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ABSTRACT

There is a conflict between the traditional concept of journalism education--characterized by devotion to the five "w's," the inverted pyramid news story form, the style book, and copy reading symbols--and a newly emerging, philosophy of communicologist-dominated journalism schools--characterized by increasing specialization in space exploration, environmental pollution, race relations, education, and other areas. The task of the journalism school is to keep up with the demand for more and better graduates with basic news reporting skills. To achieve this goal strict requirements should be maintained. Today, as a result of curriculum changes and new policies, the journalism graduate is not as well prepared as were his predecessors of a decade or more ago. Not only do the journalism schools no longer have the solid and purposeful curricula they once had, they no longer have the highly qualified faculties of years past. (Also included is a history detailing the trend toward a more inclusive communications philosophy, including an emphasis on research and scholarship.) (RB)

A PI DELTA EPSILON PUBLICATION

SCHOOLS OF JOURNALISM ARE BEING RUINED

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My topic tonight really is, "Isn't It a Shame that MacDougall Had to Retire?" and it was inspired, not only by the fact that you gave me this award but specifically by a letter to the Communications editor in the Nov. 13, 1971 issue of *Saturday Review*. Of the so-called green eyeshade type of journalism professor, Steven H. Chaffee, chairman of the Committee on Research of the Association for Education in Journalism, wrote, "Fortunately their number declines yearly." That surely included me since Chaffee's letter was in comment on two articles in a previous issue in which I was mentioned prominently. I don't think it's at all fortunate that my type of teacher is disappearing and I'm here to tell you why, if you can take it.

"Green eyeshade" became part of the lexicon of polemical journalism educators when Jake Highton of Wayne State published an article, "Green Eyeshades vs Chi-Squares" in the February, 1967 issue of *Quill*, inspiring several other articles and letters to bring the ideological conflict somewhat but not far enough into the open. Tonight I want to go further in stating one side of the argument because I believe firmly that unless this matter is settled soon, journalism schools as we have known them will be ruined and will cease to exist. My thesis simply stated is: schools of "Green eyeshade" is a complete misnomer for those of us who are fighting the take over by communicologists. "Green eyeshade" suggests hearing aids, bifocals, ulcers, hernias and hemorrhoids in the newsroom and, in the classroom, slavish devotion to the 5 w's, the inverted pyramid news story form, the style book, copy reading symbols and headline counts. It is ironic that the label be pinned on us who were the winners over advocates of that type of journalism education a generation ago when the conflict was "trade school vs social significance."

We believed then, and we believe now, that journalism is a profession essential to the welfare, in fact to the very existence of a democracy, that form of government which is predicated on the ability of the people to rule themselves. It is the obligation of the journalist to do the fact finding, newsgathering, reporting or whatever you want to call it so that the people can be sufficiently informed and able to make wise decisions. As the economic, social, political and other problems have become more complicated in an overpopulated and complex world, the task of the

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Dr. Curtis D. MacDougall, professor emeritus of journalism, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University, in accepting the annual Outstanding Educator Award of the Southern Illinois University School of Journalism, Thursday, March 9, 1972 at Carbondale, Illinois.

newsgatherer becomes more difficult and the need for reporters with extraordinary educational backgrounds and understanding increases. The trend within the profession is toward specialists in an increasing number of areas—nuclear physics, space exploration, the polluted environment, the population explosion, education, transportation, housing, race relations and many more.

Chaffee is correct when he writes that "the communications industry spreads far beyond the traditional journalism," meaning the newspaper. Chaffee is blind when he concerns himself with the mechanics or physical aspects of changes in methods of transmission of information rather than with the expanding needs of the people to know and understand what is going on in the world. Newsgathering is still newsgathering whether for a newspaper, magazine, radio, television, newsletter or other medium. It is not the medium that counts, nor the method of transmission—slave runners, carrier pigeons, pony express, telegraph, telephone, radio, television, or thought waves. Humans never will be replaced by machines in interviewing and composing news accounts.

The tremendous task of the journalism school to keep up with the demand for more and better graduates is obvious. During their heyday, roughly 1945 to 1960, the best journalism schools were certainly not trade schools. Elementary courses in news writing (the 5 w's, etc.), copyreading and the like were considered in almost the same category as ability to use a typewriter: to provide the student with the tools of the trade. The schools' responsibility was to show the student how to use those tools, not just to qualify him to be a cub reporter on the police beat—which we *did* recommend as the best way to begin a journalistic career—but to be able to qualify for promotion to editorships after a well-rounded apprenticeship. We always believed that we were training the future leaders of American journalism. And, as it turned out, we were.

In his article, "Journalism Education—A Matter of Coexistence," in the Oct. 8, 1971 *Saturday Review,* one of the articles that inspired the Chaffee response, M. L. Stein correctly quoted me as having "thundered" at the annual AEJ convention in South Carolina that, "All journalism is reporting." That is what we believed when we built J school curricula. We knew that the lowly reporter exercises editorial judgment when he decides what questions to ask during an interview and what facts to play up in a news story. We knew that any editor draws on his own reportorial sense of news values when he decides what and how news stories are to be presented in the paper. Reporting is what journalism is all about and so courses in reporting must be the backbone of any journalism school curriculum. All other courses should serve the purpose of making better reporters. For example, a course in journalism law is not given for its own sake but for the future reporter's benefit; a course in journalism history gives the future journalist perspective and understanding of the field he is entering; a course in newsroom problems and policies, or ethics, or the Press and Society, or whatever it is called, gives the future journalist the opportunity to consider the practical problems he will face during his

career and the social consequences of his behavior. And so on, all really extensions of the reporting course, all geared to turn out top flight journalists, not mere hacks.

Students who took the five years news-editorial sequence at the Medill School of Journalism prior to 1960 had a minimum of five quarters of reporting; most of them took six, seven or even eight quarters. All, furthermore, had a thorough grounding in the social sciences. When the five year curriculum was devised in the late '30's, the advice of numerous professionals was followed in making certain students had sufficient exposure to American history, American government, economics and sociology courses. We either required or strongly recommended such courses as Public Finance, Criminology, Race Relations, Labor Problems, State and Local Government, Population Problems and the like. Students who declared they lacked an interest in such subjects were advised to transfer to some other field, for the sake of their own happiness and the good of the profession.

Graduate courses in Newspaper Reporting of Public Affairs, Editorial Interpretation of Contemporary Affairs and others related the theoretical contents of the social science courses to the immediate news, and the students wrote editorials, feature articles, news reviews and other types of interpretative journalism assignments. Most other leading schools operated in accordance the the same principles. *And they worked.* Today the graduates of those halcyon days are in top editorial jobs all over the world, hardly a failure among them. Grateful for what they got, they are pro-journalism schools, whereas the editors they succeeded were mostly skeptics and cynics in the Front Page tradition.

Unfortunately the ties between schools and profession are not so close in our field as in medicine, law and the other professions. That means that the successful graduates of the J schools in the 1945-60 period don't know what's going on today at alma mater. If they did they would be shocked for, instead of five or more courses in reporting, the ordinary student now takes only one or two and attempts to correlate his liberal arts and journalism courses are fewer in number. The emphasis upon a broad social science background has diminished. In fact, the trend throughout the entire academic world is toward elimination of requirements. The alarming consequence is that too many students select what they consider the easiest courses, or they cop out; that is, they avoid coming to grips with the contemporary world, by taking ideological and theoretical courses in philosophy, psychology, religion and other fields.

Certainly no time spent on any class is wasted. Every educational experience has value. It enriches a person to know about the anthropology of Oceana, or the politics of the Far East; but for a future journalist if it means sacrificing the social science courses related to the kind of news which he will be covering as a reporter.

Today journalism students are being required or advised to take an increasing number of courses in communication theory and research methodology. They learn that copyreaders are really gatekeepers and that

no editor receives a letter; rather, he receives experiences feedback. They become familiar with statistics, in itself not at all bad; but there is danger that one may think of social problems in terms of means and medians and standard deviations rather than as involving human beings about whom journalists must write.

As a result of the curriculum changes and new policies, the journalism school graduate today is not so well prepared as were his predecessors of a decade or more ago. And those earlier graduates, who are now in hiring positions, cannot help noting that fact. First reaction of the sympathetic alumnus editor is to rationalize, "Guess I've forgotten how green I once was." Eventually, however, the evidence may become impossible to ignore.

Not only do the J schools no longer have the sound and purposeful curricula they once had, more tragically, they no longer have the highly qualified faculties of yesteryear. Maybe the student isn't missing much by not taking more reporting courses from instructors with Ph.D.s in communicology but no professional journalistic experience. In problem courses it's great to have contact with a scholar who is familiar with the thoughts of John Milton, John Stuart Mill and other great liberals of the past; but there comes a time when matters related to invasion of privacy, privilege, pre-trial publicity, impersonation, suppression, distortion, etc. need the advice of someone who has been through the mill himself. To expect students to get maximum benefit from these non-journalism teachers is as unrealistic as it would be to believe a German class could learn much from someone unable to read or speak the language.

What it all adds up to is the fact that most of the schools of journalism which were once considered the best are today living on their reputations. They are taking money under false pretenses. If present trends are not reversed, the schools should be put out of their misery.

While there remains hope, however, let us ask how this sad state of affairs came about. Who or what has been responsible? The origins of the trends now ruining schools of journalism were outside the field of academic journalism. Since World War II, ideological battles have been waged within all of the social science disciplines over the attempts to make the social sciences seem to be as exact as the physical sciences presumably are (two parts of hydrogen and one part oxygen always makes water). The methodology has been the attempt to quantify and classify knowledge and to postulate principles and laws based on research findings. This is no place to evaluate the total validity and impact of the new scholarship. C. Wright Mills took a good slap at it in his last important book, *The Sociological Imagination.* It has been called scientism, pseudo-intellectualism, phony scholarship and similar things by its critics who agree in their belief that the urge to appear learned, or at least respectable, has led to the creation of a scholarly dream world. As one put it, "These fellows don't want their wives to feel inferior to the wives of professors of physics or biology, so they have invented a pie-in-the-sky doctoral heaven, or haven, and they are almost totally ignorant of what is going on on earth."

As a fellow of the American Sociological Association, I have observed the conflict in that field. I was somewhat "in" on the organization of the

Society for the Study of Social Problems two decades ago to protest and offset the trend in sociology toward a phobic "no value" world. Since many of the "facts" on which all of this type of scholarship is based are the result of analysis -- often with the use of the notorious Chi Square -- of answers to pollsters' questions, the goal of making the social sciences as exact as the physcial sciences has not been reached and probably never will be.

The invasion of journalism by these so-called behavioral scientists began when a handful of journalism professors who belonged to the American Association of Public Opinion Research met in the Hotel Loraine at Madison, Wis. when the AAPOR convention was held there in April, 1955. I was one of the group and I attended what were called "rump" sessions the days before the Association for Education in Journalism conventions in 1955 at the University of Colorado and in 1956 at Northwestern University. Other such "day before" or "day after" meetings were held in succeeding years, but I felt I had given Chi Square a fair hearing and was thoroughtly disillusioned regarding its value to journalists. I recall the explanation of one of the leaders of the New Movement, a prominent dean, "I'm tired of meeting annually with nincompoops. If they want to see me let them go get themselves Ph.D.s and them come around." That was in open meeting and most of those present applauded. I didn't. Stein correctly insinuated that I believe the ranks of the journalism teaching profession should be entirely rid of these arrogant phonies.

Certainly I believe that there should be research centered in the schools of journalism. Not, however, the type suggested by the titles of papers presented by AEJ's Theory and Methodology Division which Stein ridicules, a typical one being, "Communications as Interaction: A Role Theory and Dissonance Analysis." How does that sort of thing train anyone to explain to voters in a democracy what the problem of the mentally retarded is; or the possible ramifications of a governor's budget or a president's trip to China? Research in our field should be related to the problem of how the interests of people in a democracy can best be served by the news media. What interviewing news gathering, news writing and processing methods are best? Mostly, there should be critical analysis of media performance. This suggestion makes deans swoon for which the profession is to blame. Publishers and their editor-appointees are mostly thin skinned. They don't want criticism of any kind from either inside or outside the field. "Robert Maynard Hutchins" still is a swear word and the current headache relates to proposals for local press councils to examine the complaints of news sources, readers and others. Nevertheless, there should be critical analysis and the journalism schools logically should do some of it. Let me cite a few of the doctoral dissertations which I directed within the past few years, before Northwestern's doctoral program was scuttled: (1) an enumeration and evaluation of the role of the Chicago press in relation to the urban renewal projects which led to the demolition of the Harrison-Halsted (Hull House) area to make way for the University of Illinois Circle campus. The brilliant Gene Burd, now an assistant

professor of journalism at the University of Minnesota, worked for the Chicago Plan Commission and lived at Hull House while fact gathering. There isn't a chart or graph or methodological mumbo jumbo in the document about which members of our Sociology Department who served on his committee still rave; (2) a similar critical analysis of the treatment the Chicago newspapers gave the controversial Dr. Benjamin Willis, superintendent of schools, by Thomas Koerner, now in Washington in charge of public relations for the National School Principals Association; (3) a survey of press coverage of unidentified flying objects, 1947-1967. Herbert Strentz, now director of the Department of Journalism at the University of North Dakota, worked several months at the University of Colorado with Dr. Edward U. Condon and had access to all of the material which led to the United States Air Force-sponsored report, *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects,* published in January, 1969 as a New York *Times* book and which should have ended the flying saucer nonsense to which the press contributed in the past; (4) a prodigious 984-page study by James Flanery, now a reporter for the Baltimore *Sun*, of *The Chicago Newspapers' Coverage of the City's Major Civil Disorders of 1968.* Flanery was on the staff which prepared the report, *Rights in Conflict*, commonly called the Walker Report because its director was Daniel Walker, prominent Chicago attorney and, I hope, Illinois' next governor. The report termed the disturbances which occurred in connection with the Democratic National Convention in Chicago "a police riot." About 100 newsmen were injured physically and sharp differences arose between the rank-and-file journalists and some of their superiors which led to organization of the Federation of Journalists and publication of *Chicago Journalism Review* which now has about a dozen emulators.

The discouraging fact is that such monumental constructive studies remain unpublished. On the other hand the gobbledegook scholars can find ready outlets for their stuff which offends nobody. They are popular with college administrators because they can obtain huge grants, into the millions, from private foundations, govermental agencies and other sources. They can get money for so-called centers and institutes which have considerable public relations value and which may help relieve the financial pressures of the budget makers, but which contribute little or nothing to the educational programs of tuition-paying students.

Back to the main train of thought. The AEJ "rump" sessions became incorporated into the regular AEJ structure and were legitimized in 1965 when AEJ was reorganized. As presented to the Syracuse convention, the plan provided for nine divisions: Radio and Television; Theory and Methodology; International Communications; Magazines; Public Relations; Graphic Arts; Secondary Education; History and Advertising. There were created three elective standing committees, part of whose duties was to study and report on the divisions; Professional Freedom and Responsibility; Research and Teaching Standards.

Note the incredible fact: *there was no provision for a Newspaper Division.* The oversight (?) was corrected when a few highly indignant

members circulated a petition whcih obtained so many names the Establishment had to yield. Leading the revolt was Charles Barnum who since then got a bellyful, resigned his professorship in the Medill School of Journalism and now edits the Quincy (Ill.) *Herald-Whig*.

Since then the Newspaper Division, which became AEJ's largest for a few years, has been harassed constantly by the communicologists who occupy prestiguous positions in the total structure. In 1969 the communicologist chairman of the Research Committee reprimanded the Newspaper Division for inactivity, at the time when it was starting a study of the newspaper dropout problem under the direction of Dr. Jack Haskins of Syracuse. The study, several hundred dollars worth, was financially possible because for years the Newspaper Division saved its income from dues and did not issue newsletters, superflous directories and piddling reports as did most of the other divisions. In 1970 the communicologist chairman of the Teaching Standards Committee threatened to recommend that the Newspaper Division be dissolved. This was because the Newspaper Division was unique in obeying the AEJ Executive Committee's request that the divisions cut down on the number o. sessions to allow them to avail themselves of the advantages available in Washington where the convention was held. Incidentally, the most time-consuming of those alleged advantages involved standing on the south lawn of the White House for an hour until Herbert Klein appeared to inform us we were engaged in an important undertaking.

Since 1966 the Newspaper Division has had convention sessions on how to teach Reporting; Journalism Ethics; Specialized Reporting; Editorial Writing; Copyreading and Editing; Journalism Law; Business News Reporting; Newspaper Makeup and the introduction to Journalism course. No other division has come anywhere close to that record and yet the division has had to be constantly on its toes because its communicology critics are definitely out to "get" it if they can.

The communicologists have made headway on campuses because they possess Ph.D. degrees. College administrators put an abnormally high value on that fact. Perhaps it is justified in many if not all other academic fields. It certainly doesn't make any sense in journalism. I have numerous letters in my files from successful newspapaermen who, about the age of 40, after 15 to 20 years of professional experience, would like to teach. They cannot get appointments to leading schools of journalism faculties unless they make the idiotic sacrifice of returning to school themselves first, to go through the routine of obtaining the Ph.D. degree. They also have familes to support. So they forget it, especially when warned that if they did get a teaching job, their promotion would depend in large part on their adherence to the "publish or perish"rule. It is nonsense, of course, to say that someone who has been writing all his life must concentrate on more writing rather than upon teaching to which he is a newcomer. So, the only influx of professional journalists into the teaching field consists of old timers, retired editors mostly, who have the mistaken idea that they will find a more leisurely existence, possibly with the time to write their

memoirs and spend their golden years pleasantly in an intellectually-stimulating environment. Most of them are flops in the classroom. They don't know how to organize a course and are disinclined to exert the time and energy necessary to find out how to do it from experienced teachers who might be too awe-struck to offer suggestions anyway. These retirees have little background in the literature of journalism and they think they can inspire the coming generation by spinning anecdotes of their own careers. They soon become bores, but college publicity departments make much of their proximity and supposed availability to developing minds.

I personally owe more to the late Baker Brownell than to any other person. For about two decades he conducted the most popular course on the Northwestern campus, Contemporary Thought. I sat through it three times. Brownell was a former Chicago *Tribune* editorial writer. I know he did not have a Ph.D. degree. I'm not sure that he had a master's or even a bachelor's degree. But he was a phenomenal scholar. What I tried to do during my long tenure at Northwestern was to keep alive his ideas and ideals.

Many of the other outstanding journalism teachers that I have known were not doctors: Harry F. Harrington, first director of the Medill school; William Slaughter, Roland E. Wolseley, Burton Marvin and Jacob Scher, all of whom helped develop the tremendous reporting course that once distinguished the school. Not a Ph.D. among them. And the same goes for Llewellyn Jones, Elmo Scott Watson, Irving Pflaum, Warren Pierce, Lucy Rogers Hawkins, Robert Gildart, Virginia Coverdale and many other great teachers.

Goaded by a family friend, the dean of women at Carroll College, Waukesha, Wis., I used the small inheritance my mother left me to get a Ph.D. in sociology before I was 30. Then I returned to newspaper work, at first with the St. Louis *Star-Times* and then on several Chicago area publications. It was ten years before I became a fulltime journalism professor, and it was my professional experience and not the textbooks I had memorized to get the Ph.D. that was responsible for whatever success I had as a teacher.

I resent the supercilious and condescending attitude of many communicologists. In my judgment these men are mostly to be pitied for their narrow intellectual outlook on life. they have built a dream world in the skies; it is as real to them as chess is to a fanatic and as unreal in relation to the world of human beings. They preceded Marshall McLuhan but they have their own vocabulary and they adhere to the concept that the "medium is the message," an absurdity. Wallace Carroll, editor and publisher of the Winston-Salem *Journal and Sentinel* took care of McLuhan in an address to the New England Society of Newspaper Editors which appeared in large part in the June, 1970 *Nieman Reports*. It should be required reading for all journalists: students, teachers and practitioners.

The communicologists display their ignorance whenever resolutions related to contemporary problems are considered at AEJ business meetings. They seemingly lack adequate background in the social sciences to understand the day's news. Furthermore, they are not devoted to journalism. Many of them in fact, have an Agnew-like contempt for the

media. They just don't understand the implications of the first amendment to the Constitution of the United States. They certainly do not uphold the freedom of the press clause with any vigor. They don't understand the need for more, not less, training in the so-called fundamentals of journalism which, after all, analysis means more reporting. They don't teach journalism, both because they can't and because they don't believe it should be taught. Rather they teach *about* journalism. If they have anything to offer, let them go somewhere else with it. They don't belong in journalism teaching. They are ruining the Association for Education in Journalism and the previously fine journalism schools.

My fervent hope is that journalism school alumni and leaders in the profession wake up and take an interest in what is happening. Their help is badly needed. Unfortunately too many publishers become "taken in" by the seemingly erudite Theory and Methodology scholars. Not long ago a managing editor of a large metropolitan daily pointed to a large two-volume report on an aspect of his paper's operations prepared by some T&M boys at a nearby j school. The editor confessed that he couldn't understand the report, but he was tremendously impressed and tended to blame himself. He regretted his ignorance, the fact that he had been so wedded to his desk for so many years that he hadn't "kept up." His attitude seemed to be that because he couldn't understand the report, it must be profound.

Not many experienced professionals become deans or professors of journalism. Those that do often experience the same humility as my managing editor friend. They meet scholars from other parts of the campus and develop inferiority complexes. So they are suckers for the glib and the phony as well as the real. It's amusing—perhaps I should say disgusting— the extent to which the T&M boys try to smother any newcomer from the professional field when he shows up at an AEJ convention or similar meeting.

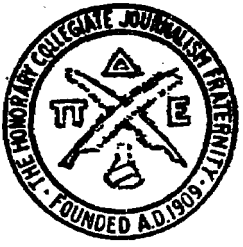
My advice to the professional-turned-professor is to be as skeptical of these psuedos as you used to be of mayors, sheriffs and others in your reporting days.

Specifically, the journalistic professional could pressure college administrators to employ faculties with professional competence and to build curricula which emphasize the social sciences and reporting courses. There is no college president who would not be impressed by a delegation of editors and/or publishers demanding that the J school resume graduating a good product.

The representatives of professional journalism organizations on the American Council of Education for Journalism, the group that examines and accredits journalism schools, should work for a restoration of the rule that was adhered to for many years, that unless he possessed a minimum of five years of professional experience, one should not be allowed to teach journalism. That rule has been progressively watered down. For several years it was reduced to a two-year experience average for the faculty as a whole. that inspired some schools to employ some retired newsman with 20 or more years of experience to balance the rest of the faculty which had little or none. Today there is no minimum requirement whatever.

Five years or so ago an AEJ committee chairmaned by Prof. Dean Baker of the University of Michigan recommended that the five year minimum rule be resurrected. It took three years to get the Baker report on the agenda of an AEJ business meeting and then it was tabled.

Reenactment of the minimum professional experience rule would send the communicologists into the limbo where they belong. It would mean that a large number of journalism professorships and deanships would be vacated; but that shouldn't be alarming when one realizes that deans of medical schools are doctors and that deans of law schools are lawyers. Quaint custom which it might not hurt journalism schools to emulate.



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