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# Agent of social change : a history of Canadian University Press

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AGENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE: A HISTORY OF CANADIAN UNIVERSITY PRESS

By

Käthe Anne Lemon, B.F.A. Writing, University of Victoria, 2002

A thesis

presented to Ryerson University and York University

in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts

in the Program of

Communication and Culture

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## Agent of Social Change: A History of Canadian University Press

Käthe Anne Lemon, M.A. 2004

Communication and Culture

Canadian University Press (CUP) is a co-operative national student news group that produces a news service and unites student newspapers across the country. Since its establishment in 1938, CUP has brought campus newspapers from across the country together to share news and information as well as training with one another. From 1965 to 1991 CUP's policies stated that the major role of the student newspaper was to "act as an agent of social change." During this time CUP and its members took on an educative and active political role. Using CUP as a case study of a politically engaged press organization that saw its role as an active participant in the events it reported, this thesis illuminates the factors that can encourage a politically engaged press taking into consideration both theory and practice. This study examines the factors that made it possible for CUP to act as an agent of social change, how that role was interpreted, and the changes that resulted in the organization moving away from that role.

## Acknowledgements

Despite my declaration that I am the sole author of this thesis, like any such work, this one was not undertaken alone. Starting on a very mundane level, this thesis was made possible in large part through the generous financial support of my family, the Ryerson University Communications and Culture program, the Canadian Media Research Consortium, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

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*For Dorothea Sarah Lemon*

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## **Introduction**

### **Agents of Social Change**

Canadian University Press (CUP) is a co-operative national student news group that produces a news service and unites student newspapers across the country. Since its establishment in 1938, CUP has brought together campus newspapers across the country to share news and information as well as training and support with one another. CUP holds an annual national conference to train student journalists, share ideas and make decisions about the direction of the organization. At the 1965 conference held in Calgary, delegates from the thirty-five member papers voted in a change to their Charter of the Student Press (later renamed the Statement of Principles) stating that “one of the major roles of the student press is to act as an agent of social change; that it should continually strive to emphasize the rights and responsibilities of the student as a citizen, and use its freedom from commercial control to examine issues that the professional press avoids.”<sup>1</sup> The “agent of social change” clause would become one of the most highly contested sections of the CUP Statement of Principles. In requiring student journalists to become “agents of social change” CUP put into its policies a vision of the role of the press, specifically the student press, as a politically engaged alternative to the professional press and its “commercial control.”

This thesis examines CUP as a case study of a politically engaged press group. Through an exploration of the factors that fostered the agent of social change role in the student press, the ways CUP and its members interpreted and acted on the policy through the years, and the changes that led CUP to opt for a less politically engaged role in the 1990s, this work provides insight into the possibilities for a politically engaged press in Canada. This thesis also examines various models and theories for press reform and compares them to CUP’s experiences. While the “agent of social change” clause was removed from the CUP Statement of Principles in 1991, this change should not be viewed as a failure of the possibility of an engaged press. Rather, it is a sign that the student journalists continued to adapt their role and readdress the question “what is journalism for?”

The role of the press is one that has changed several times and continues to be questioned. Currently, we find ourselves in a media environment where we are paradoxically inundated by a plethora of choices of news media, which are increasingly controlled by fewer and fewer voices leaving us fewer actual choices. Questions about the social role of the press and the relation of the press to the community become even more important when not only

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<sup>1</sup> CUP, *Report: 28th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1965) Motion 10/C/65.

fewer people are in control of the news media, but it is increasingly controlled from outside of the community. Often the problem with media criticism becomes one of exasperation, the feeling that nothing can be done: the problems can be identified, but not resolved. That is why this particular case study of CUP and its experiment as a politically engaged press is especially intriguing. Here is a press organization and news wire that was both actively engaged in its community and operating outside the profit model. CUP and its members took on an educative and active political role. In examining how they did this, we can see the factors that stand in the way of an engaged press taking into consideration both theory and practice.

### **The Press, Community and Democracy**

Many theorists have discussed the relation between the press, building community and fostering democracy. In his book *The Power of the News*, Michael Schudson posits the media and democracy as “mutually constitutive.”<sup>2</sup> A free press cannot exist without a functioning democracy, neither can a democracy function without a free press. In this sense, the role of the press is to serve and strengthen democracy, and in doing so it strengthens itself. In Schudson’s view the news serves a “vital democratic function whether in a given instance anyone out there is listening or not.”<sup>3</sup> He sees the very idea of news that is available to all, daily and inexpensively as in itself a lesson in democracy. The press serves two democratic functions; the first is that the press gives people the information and context needed to make the decisions required of them as citizens, and the second is that in its availability to everyone, the press itself is an example of a democratic ideal.

In discussing the role of the press, Schudson also builds on Anderson’s idea of the imagined community. He writes, “the mass media carry a great deal of symbolic freight in urban and regional identity, more than they know, certainly more than they self-consciously engineer. They help to establish in the imagination of a people a psychologically potent entity—a ‘community’—that can be located nowhere on the ground.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, the media create an image of community, a relation between people who are otherwise unrelated. The creation of community happens in the minds of the journalists, publishers and readers. For Schudson, the notion of a public is itself a fiction. This is not meant to devalue the idea, rather he sees it as the “democratic fiction par excellence...it is the fiction that brings self-

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995) 31.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995) 33.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995) 15.

government to life.”<sup>5</sup> In constituting a public, a democratic public, the press creates and sustains the conditions for its own existence. In this way, the press not only addresses the community, but in addressing it, creates the community.

That the press and democracy are mutually constitutive is also seen in the social responsibility model of the press. The idea of a socially responsible press seems to have been first clearly articulated and given a name in North America by the Commission on Freedom of the Press in their 1947 report, *A Free and Responsible Press*. In the view of the Commission, the American First Amendment rights to freedom of the press in the U.S. were coupled with a responsibility to the public.<sup>6</sup> If the media did not fulfill this responsibility, the Commission feared that public would renege on the promise of press freedom and put the media under government control. In order to fulfill their responsibility the media had to provide a “truthful, comprehensive account of the day’s events in a context which gives them meaning,” act as a “forum for the exchange of comment and criticism,” provide a “representative picture of the constituent groups of society,” clearly present the “goals and values of society,” and present “full access to the day’s intelligence.”<sup>7</sup> The Commission implicitly connected the responsible press to the larger project of democracy by giving the press the role of ensuring its own freedom. Although the Commission expressed fears about the outcome of possible government control of the media, it also presented this as a possible outcome of the media’s own failure to fulfill their given role.<sup>8</sup> In requiring the media to present not only facts, but also context, a forum of debate and a space to discuss the values and goals of the community, the Commission set forth a model of the socially responsible press as engaged with the community it represented.

While in Canada there are not similar protections for the press as outlined in the American First Amendment rights, there is a similar idea of both freedom and responsibility of the press. As Frederick Fletcher has written, “In recognition of its central role in the democratic process, the press has traditionally received special access to government information and a number of indirect subsidies, with respect to mail delivery, trips with

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995) 32.

<sup>6</sup> The Commission on Freedom of the Press, *A Free and Responsible Press a General Report on Mass Communication: Newspapers, Radio, Motion Pictures, Magazines, and Books* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1947) 18.

<sup>7</sup> The Commission on Freedom of the Press, *A Free and Responsible Press a General Report on Mass Communication: Newspapers, Radio, Motion Pictures, Magazines, and Books* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1947) 20.

<sup>8</sup> The Commission on Freedom of the Press, *A Free and Responsible Press a General Report on Mass Communication: Newspapers, Radio, Motion Pictures, Magazines, and Books* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1947) 18.

political leaders, office space in government buildings, for example. It has also been expected to fulfill a number of civic obligations, obligations recognized by most journalists.”<sup>9</sup>

In his book *Communities of Journalism*, David Paul Nord presents two models of the role of the press: the fact model and forum model. For Nord, the fact model “does not build communities; it provides the factual materials for others to do so.”<sup>10</sup> In this model it is not the responsibility of the press to build community, rather the role of the press is to provide citizens with the information they need to build their own communities. Conversely, the forum model sees the press’ role as “conversation, connection and common action, not facts and information.”<sup>11</sup> In this model the press and the public have a conversation about community. Both sides are engaged in “common action.” Both of these models trace their roots back to the early days of journalism, and in them we see the polarization of the debate about the role of the press. The one side argues that the press should be distanced and objective, having neither involvement nor appearance of involvement in the events and people it reports about. The other side argues that this distancing and “objective” stance is simultaneously an impossible goal to achieve and is at the root of the problems with the press. Both models present the press as an integral part of the functioning democracy and the project of community building. The question is how involved the press should be in these projects: should the press be actively engaged as in the forum model, or is the press’ role simply to furnish the information that citizens need to take action. For Nord, the forum model is of more interest. He asserts that “newspapers have always crossed that line; they have always been thoroughly enmeshed in the political and cultural lives of their communities.”<sup>12</sup> According to Nord, to say that newspapers in the fact model are not involved in the politics and culture of the communities they report on is to overlook the complex, and always politically and culturally influenced ways in which journalists and editors create “the news” out of the events of the day. At the same time, both models are problematic. As Nord points out, “neither [model] accounts very well for the workings of political, economic, and cultural power.”<sup>13</sup> While many media critics agree that the media is not fulfilling its role of

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<sup>9</sup> Frederick J. Fletcher, *The Newspapers and Public Affairs* vol. 7 Royal Commission on Newspapers (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing Centre, 1981) 6.

<sup>10</sup> David Paul Nord, *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2001) 5.

<sup>11</sup> David Paul Nord, *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2001) 7.

<sup>12</sup> David Paul Nord, *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2001) 11.

<sup>13</sup> David Paul Nord, *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2001) 7.



supporting a functioning democracy, the question of how best to do that depends on the particular criticisms and the model that each critic believes the media should take.

### **The Profit Model and the Press**

For media critics Herman and Chomsky, profit orientation is the root from which all other problems with the media grow. In their “propaganda model,” Herman and Chomsky describe five news filters that work to shape the mainstream coverage of the news in major U.S. news sources. The “essential ingredients” of these filters are:

- (1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms;
- (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media;
- (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by governments, business, and ‘experts’ funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power;
- (4) ‘flak’ as a means of disciplining the media;
- and (5) ‘anticommunism’ as a national religion and control mechanism.<sup>14</sup>

For Herman and Chomsky profit orientation, concentration of ownership and advertising as a central source of income all work to magnify the effects of the other filters. While Herman and Chomsky make certain interesting points, they tend to gloss over the effects of the work of individual journalists and the traditions of journalism, leaving readers with a sense that there is a giant conspiracy rather than that the content of the news media is the result of the complex interplay of hegemony, tradition, politics and class in the newsroom.

For liberal critics such as John Miller and Richard Gruneau, profit orientation is only one factor in a complex series of problems identified with the news media. In his book *Yesterday's News*, Miller also focuses on the commercialism and profit orientation of the news media in his critique of Canada's mainstream newspapers. Most of his criticisms revolve around newspapers working more as businesses than for the public good. Miller records as their first area of failure, that “newspapers behave as if they're serving themselves, not us.”<sup>15</sup> This is echoed by Hackett and Gruneau in their study into the filters that journalists themselves view as shaping the news. Their work identifies a lack of resources for journalists as one of the strongest filters of the news in Canada. According to Hackett and Gruneau,

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<sup>14</sup> Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 2002) 2.

<sup>15</sup> John Miller, *Yesterday's News: Why Canada's Daily Newspapers are Failing Us* (Halifax: Fernwood, 1998) 17.

“approximately 84% of journalists surveyed said that a lack of resources (including time, money and news space) ‘occasionally’ or ‘often’ leads to the omission of significant news.”<sup>16</sup>

Work routines are cited as the second most important news filter in Hackett and Grueneau’s study.<sup>17</sup> Hackett and Gruneau view media filtering as partly a process of the work of journalists. This is not meant to forgive it, but rather to point to the limitations of traditional journalistic practice. While Herman and Chomsky see news filtering as the purposeful censorship of certain views, Hackett and Gruneau approach media filters as at least partially a product of a complex work place. Hackett and Gruneau see not only the part played by “flaks” and heavy-handed owners, but also the less obvious part played by overworked journalists who have not been asked to examine their own cultural and professional biases and the very traditions of journalistic practice such as “objective” reporting. Each of these accounts is useful in an examination of the mainstream and student press.

Between these three ideas of media filters a clearer image of the forces that shape the news begins to emerge. While concentrated ownership, advertisers, advertising-based media, and “flaks” play a part in shaping the news, so does the work of the journalist, the tradition of objective reporting, and the reliance on experts and government officials for agenda setting and sources. However, one of the root causes of all of these filters is the media as a commercial enterprise. Within the profit model, the main goal of a newspaper, or any media source, is to generate profit for shareholders. The needs of the reader become secondary to the needs of the shareholder. Costs are cut, resulting in a decrease in resources for journalists, in turn increasing journalists’ reliance on official sources and quick stories, and making newspapers even more leery of controversial pieces that may result in lawsuits. Commercialization also increases the likelihood and the adverse effects of concentration and increased reliance on advertising. Economies of scale become necessary and cause even more cost-cutting measures. Moreover, commercialization also entails a shift in thinking from seeing the readers as citizens to seeing them as consumers. The commercialization of the media is ultimately the largest single filter and can be broken down into separate factors that shape the news.

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<sup>16</sup> Robert A. Hackett and Richard Gruneau with Donald Gutstein, Timothy A. Gibson and NewsWatch Canada, *The Missing News: Filters and Blind Spots in Canada’s Press* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2000) 79.

<sup>17</sup> Robert A. Hackett and Richard Gruneau with Donald Gutstein, Timothy A. Gibson and NewsWatch Canada, *The Missing News: Filters and Blind Spots in Canada’s Press* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2000) 83.

Commercialization is also seen by all of these critics as the single largest factor alienating readers and thereby citizens. The focus of the commercial enterprise on the shareholder rather than the reader undermines the responsibility of the press towards citizens and communities.

### **The Press as “Objective”**

For many theorists the tradition of objective reporting is one of the major stumbling blocks to creating both a publicly and politically engaged press. Though these issues were on the periphery during the mid-sixties, issues surrounding the limitations of an objective press have now become widely debated by theorists such as Jeremy Iggers, Gaye Tuchman, Richard L. Kaplan, David Mindich, and Robert Hackett. The issue of objectivity and its place in a politically engaged press makes this case study of CUP increasingly relevant to both those interested in the workings of journalism and those who work in it.

Even though objectivity is no longer seen as possible by many journalists, a sort of ritual of objectivity remains, one that is used to protect journalists from criticism according to Gaye Tuchman and Jeremy Iggers. For Iggers:

Objectivity may be dead, but it isn't dead enough. Even though few journalists still defend the idea of objectivity, it remains one of the greatest obstacles to their playing a more responsible and constructive role in public life. Although the idea itself may be widely discredited, its legacy is a professional ideology that shapes journalists' daily practices.<sup>18</sup>

Objectivity is not only a goal, but a way of working for journalists. Because of this, the practice of “objectivity” can live on through the work of journalists even after the philosophy is dead.

For Mindich, objectivity is made up of five components: “detachment, nonpartisanship, a style of writing called the ‘inverted pyramid,’ facticity, and balance.”<sup>19</sup> Moreover, as Robert Hackett has identified, “objectivity is not a single, unitary ethic.”<sup>20</sup> Objectivity is more easily identified by what it is not (biased, partisan, involved) than what it is. Considering that objectivity was first introduced as a way to serve the public interest, and

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<sup>18</sup> Jeremy Iggers, *Good News, Bad News: Journalism Ethics and the Public Interest* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998) 91.

<sup>19</sup> David T.Z. Mindich, *Just the Facts: How “Objectivity” Came to Define American Journalism* (New York: New York UP, 1998) 2.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Hackett, “An Exaggerated Death: Prefatory Comments on ‘Objectivity’ in Journalism,” *Deadlines and Diversity: Journalism Ethics in a Changing World* eds. Valerie Alia, Brian Brennan and Barry Hoffmaster (Halifax: Fernwood, 1996) 42.

is still viewed that way by many, it may seem surprising that it is viewed by some theorists as the greatest obstacle to establishing a responsible press.

In his work on the rise of objectivity, Kaplan examines the forces that turned the partisan press of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century towards the objective model. Kaplan says that in part to appeal to a wider general audience in order to gain advertising revenue, “newspapers elaborated a new occupational ethic and reconstructed their political role in the public arena. The press, journalists pledged, would be governed by only a rigorous ethic of impartiality and public service.”<sup>21</sup> It is significant that objectivity was seen as a public service: journalists and newspapers re-cast themselves in the role of mediators, standing between politicians and the public so that the public could get impartial information. However, objectivity had another side-effect—distance not only from those being covered, but from those receiving the coverage. Kaplan writes:

In their passion for rigorous objectivity, in their disavowal of any particular viewpoint, in their commitment to standing as external observers to the deceptions and diatribes of public life, reporters lost their capacity to interject their own evaluations and judgments; provide overarching interpretations; and explore controversial, or conversely, taken-for-granted social viewpoints. They lost the ability to independently set the news agenda.<sup>22</sup>

According to Kaplan, in following the model of objective reporting, journalists removed themselves from the public sphere and detached themselves from the conversation of the community. Further, the model of objective reporting does not address the active role that journalists and newspapers necessarily take in selecting the news. As Mindich has written, “to say that journalists *make* the news does not mean that they fake the news...It simply means that journalists do and must construct stories, because of their membership in the world of humanity.”<sup>23</sup> In failing to recognize this aspect of the work of journalists, objectivity often works to maintain the status quo, create false struggles, and alternately over-simplify issues into binary opposites that fit its call for “balance.”

In trying to resolve the problems raised by “objectivity” and the rituals of objectivity, many critics, including Kaplan and Robert McChesney, see a need for media reform as part of a larger social reform aimed at strengthening democracy. What they are calling for is a

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<sup>21</sup> Richard L. Kaplan, *Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865-1920* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2002) 2.

<sup>22</sup> Richard L. Kaplan, *Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865-1920* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2002) 193.

<sup>23</sup> David T.Z. Mindich, *Just the Facts: How “Objectivity” Came to Define American Journalism* (New York: New York UP, 1998) 8. Emphasis in original.

press in the forum model, actively engaged in the community and the projects of democracy and community building, rather than standing outside the community and providing only “facts.”

### **Attempts to Resolve the Problems with the Press**

For the radical critics of the media, necessary media reform includes creating a press that is both more responsive to citizens and is based at least in part on a not-for-profit model. For liberal critics media reform must include restructuring of the newsroom to address those voices that are not heard in the current model, to reduce reliance on official sources for both information and agenda-setting, and to change the working conditions of journalists to allow for more time, space, and resources to be given to in-depth coverage. At the same time, media reform must address the problematic issues of the traditions of journalism and their effects on coverage.

The idea of an active politically engaged, but non-partisan press is proposed in both Robert McChesney’s ideas of a democratic media, and Jay Rosen’s ideas of public journalism. Public journalism, while more open to public dialogue, maintains that, “journalists do not join the parade because their job is to report on the parade.”<sup>24</sup> Public journalism actively engages the community in deciding what coverage should entail, what questions should be asked, and how the press should present information. In opening itself to the community, public journalism addresses many of the liberal critics’ concerns about reliance on experts and official sources for both agenda setting and information. In many ways public journalism makes the press more accountable by opening the doors to the public and inviting it in. However, depending on the community, public journalism can run the risk of maintaining the status quo by promoting a majority rule model of the news. Also, though it makes the newsroom more open, Rosen’s model does not address some of the structural problems in the newsroom such as lack of time and resources or the effects of the profit model. Because it doesn’t “join the parade,” public journalism also does not necessarily make itself a part of larger community changes and democratic reforms.

For others, media reform must be part of a larger reform of society. For McChesney, it is imperative that “we should make the rule of the many possible. This means among other things...reducing social inequality and establishing a media system that serves the entire population and promotes democratic rule. In structural terms, that means a media system that

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<sup>24</sup> Jay Rosen, *What Are Journalists for?* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999) 281.

has a significant nonprofit and noncommercial component.”<sup>25</sup> McChesney sees media reform as only one aspect of larger social reform, and again, because of the mutually constitutive character of democracy and a free press, these must happen concurrently.

This study of the Canadian University Press brings to light various aspects of these proposals for media reform. CUP’s own reforms included standing in opposition to the mainstream press, becoming more politically and socially active, restructuring the newsroom hierarchies to address issues of power, examining the role of objective reporting, and engaging with and participating in larger social movements in the community, all in an effort to act as an agent of social change.

### **Agents of Social Change**

This study examines CUP from the liberal critical standpoint. CUP and its members stand outside of the profit model in the sense that they are not-for-profit enterprises. However, following the liberal critical point of view, this alone does not mean that CUP and its members would necessarily represent a better news source than the mainstream for-profit news media. That is why this study does not focus on CUP and its members’ finances and varying reliance on advertising revenue, but rather the “agent of social change” clause in CUP’s constitution. From 1965 through 1991, in order to fulfill their roles as stated in the CUP policies, student journalists needed to be active members of the community. CUP policies stated that the press had both an active and educative function, and needed to work with other agents of social change in the community. The student press not only had to report on social change, but also had to be a model of social change, using democratic rule and cooperative work sharing in the office. However, while the organization placed a high value on democracy, this did not mean that majority ruled absolutely—structures such as a gender alternating speakers’ list were instituted to ensure that minority voices were heard. In examining the CUP “agent of social change” clause and the organization’s own concept of the role of the student press, this thesis explores an example of a politically active press that saw itself not only as an active participant, but also as a creator of and participant in its community. As members of the community of students they served, CUP journalists did not see themselves as uninvolved observers. Although the organization did call for unbiased and

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<sup>25</sup> Robert McChesney, *Rich Media Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1999) 5-6.

fair reporting, CUP saw being an “agent of social change, striving to emphasize the rights and responsibilities of the student citizen,” as the major role of the student press.<sup>26</sup>

CUP did not become a politically engaged press overnight. When the “agent of social change” clause was first introduced, the CUP Code of Ethics opened by stating, “the student journalist should strive continually to be unbiased and accurate in his reports.”<sup>27</sup> During the mid-sixties in CUP there seems to have been little perceived conflict between the tradition of objective reporting and the activist role. A 1965 report by Peter Calami on the purposes and goals of the university newspaper stated, “all papers were in agreement that the primary purpose of a student newspaper was to report campus news as accurately and swiftly as possible...it was generally agreed that the student newspaper [had] a duty to attempt to provoke thought and beliefs...[and] should strive in the best tradition of journalism, to be objective and impartial.”<sup>28</sup> At least in 1965, Calami and others did not seem to see any conflict between the goals of provoking beliefs and being unbiased. Although CUP would increasingly move away from the term unbiased, replacing it with “fair” in later versions of the Code of Ethics, the idea of objectivity was never completely erased from CUP’s idea of good journalism. Looking into CUP’s struggle with challenging the traditions of journalism, specifically the tradition of objectivity, is just one way that this thesis will examine the difficulties that face a politically involved press.

The CUP “agent of social change” clause suggested that journalists should report on the parade from the inside of the parade, and also that in reporting on the parade it could be significantly reshaped. At the same time, the question of how involved journalists should be in the events they reported was one that CUP grappled with continually. It is important to note that although it embraced the idea of being a politically involved press, CUP did not act as a mouthpiece for a particular party. Over the time that the “agent of social change” clause was in place CUP distanced itself from the national and provincial student unions and federations and encouraged members to become financially and editorially independent from their universities’ students’ unions. Similarly, CUP did not support newspapers that had even the appearance of being controlled by a political party, as was demonstrated by the University of Waterloo *Chevron* case, in which CUP ended the paper’s membership in part because of accusations that the paper was controlled by the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist).

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<sup>26</sup> CUP, *31st National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1968) 31.

<sup>27</sup> CUP, “Code of Ethics of the Canadian University Press,” *Report: 28th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1965) n.pag.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Calami, “The Purposes and Goals of a University Newspaper,” *CUP Working Papers: 28th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1965) 1-2.

Whereas many journalists may feel they can erect a wall between themselves and their material, CUP journalists, as part of the public they addressed, could not easily separate themselves from their work even if they wanted to. One of the main differences between CUP's agent of social change concept and the ideas of public or democratic journalism is that consulting with the "public" on coverage issues was not a concern for CUP. Student newspapers are primarily staffed by volunteers from the campus, and although they can at times be cliquish, most will not turn away any willing volunteer. However, the 1968 changes to the Statement of Principles included a clause stating that the student press must "support groups serving as agents of social change,"<sup>29</sup> which suggests an active engagement with groups outside of the press similar to that promoted by public journalism. As well, CUP required that members be "democratically run."<sup>30</sup> This meant that the journalists themselves—rather than the students' union, the administration or another publisher—made all of the decisions involved in running the newspaper. This gave staff members at CUP papers a huge amount of freedom, most significantly the freedom choose to whether or not to act as agents of social change.

The role of the press is intimately related to the social and historical context that surrounds it, and the "agent of social change" clause can be viewed as very much a product of the political activities of students in the 1960s. While that is certainly important, the student movement of the sixties plays only one part in the development of CUP as a politically engaged press. As we shall see, the student movement and the politically engaged student press were not causally related; one did not cause the other to occur. Rather, the two were symbiotic and mutually constitutive; they encouraged, fostered, and built each other. It is also important to remember that while the student movement of the 1960s was relatively united, it was not monolithic or homogenous, and neither was the student press.

The "agent of social change" clause would in time bring many changes to the organization and be the guiding principle behind many of CUP's political actions. However, the introduction of the "agent of social change" clause did not mark an abrupt departure from CUP's previous guiding principles. In many ways CUP had long acted as an agent of social change taking action outside of members' editorial pages—most obviously through letter writing campaigns and CUP "censures" against governments and corporations. The motion does not seem to have been controversial when it was first introduced, as it would be later—the motion is not remarked upon in any surviving reports and was voted in by a landslide, 23 in favour, one abstention and one against.

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<sup>29</sup> CUP, *31st National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1968) 31.

<sup>30</sup> CUP, *Canadian University Press 36th National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1973) Motion C/3/73.



At the same time as we examine the significance of the “agent of social change” clause and the Statement of Principles and other documents listing CUP’s policies, we must also be aware of the limitations of the CUP Statement of Principles and Code of Ethics. As Nigel Harris has noted in his research into journalistic codes of conduct, “codes of conduct are only a part, and perhaps a quite minor part, of the regulatory framework within which journalists operate. Reporters and editors may be constrained in many different ways from acting unethically.”<sup>31</sup> Throughout this work I will examine the limits of the effectiveness of the agent clause, members’ frequent disagreements with the clause, as well as the other factors that hindered members and the CUP executive in acting as agents of social change.

This questioning of the clause does not point to a failure of CUP or its Statement of Principles, rather, the organization’s criticisms of the clause are also a way in which CUP journalists acted as agents of social change. Members of the co-operative directed the national office, rather than vice versa, and as CUP was no longer taking the mainstream press as its lead, the “agent of social change” clause represents what Rosen has called “a disturbance of the professional hierarchy.”<sup>32</sup> Disturbing this hierarchy is another way that CUP questioned the traditions of journalism and worked to reshape how the press operated.

### **Situating the Study**

My own interest in CUP developed out of my long involvement with the organization. As a student journalist with the University of Victoria newspaper, *The Martlet*, I was sent as a delegate to the 61<sup>st</sup> CUP conference held over the 1998/99 winter break in Guelph, Ontario. After that introduction I became the CUP arts bureau chief in 1999/2000 and again in 2001/2002. Finally, in 2002/2003 I sat as the Human Resources representative on the CUP Board of Directors. During all of this time I was intrigued by the idea of acting as an agent of social change—a phrase that was still invoked regularly at CUP conferences even though it had been formally removed from the constitution almost a decade earlier. This level of involvement may strike some as creating a bias. As James Halloran has noted, “Objectivity dies hard in journalism, but it dies even harder in the social sciences.”<sup>33</sup> I believe it is fitting to such a study, which examines the very concept of objectivity and the

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<sup>31</sup> Nigel G.E. Harris, “Codes of Conduct for Journalists,” *Ethical Issues in Journalism and the Media* eds. Andréw Belsey and Ruth Chadwick (London: Routledge, 1992) 65.

<sup>32</sup> Jay Rosen, *What Are Journalists for?* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999) 270.

<sup>33</sup> James D. Halloran, “Mass Communication Research: Asking the Right Questions,” *Mass Communication Research Methods* eds. Anders Hansen, Simon Cottle, Ralph Negrine and Chris Newbold (New York: New York UP, 1998) 11.

role of the reporter. It is my contention that a researcher, as well as a reporter, not only can, but should be involved politically, and that this involvement should be towards a greater understanding and deeper questioning of the situation and organization rather than towards an unquestioned belief in a certain way of doing things. That said, because this study focuses on the “agent of social change” clause, which was removed from the Statement of Principles in 1991, this work does not touch directly on the period of my own involvement in CUP and the policy changes that I and my contemporaries effected are not discussed here.

This study will be situated within a critical analytical frame and will take a holistic approach by taking into account CUP’s policies, systemic frameworks, organizational structures, news content, and social/historical context. In examining both CUP’s newswire content and organizational structure, this study uses a power elite model of media criticism, which sees the operations and content of the press as the result of the complex filters of elitism and commercial pressure as well as the social/historical context of the press in question and the traditions of journalism.

Chapter One examines the role of the press leading up to and including 1965 when the “agent of social change” clause was incorporated into the Charter of the Student Press of Canada. Chapter Two examines CUP’s coverage of the FLQ crisis as the first instance of CUP acting as an agent of social change. Included in this chapter is a discussion of how CUP dealt with the ideas of objectivity and personal responsibility in practice as well as in theory, and how CUP, through its style guides and staff training, instructed student journalists to interpret ideas of objectivity, bias, and fairness. Chapter Three examines systemic change in CUP as a result of the “agent of social change” clause. This chapter explores theories of media democracy and CUP’s practices of democratic rule along with other measures that changed CUP’s organizational structure and operations, such as alternating gender speakers’ lists. Chapter Four examines the addition to the constitution of the statement that CUP would work with other agents of social change. This includes a discussion of editorial and letter-writing campaigns as well as advertising boycotts, and CUP’s relations with other alternative press organizations and political organizations. Chapter Five explores the full realization of the “agent of social change” clause—active journalists, systemic change, work with other political groups—through the example of CUP’s work with the women’s movement. Chapter Six examines the factors leading up to the removal of the agent clause.

This thesis examines CUP and its “agent of social change” clause as a case study of a news group working towards the goal of being a politically involved press organization. Through the following chapters this work examines the various changes to the Statement of Principles, the addition of the Statement of Purposes for the National News Exchange, and

significant systemic changes made to the organization of CUP. Through these changes CUP has demonstrated a belief that to make changes to the content of the news it is also necessary to change the structure of the news organization. Examining CUP and its “agent of social change” clause will provide insight into the workings of a progressive political press and the student press where many of Canada’s journalists and media critics, as well as politicians, lawyers, and activists got their start. As the Canadian news environment becomes increasingly controlled by large commercial conglomerates, it is ever more important to examine alternative structures in the news organization.

### **Methodological Note**

In completing this research I searched through CUP’s archives, such as they were. When I started this study, CUP’s archival documents were stored in several large unmarked filing cabinets, and even more unlabelled boxes. The material was not organized in any usable way—different types of documents from various years were thrown together in the same box or file drawer, nothing was in a discernable order and several of the filing cabinets were broken. Because of the nature of the CUP office—with CUP staff changing over each year—there was also no consistency to the types of documents that had been saved. Some years the staff had meticulously saved every scrap of paper that crossed through the office, some years almost all the documents had been just as meticulously purged so that almost no trace of the year’s events remained.

Once I organized the material so that I could use it, trying where possible to maintain the organization such as it was, I set about to review the material and search for clues to my thesis questions. I examined the CUP archives from the earliest materials available, until 1992, when CUP completely rewrote the Statement of Principles and the Code of Ethics, removing all traces of the “agent of social change” clause. The archives contained various materials including minutes and records of motions from plenary sessions, reports written by members and CUP staff, correspondence between CUP staff and from the member papers as well as other organizations, the newsletter called the *House Organ* as well as newsletters from the conferences and regional newsletters, style guides and other training materials, and of course, the news exchange. I searched not only for explicit references to the “agent of social change” clause, but also references to the role of the press, the role of CUP, the role of the student, the student movement, activism, and the specific events and topics that I had chosen to study, such as the October Crisis and CUP’s work with the women’s movement.

Because of the number of documents I have cited and the similarity of many of these documents' names, I chose to use the footnotes, rather than a parenthetical reference style. Additionally, I have not condensed any of the references, for the same reason. Although this is slightly more cumbersome, I believe it is ultimately less confusing.

One of the frustrations of history is that we cannot go back and tell our source what we would like them to provide or how we would like them to record and document that information. Because the CUP staff changes every year and perhaps also because of the nature of student organizations, there is little consistency from one year to the next in terms of how documents are formatted or indeed if they were kept at all. Page numbering, volume numbering, and dates are inconsistent, not only from year to year, but sometimes within a single document. The result of this for the purpose of this study is that some of the referencing may seem odd and inconsistent. The references given provide the full information available to me.

After combing through the archives I set out to interview key individuals involved with CUP. It was not possible to speak with everyone involved with CUP over the years, or even everyone who acted as president or national bureau chief. I had to select participants who could speak to the specific research topic, while being able to convey a degree of the complexity of the different opinions and beliefs held by the many individuals involved with CUP. For my participants I sought people who had been involved in CUP at key periods that related to my thesis questions. For example, because I could not find much record of debate surrounding the initial addition of the "agent of social change" clause in 1965, I wanted to speak with someone who was involved with CUP at that time. This led me to interview Don Sellar, who was elected president in 1965. In other instances the historical record was more complete, but I chose participants who could give insight into details that were not recorded. For example, in researching CUP's actions during the October Crisis I interviewed Jennifer Penney, Dorothy Wigmore, and Bob Parkins to hear about their personal roles in CUP's work at that time.

While not exhaustive, the archival and interview research brought to light the complexity of CUP and its history. While there is certainly more to be studied about the student press in Canada, I hope this thesis will bring CUP's work to attention and encourage more academics to research this rich field.

## Chapter One

### The Role of the Student Press in the 1950s and 1960s

#### Introduction

There are a number of factors that make CUP distinct from the mainstream press. In the period of 1965 through 1991, these factors came together in such a way that CUP became a politically engaged news group. At that time, CUP envisioned its major role as that of an agent of social change rather than a neutral and distant observer, a watchdog, or a public servant, as other news outlets had envisioned themselves. CUP's experiment as an agent of social change is an excellent case study of how a politically involved press can operate and the environment it requires to survive. For CUP, three factors came together to provide an environment that allowed it to act as an agent of social change. These were a freedom from commercial pressures, specifically those imposed by advertising sales and the need to make a profit, a politically active audience, and finally journalists who saw themselves as a part of the community they served rather than distant observers of outside events.

These three factors are not specific to CUP. The issues of commerce, community, and objectivity are ones that are discussed in almost every theory of the role of the press. David Mindich argues that rather than being a purely philosophical view of the role of the press, objectivity and detachment worked to encourage sales. He presents the idea of detachment specifically as "a sound business practice."<sup>1</sup> Several theorists have argued that when journalists see themselves as part of the community they serve and are more receptive to the needs of the community, the public in turn becomes more politically aware and involved. For example, Robert McChesney writes that the profit model and the organization of the media operate to maintain a class system that keeps the lower classes politically uninvolved and uninformed.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Merrit and Rosen have written that the public journalism movement will help public life by re-engaging citizens.<sup>3</sup> In examining CUP we have the opportunity to observe how a press organization outside of the profit model, with a politically active community of readers, and journalists who viewed themselves as members of that community, worked out its role as a politically engaged press. This chapter examines the factors and situations that led to the "agent of social change" clause being enshrined in

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<sup>1</sup> David T.Z. Mindich, *Just the Facts: How "Objectivity" Came to Define American Journalism* (New York: New York UP, 1998) 39.

<sup>2</sup> Robert McChesney, *Rich Media Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1999) 281.

<sup>3</sup> Davis (Buzz) Merrit and Jay Rosen, "Imaging Public Journalism: An Editor and Scholar Reflect on the Birth of an Idea," Roy W. Howard Public Lecture In Journalism and Mass Communication Research, School of Journalism Indiana University, Bloomington, 13 Apr. 1995.

CUP's Charter of the Student Press, how they differed from the previous documents and what effect these changes had on the organization and members. Jay Rosen has written, "Different times call for different journalisms—different replies to the standing question, what are journalists for?"<sup>4</sup> This chapter also examines what was different about this time for CUP journalists that it called for a different answer to the question, what are journalists for?

## The Canadian University Press

CUP was founded as a national news co-operative in 1938 at the National Federation of Canadian University Students (NFCUS) conference in Winnipeg. In part, a national union of student newspapers was seen by NFCUS as necessary in order to publicize information about its activities to students across the country. It was hoped that CUP would help spread information about student activities across the country and increase the belief that students had common interests nationally. NFCUS provided funding for the first two years of CUP's existence to help the group get off its feet, and gave financial assistance frequently after that.<sup>5</sup> However, by the sixties, NFCUS (renamed CUS) was facing some severe problems. In 1968 CUS lost 18 on-campus membership referenda and subsequently dissolved.<sup>6</sup> CUP however, was just heading into its heyday.

CUP is a co-operative, and makes almost all of its decisions through participatory democracy. Members vote on motions of policy each year at the national conference, usually held over the winter break.<sup>7</sup> Delegates participate in caucuses to discuss common interests with other members or other delegates, commissions to discuss and propose motions of policy, and plenary sessions where motions are debated and voted on. The conference is both a training session and a policy meeting. Virtually all of the organization's decisions for the year, from the budget to membership fees to staffing, are decided at the national conference. Members debate and vote on motions that affect every major decision of the organization. While constitutional decisions need a two-thirds majority, most motions require only a simple majority to pass. Each national conference includes two or three plenary sessions. The plenary sessions are long, heated, and sometimes tedious. According to Bob Parkins, field

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<sup>4</sup> Jay Rosen, *What Are Journalists for?* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999) 283.

<sup>5</sup> CUP, "Report on the Ryersonian Case," *Annual Fall Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1966) 14.

<sup>6</sup> Carl Wilson, ed. "Canadian University Press: A Chronology," *Canadian Student Press Styleguide* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) 262.

<sup>7</sup> Because many of the conference were held over the new year, with part of the plenary session taking place in one year and part in the next year, all plenary years referenced are the year in which the plenary started. For example, motions of the plenary that took place during the 1965-67 conference would be referred to as having happened in 1965. Many of the documents are referenced by CUP in their "CUP year." CUP years generally go from about May to April, rather than January to December. CUP years are numbered with 1938-39 being one. So, for example, 1965-66, the year that the Charter was changed to include the agent of social change clause, would be CUP 28.

secretary in 1968-69, the 1966-67 final plenary session was 23 hours long.<sup>8</sup> Most years a plenary pool is collected with delegates betting on how long the session will last.

Each member paper gets one vote, regardless of its size or number of delegates it brings to the conference. Motions are brought to the plenary floor either by members themselves or by a commission that has discussed the matter during the conference. Members elect commissioners from among the delegates at the conference. Commissioners are elected from “size category caucuses.” This allows small, medium, and large papers to have an equal number of representatives on commissions. The standing commissions were set in 1956 as wire service, finance, trophy, constitution, editorial, CUP paper, and others as created by a two-thirds vote of the membership.<sup>9</sup> However, commission names and topics have changed frequently over the years, often without any vote.

In its early years CUP was a loose organization of papers that shared news stories. Members would mail each other copies of their papers and reprint stories clipped from each other’s pages. Each year an “executive paper” was elected at the national conference to host the organization for the year and the conference the following year. The editor of the executive paper would become CUP’s de facto president. This meant that each year CUP’s offices moved across the country. Inevitably, this led to a great deal of disorganization and difficulty in keeping records. Additionally, it has meant that the historical record from this era is sketchy at best. There is almost no record of CUP’s operations before 1953, and very little until after 1958 in terms of the day-to-day activities of the organization.

As the organization grew, this set-up became unmanageable. In 1958 the membership created a full-time president position on a trial basis, and the following year established a permanent national office in Ottawa.<sup>10</sup> After that, the CUP president was elected for a one-year term as a full-time paid employee of CUP. As with all motions of policy, the president was elected at the annual national conference. Although election procedures changed somewhat from year to year, the process usually involved some informal campaigning by applicants, an interview in front of the entire membership, and then a vote. In later years, as the staff grew, members elected the other positions, such as field secretary, national vice president, and national bureau chief. In addition to the national executive, CUP members also elected a volunteer regional president each year at a regional conference. Although it is unclear when this started, by 1963 CUP was divided into four regions: Atlantic, or ARCUP; Québec, or CUPbeq; Ontario, or ORCUP; and Western, or WRCUP.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Bob Parkins, Telephone Interview, 5 May, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> CUP, *Nineteenth Annual Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1956) 34.

<sup>10</sup> CUP, “Motions Passed 1959,” *Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1959) n.pag.

<sup>11</sup> CUP, “National Executive,” *XXVI National Conference: 1963 Reports* (Ottawa: CUP, 1963) n.pag.

During the late-fifties and early-sixties, CUP also became much more formally organized in terms of its policies. In 1957, CUP adopted its Charter of the Student Press in Canada, which was modeled after the Charter passed by the International Student Press Conference the previous year.<sup>12</sup> The Charter focused on the necessity of freedom of expression in the “educational community in a democratic society.”<sup>13</sup> This focus on freedom of expression over other aspects of journalism may have come out of the unique set-up of the student press itself. At the time, all of the student newspapers in Canada were formally published by their students’ unions.<sup>14</sup> In other words, they were essentially government (albeit small-scale government) funded publications. The papers were in theory arms-length publications, or using the CUP terminology “editorially autonomous.” However, because the newspapers reported on the actions of the students’ unions, the publishers and editors frequently came into conflict. Through the sixties, CUP increasingly helped members deal with these conflicts and work towards financial autonomy from their students’ unions.

As the organization grew, the services grew as well. CUP sent out a weekly news service of stories from across the country. However, many papers, especially those in the western region, complained about the slow service. Because members sent their papers to CUP, which then compiled the most important stories and sent them back out to all members, much of the news was outdated and unusable by the time it reached the members.<sup>15</sup> According to John Kelsey, CUP field secretary in 1967-68, the newspapers “relied on CUP to be [their] news service, to give [them] information about what was going on in other campuses and [they] weren’t getting it.”<sup>16</sup> In 1967 the CUP national office bought a Gestetner machine and introduced a daily telex service to all members who had access to telex. According to Don Sellar, who was CUP president in 1966-67, these changes were a huge step forward for the organization, making it increasingly professional, and greatly improving the speed of the news service.<sup>17</sup> Following that trend, the next year CUP membership expanded the national staff to five people: the president, the vice-president, the field secretary or field worker, the national secretary or systems manager, and the bureau chief. The biggest change was the addition of the field secretary, who travelled across the country visiting each member paper. Bob Parkins, CUP’s field secretary in 1968-69, described the job as a “travelling journalism school.” In addition to teaching papers about

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<sup>12</sup> CUP, “Report on the Ryersonian Case,” *Annual Fall Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1966) 16.

<sup>13</sup> CUP, “The Charter of the Student Press in Canada,” *Twentieth Annual Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1957) n.pag.

<sup>14</sup> CUP, “Report on the Ryersonian Case,” *Annual Fall Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1966) 13.

<sup>15</sup> Don Sellar, Personal Interview, 20 Apr. 2004.

<sup>16</sup> John Kelsey, Telephone Interview, 25 May, 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Don Sellar, Personal Interview, 20 Apr. 2004.



writing, interviewing, layout and design, the field secretary helped the papers argue or organize protests against their students' unions where needed.<sup>18</sup>

CUP membership numbers went up and down over the years. In the late-fifties there were over twenty members in CUP across the country.<sup>19</sup> In 1962 the French-language student papers withdrew from CUP to form their own student news organization, Presse Étudiante Nationale (PEN). Through most of the sixties membership hovered between thirty and forty member papers across the country.<sup>20</sup> Membership fees were calculated on a sliding scale with papers from larger schools paying more than those from smaller schools. In 1966-67 fees were \$150 flat fee and an additional three and a half cents per student enrolled at the paper's university to a maximum fee of \$500. As CUP's services and staff increased, so did membership fees. Later, as more papers became financially autonomous from their students' unions CUP fees came to be based on the members' budgets rather than student enrollment at their universities.

By 1965, the year that the "agent of social change" clause was introduced to the Charter of the Student Press, CUP was a strongly organized co-operative with two full-time paid staff working out of the national office in Ottawa. Up until this point CUP had been working to become a stronger, more organized, and more professional news group modelled after a mainstream news service such as the Canadian Press. In fact, CUP even used the *CP Style Guide* for news service stories.<sup>21</sup> However, the idea of CUP's role and the role of the member papers on their campuses was about to change, along with many other aspects of campus life.

## A Time for Change

The role of the press as described in the 1963 Charter of the Student Press was "to assure that the students have a mode of communicating their ideas to other students and to the nation." It also instructed papers to "stimulate student thought and awareness of the problems and topics that affect students, the nation and the world."<sup>22</sup> In 1965, the Montréal papers, the *McGill Daily*, The Sir George Williams University *Georgian* and the Loyola College *Loyola News*, proposed extensive changes to the Charter. In a discussion paper presented at the national conference the papers wrote that over the previous few years the role of the student had been changing, and that this change demanded a change in the role of

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<sup>18</sup> Bob Parkins, Telephone Interview, 5 May, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> CUP, *Brief for Presentation to the Royal Commission on Publications* (Ottawa: CUP, 1960) n.pag.

<sup>20</sup> CUP, "Report on the Ryersonian Case," *Annual Fall Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1966) 14.

<sup>21</sup> CUP, "Wire Service," *Twentieth Annual Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1957) 6.

<sup>22</sup> CUP, "The Charter of the Student Press in Canada: Revised December 1963," *XXVI National Conference: 1963 Reports* (Ottawa: CUP, 1963) n.pag.

the student press. They saw “movements for social change” taking shape on campuses and finding outlets outside of the student press, which they accused of being directionless. “The student press must now redefine its role,” they wrote:

It is now time to go out and cut the grass. The Charter, and not the Code of Ethics, must be reactivated in such a way as to make it central to the fact of the student press. To make it central, it should combine both function and ideal until we reach a situation where function and ideal have become synthesized. The Charter, then should make as a priority the social responsibility of the student press to reflect and encourage the genuine social concerns of the student-citizen. It should give priority to the concept of the press as educator. It should invest the student press with the responsibility for being the initiator of new modes of thinking, in direct antithesis to its present role as a passer-on of stock truths. In other words, the Charter must provide for the student press a reason—in the deepest sense of that word—for continuing to exist. It does not do so now.<sup>23</sup>

The discussion paper clearly promoted a new role for the student press. Where the 1963 Charter talked about a press that stimulated student awareness, the Montréal papers talked about a press that encouraged students, and initiated, rather than merely reacting. While *The Daily, Georgian, and Loyola News* accused the student press of being “passers-on of stock truths” they saw a new role emerging where the student press would take responsibility and be a leader in the student movement. Despite these harsh criticisms, there seems to have been little debate on the two motions the *Daily* proposed to change the Charter of the Student Press. Don Sellar, who was elected president at that conference remembered no debate, and none is recorded.<sup>24</sup> The motions carried with 23 in favour, one against and one abstention.<sup>25</sup>

In keeping with the Montréal papers’ criticisms, the two motions dramatically changed the stated role of the student press. The first motion deleted the second paragraph of the Charter, which stated that, “the role of the student press is to assure that the students have a mode of communicating their ideas to other students and to the nation,”<sup>26</sup> and replaced it with the following: “that one of the major roles of the student press is to act as an agent of social change; that it should continually strive to emphasize the rights and responsibilities of the student as citizen, and use its freedom from commercial control to examine issues that the

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<sup>23</sup> CUP, “A Discussion Paper on The Charter of the Student Press in Canada,” *Working Papers 28th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1965) n.pag.

<sup>24</sup> Don Sellar, Personal Interview, 20 Apr. 2004.

<sup>25</sup> CUP, *Report: 28th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1965) Motion 10/C/65, 11/C/65.

<sup>26</sup> CUP, “The Charter of the Student Press in Canada: Revised December 1963,” *XXVI National Conference: 1963 Reports* (Ottawa: CUP, 1963) n.pag.

professional press avoids.”<sup>27</sup> The second motion added a fifth paragraph to the first section of the Charter stating, “that the Canadian Student Press should incorporate as its primary purpose an educative function which is vital to the development of the student-citizen.”<sup>28</sup>

These changes involved several ideas that would be very important to CUP’s development over the next decades. Key among them was the idea of the press being “an agent of social change.” In seeing themselves as “agents of social change” rather than merely a “mode of communication” CUP members took a step in the direction of a politically involved press, and away from the traditions of an objective, detached, and neutral press. The 1965 Charter also formalized the idea that students were citizens of the university community, and as such had the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. CUP members began to see themselves as part of something larger than student newspapers that just reported on campus activities. They began to see themselves as an integral part of the student movement. Finally, the 1965 Charter emphasized the idea that CUP and its members were an alternative to the mainstream press, of which they had been quite critical in the past.

Although the 1965 Charter promoted a view of the press as more engaged and less objective, the Code of Ethics at the time seemed to contradict this idea. The 1965 Code opened by stating, “the student journalist should strive continually to be unbiased and accurate in his reports.”<sup>29</sup> However, in 1967, in keeping with the changes to the Charter, the word “unbiased” was replaced with “fair.”<sup>30</sup> In describing the change, the writer of the conference report wrote, “The changing of the word ‘unbiased’ for ‘fair’...[was] in the opinion of the delegates [a] realistic adjustment which describes the present situation.”<sup>31</sup> This suggests that the change reflected a growing concern of CUP members with the idea and practice of objective reporting.

Although the “agent of social change” clause was instituted in 1965, it seems to have taken most CUP members, and CUP staff another couple of years before the concept came to maturity. As stated previously, the emphasis in the early- and mid-sixties was on increasing and improving CUP services. As Kelsey stated, “What we did think was that student politics was hamstrung and stymied without information. We needed to know what was going on on other campuses. We needed to know what the issues were.”<sup>32</sup> Without the improvement in services of the telex system and the creation of the field worker position CUP did not have the capacity to spread any type of information about the student movement, let alone

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<sup>27</sup> CUP, *Report: 28th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1965) Motion 10/C/65.

<sup>28</sup> CUP, *Report: 28th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1965) Motion 11/C/65.

<sup>29</sup> CUP, “Code of Ethics of the Canadian University Press,” *Report: 28th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1965) n.pag.

<sup>30</sup> CUP, “Code of Ethics for the Canadian University Press,” *National Conference Report 30* (Ottawa: CUP, 1967) 11.

<sup>31</sup> CUP, “Legislation Report,” *National Conference Report 30* (Ottawa: CUP, 1967) n.pag.

<sup>32</sup> John Kelsey, Telephone Interview, 25 May, 2004.

mobilizing information. However, by 1968, with the telex system and the field secretary in place, CUP and many of its members were ready to act as agents of social change, even if that mission was a bit vague. In 1968 the Charter was amended again to emphasize the politically engaged role of the student press. The Charter also got a new name, the Statement of Principles of the Student Press in Canada. The changed portion of the 1968 Statement of Principles read:

That the major role of the student press is to act as an agent of social change, striving to emphasize the rights and responsibilities of the student citizen; that the student press must in fulfilling this role perform both an educative and active function and support groups serving as agents of social change; That the student press must present local, national and international news fairly, and interpret ideas and events to the best of its ability; That the student press must use its freedom from commercial and other controls to ensure that all it does is consistent with its major role and to examine issues which other media avoid.<sup>33</sup>

The motion passed with only one member opposed and one abstention, and again, there was very little debate. In fact, the writer of the conference report seems quite disappointed by the lack of debate on the motion: “The revised version of the Charter of the Student Press (now entitled Statement of Principles) had been intended to stimulate some sort of debate, which it didn’t. When the Statement was drafted, changes in it were intended to reflect the growing activism of Canadian student newspapers.”<sup>34</sup> In four years CUP’s members had gone from stating that their role was to be simply “a mode of communicating” student ideas, to being “agents of social change.” The papers were moving from being campus boosters, or bulletin boards of student activities, to being engaged with and in the student movement. While in some ways it was quite clearly a massive reconceptualization, in some ways CUP and its members had always been more actively engaged with students than many news outlets are with their readers.

### **The Role of CUP and the Student Press before “agent of social change”**

Before 1965, the main thrust of the Charter of the Student Press in Canada was the importance of maintaining the freedom of expression of the student press. Like many other press organizations, CUP condemned the actions of groups that violated the principles of freedom of the press, specifically the freedoms of its members. The members routinely passed motions, at both regional and national conferences, censuring those students’ unions

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<sup>33</sup> CUP, “Standing Resolutions,” *31st National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1968) 31.

<sup>34</sup> CUP, *31st National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1968) 4.

and university administrations that violated the freedom of the press as set out in the Charter of the Student Press in Canada. For example, in a letter to the Reverend Louis-Albert Vachon, Rector of Laval University, Fred Fletcher, editor in chief of the University of British Columbia *Ubysey*, mentioned a Western Region CUP (WRCUP) motion condemning Laval University administration for expelling three editors of the student paper *Le Carabin*.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, in 1965 CUP censured the Students' Representative Council of the University of Saskatchewan for firing the editor of the *Carillon*.<sup>36</sup> The idea stated by Dr. D.M. Hayne in his opening address to the CUP conference in 1956, that student newspapers, "are exempt from financial preoccupations, [and] have no definite point of view imposed on them,"<sup>37</sup> was more a statement of ideals than practice. In many cases student union ownership, not to mention the influence of the university administration, was quite restrictive both editorially and financially. As Barbara Sullivan wrote in her report on the student press for the Davey Commission, "In the legal area, students are under more pressure than their commercial counterparts since they are subject to action by bodies other than the courts."<sup>38</sup> The second section of CUP's 1963 Charter of the Student Press in Canada and the 1965 and 1968 rewrites set out some of the various ways that freedom of the student press had been abridged:

by suspension, expulsion or threat of similar action, and/or confiscation of issues of the student newspapers because of the publishing or proposed publishing of matters which faculty or administrative authorities consider uncomplimentary or critical of the institution...by financial pressure used to limit or retaliate against editorial policy...by excessive social pressure and by informal pressures, such as commentary intended to be a threat, used to prevent publication of particular issues, opinions, or articles.<sup>39</sup>

Censorship, or threat of it, was something that almost all CUP members faced from their students unions and administrations. In fact, for many papers, self-censorship was a matter of policy.

Student newspapers were viewed by the university administration and the students' union executives as bulletin boards for the campus, or as boosters for the university

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<sup>35</sup> Fred Fletcher, "Letter to Right Reverend Louis-Albert Vachon," *Canadian University Press Working Papers 1960* (Ottawa: CUP, 1960) n.pag.

<sup>36</sup> CUP, *Report: 28th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1965) Motion 13/C/65.

<sup>37</sup> D.M. Hayne, "The Role of the University Newspapers in Canada," *Nineteenth Annual Conference Canadian University Press* (Ottawa: CUP, 1956) 13.

<sup>38</sup> Barbara Sullivan, "The Student Press in Canada," *Mass Media: Good, Bad, or Simply Inevitable? Research Studies for the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media* vol. 3 Special Senate Committee on Mass Media (Ottawa: Thorn Press, 1976) 268.

<sup>39</sup> CUP, "The Charter of the Student Press in Canada," *XXVI National Conference 1963 Reports* (Ottawa: CUP, 1963) n.pag.

community. The role of the student newspaper, as seen by the unions and administration, was to promote student activities and participation in campus events. This is demonstrated in the 1963 contract for the University of Toronto *Varsity* editor, held by the Students' Administrative Council, which read, "The Editor and his staff should remember that as students of this University, they owe loyalty to its traditions, reputation and future development, and that their policy should evidence a desire to stimulate such loyalty...it must form its policy to suit its own unique circumstances."<sup>40</sup>

The Charter of the Student Press, however, shows that CUP's member newspapers were in favour of freedom of the press from all external pressures, including those imposed by publishers. Specifically, the clause stating that freedom of the press had been abridged by "censorship of articles and/or editorial comment by faculty, civil or administrative authorities, or the student government so that the student newspaper tended to become an organ of the institution or an instrument of the student government" points to the tensions between the role of the press as seen by the student government and that seen by the newspapers themselves.<sup>41</sup> CUP promoted the idea that only the student journalists and editors should decide newspaper policy.

These motions, where members took a stand against interference in the student press, show how CUP worked as many other press organizations do in supporting the freedom of the press. However, on a few occasions CUP also took stands on issues that affected the editorial policy of members, promoting a specific point of view on certain subjects. In this way CUP began to become politically involved in the content of member papers and members became involved in setting the editorial policy of the organization. This was indicative of a move towards the idea of acting as an agent of social change. However, several members strongly objected to what seemed to them to be an imposed editorial policy.

Until the "agent of social change" clause was adopted, motions that touched on members' editorial policy were usually carefully worded to ensure that members always had the option not to participate. For example, in 1953 CUP members passed several motions dealing with members' editorial policy, such as a motion stating, "the national conference of the Canadian University Press urges that member papers take an editorial stand against racial discrimination in all campus organizations, including Greek letter societies."<sup>42</sup> Another motion passed the same year stated that, "the student editors [should] undertake the job of bringing the facts about the National Federation of Canadian University Student to the

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<sup>40</sup> CUP "Contract Between the Editor-in-Chief of the *Varsity* and the Students' Administrative Council," *XXVI National Conference 1963 Working Papers* (Ottawa: CUP, 1963) n.pag.

<sup>41</sup> CUP, "The Charter of the Student Press in Canada," *XXVI National Conference 1963 Reports* (Ottawa: CUP, 1963) n.pag.

<sup>42</sup> CUP, "Report of the Committee on Editorial Policy," *Sixteenth Annual Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1953) 43, Resolution 9.

students at their universities, and should present an opinion on the matter.”<sup>43</sup> Even though both motions were passed unanimously, the “Report of the Committee on Editorial Policy” made it clear that all such resolutions were made “in light of the principle that...the individual sovereignty of each member paper should be recognized and that student editors must be free to determine their own editorial policy, regardless of any resolutions adopted by this conference.”<sup>44</sup> Other motions passed the same year included a recommendation to members to “rouse student interest in favour of the Canada Council and the National Scholarship Scheme,”<sup>45</sup> a motion that editors inform students about NFCUS and “present an opinion on the matter,”<sup>46</sup> and that CUP urge “Premier Duplessis to reconsider his stand on federal aid to universities in Québec.”<sup>47</sup> These motions all clearly state opinions, or, in the case of resolution 12 dealing with NFCUS, urge editors to express their own opinions.

While such motions before 1965 were in some ways related to social change, there is a critical difference in terms of policy. Before the “agent of social change” clause was adopted, the members ruled on each instance separately, declaring whether or not the organization would take a stand on a particular issue rather than stating that, as a matter of policy, CUP would work toward progressive social change in every case. From the above examples it can also be seen that before the “agent of social change” clause was added to the Charter CUP’s focus on actions of social change was much more closely related to the campus and issues surrounding student politics such as the freedom of the student press, organization of NFCUS, and federal education funding. The “agent of social change” clause was reflective of members starting to see themselves as much more politically involved in not only student politics, but a spectrum of issues that affected the “student citizen.” In the fifties and early-sixties, however, there was still a strong resistance to the idea of a politically engaged press at many of the student newspapers.

For example, in 1961, the Queen’s University *Journal* and *The Ubyyssey* formally withdrew from the conference, although ultimately not from the organization. The dispute was over the issue of CUP imposing editorial policy on members, or as they wrote, “acting as a body upon a matter of editorial opinion.”<sup>48</sup> *The Journal*, *The Ubyyssey* and *The Varsity* wanted to change the constitution so that motions that affected the editorial policy of

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<sup>43</sup> CUP, “Report of the Committee on Editorial Policy,” *Sixteenth Annual Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1953) 44, Resolution 12.

<sup>44</sup> CUP, “Report of the Committee on Editorial Policy,” *Sixteenth Annual Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1953) 43.

<sup>45</sup> CUP, “Report of the Committee on Editorial Policy,” *Sixteenth Annual Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1953) 43, Resolution 11.

<sup>46</sup> CUP, “Report of the Committee on Editorial Policy,” *Sixteenth Annual Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1953) 44, Resolution 12

<sup>47</sup> CUP, “Report of the Committee on Editorial Policy,” *Sixteenth Annual Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1953) 45, Resolution 16.

<sup>48</sup> David Hill and F.J. Fletcher, “Special Report: re. Conference Withdrawals,” *XXIV National Conference, 1961 Canadian University Press* (Ottawa: CUP, 1961) n.pag.

members could not pass without unanimous support of the membership. As the delegate from *The Varsity* wrote, “no other press association—CP, AP, UPI, Reuters—makes any editorial pronouncements whatsoever.”<sup>49</sup> Despite this protest of three of the largest papers in CUP, over the next few years the organization would come to make an increasing number of motions about editorial policy and the role of the press. Even the renaming of the Charter of the Student Press to the Statement of Principles suggests a greater unity of the members in terms of editorial policy. It was not so much that members began to accept CUP dictating editorial policy, rather that they began to see the co-operative as a body that could work together to encourage a common ideal of the student press. However, it was not without debate that CUP and its members moved towards a more politically engaged role of the press.

### **Debates on the Role of the Press**

The sixties were a transition period for CUP and its member papers. The papers moved from the role of campus “boosters,” to the role of politically active newspapers, often reporting on negative aspects of the students’ unions and university administration. While some of the larger papers had already been working in this vein, it became the norm. As Sullivan has written, “An examination of the student press during the sixties [indicated] a gradual shift in emphasis—a shift paralleled in the student movement of the decade. In the late fifties and early sixties, the student press was a soft, unconcerned medium, self-satisfied.” Sullivan describes the student press of the fifties as complacent, but not thoughtless.<sup>50</sup> However, as students and CUP member papers became increasingly political on their campuses, so did CUP.

There was also a shift in CUP’s relationship to the mainstream press. In the early-sixties CUP had a fairly amicable relationship with the mainstream press. Journalists from commercial dailies judged CUP’s many writing competitions, each of which had a trophy donated by a commercial paper. Each year until 1969 the organization elected an honorary president from the professional press, the last one being the young Peter Gzowski. Also, many student journalists worked at commercial daily newspapers on weekends or on their summer break and brought what they learned back to the student newsrooms.<sup>51</sup> At the time,

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<sup>49</sup> Ed Roberts, “Special Report: re. Conference Withdrawals,” *XXIV National Conference, 1961 Canadian University Press*, (Ottawa: CUP, 1961) n.pag.

<sup>50</sup> Barbara Sullivan, “The Student Press in Canada,” *Mass Media: Good, Bad, or Simply Inevitable? Research Studies for the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media* vol. 3 Special Senate Committee on Mass Media (Ottawa: Thorn Press, 1976) 242.

<sup>51</sup> John Kelsey, Telephone Interview, 25 May, 2004.



CUP and its members were modeled on the mainstream press in many ways and shared similar goals and practices.

The model CUP members followed was an idealized version of mainstream commercial journalism. In fact, CUP and its members were so strongly committed to the ideals of traditional journalism, especially objective coverage, that on several occasions they criticized the mainstream media for their failure to maintain “ethical standards generally accepted and adhered to by the press of Canada.” In 1957, CUP passed a motion that members “make an honest and fearless effort to criticize before the general public... any practices of the metropolitan press which they feel is not in keeping with journalistic standards as generally recognized by the CUP.”<sup>52</sup> While specific papers were not mentioned in the motion or the discussion, there seems to have been a feeling at the time that commercial newspaper journalism was becoming unethical. The motion suggests that CUP saw itself as a watchdog of the accepted ethical standards of the press. This idea is strengthened in a report from the Western regional conference about the “reluctance of university students to enter the field of newspaper journalism in Canada.” The report states that one of the reasons for this reluctance was that, “the low standards and unfair practices employed by many Canadian metropolitan daily newspapers which run contrary to the ideals of journalism and its place in our society.” The “unfair practices” identified in the report include the presentation of facts out of context, biased, slanted and emotional writing, and the presentation of only one side of important issues.<sup>53</sup> In its criticisms of the media in the 1950s, CUP attempted to uphold and enforce traditional ideas of journalistic ethics and practice. These motions show how important the idea of objectivity was to CUP and its members at this time.

Through its early years, CUP and its members worked in what David Paul Nord has called the “fact model” of journalism.<sup>54</sup> Their role was to accurately and objectively report the news of the day in order to “increase students’ knowledge of Canada as a whole, and in special [sic], their knowledge of students, and student activities in their section of the nation.”<sup>55</sup> According to Ken Drushka and Douglas Ward, writers of a 1964 CUP working paper on the student press and student government, a good student paper was one that was “responsible to the canons of journalism, that provides complete, objective and relevant news coverage, that presents informed opinion and which allows for some expression of minority

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<sup>52</sup> CUP, “Wire Service Committee Report,” *Twentieth Annual Conference*. (Ottawa: CUP, 1957) 40.

<sup>53</sup> CUP, “Appendix I: Report from the WRCUP Conference on the Reluctance of University Students to Enter the Field of Newspaper Journalism in Canada,” *Twentieth Annual Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1957) 50.

<sup>54</sup> David Paul Nord, *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2001) 7.

<sup>55</sup> CUP, “Constitution of Canadian University Press,” *Motions* (Ottawa: CUP, 1959) n.pag.

opinion.”<sup>56</sup> It is a fairly traditional view of the role of the press, one that does not allow for much engagement with the political movements that were about to sweep through the university campuses.

As long as there has been a press, it has been criticized as being deeply flawed, lacking in credibility, and being undemocratic. In 1944 the American Commission on Freedom of the Press was convened at the University of Chicago to study the threats to the freedom of the press. The Commission’s 1947 report is seen by some as “the chief source of the idea that has dominated discussion of journalism ethics for the past [55] years—the concept of the social responsibility of the press.”<sup>57</sup> Fifty years after the Commission’s report the Committee of Concerned Journalists, led by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, would again examine the role of the press and come to a similar conclusion—the role of the press is to serve society, to build community and encourage democracy. According to Kovach and Rosenstiel, “the purpose of journalism is to provide people with the information they need to be self-governing.”<sup>58</sup>

The idea of the social responsibility of the press is one of the key concepts behind CUP’s “agent of social change” clause. For CUP members, many of whom were fighting to get control of their papers from their student governments, the responsibility of the student press was to voice the student citizens’ “rights and responsibilities.”<sup>59</sup> CUP members felt that they not only had the power, but the responsibility to their fellow students, as well as other members of their community, to fight for progressive social change. The Davey Commission described CUP’s approach as the “Soviet view of journalism—that all observed experience must be interpreted in the light of Marxist-Leninist theory.”<sup>60</sup> While CUP members did not explicitly define the type of social change they wanted to work toward until much later, there was a sense that the membership was working towards a socialist, even Marxist, idea of social change. This idea is supported by the membership’s work to put the entire process of newspaper production in the hands of the journalists, and in support of unions as well as other liberation movements such as the women’s rights and gay rights movements.

The later Statement of Purposes for the National News Service, which was created out of the Statement of Principles, would state more explicitly that CUP “must also use its

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<sup>56</sup> Ken Drushka and Douglas Ward, “Report: The Student Press and Student Government,” *Working Papers: 27th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1964) n.pag.

<sup>57</sup> Edmund B. Lambeth, *Committed Journalism: An Ethic for the Profession* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992) 6.

<sup>58</sup> Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001) 12.

<sup>59</sup> CUP, “The Charter of the Student Press in Canada,” *Report: 28th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1965) n.pag.

<sup>60</sup> Special Senate Committee on Mass Media, *Mass Media: The Uncertain Mirror Report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media* vol. 1 Special Senate Committee on Mass Media (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer for Canada, 1970) 187.

national news service to provide Canadian students with information and analysis of the capitalist economic system in which we all live, and to assist students in mobilizing against that system where it is found to be preserving the class structure or to be oppressive to women, minorities or others within Canada.”<sup>61</sup> Where the Statement of Principles was vague, the Statement of Purposes for the National News Service was very explicit—CUP would be an agent of social change towards a more progressive, even socialist, economic and social structure.

By the mid-sixties many in CUP were noticing a growing politicization in the student body. A report on changes to the structure of CUP written in 1963 identified this change, stating, “We are all aware that the Canadian student world is in a state of flux. Many students are beginning to realize that they can have some influence on the world around them, on both a campus and an external political level.”<sup>62</sup> Two years later, a working paper about new sessions on the role of the press that had been added to the conference schedule noted, “In the past three years a significant transformation has taken place in the English Canadian student press... Beginning in Vancouver two years ago, some delegates began asking serious questions, not only about the nature and function of CUP, but also about the nature of Canadian journalism.”<sup>63</sup> CUP members were beginning to question the role of the press and their work in it.

At the same time, a changing view of what it meant to be a student was also affecting the role of the student press. This was noted in *The Daily, Georgian, and Loyola News*’ 1965 discussion paper on the Charter of the Student Press. “Over the last few years there has been an attempt to redefine the student,” the paper stated. “The crisis in higher education in Canada, the movement for democratization of university structures, the quest for participatory democracy by young people all over the world have forced students toward a new kind of self-conceptualization.”<sup>64</sup> These new students required a new student press, one that would be active in helping them define themselves as student citizens and be a leader in changing the system. As Bill Miller, editor of the University of Alberta *Gateway* in 1966 wrote in a report on the relationship between students’ councils and newspapers, “The student newspaper and student government [were] realizing that they [could] be a vital force in the eradication of society’s abuses and in the promotion of a new social order.”<sup>65</sup> As a vital

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<sup>61</sup> CUP, “Services Report,” *CUP 38 National Conference 38 1/2 Special Plenary Session* (Ottawa: CUP, 1975) 38.

<sup>62</sup> CUP, “Report of the Proposed Changes in the Structure of Canadian University Press,” *XXVI National Conference: 1963 Reports* (Ottawa: CUP, 1963) n.pag.

<sup>63</sup> CUP, “Seminar Sessions,” *Working Papers 28th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1965) n.pag.

<sup>64</sup> CUP, “A Discussion Paper on The Charter of the Student Press in Canada,” *Working Papers 28th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1965) n.pag.

<sup>65</sup> Bill Miller, “Council-Newspaper Relations,” *Annual Fall Report September, 1966* (Ottawa: CUP, 1966) 82.

force, CUP members increasingly took on the active role that the 1968 Statement of Principles encouraged.

For some members being an agent of social change was a joke, something that was in the Principles, but that they ignored either because it was too political or because they just did not have the time between putting out newspapers to figure out what it meant. Some viewed it as too vague to be meaningful. However, for the majority of members, being an agent of social change was at least a worthy goal. Some members acted as agents of social change by organizing protests and demonstrations, such as the US border march organized by *The Loyola News* to protest the Amchitka bomb test in 1971.<sup>66</sup> Others covered demonstrations “from within and without” noted an article about journalists’ legal rights in the 1969 *House Organ*.<sup>67</sup> CUP journalists had thought enough about potential legal problems that in 1971 the membership passed a motion giving the national office the power to “post bail for the national executive at their discretion when necessary.”<sup>68</sup> Although there is no record of this power having yet been used, this awkwardly worded motion is of interest in that it seems to assume both that it is almost inevitable that a member of the CUP national executive will be arrested, and that the remaining executive would be so policy-minded as to check the constitution before deciding to bail out a colleague.

Over the next decade, CUP and its members became increasingly involved with the student movement as well as other movements for social change. As Sullivan wrote, “the focus of attention of the student press [was] no longer sport activity, campus queens, and freshmen hazing—as it tended to be in the late fifties. Rather the attention [was] directed to the wider community and the social system of which the university is a part.”<sup>69</sup> However, while CUP’s political activity and move towards becoming a politically engaged press can be seen as a reflection of these larger movements, it was also an action of these larger movements. The student press not only reported on the movements and gave them a forum, but it was also actively involved in social change through political engagement as well as changes to the structure and role of the student press itself.

### **The Great Objectivity Debate**

One of the first internal changes CUP made as a result of the “agent of social change” clause was the 1967 amendment of the Code of Ethics to replace the word “unbiased” with

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<sup>66</sup> CUP, *House Organ* 13 Sept. 1971: 4.

<sup>67</sup> CUP, “Press Heads Get Smashed Too,” *House Organ* 30 May 1969: n.pag.

<sup>68</sup> CUP, *34<sup>th</sup> National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1971) 15, Motion NB/5/71.

<sup>69</sup> Barbara Sullivan, “The Student Press in Canada,” *Mass Media: Good, Bad, or Simply Inevitable? Research Studies for the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media* vol. 3 Special Senate Committee on Mass Media (Ottawa: Thorn Press, 1976) 248.

the word “fair.” Before that, the Charter and the Code had seemed to contradict one another. The “agent of social change” clause encouraged members to be increasingly active in their role as journalists, to make choices that would produce social change, however vague a mandate that was. Implicit in this statement was the idea that journalists must have and voice opinions, take personal stands on the issues they reported and work towards the type of change that would benefit students and other groups whose causes were not served by the commercial press. Yet, the 1965 Charter also stated that “for the student press to fulfill this role it must...present news fairly and without bias,”<sup>70</sup> a statement reinforced in the Code of Ethics of the Canadian University Press, which opened with the statement, “The student journalist should strive continually to be unbiased and accurate in his reports.”<sup>71</sup> What explains these seeming contradictions? Why did CUP members seem to promote an ideal of political involvement on the one hand and objective reporting on the other? At their root, these questions raise problems with the goals and practices of objective reporting. To understand some of the issues CUP and its members were grappling with, it is necessary to examine the history of objective journalism.

Before the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, it was partisan politics rather than objective neutral reporting that was the tradition for most North American newspapers. Various reasons have been theorized for the change to an objective and detached style of journalism. However, the most convincing argument is that objectivity arose out of a need to increase the credibility and mass appeal of the newspapers and that this was encouraged by a larger financial incentive to be gained from commercial advertising over political patronage.<sup>72</sup> For CUP members, which were mostly subsidized by the students’ unions and made little money from advertising, the reason to use an objective style of reporting is more likely related to their close relationship with the mainstream commercial press and the hegemonic dominance of the style at the time. Objectivity was seen to be the best and more importantly the most honest way of reporting the news.

Objectivity and the rituals of objective reporting gave journalism a new credibility by proposing that journalists no longer worked in the interest of politicians, but solely in the public interest. Journalists were seen to be messengers or impartial observers, working only in the interests of the public good. As Kaplan writes, “newspapers elaborated a new occupational ethic and reconstructed their political role in the public arena. The press, journalists pledged, would be governed by only a rigorous ethic of impartiality and public

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<sup>70</sup> CUP, “The Charter of the Student Press in Canada,” *Report: 28th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1965) n.pag.

<sup>71</sup> CUP, “Code of Ethics of the Canadian University Press,” *Report: 28th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1965) n.pag.

<sup>72</sup> Jeremy Iggers, *Good News, Bad News: Journalism Ethics and the Public Interest* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998) 92.

service.”<sup>73</sup> This is the very idea of the news as “just the facts.” However, objectivity was not just a point of view, it was a method of writing and reporting, the rules of which were set out to maximize the appearance of neutrality.

Even the dominant narrative structure of the news—the famous ‘inverted pyramid’ format with its summary lead paragraph—pointed to this independent and flexible posture of the press... Brute particular facts (the classical ‘who, why, what, when and where’ of journalism school), not overarching theories or social concerns, supposedly determined the make-up of the front page.<sup>74</sup>

Objectivity became a functional part of the traditions of journalistic practice as well as its guiding philosophy. The form and content worked together not only to help maintain objectivity, but to maintain what Gaye Tuchman has called the “rituals of objectivity.” Objectivity became a series of rituals practiced by journalists involving interviewing opposing sides of an issue, quoting official sources and overcoming, or hiding, the journalists’ own biases, and presenting the facts and the facts only for the readers to interpret for themselves. As Denis McQuail has written, objectivity also offered “easily employed guidelines for selection [of news] and [left] the responsibility for content to sources, freeing reporters from the need to acquire expert knowledge.”<sup>75</sup> Further, Robert Hackett has pointed out, “objectivity is not a single, unitary ethic.” Hackett cites a study that found four possible meanings of objectivity that journalists supported: “1) negation of journalists’ subjectivity, 2) fair representation of each side in a controversy, 3) balanced skepticism towards all sides in a dispute and 4) the search for ‘hard facts’ with which to contextualize a dispute.”<sup>76</sup>

However, the idea of journalistic objectivity creates several problems. Among these is that, as Hackett has written, “at some level, even the most objective journalism privileges some values and interests over others, even if it does not explicitly advocate them.”<sup>77</sup> The practice of objectivity leaves several questions unanswered. For example, if the news is just the facts, who gets to pick which facts are the news and which are not? What makes some facts more important than others? More importantly, how is the reader to interpret the facts?

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<sup>73</sup> Richard L. Kaplan, *Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865-1920* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2002) 2.

<sup>74</sup> Richard L. Kaplan, *Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865-1920* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2002) 192.

<sup>75</sup> Denis McQuail, *Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public Interest* (London: Sage, 1992) 185.

<sup>76</sup> Robert Hackett, “An Exaggerated Death: Prefatory Comments on ‘Objectivity’ in Journalism,” *Deadlines and Diversity: Journalism Ethics in a Changing World* eds. Valerie Alia, Brian Brennan and Barry Hoffmaster (Halifax: Fernwood, 1996) 42.

<sup>77</sup> Robert Hackett, “An Exaggerated Death: Prefatory Comments on ‘Objectivity’ in Journalism,” *Deadlines and Diversity: Journalism Ethics in a Changing World* eds. Valerie Alia, Brian Brennan and Barry Hoffmaster (Halifax: Fernwood, 1996) 40.

And finally, even if it is possible for reporters to get past their conscious biases and those of their sources, is it possible for reporters to filter out their unconscious biases? Increasingly, these questions would become problematic for many journalists and media critics.

With its move to replace the term “unbiased” with “fair,” CUP was at the vanguard of a shift in thinking about the possibilities of objective reporting. The backlash against objectivity seems to have started in the 1960s. According to Philip Gaunt, during the early-1960s, “‘objectively’ reported news proved misleading, objectivity became suspect.”<sup>78</sup> Through the Vietnam War it became increasingly obvious, especially to students involved in political movements, that the rituals of objective reporting could be used as a mask to hide responsibility. As Jeremy Iggers writes, the journalists’ statement that they don’t make the news they just report it, “functions implicitly—and frequently explicitly—as a denial of responsibility.”<sup>79</sup> Also, objectivity promoted the view that stories were “balanced” if two opposing arguments were presented. This simplistic binary opposition of commentary succeeded in shutting out many voices, as well as presenting arguments even in situations where there was mostly consensus.

For Iggers, these are some of the fundamental flaws of the theory of objective journalism: “it fails to acknowledge both the active role that journalists play in making the news and the increasingly central role that the news media play as social institutions.”<sup>80</sup> Similarly, for proponents of public journalism, objectivity came at the price of understanding and engaging with the community.<sup>81</sup> In presenting themselves as neutral, journalists set themselves apart from the community and were therefore less concerned with the issues that mattered to their readers.

For CUP members there was never a possibility of setting themselves apart from their community of readers. The student press is, by definition part of its own community. Since volunteers run campus papers, the student press audience has the opportunity to become part of the process of news production. However, what changed for CUP members during the sixties was a reconceptualization of what the student community was, who students were and what they were capable of. The idea of students as citizens who needed to be awakened to their responsibilities and rights was a new one. While in some ways the student press had always been an active part of its community in the sense of welcoming virtually any community member to write and be involved in the process of producing the news, the 1965

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<sup>78</sup> Philip Gaunt, *Choosing the News* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1990) 24.

<sup>79</sup> Jeremy Iggers, *Good News, Bad News: Journalism Ethics and the Public Interest* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998) 109.

<sup>80</sup> Jeremy Iggers, *Good News, Bad News: Journalism Ethics and the Public Interest* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998) 111.

<sup>81</sup> John Miller, *Yesterday's News: Why Canada's Daily Newspapers are Failing Us* (Halifax: Fernwood, 1998) 3.

and 1968 changes to the Charter and Statement of Principles addressed a fundamental shift in the way the student press viewed its audience and itself. It was clear to many of CUP's members that the traditions of objective reporting no longer completely fit with what they were trying to do. "The [*Ubysey's*] directors, frustrated with emulating an establishment-serving, soul-less professional press, began to wrestle with a new definition of the news," Danny Stoffman, editor of *The Ubysey* in 1967, wrote in the November 3 *House Organ*.

It was felt that there was more to news than just the surface events to which we and most other papers were devoted... The idea was to go after the neglected member of the famous who-what-when-where-why fivesome. The orphan, needless to say, was WHY. In properly answering WHY, a reporter must cease to act merely as a recorder—he must become involved with the story as a human being.<sup>82</sup>

Being involved as a human being was what acting as an agent of social change required. Stoffman also points to another important aspect of CUP's new role. In focusing on the why questions, CUP members became more analytical in their reporting. But they did not turn away from the concept of journalism, only refocus it.

CUP did not promote the idea of the press as a propaganda mill for social movements. While the members did take the term "unbiased" out of the Code of Ethics and the Statement of Principles, they replaced it with the term "fair," indicating that they maintained a sense of the necessity of honest reporting. While Hackett has argued that the term fair in the place of the objective or unbiased is "simply old wine in new rhetorical bottles and has not led to new journalistic practices,"<sup>83</sup> coupled with the change of focus in CUP's role, it does seem to have indicated a shift in practice. Because fairness is in itself a subjective measure, it is a particularly fitting, if no less problematic term. In changing the wording of the Code of Ethics and Statement of Principles CUP members pointed not only to the problematic issues surrounding objectivity, but also to the necessity to maintain credibility and not distort the truth or mislead readers. What CUP seemed to be aiming for was a best-of-both-worlds situation. With the "agent of social change" clause CUP members tried to engage with the student citizens their papers served, set the news agenda independently of official sources and take responsibility for their work. At the same time, with the requirement to write fairly, CUP members seemed to try to maintain the credibility that objectivity can give the press.

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<sup>82</sup> Danny Stoffman. "On Changing a Newspaper," *House Organ* 3 Nov. 1967: n.pag.

<sup>83</sup> Robert Hackett, "An Exaggerated Death: Prefatory Comments on 'Objectivity' in Journalism," *Deadlines and Diversity: Journalism Ethics in a Changing World* eds. Valerie Alia, Brian Brennan and Barry Hoffmaster (Halifax: Fernwood, 1996) 42.



## Conclusion

Throughout the sixties the three factors of freedom from commercial pressures, a politically active audience, and journalists who saw themselves as a part of the community they served came to affect CUP and its members to an increasing degree. The organization and its members became more politically engaged and active, and started towards a larger project of altering the structures of reporting, decision-making, and community action for the student press. These three aspects of the student press in Canada in the sixties provided an environment for a press that acted as an agent of social change.

Although the 1965 changes to the Charter formally introduced the “agent of social change” clause, it was not for a couple of years that CUP and its members really began acting out their new role. In some ways it is ironic that the organization’s focus on professionalizing through increasing the national staff, focusing on better service and field working with members helped the members with the harder work of becoming agents of social change.<sup>84</sup> Without the increased service from CUP and especially the field secretary helping with coverage and the vice president providing analytical features out of the national office, many members would not have had the time or energy to dedicate to this new, and in many ways more demanding, role of the press.

With the Code of Ethics amendment in 1967, followed by the rewrite of the Statement of Principles in 1968, CUP members moved to take the idea of unbiased coverage out of the CUP constitution. While this change addressed some of the more problematic issues of objective coverage, CUP members maintained an idea of fairness in journalism. In setting the news agenda as one of progressive social change, while maintaining a concept of fairness in journalism, CUP members worked towards empowering the student citizen and the student journalist, without decreasing their own credibility.

CUP’s idea of acting as an agent of social change involved both community- and democracy-building, and giving students the information they needed to be self-governing. While the CUP “agent of social change” clause may seem to fly in the face of much of the tradition of journalism, specifically that journalists be objective, detached, observers of events, the Charter of the Student Press of Canada and the Statement of Principles have much in common with both the suggestions of the Commission on the Freedom of the Press and the Committee of Concerned Journalists in terms of their commitment to community, citizens, independence, and truth. The Statement of Principles specifically addressed the issue of

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<sup>84</sup> CUP, “Legislation Report,” 34<sup>th</sup> *National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1971) 3. The report focuses on the affect of field working and the analytical content of the news wire as being a benefit to the political potential of the organization.

acting as a “specialized media of advocacy”<sup>85</sup> in its role to report on issues not covered by the professional press. However, CUP would struggle with the difficulty in finding the ground between context and opinion, between interpreting and recasting the facts.

Throughout the 1960s, students were increasingly politically active both on campus and off. As campus activity became more political, and the students’ unions became more involved in political movements, the reporting in student newspapers also became more political. With the 1965 amendment to the Charter of the Student Press, CUP members shifted their role from that of simply a “mode of communication” to that of “an agent of social change.” In the years that followed it was not just CUP and its members’ coverage that was political. The organizations worked to change their own internal structures and operations as part of their work as agents of social change by ensuring that their own operations encouraged active participation from as many members of the community as possible. CUP and its members’ articles were not just a reflection of the political movements on the campus; CUP members were active participants in creating social change through coverage as well as restructuring the student press and its interactions with advertisers, government, and other agents of social change.

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<sup>85</sup> The Commission on Freedom of the Press, *A Free and Responsible Press a General Report on Mass Communication: Newspapers, Radio, Motion Pictures, Magazines, and Books* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1947) 25.

## Chapter Two

### The Canadian University Press and the October Crisis

#### Introduction

On Monday, October 5, 1970 James Cross, senior British trade commissioner, was kidnapped from his home in Montréal. His kidnapping and the later kidnapping and murder of Pierre Laporte, the Québec minister of labour, by members of the Front de Liberation du Québec (FLQ) would lead Québec and Canada into a tumultuous period now known primarily as the October crisis. In addition to supporting Québec separatism by whatever means necessary, the FLQ supported the labour movement, and was critical of the mainstream media. In these areas its goals intersected with those of CUP. Although neither the CUP national office nor CUP members directly supported the FLQ's actions, many in CUP and the larger campus community were sympathetic toward the group's goals and agreed with many of the FLQ's critiques—or at least its right to voice them.

1970 could be described as the year that CUP's "agent of social change" clause became fully realized. Never again in a single year would so many events take place that seemed to demand a politically engaged press. In the spring, the American National Guard killed four students at Kent State and two more at Jackson State during protest demonstrations. And in the fall, the FLQ kidnappings led to the declaration of the War Measures Act (WMA) by the Trudeau administration. CUP acted as a politically engaged press by providing a political view sympathetic to the FLQ that was not available elsewhere. In setting up the Québec Special Service and strongly encouraging member papers to run its coverage, the CUP national office actively worked to spread its point of view and to mobilize students against the WMA. The coverage of the FLQ crisis demonstrated what CUP meant by acting as an agent of social change and covering issues that the mainstream press did not cover. However, it is significant that Jennifer Penney, CUP president that year, did not remember the clause as a factor in the actions of the national office. Rather than being a reflection of CUP's documents, the CUP national office's actions were a sign of their own convictions and beliefs.<sup>1</sup> During this period, the ideas that were set out formally in the Statement of Principles overlapped with the informal beliefs of the staff members. At the same time, although the actions of the CUP staff were motivated by their personal

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004.

convictions rather than CUP policies, the coverage was part of the larger student involvement in the October crisis and protest of the WMA.

CUP provided its members as well as many alternative press sources across the country with its Québec Special Service throughout the October crisis. The Service included several printings of a CUP translation of the FLQ Manifesto, stories on the FLQ crisis that were sympathetic to the FLQ and critical of the government, stories about student protest of the WMA and police actions in Québec, and information on censorship of student newspapers across the country. For CUP, the October crisis brought to the fore questions about the role of the press, in particular the role of “objective” reporting and the power of the press to build community and raise awareness.

This chapter examines the CUP national office’s actions during the October crisis, sympathies with the FLQ in the student movement as well as within CUP, student protest of the WMA, censorship of student newspapers during the October crisis, media criticism from both CUP and the FLQ during the period, as well as a discussion of the role of the press as demonstrated by the CUP national office during this time. Through these topics the idea of the politically engaged and active press, specifically the student press as an agent of social change, is explored.

### **The Québec Special Service: CUP and the October Crisis**

In 1970 the CUP national executive literally lived in its offices. The year before, CUP president Stewart Saxe had signed a lease for the CUP offices in a house, which the national office staff would also live in to lower costs. Although the situation was less than ideal for the staff members, it did allow them to devote a huge amount of time to the wire service during the October crisis. Unlike many of the other aspects of CUP discussed in this thesis, the CUP coverage of the October crisis was in many ways an action of those individuals working in the national office during that time, rather than a collective action of the CUP membership. However, since the members had elected those in the national office to lead the organization and run the news service, and since members reprinted the coverage in their papers, often at risk of censorship or expulsion, the CUP membership was also actively engaged in the October crisis.

Starting with the Cross kidnapping, the CUP national office worked to supply not only CUP member papers, but “some 200 North American underground and alternate media

services, organizations and concerned individuals’<sup>2</sup> with a news wire that came to be known as the Québec Special Service. The service included copies of the FLQ manifesto and communiqués translated by CUP sources along with a series of notes to explain the local Québécois references; stories about the actions in Québec from a student perspective, often sympathetic with the FLQ’s aims; articles critical of the WMA, police and government; and stories that focused on student protest and censorship of student newspapers.

When the WMA was called into effect on Friday, October 16, 1970, the Ontario Regional fall conference was taking place in Ottawa. Dorothy Wigmore, who would later become president of CUP in 1972-73, remembered being at the conference: “There was a lot going on in terms of people trying to get in from Québec. And there were, very literally, barriers up to prevent people leaving Québec.” Being journalists, those at the conference went up to Parliament Hill to find out anything they could. “I was on the hill that night, transporting people between the Lord Elgin [hotel, where the conference was] and the hill... So there was CUP sort of in the middle of it, in some ways,” said Wigmore.<sup>3</sup> CUP would get more in the middle of it in the sense of reporting on the events of the October crisis and getting into what Penney described as the national office’s “war footing.”

“We were just feeling very thrilled to be part of the whole thing,” said Penney. “But, we [regarded] it as a very serious business and worked really hard to get stories out at that time.”<sup>4</sup> Although CUP had already sent out a version of the FLQ manifesto on the wire service four days earlier, once the WMA was declared, the national office moved into high gear, planning what to do in the event that any of the staff were arrested. Within a day or two of the WMA being put in place, the CUP national office had set up a network with the United States Student Press Association (USSPA). If the CUP office was shut down, the CUP sources would send stories to the USSPA, who would then become the network for distributing the wire back to CUP’s members. This planning shows not only that the CUP national executive assumed the staff would be arrested as a result of the coverage it intended to publish on the news wire, but also that it was actively involved in ensuring that the coverage got out, no matter what the cost. However, the police never showed up. “We actually were surprised that no one ever came and sat on us,” Penney said. “I think they just thought of us as a minor annoyance.”<sup>5</sup> While the CUP national office was never censored, nor even visited by police, many of the student newspapers proved more than a minor

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<sup>2</sup> CUP, *33rd National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1970) 4.

<sup>3</sup> Dorothy Wigmore, Telephone Interview, 9 Apr. 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004.

annoyance, and were censored either by their printers or their administrations, or had their papers confiscated by the RCMP.

An editor's note that accompanied the first news wire after Cross' kidnapping clearly stated the intention of what would become the Québec Special Service: "If we are to understand the struggle that is taking place in Québec we should try to find out as much as we can about what is happening. And we should print all we have so others may understand too."<sup>6</sup> The focus of the Québec Special Service was on supplying information that was not otherwise available in the English media in Canada. This meant articles that provided the context of the Québec separatist movement and explained the FLQ in terms of class struggle and Québécois oppression. As Penney said in an interview: "We thought people should be hearing what was happening. We wanted to get that information out and we wanted to get the perspective of the people who supported the FLQ. Or supported the liberation movement in Québec." She also said that the CUP national executive "came pretty close" to supporting the FLQ and were at least sympathetic to the group's goals.<sup>7</sup>

The first major act was to print the FLQ manifesto. The FLQ had demanded that the manifesto be broadcast in the media as one of its demands for the release of James Cross. While it was eventually read on Radio Canada, the French language public broadcaster, the FLQ manifesto was not widely distributed. The student press would be one of the few places that the unabridged FLQ manifesto appeared in the English press.<sup>8</sup> In an editorial note about the volume of stories in the news service relating to the events in Québec, the CUP national office noted, "We appear to be the only english [sic] speaking organization that is putting out news that is at all sympathetic to the French struggle in 'La Belle Province.'"<sup>9</sup> According to Ron Haggart and Aubrey E. Golden in their book *Rumours of War*, in addition to the English CBC radio not broadcasting the manifesto, few English language papers carried the full text.<sup>10</sup>

A statement from the FLQ titled "Manifesto of the Front de Liberation Québécois" was first published by CUP in the October 7, 1970 news service along with an article about the FLQ, the Cross kidnapping, and the FLQ's demands in exchange for Cross' release. The October 7 manifesto was a list of objectives and "means" unlike the more familiar manifesto that CUP published on October 12, 1970. It is unclear where this article came from, and while it was not the FLQ manifesto as it is currently known, it was an interesting document.

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<sup>6</sup> *CUP News Service* 7 Oct. 1970: 1.

<sup>7</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Dorothy Wigmore, Telephone Interview, 9 Apr. 2004.

<sup>9</sup> "Note to Editors," *CUP News Service* 9 Oct. 1970: 1.

<sup>10</sup> Ron Haggart and Aubrey E. Golden, *Rumours of War* (Toronto: New Press, 1971) 11.

The first and the last “means” were perhaps the most important in relation to CUP. In stating that the FLQ believed it was “urgent that we form a Common Front of all the progressive forces in Québec,” the FLQ echoed CUP’s own idea of supporting other agents of social change. This idea of CUP working to support the aims of the FLQ was strengthened by the final “means,” which stated in all capital letters: “HELP THE FRONT DE LIBERATION QUÉBÉCOIS TO DIFFUSE THIS MANIFESTO IN YOUR AREA AND EXPAIN THE POLITICAL OBJECTIVES OF THE FLQ.”<sup>11</sup> This would suggest, as politicians later did, that CUP and any publication that printed the manifesto were helping the FLQ. In sending out the manifesto, the CUP office staff was clearly trying to help the FLQ by spreading information about the group’s objectives. Additionally, the editorial notes that accompanied the Québec Special Service encouraged, even “pushed,” the members to publish the information.<sup>12</sup> “This is very important to the struggle for liberation in Québec,” read one such note, “and for most reality-minded people will put the lie to a lot of the propaganda we’ve been getting from the press and media.”<sup>13</sup> The CUP national office was not a neutral provider of news in this case, it was actively engaged in promoting news that was “at all sympathetic to the French struggle,” which was not getting out in the mainstream media.

Following the government broadcast of the manifesto on Radio Canada, CUP published the piece on October 12. While this was a large concession to the kidnapers, for the most part it seems to have been a stalling technique, giving the appearance that the government was negotiating, while giving the police more time to find Cross’ abductors. The CUP copy of the manifesto was translated by an un-named source, who also provided a series of notes to help explain many of the localized references. Both the translator and the member of the CUP staff identified as “liz,” (most likely Liz Willick, the systems manager) who typed out the translation for the news service, commented on the writing of the piece as well as the content. “The text, in French, is not prose but poetry almost uninterrupted,” wrote the translator in a preface to the notes on the piece.<sup>14</sup> “It is a beautifully-done document which speaks directly and personally to the people of Québec and their oppression,” stated an editorial note about the manifesto itself.<sup>15</sup> These comments seem to be about a piece of inspirational writing, not news. Similar notes seem to be rare in the CUP news service at this time.

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<sup>11</sup> “Manifesto of the Front de Liberation Québécois,” *CUP News Service* Oct. 7 1970: 2.

<sup>12</sup> “Note to Editors,” *CUP News Service* 9 Oct. 1970: 1.

<sup>13</sup> “Note to Staff,” *CUP News Service* 12 Oct. 1970: 3.

<sup>14</sup> “Text Notes on the FLQ Manifesto,” *CUP News Service* 12 Oct. 1970: n.pag.

<sup>15</sup> “Note to Staff,” *CUP News Service* 12 Oct. 1970: 2.

As Haggart and Golden note, “the FLQ manifesto was full of the most outrageous slanders against private citizens, to say nothing of calling the Prime Minister of the country *la tapette*.”<sup>16</sup> According to Haggart and Golden many English newspapers used loose translations to tone-down much of the language in the manifesto. CUP was not one such source. The CUP copy referred to “nauseating Murray Hill and its assassin-owner,” the “hypocrite, Bourassa,” “Drapeau the ‘dog,’” and finally, “Trudeau the faggot.”<sup>17</sup> While the CUP staff made no mention of these instances of libel, the translator did note that “*the Gazette’s* (Montréal) translation is so full of errors, distortions and watering-down that it amounts to a complete lie for any person seriously interested in informing himself.”<sup>18</sup> Presumably a looser translation of *la tapette* is among these instances of distortion. Haggart and Golden see such mistranslation as having the unintended effect of downplaying the degree of the government’s concession in airing the manifesto. By presenting the manifesto as a less libelous document, the mainstream media took away some of the effect of the piece, but simultaneously made it less obvious why the government would not want it published. While the CUP staff did note that the release of the manifesto was “in fact a very major concession,” their more accurate translation was certainly not for the benefit of the government. Rather it was to speak more honestly of the “people of Québec and their oppression,” and address the “complete lies” of the commercial press.<sup>19</sup>

The CUP coverage was neither distant nor “balanced” in the sense of giving all sides equal voice. The concept of objectivity was left behind in order to provide the context of class struggle and Québec nationalism. According to Penney, those in the national office at the time “fought against the whole notion of objectivity in journalism. What we want[ed] to get out [was] a... perspective on things and information about things that [didn’t] gain any credibility in the normal press and [didn’t] get reported and [weren’t] part of the discussion that [took] place in the regular media.”<sup>20</sup> In the case of the October crisis, the discussion that wasn’t taking place in the regular media was the perspective of the extreme nationalist Québécois.

The CUP coverage was very critical of the government and sympathetic toward those arrested, including FLQ members. For example, an article reporting that the government had proposed to charge the FLQ members with treason stated that the last person successfully charged with treason in Canada had been Louis Riel, who just that year had been

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<sup>16</sup> Ron Haggart and Aubrey E. Golden, *Rumours of War* (Toronto: New Press, 1971) 11.

<sup>17</sup> “Manifesto of the Front de Libération du Québec,” *CUP News Service* 12 Oct, 1970: 4-5.

<sup>18</sup> “Text Notes to the FLQ Manifesto,” *CUP News Service* 12 Oct. 1970: 1.

<sup>19</sup> “Note to Staff,” *CUP News Service* 12 Oct. 1970: 2.

<sup>20</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004.



commemorated on a postage stamp. Riel, the article went on to note, was “looked upon by historians as a reformer rather than a treasonous man.”<sup>21</sup> While the article did not explicitly state that the FLQ members were also “reformers,” the implied connection was clear.

The CUP coverage was also very critical of the arrests made under the WMA and several stories questioned the official number of arrests made.<sup>22</sup> In other cases CUP used terms usually associated with terrorists to describe the actions of the government, turning the terminology on its head and thereby questioning the validity of the common usage to describe the FLQ. “Citizens of Québec are being terrorized by the Trudeau government,” stated a CUP story under a similar headline.<sup>23</sup> Another article on the repercussions of the WMA told readers, “The Trudeau regime [was] coming up against the inevitable problems involved in manipulating an occupying army.”<sup>24</sup> In reframing the use of terminology such as terrorism, regime, and occupation, CUP questioned the government’s actions, especially the use of the WMA. This use of language mirrored the FLQ’s own use of the term terrorism to describe the actions of big business, the government, and the Catholic Church. “We live in a society of terrorized slaves,” stated the FLQ Manifesto, “terrorized by the big bosses... terrorized by the capitalist Roman Church.”<sup>25</sup> In its notes on the FLQ manifesto, CUP also used the term “counter-revolutionary” to describe government actions such as language laws. The article claimed that the function of the Bill 63 “in the strategy of counter-revolution was to get all immigrants to Québec to assimilate English rather than French, thus developing a working class split along language lines. Almost as good as black vs. white workers.”<sup>26</sup> In other cases CUP questioned the validity of the framing of the “victims.” James Cross, for example, was described by a CUP writer as “a representative of one of the world’s oldest colonialist regimes, and that which began its oppression of people in Canada over two centuries ago.”<sup>27</sup> The terminology was used intentionally, not to incite censorship or action from the police, but to educate the readers by contextualizing the events of the October crisis from a different point of view than the mainstream media.

While the CUP reporting was not balanced, neither was the reporting in the commercial press. It could be said that the CUP coverage offered a balance to the mainstream English press; that was certainly the intention. “We saw ourselves as part of the alternative

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<sup>21</sup> “FLQ Members to be Charged with Treason, Maybe,” *CUP News Service* 30 Oct. 1970: 2.

<sup>22</sup> See: Tom Sorell, “Round-up of Events in Montréal Following the Invocation of the WMA, Friday October 23, 1970,” *CUP News Service* 23 Oct. 1970: n.pag.

<sup>23</sup> “Government Terrorizes Québec,” *CUP News Service* 28 Oct. 1970: 3.

<sup>24</sup> “Repercussions of War Measures Act,” *CUP News Service* Number 25, n.d.: 5.

<sup>25</sup> “Manifesto of the Front de Liberation du Québec,” *CUP New Service* 12 Oct. 1970: 5.

<sup>26</sup> “Text Notes to the FLQ Manifesto,” *CUP News Service* 12 Oct. 1970: 4.

<sup>27</sup> “The FLQ Takes on Imperialism,” *CUP News Service* 7 Oct. 1970: 5.

press movement really, and we saw ourselves as an alternative to the mainstream media,” said Penney. In many cases this idea of being an alternative source of information became part of the CUP coverage itself. For example, a CUP article about the coverage the crisis was receiving in the papers of France stated, “Over fifty per cent of Québécois supported the aims of the FLQ, and although many were not too happy with the means used, they did not entirely condemn them, Pierre Desrosiers of the left wing Québec Press said. The Canadian media rarely reports that half of the story.”<sup>28</sup> While CUP’s actions and those of the member papers were very different from many of the contemporary mainstream papers, because the goal was to arm readers with information they couldn’t get elsewhere, the actions still fell inside what can be considered the social responsibility tradition of the press. At the same time, to understand the CUP coverage it is also necessary to understand the history of the FLQ and its support and sympathy among students and the academic community in Québec and across Canada.

### **Student Support and Sympathy for the FLQ**

Penney took pains to state that CUP itself, as an organization, had no political position on the October crisis. However, those involved in CUP, especially those in the national office during 1970, did. “The people who were elected to office, we would have come pretty close to supporting the FLQ,” said Penney explaining the feeling that the FLQ had many legitimate complaints. Also, because CUP members were supportive of liberation movements in other countries, Penney pointed out that the CUP leadership was in some ways excited to have such a movement in their own backyard. Although the support broke down over the issue of violence, Penney stated, “There was certainly a very strong sense that what the FLQ represented was very legitimate grievances. And that those grievances would not be taken seriously without the kind of actions that they took, to draw attention to it and to their own perspectives on things.”<sup>29</sup> The political positions reflected in the coverage of the Québec Special Service were those of the CUP national executive. However, the fact that the stories were picked up by so many members of the student press, often under the threat of censorship, shows that many in CUP shared sympathy toward the FLQ.

In Québec during the late sixties and early seventies, as the separatist and nationalist movements gained momentum, the university community played an important role in gathering support and spreading information about the political movements. André Cardinal

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<sup>28</sup> “Québec Senator Upset by Lack of Censure in French Papers,” *CUP News Service* 29 Oct. 1970: 1.

<sup>29</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004.

describes faculty members, in particular those at L'Université de Montréal, as playing "key roles in marginal political parties in Québec, such as the New Democratic Party and the 'Parti Socialiste du Québec.'"<sup>30</sup> Student groups such as the Union General des Étudiants du Québec (UGEQ) and the Presse Étudiante Nationale (PEN) also took strong positions on the questions of nationalism and separation.<sup>31</sup> In 1963 the few Francophone member papers dropped out of CUP to join the recently formed PEN, in part because of a recognition that while English papers were "information newspaper... French student newspapers, on the other hand, prefer summaries, inquiries and campaigns of ideas."<sup>32</sup> However, the move was also a political issue of Québécois nationalism: the French student newspapers could not be represented in a national press organization that did not recognize their own nationalism. The split with CUP seems to have always been amicable in part because of CUP's recognition that it could not represent the Francophone papers adequately. As noted, there was also support in CUP for the Québec nationalist movement. This was shown after the October crisis by a motion at the 1971 national conference to "investigate... the possibility of changes in the by-laws, code of ethics and standing resolutions which would recognize the existence of the nations of Canada and Québec under the present federal state of Canada."<sup>33</sup> Throughout the 1970s CUP worked in various ways to try to integrate the concept of Québec nationalism into the organization, although without much success. Even though PEN, along with UGEQ, collapsed in 1969, and what was left of it was effectively wiped out for some years after the WMA, it is clear that the university community was involved in the nationalist movement, in particular in Montréal.

While the majority of the involvement focused on the Francophone campuses, students throughout the country were sympathetic and even supportive of the goals of Québécois nationalism. According to Penney:

There were groups [on campus] that supported the FLQ, or at least supported, if not the activities, the actions of the FLQ in terms of bombing mail boxes and, later on kidnappings and things like that, who certainly supported the notion of, stronger rights for Québec, for Francophones and for people in Québec. And even the right to secede.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> André Cardinal, "Quebec and the Intellectuals," *Quebec and Radical Social Change* ed. Dimitrios Roussopoulos (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1974) 67.

<sup>31</sup> André Cardinal, "Quebec and the Intellectuals," *Quebec and Radical Social Change* ed. Dimitrios Roussopoulos (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1974) 69.

<sup>32</sup> CUP, "CUP and the Québec Student Press," *Annual Fall Reports CUP 40: Executive Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1977) 2.

<sup>33</sup> CUP, *34th National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1971) 15, NB/9/71.

<sup>34</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004.

This is echoed by Haggart and Golden, who point out that while many students were in support of the FLQ's demands, very few were involved with terrorist actions.<sup>35</sup>

The involvement of the student groups had a great impact on CUP's coverage of the October crisis. In Montréal, the academic community's involvement in the issues meant that certain aspects of the October crisis played out on the campuses themselves. While the CUP coverage of the October crisis was broad, it focused mainly on the issues as they affected the campus. For example, the Québec Special Service featured many articles about student protests of the WMA, teach-ins on campuses, and the censorship of student newspapers.<sup>36</sup> As with other social issues, those protesting on campus often came into conflict with the status quo.

The conflict between the university community and the larger "general" community is a significant part of the CUP story as well as the story of CUP's role in the October crisis in particular. According to Alexander DeConde, the conflict between the university community and the community that surrounds it is one that dates back to the middle ages. He describes the conflict seen in North America in the sixties as part of the classic "town and gown" conflict pattern. For DeConde, whether it is the conflicts over legal jurisdiction in the university towns of Medieval England, or the Berkeley Free Speech movement of the sixties, "students, in one way or another, have always been active in the affairs of their universities, their communities, and their nations. They have frequently functioned as barometers of deep-seated unrest and social change."<sup>37</sup> This was certainly the case during the sixties and early seventies in Québec, when many students sympathized with the FLQ and protested against the repressive WMA.

Student movements, both those in the modern day and in ancient times shared a difficulty in being short-lived and difficult to sustain. In part this was because of the transient nature of the student population. Because almost the entire undergraduate student body turned over every four years, it was difficult to sustain demands: those in power know that the current students would be gone in four years, so it was easy to ignore complaints. As DeConde identifies, "the effectiveness of [the student movement] force is difficult to analyze over any extended period because student movements are extremely fluid—constantly

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<sup>35</sup> Ron Haggart and Aubrey E. Golden, *Rumours of War* (Toronto: New Press, 1971) 32.

<sup>36</sup> See, "Groups Rally To Protest War Measures Act," *CUP News Service* 28 Oct. 1970: 1. "1,000 Turn Out for U de M Teach In," *CUP News Service* 29 Oct. 1970: 3. "University Newspapers Harassed by Police, Printers and Administration," *CUP News Service* Number 29, n.d.: 4.

<sup>37</sup> Alexander DeConde, "In Perspective," *Student Activism: Town and Gown in Historical Perspective* ed. Alexander DeConde (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971) 4.

shifting power, ever changing in constituency, and generally unstable.”<sup>38</sup> However, this is not to say that student movements have not had times of sustained power nor that they have not from time to time effected real change. The student movements of the sixties and seventies, across the globe, were one of those times. According to Nathan Glazer, one of the main successes of the student movement of the 1960s was its ability to reframe the notion of civil government in such a way that “the civil government of local communities (such as Oakland and Berkeley), and of the nation, and of the universities could be cast in an oppressive role, though they had generally not been seen in that light before.”<sup>39</sup> In casting these institutions in an oppressive role, the student movement questioned not only the relation of the administration to students, but also the relation of the larger community to the university community as a whole. At the same time, this reframing had the effect of opening new areas of debate and discussion. During the October crisis this conflict was played out in students being arrested and student newspapers being censored. Without a doubt the Québec Special Service coverage of the October crisis put a different light on the conflict than the mainstream coverage and opened new areas of debate about the events.

### **Supporting Workers**

As mentioned, CUP and the FLQ did have some intersecting goals, most notably their ideas about liberation movements generally and the legitimacy of the Québécois nationalist movement specifically, their support for workers’ rights, and their critique of the media. CUP had long been supportive of unions and workers. For example, in 1968 CUP passed motions supporting the striking *Peterborough Examiner* workers and censuring “the management and owners of the Westbury Hotel [the location of the conference] for its oppression of the working class” because the hotel’s employees were not unionized.<sup>40</sup> During the October crisis the CUP news wire also carried stories on the striking Acadia Fisheries workers in Halifax, describing them as being “sacrificed for reasons of profit and political expediency.”<sup>41</sup> When it came to their coverage of the FLQ and its manifesto, CUP was equally supportive of the FLQ’s self-proclaimed efforts to help Québécois workers. The notes CUP published about the manifesto described Lord and Cie, a steel manufacturer

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<sup>38</sup> Alexander DeConde, “In Perspective,” *Student Activism: Town and Gown in Historical Perspective* ed. Alexander DeConde (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971) 4.

<sup>39</sup> Nathan Glazer, “‘Student Power’ in Berkeley,” *Student Activism: Town and Gown in Historical Perspective* ed. Alexander DeConde (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971) 296.

<sup>40</sup> CUP, *31st National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1968) 17, 2/NB/68 and 4/NB/68

<sup>41</sup> “Fighting Nova Scotia Fishermen and the Provincial Elections,” *CUP News Service* 12 Oct. 1970: 2.

mentioned in the manifesto, as a “vicious steel-fabricating sweatshop,” and described strike actions as “heroic.”<sup>42</sup> CUP and its members were quite clear on their intent in using such language. In an article describing members being harassed by police, printers and administration for their publication of the manifesto, and articles about the FLQ, the University of Lethbridge *Meliorist* staff was quoted as saying, “we do support most of their (FLQ) anti-imperialist, anti-liberal aims and we are against the repressive War Measures Act.”<sup>43</sup>

Throughout the coverage in the Québec Special Service CUP explicitly noted the connections between the FLQ and working class Québécois. For example, an article titled “The FLQ Takes on Imperialism” explained the goals of the FLQ by stating:

The FLQ was created in the early sixties in response to growing awareness on the part of the Québécois that they were being severely oppressed both culturally and economically by English-speaking Canadians and Americans. It has developed a political program which includes working with trade unionists, tenants organizations and other groups in Québec against the English monopoly of Power.<sup>44</sup>

This class analysis of the October crisis did not find a welcome place in the commercial press. While there is nothing in the CUP Statement of Principles that specifically promoted this type of analysis, according to Penney, many of the people involved with CUP and student newspapers at the time were also involved in various left-wing, Maoist and Marxist political groups. It was these individuals and their work, rather than the explicit policy of CUP, that resulted in such coverage. Penney said about the group involved in CUP:

We formed quite a strong, quite a new left. And we were active in all these organizations and so it was natural for us to take [political action] into the organizations [such as CUP]. We saw the organizations in some sense, as a tool, not only in a sense of manipulating it, to support, but because we truly believed that that’s what needed to be done.<sup>45</sup>

At the same time as the CUP coverage was the result of the actions of a few individuals, it was also a part of the larger student involvement in the nationalist movement and the October crisis, and a reflection of what CUP members described as the role of the press in the Statement of Principles. As shown through the many CUP articles on student protest of the

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<sup>42</sup> “Text Notes to the FLQ Manifesto,” *CUP News Service* 12 Oct. 1970: 3.

<sup>43</sup> “University Newspapers Harassed by Police, Printers and Administrators,” *CUP News Service* Number 29, n.d.: 3-4.

<sup>44</sup> “The FLQ Takes on Imperialism,” *CUP News Service* 7 Oct. 1970: 4.

<sup>45</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004.

WMA through teach-ins, rallies, and occupations of campuses, students were actively involved in these issues. In addition to reporting on these groups and their actions as a reflection of what was happening on the campus, it was CUP's role to "perform... an active function and support groups serving as agents of social change."<sup>46</sup>

### Criticism of the Media

In addition to supporting workers' rights, CUP and the FLQ also agreed in their critique of the media. The eighth objective of the FLQ, as described in the manifesto published by CUP on October 7, 1970 was to fight the "owners of the means of communication," and the "capitalists who monopolize all the major means of information."<sup>47</sup> This objective complemented both CUP's observations of the mainstream press and goals as an alternative press organization, to "use its freedom from commercial and other controls to...examine issues which other media avoid."<sup>48</sup> Through the October crisis, the CUP news wire consistently carried information and editorial content on the FLQ, as well as comment on the coverage of the events by other media. A note to editors printed in the news wire four days after Cross was kidnapped, stated:

The reason we are pushing so much copy on current events in Québec is that we appear to be the only english [sic] speaking organization that is putting out news that is at all sympathetic to the French struggle... We should not increase and perpetuate the red-scare paranoia of the "terrorist" and "communist conspiracy" type headlines.<sup>49</sup>

For the CUP news wire, correcting the wrongs and omissions of the "bourgeois press" became one of the major goals of the Québec Special Service. In this way, CUP fulfilled its mandates to "emphasize the rights and responsibilities of the student citizen...perform both an educative and active function and support groups serving as agents of social change... and interpret ideas and events to the best of its ability."<sup>50</sup> This passage of the Statement of Principles addressed not only the role of the student press, but its relationship to the student community.

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<sup>46</sup> CUP, "Standing Resolution: 1. Statement of Principles of the Student Press in Canada," *31st National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1968) 31.

<sup>47</sup> "Manifesto of the Front de Liberation Québécois," *CUP News Service* 7 Oct. 1970: 2.

<sup>48</sup> CUP, "Standing Resolution: 1. Statement of Principles of the Student Press in Canada," *31st National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1968) 31.

<sup>49</sup> "Note to Editors," *CUP News Service* 9 Oct. 1970: 1.

<sup>50</sup> CUP, "Standing Resolution: 1. Statement of Principles of the Student Press in Canada," *31st National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1968) 31.

At the centre of many questions about the role of the press is the relationship between the press and community and the press' role in building community. According to the CUP Statement of Principles of 1968, the student press' role was to build students' awareness of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. In the case of the October crisis those rights included the right to freedom of the press, which was being abridged by the RCMP and printers while the WMA was in effect.

## Censorship

Not only did the events of 1970 demand a politically engaged press, they also demonstrated the risks of such engagement. While student demonstrations at Kent State and Jackson State resulted in deaths, in Canada students and other left-wing activists were harassed and arrested by the police. Under the WMA, police did not even need warrants to raid houses or arrest people for suspicious activity.

In a speech given by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau after the declaration of the WMA he stated that the act gave "sweeping powers to the Government" and that it suspended the Canadian Bill of Rights.<sup>51</sup> The WMA was a relic of the First World War, put in place by the Borden government in 1914. The act was modeled on the British Defense of the Realm Act, except that unlike the British version it allowed the government to invoke the act when a "state of war, invasion or insurrection, real or apprehended exists," and more critically, it did not end with the end of the war.<sup>52</sup> While the powers under the WMA ended with the end of the war, the act itself was not repealed.<sup>53</sup> So, in 1970, the act was still on the books and could be invoked by the government after the Governor-General proclaimed a state of war, invasion, or insurrection.

However, the Trudeau government did not invoke all the powers of the WMA. According to Haggart and Golden there was no official censorship of the media under the 1970 WMA.<sup>54</sup> However, the 1970 WMA did include a clause stating that "a person who... communicates statements on behalf of or as a representative or professed representative of the [FLQ]... is guilty of an indictable offense and liable to imprisonment for a term not

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<sup>51</sup> Pierre Elliot Trudeau, "Notes for a National Broadcast by the Prime Minister," *First Among Equals* <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/primeministers/h-4-4065-e.html>, 5 Aug. 2004.

<sup>52</sup> Claude Belanger, "The War Measures Act," *Québec History Readings* <https://www2.marianopolis.edu/quebechistory/readings/warmeas.htm>, 6 May 2004.

<sup>53</sup> Ron Haggart and Aubrey E. Golden, *Rumours of War* (Toronto: New Press, 1971) 91.

<sup>54</sup> Ron Haggart and Aubrey E. Golden, *Rumours of War* (Toronto: New Press, 1971) 107.



exceeding five years.”<sup>55</sup> The wording of the WMA left it up to police to decide whether or not the press was acting “on behalf of” the FLQ or rather on behalf of the readers. Because of this, the RCMP visited several student newspapers to issue warnings and confiscate issues that contained information about the FLQ.<sup>56</sup> One paper, the University of Guelph *Ontarion*, was even charged by the police with contravening section 62 of the Criminal Code, which dealt with seditious libel because the paper had printed the FLQ manifesto.<sup>57</sup> Additionally, because of the great amount of confusion about the WMA’s clause concerning communication, many papers self-censored, or found themselves censored by their printers. Many CUP members were censored or threatened by their printers or their universities’ administration (although it is interesting to note that most were supported by their students’ unions) over printing CUP’s Québec Special Service.

According to the CUP news wire, both the Dalhousie *Gazette* and the St. Mary’s *Journal* were “forced to leave blank spaces in their newspapers” after their printer, the Dartmouth Free Press, (“the name has nothing to do with the ideology,” the article noted) refused to print coverage of the events in Québec including CUP news wire material.<sup>58</sup> Dorothy Wigmore, who was working at *The Gazette* at the time said, “I remember dashing around town, probably followed by cops. With the newspaper, with the FLQ manifesto in it, trying to distribute it. ‘Cause our printer refused to print it.”

They were not alone. The University of Prince Edward Island newspaper, *The Cadre*, also faced censorship by its printer<sup>59</sup> as did the University of Toronto *Varsity*, whose printer refused to print the FLQ Manifesto.<sup>60</sup> Other papers, such as the University of Lethbridge *Meliorist* and the *Ontarion* had their papers confiscated by police. While the WMA may not officially have included censorship of the media, this seems to have been a bit of sleight of hand on the part of the government. It is clear that the police tried to shut down publication of views sympathetic to the FLQ. In a motion opposing the WMA that was passed at the national conference in 1970, CUP members wrote, “The government of Canada has shown by its actions that it intenss [sic] to keep the Canadian people in fear, ignorance and mystery about the conditions of Québec first by brutally smashing the communications structures of

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<sup>55</sup> “War Measures Act,” in Ron Haggart and Aubrey E. Golden, *Rumours of War* (Toronto: New Press, 1971) 283.

<sup>56</sup> Ron Haggart and Aubrey E. Golden, *Rumours of War* (Toronto: New Press, 1971) 107.

<sup>57</sup> “University Newspapers Harassed by Police, Printers and Administration,” *CUP News Service* Number 29, n.d.: 2.

<sup>58</sup> “Nova Acotia [sic] Papers Face Censorship from Printer,” *CUP News Service* 25 Oct. 1970: 3.

<sup>59</sup> “Roundup of Québec Activity,” *CUP News Service*. 26 Oct. 1970: 2.

<sup>60</sup> “Varsity Censored but Ubyssy Prints,” *CUP News Service* 12 Nov. 1970: 3.

the Québécois, and harrassment [sic] of the English language media including the university press.”<sup>61</sup>

Jerome Choquette, Québec justice minister, was clearly in favour of censorship in the sense that he hoped the media would self-censor in order to not be the “direct or indirect accomplices of FLQ propaganda.” A CUP article quoted Choquette as saying: “I prefer a situation of non-censorship as long as [the news media] co-operate with us.”<sup>62</sup> Presumably co-operating meant self-censoring in favour of the government point of view. Some papers did just that. According to CUP, “Many papers [found] themselves imposing a form of self-censorship because they [were] unable to interpret the War Measures Act in terms of freedom of the pres [sic] and their own particular copy.”<sup>63</sup> Haggart and Golden describe such an incident of self-censorship at the University of Victoria *Martlet*. The paper received a letter from assistant professor Ronald Kirkby “declaring that Trudeau’s actions were responsible for the death of Pierre Laporte,” which Haggart and Golden note was an assessment shared by René Levesque. The police paid a visit to the *Martlet* warning the paper not to publish the letter, which they did not.<sup>64</sup>

It is during periods of political turmoil that our principles are most sorely tested, but also most needed. The October crisis provided a test to the principles of civil liberties, one that many might argue the Canadian government failed. It also provided a test to the CUP Statement of Principles. The CUP national executive, and in most cases the CUP members, worked to preserve their principles even while these principles put them at risk of expulsion, censorship, and even charges of seditious libel. In knowingly standing up to these threats, CUP acted as a politically engaged press, acting as an agent of social change. The October Crisis provides an excellent opportunity to examine CUP’s “agent of social change” clause in action. As Penney, president at the time, recalled, “We were, very upset ... with the aspect of the War Measures Act that censored the press. And, we just simply set out, to subvert it.”<sup>65</sup> In purposely subverting the government actions and providing information on the October crisis that was not available in the mainstream English news, CUP fulfilled its mandate of acting as an alternative press and an agent of social change.

At the national CUP conference in December of 1970, the members of CUP passed a resolution opposing media censorship and calling for the release of those arrested under the

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<sup>61</sup> CUP, *33rd National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1970) 7, P/5/70.

<sup>62</sup> “Choquette Admits Papers Must be Censored,” *CUP News Service* 12 Nov. 1970: 1.

<sup>63</sup> “University Newspapers Harassed by Police, Printers and Administration,” *CUP News Service* Number 29. n.d.: 2.

<sup>64</sup> Ron Haggart and Aubrey E. Golden, *Rumours of War* (Toronto: New Press, 1971) 112.

<sup>65</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004.

WMA. In its preamble the motion set out many of the CUP members' criticisms of the commercial press and its coverage of the October crisis:

The purpose of a newspaper news service is to provide people with the information they require to understand their world.... In the political crisis in Québec the Canadian news media did not make clear the history of Québec or the grievances of the Québécois and this coverage did not extend beyond the immediate events nor were these events always accurately reported... We recognize that... CUP has provided the only accurate and systematic English language coverage of the events in Québec.<sup>66</sup>

Through its "accurate and systematic" coverage of the October crisis, the CUP national executive, and the many papers that published the Québec Special Service, worked actively to "provide people with the information they [required] to understand their world." But moreover, they provided information that encouraged readers to take action.

### **CUP and Other Forms of Media Reform**

CUP's idea of the role of the press in building awareness of citizenship was similar to the role of the media as seen by the public journalism and media democracy movements. For proponents of public journalism, the media must be both accountable and open to the public. As Davis (Buzz) Merrit and Jay Rosen, two of the founders of the public journalism movement, have written, "The viability of public life and the value of journalism are inextricably bound together." Because of this, journalism must aim to increase the community's engagement with social issues and public life. According to Merrit and Rosen, public journalism demands that journalists "help public life go well."<sup>67</sup> This does not mean that journalists make public life easy or good for a particular segment of the population, rather that journalists and newspapers endeavour to make public life itself better for all through actively engaging the public in a conversation about civic life. In some ways this is similar to CUP's idea of acting as an agent of social change. However, the public journalism movement does not address the question of whether public life can go better for everyone. If, as CUP seemed to identify in their coverage of the October crisis, the public life in question is built on fundamental social inequalities, improvements for some almost necessarily mean losses for others. For example, during the October crisis CUP reported on the "English

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<sup>66</sup> CUP, *33rd National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1970) 7, P/5/70.

<sup>67</sup> Davis (Buzz) Merrit and Jay Rosen, "Imaging Public Journalism: An Editor and Scholar Reflect on the Birth of an Idea" Roy W. Howard Public Lecture In Journalism and Mass Communication Research, School of Journalism Indiana University, Bloomington, 13 Apr. 1995, 11.

monopoly of Power” in Québec.<sup>68</sup> Redistributing that power would certainly make public life better for the Québécois, but not necessarily for the English. One of the main differences between CUP’s mandate and that of the public journalism movement was that the CUP Statement of Principles, while it did call for fairness in reporting, was much more assertive in stating that the press itself should make social change, and because of this, that the press should take sides in the public debate, rather than simply engaging the public in discussion.

For supporters of media democracy, changes to the media are only one aspect of the social changes needed to increase democracy in practice. For McChesney increasing the possibility of a functional democracy is the key to social justice. He sees it as imperative that “we should make the rule of the many possible. This means among other things...reducing social inequality and establishing a media system that serves the entire population and promotes democratic rule.”<sup>69</sup> According to McChesney media reform is only one aspect of democratic reform, but it is an important one. Some of his criticisms are similar to those of the FLQ in stating that the monopoly-owned media frequently do not report in the political best interests of the lower classes. In proposing to be an alternative to the commercial media, CUP set out to cover the October crisis in such a way as to give students the information they needed to function as citizens in a democratic society; specifically a participatory democracy. For CUP this meant supplying the student and underground press with information about the crisis that was critical of the government and sympathetic to the goals of the nationalist movement and the FLQ.

With the 1965 changes to the constitution, CUP cast itself in the role of an alternative to the mainstream media. By 1968 CUP had strengthened this concept in the Statement of Principles to state:

the student press must use its freedom from commercial and other controls to ensure that all it does is consistent with its major role [to act as an agent of social change] and to examine issues which other media avoid.<sup>70</sup>

Although they did not necessarily review the formal policies before acting, this is the role that the CUP national office staff of 1970 worked toward.<sup>71</sup> While this is not the traditional role of the commercial press, the 1947 Commission on the Freedom of the Press also

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<sup>68</sup> “The FLQ Takes on Imperialism,” *CUP News Service* 7 Oct. 1970: 4.

<sup>69</sup> Robert McChesney, *Rich Media Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1999) 5.

<sup>70</sup> CUP, “Standing Resolution: 1. Statement of Principles of the Student Press in Canada,” *31st National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1968) 31.

<sup>71</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004.

encouraged a “media of advocacy” to balance the coverage of the mainstream media.<sup>72</sup> At the same time, John Downing, Tamara Villarreal Ford, Geneve Gil and Laura Stein state in their work, *Radical Media*, “it must be acknowledged that to speak simply of alternative media is almost oxymoronic. Everything, at some point, is alternative to something else.”<sup>73</sup> What we mean by alternative media then is not the plethora of trade magazines and niche publications, but rather what Downing et al term “radical media”—that segment of the press that aims to provide political opposition to the mainstream press, and round out its coverage. In being an alternative to the mainstream the radical press gives that information that is perhaps most noticeably absent from the mainstream news: information that encourages the political engagement and mobilization of the reader. For Downing et al, the mission of radical media is

not only to provide facts to a public denied them but to explore fresh ways of developing a questioning perspective on the hegemonic process and increasing the public’s sense of confidence in its power to engineer constructive change.<sup>74</sup>

The role of the alternative press is to provide information and to mobilize readers as citizens to create social change. This was precisely what the 1968 Statement of Principles encouraged by stating that the “major role of the student press [was] to act as an agent of social change, striving to emphasize the rights and responsibilities of the student citizen.”<sup>75</sup>

For Downing et al, the radical press has a symbiotic relationship with other radical organizations. In this way, “movement upsurges appear both to generate and to be stimulated by radical media. Conversely, at times when such movements are at a low ebb, the flood of alternative media also subsides.”<sup>76</sup> In each of these ways CUP acted in the role of an alternative or radical press, by actively working towards social change, providing information other news sources did not, and supporting other agents of social change. CUP was linked to the larger student movements, especially the left-wing social movements and sympathized with the FLQ. In its coverage, the CUP national executive tried to change the

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<sup>72</sup> The Commission on Freedom of the Press, *A Free and Responsible Press a General Report on Mass Communication: Newspapers, Radio, Motion Pictures, Magazines, and Books* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1947) 25.

<sup>73</sup> John D.H. Downing with Tamara Villarreal Ford, Geneve Gil and Laura Stein, *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements* (London: Sage Publications, 2001) ix.

<sup>74</sup> John D.H. Downing with Tamara Villarreal Ford, Geneve Gil and Laura Stein, *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements* (London: Sage Publications, 2001) 16.

<sup>75</sup> CUP, “Standing Resolution: 1. Statement of Principles of the Student Press in Canada,” *31st National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1968) 31.

<sup>76</sup> John D.H. Downing with Tamara Villarreal Ford, Geneve Gil and Laura Stein, *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements* (London: Sage Publications, 2001) 23.

views of the students and engage them politically with the issues of Québec nationalism and the infringement of civil liberties as a result of the WMA.

According to Penney, this was one of the explicit goals of the CUP national office in 1970. The CUP staff members felt they needed to “make a different kind of view available to the student body across the country.” Penney said that the members of the executive saw themselves both as “direct agents of social change, but also as people who would help other people to [take action].”<sup>77</sup> CUP helped other people to make change mostly by making information available to readers. The intention of making that information available was to alter students’ opinions about the FLQ and WMA, and encouraged students to take action. During the October crisis simply providing context about the FLQ and the actions in Québec become an action of defying the government and trying to avoid censorship by printers. The information can be considered active in the sense of engaging the audience in a debate and providing mobilizing information. For Michael Schudson, this type of information is one of the main areas lacking in the mainstream press:

While the commercial press is not without its virtues, actively engaging the public in political debates is not one of them. The contemporary mainstream press in a sense prevents the political activity of its readers because in some situations it avoids publishing what James Lemert calls “mobilizing information.”<sup>78</sup>

In providing context of the October crisis aimed at increasing sympathy with the FLQ, the CUP news wire was a source of such “mobilizing information.” The CUP national executive also mobilized the student and underground press by setting up the Québec Special Service and repeatedly urging papers to print the manifesto and articles sympathetic to the FLQ.

## **Conclusion**

In examining the CUP coverage of the October crisis we can see how the concept of acting as an agent of social change played out in the coverage of what is arguably the most controversial political event in Canada’s history. While the coverage in some cases meant police action and censorship by printers, the CUP news wire and CUP members acted on the Statement of Principles to the best of their abilities. Not only did CUP discuss the October Crisis in the context of a working class struggle against imperialist oppression (which seems to be both the FLQ’s own interpretation as well as that of the CUP national office staff) CUP

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<sup>77</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004.

<sup>78</sup> Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995) 197.

also examined the mainstream media and the effects of the crisis, and the reactions to it in the campus community. In doing so, the CUP national executive worked as an agent of social change by encouraging students across the country to become politically engaged in the issue and by encouraging student newspapers to print any and all information on the FLQ and the October crisis in defiance of censorship from their university administration, their printers and even the police.

The fact that the Statement of Principles was probably not consulted at any point by a member of the CUP national executive during the course of the October crisis does not make it less important or any less a reflection of the ideas of the organization. As Penney has pointed out, the national executive “definitely had a very strong sense of social purpose, as an organization. [That] didn’t flow from the documents. Some of the documents may have flowed from that sense of social purpose.”<sup>79</sup> As Penney seems to suggest, the conviction behind CUP’s actions during the October crisis did not start with the Statement of Principles. Rather, the Statement of Principles reflected what CUP members and staff believed. As we shall see, when this was no longer the case the formal documents became less effective. However, in 1970, the idea of acting as an agent of social change was an organic part of the CUP national office’s actions. The idea of an engaged press was not a flat two-dimensional concept that lived only inside the Statement of Purposes to be trotted out at conferences and debated—it was a living breathing concept. By 1970 the policy of acting as an agent of social change was fully realized in the CUP coverage of the October crisis and the creation of the Québec Special Service.

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<sup>79</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004.

## Chapter Three

### Changing From the Inside: Systemic changes in CUP

#### Introduction

For both the radical and liberal critics, to change the media means not only to change the content, but also to change the system of news creation. While some radical media critics such as Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky see the problems with the media as a direct consequence of the mass media's commercialization and see the subsequent solution as a matter of restructuring the media, at least in part, in a non-profit model, other critics see the profit model as only one aspect of the restructuring that needs to take place in the newsroom. For critics such as Hackett and Gruneau and John Miller, it is not simply the profit model, although that is part of the problem, but the way the newsroom privileges certain messages and voices. Further, as Hackett and Zhao have written, it is not simply the traditions of journalism, such as the practice of objectivity, that shape journalism. "The 'vocabulary of precedents' which journalists learn through newsroom practice may have more to do with the organizational imperatives of the corporations which employ them than with abstract ethical principles."<sup>1</sup>

For CUP, changing the structure of the organization was part of the project of being an agent of social change. This developed in part out of the members' Marxist or socialist critique of society, the media, and the post-secondary education system. Democratic decision-making at both a member level and a national level, as well as co-operative work sharing in the national office were ways in which CUP addressed issues of bureaucracy and hierarchy seen in traditional news organizations. CUP also worked to ensure that minority voices were not ignored by the majority. Part of CUP's commitment to minority voices included a gender-alternating speakers' list to encourage women to speak at conferences. Other measures included "issues caucuses" that met at the national and regional conferences to discuss and work on issues of importance to racial minorities, women, lesbians and gay men, and disabled delegates. Some caucuses were given speaking rights at the conference plenary sessions so that minorities did not have to rely on other delegates from their papers to allow them to speak. CUP also worked to restructure the traditional role of the publisher and the editor. CUP encouraged and supported members in becoming autonomous from their

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<sup>1</sup> Robert A. Hackett and Yuezhi Zhao, "Are Ethics Enough? 'Objective' Journalism Versus Sustainable Democracy," *Deadlines and Diversity: Journalism Ethics in a Changing World* eds. Valeri Alia, Brian Brennan and Barry Hoffmaster (Halifax: Fernwood, 1996) 45.



students' unions, allowing editorial staff to have control over finances. In promoting staff democracy and financial autonomy, CUP encouraged journalists to control the entire process of producing the news. At the same time, in promoting advertising boycotts and the refusal of advertising copy that was considered sexist or racist in content, CUP encouraged editors to make advertising decisions instead of merely blocking the advertisers from making editorial decisions. Finally, perhaps one of the most notable aspects of any CUP plenary session was the joke motions, which played an important part in CUP's restructuring of the news organization. In proposing (and passing, not to mention keeping on record) joke motions, CUP members problematized and questioned their roles as decision-makers, as journalists, and as agents of social change. Joke motions acted as a way of questioning the decisions, hierarchy, and politics of CUP and its members, as well as breaking the tension at long plenary sessions. In all of these ways CUP acted as an agent of social change through restructuring both its members' and its own operations.

This chapter examines CUP and its members' restructuring of the newsroom as part of their ongoing project of acting as agents of social change. In particular, it looks at staff democracy; the representation and encouragement of minority voices within CUP; the campaigns for newspaper autonomy from students' unions; advertising boycotts and refusal of sexist, racist and homophobic ads; and the function and use of joke motions. The chapter also explores the aspects of the Statement of Principles and Statement of Purposes for the National News Exchange that reflected CUP's view of social change as, among other things, a Marxist project of restructuring the workplace to give control of production to the workers. These structural changes were made not only to address unfair work practices, but also to alter systemic problems in news coverage caused in part by the newsroom structure. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to specify how CUP and its members' coverage was affected. For this reason, CUP news wire content is not be examined here. In part this is because of the large scale of the task. It is also a reflection of the fact that the student press is not just a product, or the cumulative output of the many CUP member papers. As well as producing a newspaper at the end of each week or month, a student newspaper is a space for training, experimentation, and questioning. Especially in considering the changes CUP and its members made to their internal structures, many of which were made without specific discussion of their effects on content, the product of the student newspaper does not seem to have been the main consideration. As an unnamed CUP BC Bureau Chief wrote, "It's the process, not the product, which must be seen as the essence [of the student press]."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "Notes from the B.C. Buro [sic]," *Regions 43rd National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1980) 8.

## **CUP's Marxist Critique of the Media**

Through the 1970s, CUP's criticism of the media as well as the education system began to take on many Marxist arguments. According to Jennifer Penney, CUP President in 1970-71, this is in large part due to many CUP participants' involvement in left-wing political groups. The individuals involved in these groups included their politics in the decisions they made with CUP.<sup>3</sup>

These arguments showed up most clearly in the Statement of Purposes of the National News Exchange, or Purposes, drafted in 1975. While the 1968 Statement of Principles stated that student newspaper's major role was to act as an agent of social change, it did not explicitly declare what type of social change. Additionally, the Statement of Principles specified the ideals that member papers held each other up to, but did not address the news wire or CUP itself. Ten years after the "agent of social change" clause was first introduced, the 1975 Purposes filled both of those areas. Instead of starting with a clause about the coverage itself, the Purposes began with a statement on the "class society" that existed in Canada. In doing so it explicitly set as its main priority social change that would help to end the "class structure" and oppression of women and minorities. The Purposes read:

Canadian University Press recognizes that a class society exists in Canada, and the important role the post-secondary education system plays in maintaining the existing social order. This role is reflected in the policies regarding accessibility to post-secondary education and the resulting composition of the Canadian student body, in the content of the education we receive, and is evidenced by the future positions which we are expected to occupy within the economic and social order.

Canadian University Press, as an agent of social change, must as its main priority attempt to use its national news service to provide Canadian students with information and analysis of the nature and role of post-secondary education within the Canadian economic and social system, relate the current policies of financial cutbacks being waged against post-secondary education and other social services to the general economic crisis facing Canada, and assist students in mobilizing opposition to these policies...

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<sup>3</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004.

Canadian University Press must also use its national news service to provide Canadian students with information and analysis of the capitalist economic system in which we all live, and to assist students in mobilizing against that system where it is found to be preserving the class structure or to be oppressive to women, minorities or others within Canada.<sup>4</sup>

The Purposes restated and reinforced the political role that CUP members had already set for themselves in the Statement of Principles. Some of this language struck some later readers, such as the members of the 1991 Long Term Planning Commission, as sounding “like the Marxist cry as you head off for the revolution.”<sup>5</sup> At the time it was not viewed as particularly revolutionary. Francis Fuca, CUP president, said of the Purposes, “We may not be revolutionary, but we can at least be reformist,” indicating that the Purposes were not thought of as radical at the time.<sup>6</sup> Again, as in the previous changes to the Statement of Principles, other than this statement from Fuca, there is no recorded discussion on the inclusion of the Purposes, and the motion seems not to have been contentious.

The Purposes extended and clarified some notions set out in the 1968 Statement of Principles, and explicitly applied them to CUP’s own operations. For example, in stating that CUP should “assist student in mobilizing opposition” this document clarified what the 1968 Statement of Principles meant by saying that the student press should be “active.” The Purposes also introduced an explicit criticism of the class system, and required that CUP use the news wire to help students mobilize against the capitalist system “where it is found to be preserving the class structure or to be oppressive to women, minorities or others within Canada.” In setting out this criticism, CUP committed itself to mobilize against the capitalist system, rather than merely to work toward non-specific social change. This included providing information to students, specifically coverage and analysis of workers’ rights, unionization, strike actions, and other issues dealing with oppression. In requiring that CUP assist students in mobilizing, the organization aimed to provide the information that Schudson identifies as missing in the mainstream news coverage; information that encourages readers to become active.<sup>7</sup> While Penney and others have raised the question of the usefulness of such documents in the actual work of the producing the news service,<sup>8</sup> in the years following the introduction of the Statement of Purposes it seems to have been taken

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<sup>4</sup> CUP, “Service Commission Report: Statement of Purposes for National News Service,” *38 National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1975) n.pag.

<sup>5</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 54th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1991) n.pag.

<sup>6</sup> CUP, *38 National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1975) 19.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995) 197.

<sup>8</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004.

quite seriously by the national office in selecting stories. For example, the *National Office Annual Fall Report* for 1977 examined the coverage of the news exchange and how it fulfilled the directives set out in the Purposes: “two thirds of the stories in the news exchange deal with education... ‘information and analysis of the nature and role of post-secondary education’. Another twenty-five per cent deal with the economy, labour, Québec, international and government... ‘information and analysis of the capitalist economic system in which we all live’. Six and a half per cent deal with liberation... ‘the class structure oppressive to women, minorities and others in Canada.’”<sup>9</sup> The next year the staff wrote in their annual report, “we have tried to keep the discussion of the Statement of Principles in front of members, and we have tried to write our news from the perspective of the Statement of Purposes for the News Exchange.”<sup>10</sup>

More than just changing coverage, however, the Purposes also encouraged CUP and its members to examine their own structures and where the organization and its members might have been “preserving the class structure.” For example, as an anonymous writer in the 1978 *House Organ* wrote, “to promote reform or advocate bloody revolution... [a paper] must demand critical analysis and participation within—democratic structure [sic]. Both are keystones to the educational process within the paper, both generate the sort of paper which provides the readership with understanding and motivation.”<sup>11</sup> Newspaper democracy was just one way that CUP and its members changed their own organizations to reflect the Statement of Purposes’ critique of the capitalist system as oppressive and class based.

### **Restructuring Decision Making**

Many theorists use the term “news filters” to discuss those processes and considerations that help to select news coverage by determining which subjects get covered and which do not.<sup>12</sup> The top-down management of the traditional newsroom, where the publisher is at the top and makes all the major financial decisions, acts as one such filter on the news. This filtering can be implicit, but it is also frequently explicit, with the publisher or

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<sup>9</sup> CUP, “The News Priorities of CUP members and Services,” *40th National Office Annual Fall Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1977) n.pag.

<sup>10</sup> CUP, “Executive Reports,” *Annual Reports 41st Canadian University Press National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1978) n.pag.

<sup>11</sup> “The Paper as an Alternative Educational Institute,” *House Organ* 22 Feb. 1978: n.pag.

<sup>12</sup> See Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 2002). and Robert A. Hackett and Richard Gruneau with Donald Gutstein, Timothy A. Gibson and NewsWatch Canada, *The Missing News: Filters and Blind Spots in Canada's Press* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2000).

advertiser demanding the coverage, or cover-up of certain events or issues. Even in scenarios where the publisher gives the editor autonomy over editorial decisions, the publisher has the power to hire and fire the editor and set the budget priorities. Top-down management is accompanied by “bottom-line management” where publishers demand bigger profits from their newspapers. This bottom-line management makes editors responsible for the profit margin of the paper without giving them the symmetrical power over major financial decisions. According to Doug Underwood, in his book *When MBAs Rule the Newsroom*, “bottom-line management” has been a long tradition in Canada’s newsrooms.<sup>13</sup> This is perhaps why, as Arthur Siegel points out, the profit margin for newspapers is among the highest in the industrial sector, with average returns of thirty per cent between 1973 and 1980, as compared to nine per cent in metal fabrication, and ten per cent in food.<sup>14</sup>

The corporate news organization is set up as a business, and many theorists have made the argument that its practices serve primarily commercial rather than journalistic or public service ends. As Edward Lambeth writes in his work, *Committed Journalism*, “rather than being driven primarily by ideals of public service, news media establish work objectives and procedures that serve first and foremost the logistic and economic needs of the news organization.”<sup>15</sup> The practices of journalism as well as the structure of the newsroom have been examined by several theorists and found to be at least contributing to, if not causing, many of the failings of the media. As with the rituals of objectivity, many of the practices of traditional journalism, such as reliance on official sources, few minority voices in the newsroom, a concept of news that privileges certain events and subjects and a top-down management style, are part and parcel of the commercial press model. However, this does not directly address which side of the equation, journalistic practices or the commercial system, is the primary problem. In working to change the structures of CUP as well as their individual papers, while at the same time questioning and adapting many of the traditions of journalistic writing, CUP members attempted to address both sides of this problem.

For CUP itself, management was neither top down nor strictly bottom up. As a co-operative, the organization always had a commitment to democratic rule. Each member newspaper had an equal vote and the organization worked on the principles of participatory democracy, with members working to create as well as vote on policy and planning initiatives. At national and regional plenary sessions conference delegates drafted policy

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<sup>13</sup> Doug Underwood, *When MBAs Rule the Newsroom: How the Marketers and Managers are Reshaping Today's Media* (New York: Columbia UP, 1993) 27.

<sup>14</sup> Arthur Siegel, *Politics and the Media in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1983) 103.

<sup>15</sup> Edmund B. Lambeth, *Committed Journalism: An Ethic for the Profession* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992) 4.

motions, either independently or as part of a “commission” responsible for a specific area of discussion, such as finances. The commissions then presented the motions to the assembled plenary, where members debated and voted on the motions. Motions from the floor could be presented either by members, or, in some cases, minority “caucus” groups. These caucus groups are explored further later in this chapter. CUP members voted on all major decisions of the organization including motions that set fees and allocated the budget of the organization, set service and expansion priorities, developed the principles of the organization, changed the constitution, created new staff positions, and elected the national staff. Through the plenary sessions members had control over almost all aspects of the organization.

The organization developed a democratic and work-sharing system that allowed decision-making to happen at many different levels depending on the situation. For example, while members at the national conferences made most of the long-term and major decisions of the organization collectively, day-to-day decisions were usually made by individual writers at member papers, or bureau chiefs, often with input from members and elected resource people. Even when decisions were made from the “top” such as the president deciding to make a purchase or the national bureau chief deciding which stories would run on the wire, these staff members were answerable to the “bottom” because it was members collectively who had the power to hire, discipline, and fire national and regional staff. At the same time, the CUP staff were given a great deal of freedom in their day-to-day operations. While members gave staff certain mandates for the year, the staff worked mostly on their own, except during the conferences. The Special Senate Committee on the Mass Media described the student newspaper editor as having almost unlimited freedom: “for one sweet season he [sic] can print *exactly what he wants*, restrained only by the laws of libel and contempt (which are seldom applied), and the apathy and chronic unreliability of his staff.”<sup>16</sup> While this is certainly overstating the case, it is true that both student newspaper editors and CUP staff had a great deal of autonomy and freedom compared to those working in the mainstream press. When emergency decisions needed to be made before a plenary session, CUP had procedures for mail or e-mail referenda and elections, allowing members to make critical decisions throughout the year. CUP’s emphasis on democracy is consistent with Downing et al’s observation that “there is a tendency with... [the] internal organization [of radical media] to try to be somewhat more, or sometimes considerably more democratic than

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<sup>16</sup> Special Senate Committee on Mass Media, *Mass Media: The Uncertain Mirror Report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media* vol. 1 Special Senate Committee on Mass Media (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer for Canada, 1970) 186.

conventional mainstream media.”<sup>17</sup> While democratic decision-making is often much more labour-intensive than top-down styles, it can also lead to greater involvement and participation, and also to decisions that take into account varied viewpoints.

CUP also experimented with changes to the flow of decision-making power in CUP’s offices. In 1973, members voted in changes to the work practices in the national office, making the staff “collectively responsible for [sic] the work done in that office,” and instructing them to “use their job descriptions as guidelines within a collective co-operative structure.”<sup>18</sup> The motion was quite long and included extensive instructions on “collective (co-operative)” decision-making that included striking a consulting committee when compromise could not be reached, using mail referendum to consult with members, and voicing dissenting opinions in the *House Organ*. This way of functioning is quite distant from the rigidly hierarchical structure in place in many newspapers. While this allowed CUP staff and members to find new and creative answers to the problems they identified with the traditional newsroom operations, they were experimental and some of the experiments did not work in practice. For example, although the staff was collectively responsible for work, all of the job descriptions stayed in place, giving specific duties to each staff member. In practice it seems that while the staff members worked together co-operatively, in many cases they were individually responsible for their own duties, especially in the case of selecting stories for the news exchange. Also, given the geographic distribution of the staff across the country, and the fact that the majority of CUP staff (regional bureaus, resource staff, field secretaries etc.) worked outside of the national office, the staff tended to be much less co-operative in practice than in the CUP policy. However, it seems that CUP attempted to make the work structure more inclusive, flexible, multi-voiced and multi-leveled. These structural differences from the mainstream newsroom display a different way of thinking about the news organization, one that valued process as well as product and that prioritized democracy as well as efficiency.

### **Minority Reports**

It is clear both through these changes and through CUP’s elaborate plenary sessions that CUP was committed to the democratic process. However, there is always danger within a democracy that minority voices will be silenced and dissent muffled. CUP worked to

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<sup>17</sup> John D.H. Downing with Tamara Villarreal Ford, Geneve Gil and Laura Stein, *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements* (London: Sage Publications, 2001) xi.

<sup>18</sup> CUP, *36th National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1973) Motion SP/4/73.

ensure that the voices of visible minorities and groups identified as systemically disenfranchised, such as women, the disabled, and lesbians and gay men were encouraged and protected.

Although CUP's work with other agents of social change is examined in more depth in Chapter Four, there are also several ways that CUP addressed these minority voices through structural changes within the organization. These changes were consistent with the critique found in the Purposes. In declaring that the student press "must assist students in mobilizing against that system where it is found to be preserving the class structure or to be oppressive to women, minorities or others within Canada,"<sup>19</sup> CUP and its members also committed to change their own structures where they preserved class hierarchies and oppressed people. As the organization became increasingly involved with various other agents of social change, the Statement of Principles and the Code of Ethics were amended to include an opposition to prejudice based on race, sex, and sexual orientation.<sup>20</sup>

CUP members put in place a number of measures to ensure minority voices within the organization were heard, and to provide women and minorities a chance to meet, organize, suggest changes, and voice concerns. The issues caucuses were a space for minority groups to meet and discuss issues of concern. The issues caucuses were in addition to the "regional" and "size" caucuses, where members split into groups to discuss their common concerns. Regional caucuses split the members into the regional groups to discuss the issues that were expected to come to the floor during the plenary sessions and allow the members of each region to discuss where they each stood on key motions. In some years, papers within a region voted as a block and were able to swing the decision on issues that they cared about strongly. While regional caucuses met throughout the national conference, the most important meeting was at the beginning of the conference, before delegates were elected to commissions.

The size caucuses often met after the regional caucus and were a chance for members to discuss the issues of concern that they shared with members of similar size. To ensure that members of each size category were equally represented on commissions, the members of each size caucus elected delegates to serve on each commission.

The issues caucuses developed out of these other two caucuses to address issues of particular concern to groups of delegates rather than members papers. Unlike the other caucuses, attendance at the "issues" caucuses was not mandatory and only those delegates

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<sup>19</sup> CUP, "Service Commission Report: Statement of Purposes for National News Service," *38 National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1975) n.pag.

<sup>20</sup> CUP, "Statement of Principles Commission: Final Plenary Report," *CUP 46 Appendices* (Ottawa: CUP, 1983) 119. Motion 3.



who identified as being part of the group were invited. One of the defining characteristics of most of the caucuses was that they had a closed-door policy and were meant to be a safe space for delegates. In part because of this there are neither minutes, nor any record of who participated in caucus meetings. However, this is not to say that issues caucuses were inactive or quiet. The purpose of the closed-door policy was to provide a safe space for delegates to plan actions and motions, and talk about their papers or CUP. Over time, the issues caucuses would also gain an official voice on the plenary floor.

The first “issues” caucus was the women’s caucus, which according to a writer in the *House Organ* had become “a regular feature of CUP conferences,” by 1973.<sup>21</sup> The women’s caucus met to discuss issues of sexism at member papers and on campuses and was frequently scheduled opposite a men’s caucus meeting where male delegates either discussed their views on sexism on their campuses or discussed how they felt they could address feminist issues as men. However, in an article in the *House Organ* in 1974, two writers identified as Harvey and Moir express frustration with the fact that in spite of the women’s caucus, and the fact that members had passed several resolutions dealing with the women’s demands, these resolutions were not being implemented. These included motions that directed field workers to pay special attention to the position of women on CUP member staff, that there be a monthly CUP women’s service and that women’s regional caucuses elect a female resource person.<sup>22</sup> Despite the caucus meetings at conferences, it took women many years of struggle within CUP to change sexist attitudes in the organization and their member papers.

Because of the way that discussion and voting took place on plenary floor, women and minorities found it difficult at times to speak to their own concerns, especially when their paper did not share these concerns. On the plenary floor, each member newspaper had a delegation card used to identify the member as a speaker and for voting. All the delegates from the paper shared the same voting card and were recognized as the member paper, not as individuals (this is the reason why the minutes usually record only the paper’s name, not the name of the individual delegate who is speaking). Although delegates would at times say that they were speaking for themselves, not their paper, this was seen as an exception, not the rule.

In 1983, the members passed a motion giving the lesbian and gay caucus “non-voting delegation status...allowing them to speak to matters of particular concern to them at plenary

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<sup>21</sup> CUP, *House Organ* 28 Jan. 1973: 5.

<sup>22</sup> Harvey and Moir, “Where the Idea for a Women’s Press Conference Came From,” *House Organ* 14 Nov. 1974: 18.

sessions of the national conference.”<sup>23</sup> The motion stated that these additional speaking rights were necessary because lesbians and gay men were reliant on the rest of their delegation to receive speaking rights:

lesbians and gay males are a minority on most of their paper delegations and, consequently, are dependent upon the good will of their fellow delegates (for access to their delegation card) when wishing to address the conference as a whole, and ... individuals attending the Lesbian and Gay caucus... have aired the concern that they are uncomfortable with this situation—feeling that they are forced to make certain compromises in order to maintain the good-will of their delegation.<sup>24</sup>

In 1985 this privilege was extended to the anti-racism caucus.<sup>25</sup> Although there does not seem to be a motion for this privilege to be given to the women’s caucus, judging by the minutes of following years, it would seem that all issues caucuses were given non-voting speakers’ rights allowing them to speak on plenary floor. Similarly, while both the motions regarding speaking rights for the lesbian and gay caucus and the anti-racism caucus mention “non-voting” rights only, based on the minutes, it appears that in practice they were given the rights to move and second motions as well.<sup>26</sup> In giving minority groups special speaking rights under the constitution, CUP maintained its commitment to democracy and to minorities in the organization. However, this did not address the underlying problem of a low number of visible minorities at conferences, an issue that continues to plague CUP to this day.

In 1983, women at the conference were also given special speaking rights. For the first time the conference used gender-alternating speakers’ lists. A proposed motion from 1984 to entrench this practice in the constitution described how the lists worked:

The Chair shall keep two speakers’ lists, one for female delegates and one for male delegates, and recognize speakers alternately. A paper’s placement on either list shall be determined by the sex of the delegate who raises the voting card on behalf of their delegation. The Chair starts with the women’s list in each discussion.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> CUP, “Other Business,” *CUP 46 Minutes* (Ottawa: CUP, 1983) 54, Motion 1.

<sup>24</sup> CUP, “Other Business,” *CUP 46 Minutes* (Ottawa: CUP, 1983) 54, Motion 1.

<sup>25</sup> CUP, *CUP 48 Minutes* (Ottawa: CUP, 1985) n.pag, Motion 8.

<sup>26</sup> See, motion 39 of the 54<sup>th</sup> National Conference, moved by the racial equality caucus, which replaced the anti-racism caucus. CUP, *Minutes of the 54th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1991) C-55, Motion 39.

<sup>27</sup> CUP, “Constitution Commission Report Part 4,” *CUP 47 Appendices* (Ottawa: CUP, 1984) 36.

In 1992 a motion was made to “install an expanded affirmative action speakers’ list” to address the fact that there “has not historically been a representative number of people of colour at CUP conferences.” However, the motion was tabled and never dealt with.<sup>28</sup>

The gender-alternating speakers’ lists were meant to encourage women to participate in policy-making and discussion. Although there were a higher number of women present at CUP conferences at this time than ever before (the 1984 delegate list records 163 delegates, sixty-eight of whom appear to be women<sup>29</sup>) the gender-alternating speakers’ list seems to reflect the situation that fewer women were participating in policy making. For example, of the forty-two delegates serving on commissions in 1984, only fifteen, or thirty-five per cent, were women, below the forty-two per cent of female delegates overall.<sup>30</sup> Since the commissions wrote the majority of motions that were addressed at the plenary, especially those dealing with issues of importance such as the budget, membership, and the constitution, this lower number of women meant that female delegates were not adequately represented in the first step of the decision-making process. Additionally, because delegation cards represented the entire paper, often the most vocal or aggressive person in the group spoke the most often. While any delegate in theory represented the views of the paper, not his or her own, the gender-alternating speakers’ lists reflected CUP’s commitment to ensuring multiple view points were heard on the plenary floor. The gender-alternating speakers’ list put male and female participants on more equal footing in terms of having the opportunity to speak at the conference. In fact, since the chair would start with the women’s list and as fewer female delegates attended the conference, individual female delegates had a greater chance of being heard on plenary floor. The gender alternating lists effectively encouraged papers to have their female delegates speak on their behalf, thereby getting to speak earlier. In turn, this meant that female delegates’ voices would be heard even if they were not the most aggressive members of their delegation. This is another way in which CUP, in acting as an agent of social change, changed its operations and structure to reflect its political commitments. In creating such measures as the gender-alternating speakers’ lists and issues caucuses, CUP changed its structure to ensure that it was, in the words of its Statement of Purposes, “mobilizing against [the] system where it is found to be ... oppressive to women, minorities or others.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 55th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) A-19, Motion 5.

<sup>29</sup> CUP, *CUP 47 Appendices* (Ottawa: CUP, 1984).

<sup>30</sup> CUP, “Members of Commissions at CUP 47,” *CUP 47 Appendices* (Ottawa: CUP, 1984) n.pag.

<sup>31</sup> CUP, “Service Commission Report: Statement of Purposes for National News Service,” *38 National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1975) n.pag.

## Media Democracy

Although many of CUP's changes addressed commonly identified problems with the newsroom, some of the changes they made were quite radical in comparison to those suggested by theorists. Perhaps the most radical of these was CUP members' work to make their newsrooms financially autonomous and democratically controlled. This meant that the journalists themselves, instead of separate publishers, controlled not only the editorial decisions, but also the budgeting and advertising decisions of the newspaper. This idea that journalists, not publishers, should control the entire production process of the newspaper is a concept that is rarely discussed in media criticism. Instead, critics focus on concentration of ownership, suggesting that there should be a diversity of ownership, or the professionalization of journalism, suggesting that the codifying of the job can take away journalists' ability to make decisions, or the effects of advertising, without suggesting that journalists themselves should have control of this advertising. Even in the discussion of the CanWest Global controversy, following the publisher's decision to insert chain editorials into all of the newspapers it owned and discipline or fire employees who were critical of that choice, media critics were careful to say that, indeed, journalists were employees and should be treated as such, but they should also have a degree of editorial autonomy. According to Paul Knox, the Newspaper Guild went as far as calling for CanWest Global to commit to a "set of principles entitled the Public Trust. This called for autonomy for local editors in the choice of editorial opinions and news editing, absolute freedom of opinion for columnists, and an acknowledgement that the journalist's first responsibility is to the reader/listener/viewer."<sup>32</sup>

CUP members instead took editorial autonomy as a given and declared that in order to ensure a free press, journalists themselves should jointly control all aspects of the newspaper including budgeting and hiring, as well as editorial direction. This idea does not seem to have ever had very many other followers, at least not in North America. According to McChesney, one of the few was George Seldes who argued that the journalists should run the newspapers: "In no other industry is the employee as capable of directing the whole works as in newspaper making."<sup>33</sup> In his book *Freedom of the Press*, Seldes imagines a scenario where publishers tell staff they are free from all outside control to publish only according to the canons and ethical codes of journalism. In this scenario, he says, "the owner

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<sup>32</sup> Paul Knox, *Not in the Newsroom... Free Expression and Media Concentration in Canada: The Case of CanWest Global* (Ottawa: The Round Table, 2002) 503.

<sup>33</sup> Robert McChesney, *The Problem of the Media: U.S. Communication Politics in the 21st Century* (New York: Monthly Review, 2004) 66.

would not be grossing about two million dollars a month. He might, in fact, have to dig down into his bank balance. But it would be worth trying.”<sup>34</sup> In promoting the student newspapers’ financial autonomy and democratic decision-making, CUP members tried just that. They were able to do so because of the guaranteed funding they had from student fees. The fact that the student newspapers were not reliant on advertising revenue or subscription sales, combined with the fact that they were not trying to make a profit, meant that they were able to try in practice what Seldes only imagined.

Although all documents seem to indicate that CUP itself had always functioned as a democratically run co-operative organization, with full members each holding equal power to move, second, and vote on motions of policy, at the 1973 conference members extended this to their own structures as well. Motion C/3/73 changed the constitution so that members of CUP had to be “democratically run.”<sup>35</sup> However, it was not entirely clear what CUP members meant by democratically run. According to the chapter on staff democracy in the 1977 *CUP Style Guide*:

the way a newspaper is operated depends not only on abstract organizational criteria but on its purpose and on the wishes, priorities and abilities of those who work on it... There are many practical as well as principled reasons for ensuring your paper is democratically run, but the one that really matters is that those who do the work should control the work.<sup>36</sup>

This meant not only that the newspaper staff, rather than the students’ unions should control the work, but that each individual working on the paper should have equal control over the publication. According to the 1977 *Style Guide*, “a viable staff democracy...is established when the staff hold all the power and with it takes responsibility.”<sup>37</sup> There were several models of democratic rule that papers used. For example, the University of Victoria *Martlet* functioned in a “collective-collaborative process” that included paid staff and volunteers carrying an equal vote in decisions on almost all aspects of the paper’s production from cover photos and the subject of the editorial cartoon, to page count, to staffing.<sup>38</sup> Other papers used voting only for major decisions such as the budget, or to ratify decisions made by the editor-in-chief, or used voting only to elect staff to decision-making positions. Still others, perhaps most notably the University of British Columbia *Ubysey* in the late 1990s, used a non-

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<sup>34</sup> George Seldes, *Freedom of the Press* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971) 358.

<sup>35</sup> CUP, *36th National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1973) 12, Motion C/3/73.

<sup>36</sup> CUP, “Staff Democracy,” *CUP Style Guide Fall '77* (Ottawa: CUP, 1977) 1.

<sup>37</sup> CUP, “Staff Democracy,” *CUP Style Guide Fall '77* (Ottawa: CUP, 1977) 4.

<sup>38</sup> Donald Brennan, “Eighties Martlet: Why be Normal?” *The Martlet: Fifty years of Newspaper (R)evolution*, ed. Gefen Bar-on (Victoria: Martlet Publishing Society, 1998) 102.

hierarchical democratic system to try to form consensus on decisions. The 1977 *Style Guide* recommended making decisions by consensus “as much as possible,” but at the same time stated that workers should have clearly defined responsibilities to ensure work got done. While there are many interpretations of staff democracy, the term certainly implies that all staff have an equal footing in some of the decision-making that happens in the newsroom, whether or not “democracy” was interpreted to mean that the staff should vote on every decision and be equally responsible for all work. In a discussion on staff democracy in the 1976-77 *House Organ*, democracy was defined as allowing “staff to have the final say is [sic] what goes into the paper.” The article recognized both the dystopian and utopian views of staff democracy:

staff democracy can easily degenerate into a small group of people making decisions...more idealistically: through a democratically-run newspaper, students can learn first hand that decisions do not have to be made [sic] by arbitrary authorities like their parent school teachers [sic] and government bureaucrats, but can be made by the people directly involved.<sup>39</sup>

The fact that the newspaper can supply information vital to a functioning democracy is among the foundational principles of the free press. As Schudson writes, the very existence of the newspaper that is available to everyone, daily and inexpensively is in itself a lesson in democracy.<sup>40</sup> In this way, the press serves two democratic functions; the first is that the press gives people the information and context needed to make the decisions that are required of them as citizens, and the second is that in its availability to everyone, the press is an example of a democratic ideal. CUP and its members’ use of staff democracy took this notion of the newspaper as democratic ideal one step further by giving individual staff members working collectively the responsibility and power to create the newspaper at all levels of production.

### **Financial Autonomy**

The idea of staff democracy for the newsroom went hand-in-hand with financial and editorial autonomy. CUP encouraged members to become both editorially and financially autonomous from their students’ unions. The 1966 *Annual Fall Report*, explained in part how the student newspapers were run at that time: “Student newspapers published at Canadian universities [were] published—formally, at least—by the governing body of the student union and [were] financed by a combination of paid commercial advertising and student

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<sup>39</sup> “Staff Democracy: Some Thoughts on Collectives,” *House Organ* Number 3 1976-77: 16-18.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995) 33.

union grants.”<sup>41</sup> That same year, the idea of autonomy was enshrined in CUP’s Policy Statement, which read, “whereas a student newspaper should be financially autonomous, all papers should be financed by a direct, compulsory, constitutionally-established student levy, to be forwarded to the constituted editorial authority of the paper. Any system of budgetary administration is detrimental to the ability of a paper’s constituted editorial authority to administer its funds.”<sup>42</sup> Although the students’ unions frequently promised not to restrict the newspapers’ editorial autonomy, while they controlled the newspapers’ finances there was always the threat that they could pull the newspapers’ funding. “Direct” student levies would by-pass the students’ unions and see the newspapers receiving their funding in the same manner as the unions themselves, rather than waiting for the union to redistribute the monies. In turn this meant that the newspaper itself would have the power to set and control its budget, rather than having its budget dictated and paid out by the students’ union. Effectively, this would give the journalists the power to decide all levels of the newspaper’s functioning from story selection to page count, staff size, and advertising.

CUP members were not only defending their own rights to freedom from the restrictions of the students’ unions, but were creating a new vision of the newsroom where the workers controlled the means of production. Many students’ unions were loathe to give up at least some sort of control over the newspapers, and some autonomy battles went on for years. By the mid-nineties many of the larger papers had gained autonomy from their students unions through general student referenda.<sup>43</sup> Autonomy, whether editorial, where students’ unions signed agreements or passed motions agreeing not to interfere with editorial decisions, or full financial autonomy, gave student journalists the rights to control and shape their papers.

### **Advertising Boycotts and Refusals**

CUP promoted the use of both advertising boycotts, where a particular advertiser would be boycotted for a variety of reasons, and ad refusals, where individual advertisements would be refused based on their content. There were two key component to these campaigns’ effectiveness, the idea that the editorial department was the location of decision-making power and the financial stability created by the student papers’ fee levies or other forms of

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<sup>41</sup> CUP, “Report on the Ryersonian Case,” *Annual Fall Report September, 1966* (Ottawa: CUP, 1966) 13.

<sup>42</sup> CUP, *Report 29<sup>th</sup> National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1966) Motion 6/NB/66.

<sup>43</sup> For example, the Concordia University *Link* gained autonomy in 1986, the *McGill Daily* in 1980, and the *Ubyyssey* in 1995. Many others have won autonomy more recently, for example the University of Alberta *Gateway* in 2002, or are still struggling to gain it, such as the Athabasca University *Voice*.

guaranteed funding. CUP members were determined not to allow advertising to rule their papers as it is seen by many theorists to rule the newsrooms of commercial papers. This was another way that CUP members “mobiliz[ed] against [the capitalist] system where it is found to be preserving the class structure or to be oppressive to women, minorities or others within Canada.”<sup>44</sup> By refusing to print individual ads that were considered racist, sexist or homophobic, and by boycotting certain advertisers altogether, CUP members acted against the traditional capitalist framework of the news organization. Not only did many CUP members refuse to allow advertisers to dictate editorial policy, they refused to allow them to dictate any content of the newspaper and maintained the right to refuse any ad. While many commercial newspapers theoretically reserve the right to refuse advertising for a variety of reasons, CUP members were unique in the using that right to such an extent.

The media critics’ objections to advertising and the power of advertisers are legion. For CUP members, advertising boycotts and the refusal to run objectionable advertising content allowed the newsroom to regain control over advertising and put advertising in its place as a means to the end of paying for a politically engaged newspaper. The fact that CUP members had other sources of guaranteed income made such actions possible. CUP boycotted advertisers such those who supported South African apartheid, companies who hired scab workers and even the CBC (over an issue of the CBC not airing public service announcements from gay rights groups in Halifax).<sup>45</sup> Advertising refusals were more difficult to co-ordinate because they did not target specific advertisers, but rather the content of the ads themselves. Some of these campaigns will be touched on in greater detail in the next chapter in an examination of CUP’s work with other agents of social change. However, boycotting and refusing advertising as a structural change to the newsroom also deserves consideration.

For the commercial newsroom under a profit model, profit and therefore usually advertising, is the main goal of the newspaper. Rather than delivering news to the reader, Miller suggests that the corporate newspaper delivers readers to the advertiser.<sup>46</sup> In this scenario the editorial department’s job is to create copy that will fill in the spaces between the ads and get readers to look at the ads. For many in CUP, however, the ads had to support, not contradict the editorial content. In an interview, Dorothy Wigmore, CUP president 1972-73, explained, “You can’t have stories about people fighting apartheid and then...an ad from

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<sup>44</sup> CUP, “Service Commission Report: Statement of Purposes for National News Service,” 38 *National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1975) n.pag.

<sup>45</sup> “Boycott CBC Radio Ads,” *House Organ* Number 4 (1976-77): n.pag.

<sup>46</sup> John Miller, *Yesterday’s News: Why Canada’s Daily Newspapers are Failing Us* (Halifax: Fernwood, 1998) 10.



a company that is really supporting it.”<sup>47</sup> Without boycotts and refusals, many of the ads the newspapers ran contradicted the messages CUP was trying to promote through its coverage. As Jennifer Penney wrote to members in the 1970 House Organ, “the advertising you use to simply keep functioning, is the advertising which sells the social structures you oppose, itself a contradiction to the different values you see yourselves promoting.”<sup>48</sup> For CUP and its members, one way of working against the capitalist system was to boycott those advertisers that were considered the most blatantly oppressive.

Several suggestions were made to create national boycott lists. One was a list of companies that would be boycotted by CUP if the organization started a national magazine.<sup>49</sup> In 1979, the members passed a motion listing the national magazine boycott list for the hypothetical magazine. The motion read:

Should CUP decide to publish a national magazine be it resolved that the national magazine boycott ads of: a) companies that blatantly invest in South Africa, e.g. Rothmans b) companies that blatantly oppress workers, e.g. J.P. Stevens, Radioshack, McDonalds c) companies that blatantly discriminate, e.g. CBC d) organizations of a military and para-military nature, e.g. Katimavik e) companies and organizations that advocate violence against workers, e.g. Robin Hood Flour.<sup>50</sup>

While there was some debate on the motion, especially regarding clause b, which some members felt would disqualify all potential advertisers, the majority agreed with the motion and it passed easily. As the delegate from the University of Saskatchewan *Sheaf* stated, the list “recognize[d] the need for advertising to finance the [magazine] but there are some areas in which it would [have been] grossly hypocritical to accept advertising propaganda from certain interests.”<sup>51</sup> CUP members continued to encourage each other to boycott ads through the 1970s and 1980s.

At the same time, there were several problems with advertising boycotts and refusals. One of these problems was the difficulty the two groups that sold advertising space for CUP papers had in recognizing advertising refusals. In 1969, CUP signed a contract with an advertising sales company called Cameron Consultants to create a national advertising co-

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<sup>47</sup> Dorothy Wigmore, Personal Interview, 9 Apr. 2004.

<sup>48</sup> Jennifer Penney, “Women and Men and First-Year Students are People Too,” *House Organ* 25 Sep. 1970: n.pag.

<sup>49</sup> Publishing a national magazine was a dream held by CUP for many years. There were several proposals over the decades, but none of them were published until 2000, when CUP published three issues of the short-lived *Agent*.

<sup>50</sup> CUP, *The Minutes: 42<sup>nd</sup> National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1979) 97.

<sup>51</sup> CUP, *The Minutes: 42<sup>nd</sup> National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1979) 97.

operative for CUP members. Once the Youthstream advertising co-operative was established CUP members received advertising in two ways, each paper sold their own local ads, and Youthstream sold national ads. With local advertisers, papers used their own discretion in terms of which ads they would run. With national advertising, both Youthstream and the paper were involved, and the issue became more difficult, especially when it involved questions of whether or not an ad was sexist. Along with rates and other disputes, it would seem that advertising boycotts were one of the issues that caused a rift between CUP and Youthstream, resulting in CUP members starting their own advertising company, Canadian University Press Media Services or Campus Plus, in 1980.

Advertising boycotts were fairly simple for the advertising co-ops, Youthstream from 1969 until 1980 and then Campus Plus, to keep straight. CUP members each filled out a form, stating which ads the paper would and would not accept. In addition, the Youthstream contract stipulated no sexist advertising content. However, from time to time there were problems. For example, according to a February 1978 letter from Nancy McRitchie, the Western Region Human Rights Co-ordinator in 1978-79, Youthstream sent at least two sexist ads to members for insertion that month, one for Colts cigarettes and another for Julius Schmidt condoms. According to McRitchie, the ads were "sexist and unacceptable according to the CUP statement of principles."<sup>52</sup> Even with the CUP *Guide to Sexist Advertising*, which gave a fairly clear definition of sexist ads, refusals of sexist ads required the ad sales person to become the judge so that objectionable content would not get inserted in the papers. In many cases ad sales people did not see the ads that were sent to the papers, they simply sold space to the advertisers. Once an insertion was ordered, even if the ads were sexist in content, Youthstream charged papers that refused to run ads the twenty per cent commission the company would have received from the advertiser. These problems continued to a certain extent with Campus Plus.

Other problems with advertising boycotts and refusals included a lack of follow-through on the part of members, and the feeling of some members that their editorial autonomy was being breached by other CUP members imposing boycotts on them. Even though members voted at the national conference on whether they would boycott an advertiser, the decisions were not binding on the members. In most cases, the good intentions shown at the conference fell by the wayside once members got home. According to the 1979 ad co-op commission, no boycott had ever received more than twenty-five per cent support from the members. This meant that in practice boycotts received support from far less than

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<sup>52</sup> Nancy McRitchie, "Dear Youthstream," *House Organ* Vol. 41 No. 10 1979: 33.

the majority of members. One of the most popular, the boycott of the CBC for their refusal to run public service announcements from gay rights groups, received support from only about twenty per cent of the members.<sup>53</sup> There are no statistics on the rejection of individual advertisements. However, the CUP national office did much more work to encourage members to identify and refuse sexist advertising than it did to support boycotts. CUP created a *Guide to Sexist Advertising* and participated with the Canadian Advertising Advisory Board to change the definitions of objectionable advertising the industry used in its self-regulation. These actions show a changed structure where the news organization worked to affect the content of advertising.<sup>54</sup> This is discussed in much greater detail in Chapter Five in relation to CUP's work with the women's movement.

Not all CUP members who refused to participate in advertising boycotts did so out of apathy or a need for money. At the 1977 Québec regional conference members moved to stop participating in CUP advertising boycotts, stating they were, "self-defeating devices, as they cost members revenue and tend to result in the issue being forgotten."<sup>55</sup> Another problem as voiced by a delegate from the *McGill Daily*, was that, "in the Canadian market, and especially in the area of national advertising, groups often cover such a wide area that it is difficult, if not impossible to find large corporations or advertisers that do not, in some manner, breach the spirit of the CUP code of ethics in their everyday corporate life."<sup>56</sup> For others, boycotts promoted by CUP were seen as a threat to editorial autonomy. Once CUP started its own advertising co-operative it had the power to cut off objectionable advertising or boycotted ads from the source by not selling space to such advertisers. However, many members objected to having anyone, including other CUP members, dictate policy for their papers. As a delegate from *The Daily* said about the 1981 creation of a national boycott list for Campus Plus, "This list works against our commitment to autonomy. Our paper had to fight for that editorial and advertising control and it shouldn't be taken away."<sup>57</sup> This was only one area where CUP policies came to be seen as a threat to newspapers' autonomy, rather than a co-operative effort of the members. In either case, whether papers moved to boycott or refused to boycott based on protection of their editorial autonomy, it is clear that

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<sup>53</sup> CUP, *The Minutes: 42<sup>nd</sup> National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1979) 32.

<sup>54</sup> CUP, "Executive Reports," *Annual Reports 41st Canadian University Press National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1978) n.pag.

<sup>55</sup> CUP, "CUPbeq Positions on Youthstream," *Annual Reports CUP 41: The Regions* (Ottawa: CUP, 1978) n.pag.

<sup>56</sup> Harold [illegible], "A Report on the Validity of CUP's Present Policy Towards Corporate Advertising Boycotts," *41<sup>st</sup> Canadian University Press National Conference: Appendices to CUP 41 Minutes* (Ottawa: CUP, 1978) 114.

<sup>57</sup> CUP, *Minutes 45<sup>th</sup> National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1982) 25.

CUP members viewed the editorial department as rightly having control over advertising decisions. This was a substantial shift in the thinking about the structure of the news organization and those who worked in it. Again, CUP and its members' actions support the idea that individually and as a group they supported and worked for journalists having not only editorial, but also financial control of the newspaper.

### **Joking Matters**

Another way in which CUP members challenged hierarchy and changed the structure of the traditional news group was through their use of joke motions at national conferences. With its unwieldy list of official documents and protocols (Code of Ethics, Statement of Principles, Statement of Purposes, Constitutional By-Laws, Policy Statements, Staff Handbooks etc.) and use of Robert's Rules for all plenary sessions, it is sometimes hard to believe that CUP is run by students or that it has ever had a commitment to challenge and change traditional systems of hierarchy and bureaucracy. Joke motions were one of the ways in which the sense of humour of the delegates, indeed the organization itself, showed itself. For Schudson, play is an essential part of the journalistic process: "Reporters make stories. Making is not faking, not lying, but neither is it a passive mechanical recording. It cannot be done without play and imagination."<sup>58</sup> Perhaps it is also a necessary, if too often forgotten, part of the bureaucratic process.

Through the use of joke motions CUP members were able to ridicule hypocrisy and self-righteousness in the organization and pull over-reaching egos or political rhetoric back into line. Joke motions gave members the opportunity to voice dissenting views about CUP's actions without the danger of being verbally attacked by the plenary. Many joke motions pointed to CUP and its members' seeming belief that it could do anything, such as this motion from 1989: "Whereas CUP is an agent of social change, and Whereas the logical extension of this is that we have our own country, [be it resolved that] the Holiday Inn be declared the Independent People's republic of CUP."<sup>59</sup> Such motions pointed to how small CUP's actual impact on the world really was and encouraged members not to take themselves too seriously.

Many joke motions made some reference to the idea of the agent of social change itself, usually poking fun at CUP's efforts to change the entire capitalist system. For example, a joke motion from the 1971 conference read: "Resolved: that the new national

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<sup>58</sup> Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995) 96.

<sup>59</sup> CUP, *Motions: Canadian University Press 50<sup>th</sup> National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1988) Silly Motion 60.

office be mandated to devise a way or ways of smashing capitalism before the 35<sup>th</sup> national conference and proceed with all speed in carrying out that mandate.”<sup>60</sup> Another from 1973 read: “Resolved: that the National Office be mandated to act as a clearing house for rigorous Marxist analysis.”<sup>61</sup> A personal favourite is a motion that gave “a vote of thanks to the American Empire without whom CUP would have no-one to hate.”<sup>62</sup> These motions all addressed CUP’s at times overwhelming work to change the capitalist system, which some members may have felt was impossible, even undesirable. One joke motion addressed the “down side” to all this revolutionary work:

Whereas it is obvious that increasing economic dislocation and confusion is to be expected as Canada’s and the world’s capitalist economies continue to disintegrate; and, whereas it is always the working people who are harnessed with the greatest hardships under these conditions; resolved that CUP redouble its efforts and work with renewed vigour to ensure the speedy dismantling of the bourgeois state and economy and participate fully in any action that will hasten this process.<sup>63</sup>

Joke motions also provided much needed comic-relief. According to Eleanor Brown, national bureau chief in 1989, “[joke motions] were to release tension. Some of those debates got pretty nasty and [joke motions] made everybody realize we’re still in this together.”<sup>64</sup> While joke motions were only a minor part of CUP plenary sessions, the very existence of the many joke motions, most of which are marked “passed,” in the recorded minutes indicates that they were integral to the plenary proceedings. Indeed, they continue to be a part of each national plenary to this day. This ability of CUP members to poke fun at the organization and the function of the plenary sessions demonstrates another way in which CUP members exercised their democratic rights within the organization and the bottom-up hierarchical structure. Joke motions not only served as much needed comic relief in the long plenary sessions and provide delegates with a chance to exercise their wittiness, but often functioned to point to members’ overlooked assumptions about the organization itself and provide a space for dissenting voices.

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<sup>60</sup> CUP, “New Business of the Final Plenary,” *34th National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1971) Motion NB/12/71.

<sup>61</sup> CUP, “New Business,” *36th National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1973) 27, Motion NB/25/73.

<sup>62</sup> CUP, *33rd National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1970) 18, NB/5/70.

<sup>63</sup> CUP, *36th National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1973) 26, NB/15/73.

<sup>64</sup> Eleanor Brown, Telephone Interview, 24 Jun. 2004.

## Conclusion

Media critics such as Hackett and Gruneau and Miller have argued that the way the newsroom is structured affects the ways the news itself is created. These critics argue that it is not the profit model, nor the traditions of objectivity that alone shape the news we read. Rather the complex factors of power and structure in the newsroom also affect our news to a large degree. The hierarchical structure of the newsroom, the question of who holds power in the news organization and the place of minority voices in both coverage and policy making, these critics argue, are all areas that need to be addressed in making substantive changes to the news. Between 1965 and 1991, along with changes to reporting, the concept of the press working as an agent of social change brought structural changes to the newsrooms, national offices, and plenary floor of CUP and its members.

The problems that CUP and its members identified and addressed in their changes to the structure of the news organization were, for the most part, not unique to the student newspaper. Many of the systemic problems that they worked to change, such as limited input from minorities and women, the commercialization of the newsroom through the increased influence of advertisers, and financial control held by publishers with different priorities than journalists, are seen in several theorists' critiques of the mainstream press.

Through measures such as newspaper autonomy, democratic decision-making, co-operative work sharing, advertising boycotts and refusals, issues caucuses, gender-alternating speakers' lists, and even joke motions, CUP and its members restructured their newsrooms and CUP as an organization to address some of the problems with traditional news and reporting. In these ways CUP acted as an agent of social change not only through its reporting, but also through its structure and function as a news group.

CUP's increasing focus on a class-based criticism of the media and society as shown through the 1975 Purposes reflected a new awareness of the role of the workers in the workplace. CUP and many of its members supported a system whereby journalists would have control over not only editorial, but also the financial decisions of the newspaper through autonomy from their students' unions and democratic decision-making shared by the staff of the paper. In this way, changing the structure of the newspaper to give journalists greater control over all decisions was a part of working as agents of social change and especially of mobilizing against the oppressive facets of the capitalist system.

In addressing many structural problems with the student press, CUP and its members worked to change how they functioned. It would be very difficult to tell how or if these changes affected CUP or its papers' news coverage. At the same time, very few of these

changes were made with the sole intention of directly affecting coverage. In fact, there was very little mention of the effect on coverage in the motions or debate on any of the changes discussed in this chapter. Rather, these changes were made in large part to affect the process itself, to “mobilize against the system,” and to make the organizations stronger through giving voice to a wider range of participants. For example, as an article on staff democracy in the 1977 CUP Style Guide stated, “There are many practical as well as principled reasons for ensuring your paper is democratically run, but the one that really matters is that those who do the work should control the work.”<sup>65</sup> Although it is likely that CUP members believed that actions such as democratic decision-making, using gender-alternating speakers’ lists, or giving the racial equality caucus a speaking card would in time result in improved coverage in the news wire, this was not the explicit reason any of these changes were made. They were made because making the news organization more democratic, giving journalists more power over the production of the newspaper and giving a voice to minorities was a necessary part of acting as an agent of social change and because how things were done was just as important to many in CUP as what was done.

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<sup>65</sup> CUP, “Staff Democracy.” *CUP Style Guide Fall '77* (Ottawa: CUP, 1977) 1.

## Chapter Four

### CUP and “groups serving as agents of social change”

#### Introduction

The role of the press is often linked to building and supporting community and democracy. It is now a well-known theory that newspapers, through the very act of publishing, create a public out of their readers. For many theorists and journalists the press is responsible for providing a forum for the multiple voices of the community. Whether that community is seen as a political party or the general readership of a town or city, a good newspaper presents the community's opinions, problems, and their possible solutions. However, this does not explain the difference between a public and a community. According to Michael Schudson the difference between a community and a public is that, “the former tends to imply a common emotional identity, the latter only a common set of norms for public conversation.”<sup>1</sup> In this view, a good paper would foster this common emotional identity, in other words, help the public feel like a community. This seems to be part of the role of the press identified in CUP's policies from 1965 to 1991.

In the Canadian student population it seems that during the 1960s students started to view themselves as a community. Being a student meant more to them than simply that they took classes; it was an integral part of their identity. CUP's work to mobilize the “student citizen” was a reflection of this change in the student body. “Many students are beginning to realize that they can have some influence on the world around them, on both a campus and an external political level, (witness student action in Québec, the U of BC's ‘back Mac’ campaign, the U of T's March for Canada),” stated a 1963 CUP conference report. The report went on to say that the student newspaper should take on the role of interpreting student actions.<sup>2</sup> This is consistent with the Montréal papers' 1965 discussion paper that stated that during the previous years the role of the student had begun to change, and that this change demanded a new role for the student press.<sup>3</sup>

For CUP, the shift that took place in the mid-sixties from addressing a public to building a community was affected by a shift in its audience of readers. As students came to see themselves as having a common identity based on being students, student newspapers came to be more politically engaged in the actions of their readers. For CUP, the idea of a

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Schudson, “Review Essay: News, Public, Nation,” *American Historical Review* (April 2002): 484.

<sup>2</sup> CUP, *Conference: 1963 Reports* (Ottawa: CUP, 1963).

<sup>3</sup> CUP, “A Discussion Paper on The Charter of the Student Press in Canada,” *Working Papers 28th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1965) n.pag.



common emotional identity, or student community, was as important as the observable fact of such a community. The concept of a united community allowed CUP to decide who was “inside” and who was “outside” of the community and therefore which groups CUP would support. The idea of creating common emotional identity in readers is consistent with CUP’s policy to support other groups acting as agents of social change and to promote the rights and responsibilities of the student citizen. It was the perception of common emotional identity that allowed CUP to select the groups it supported. In supporting these groups, CUP tried to build that emotional identity among its members and their readers.

According to the 1968 Statement of Principles, the role of the student newspaper was to help students understand and mobilize against exploitation and injustice. To do this, the Principles stated the student press must perform “both an educative and active function.”<sup>4</sup> In many cases, CUP and its members provided not just space; CUP and the members supported some of the activist groups who were working for social change. Most often the groups that CUP and its members chose to support in their actions, editorial content, and motions were liberation groups and others working against oppression. For example, CUP supported *The Body Politic*, a gay liberation newspaper, with coverage about the newspaper’s legal battles and gave symbolic support in the form of motions and signatures to petitions.

In 1968, when CUP changed the Statement of Principles to state that it was the major role, rather than merely “a main role,” of the student press to act as an agent of social change, the members also added a clause stating, “That the student press must ... support groups serving as agents of social change.”<sup>5</sup> In 1977, at a special plenary session, this clause itself was amended to specify that CUP would “critically support groups serving as agents of social change.”<sup>6</sup> The term “critically support” seems to have been used to maintain a sense of journalistic rather than propagandistic writing. However, in most cases CUP’s support showed very little criticism of activist groups. This is especially the case with CUP’s more symbolic signs of support. When CUP showed support through gestures such as passing motions at the national conference stating that CUP and its members were in support of this or that group, there was rarely much, if any, criticism. The change to using the term critical support may have been made to ensure CUP members’ freedom to write critically about groups CUP supported without fear of negative reaction from other members, rather than

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<sup>4</sup> CUP, “Standing Resolutions: 1. Statement of Principles of the Student Press in Canada,” *31st National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1968) 31.

<sup>5</sup> CUP, “Standing Resolutions: 1. Statement of Principles of the Student Press in Canada,” *31st National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1968) 31.

<sup>6</sup> CUP, *CUP 39.5 Conference Minutes* (Ottawa: CUP, 1977) 26.

encouraging CUP itself to be critical of the groups it supported. However, there is no recorded debate on the motion to indicate clearly why the change was made.

The policy of supporting activist groups was part of CUP's restructuring of the newsroom to address systemic problems with journalism and was reflective of its role as an alternative to the commercial press. While measures such as issues caucuses and staff democracy presented alternative methods of internal organization, support of groups acting as agents of social change was an alternative method of relating to outside sources. The idea of supporting, or critically supporting, other groups defined as agents of social change was a very different approach to activist groups than the mainstream media took at the time.

Although CUP certainly took a different approach to groups serving as agents of social change than the commercial media, there are echoes of several different journalistic practices in CUP's Statement of Principles. The idea of supporting groups acting as agents of social change is similar to the concept of a media of advocacy presented by the Commission of the Freedom of the Press'. Associational, partisan and public journalism also share characteristics with CUP's practices of supporting agents of social change. Each of these is discussed in this chapter.

At the same time, there has been a strong tradition of partisan or advocacy journalism historically. Further, it must be emphasized that there is a long tradition of crusading journalism in the mainstream press that is at odds with the idea of objective reporting. It is also true that the idea treads into an area that many believe traditional journalists dare not go. There is an unresolved tension between those two areas in the commercial press. It can be seen positively as a necessary engagement with the community and encouragement of public life. However, CUP's actions to support groups acting as agents of social change can also be seen negatively as a breach of the public trust in the journalist to present information untainted by the influence of any group. The idea of the press supporting certain political and social groups is neither unprecedented, nor entirely a thing of the past. However, it is perhaps always an area of vital debate about the role of the press.

This chapter examines the implications of CUP's mandate to support other groups acting as agents of social change and the ways that it went about fulfilling this policy. The chapter looks at CUP's work with anti-racism, anti-sexism, and anti-homophobia groups and campaigns, as well as CUP's support of unions and other activists. This includes a look at the various measures of support CUP gave to these groups, including encouraging members to use these groups as agenda-setters and sources, to write articles sympathetic to their causes, and to become actively involved; advertising boycotts and refusals; CUP's own active involvement and symbolic gestures of support. In examining CUP's work with other agents

of social change, this chapter also looks at how CUP's policies and actions compared to other models of the press such as the associational press of the mid-1800s and the public journalism movement.

### **From the Forum Model to Public Journalism**

In his book *The Whole World is Watching*, Todd Gitlin discusses the relationship between the new left political movements of the 1960s, specifically the Students for Democratic Society (SDS) of which he was a part, and the mainstream media. According to Gitlin, "for their different reasons, the media and the movement needed each other... Each could be useful to the other; each had effects, intended and unintended, on the other."<sup>7</sup> Gitlin focuses attention on the ways the media framed the discussion of the political movements and those themes that the media emphasized in its coverage. For example, Gitlin lists among the recurring themes in the media coverage of the movement, "*trivialization* (making light of movement language, dress, age, style, and goals); *polarization* (emphasizing *counter* demonstrations, and balancing the antiwar movement against ultra-Right and neo-Nazi groups as equivalent 'extremists'); *marginalization* (showing demonstrators to be deviant or unrepresentative)."<sup>8</sup> Some of this framing Gitlin attributes to the political decisions of individual editors and journalists, as well as the actions of political elites. However, he also identifies another source for this framing: the practices of journalism, reliance on official sources, and traditional news values such as the idea that "news concerns the *event*, not the underlying condition." Gitlin writes that at their root, "all these practices are anchored in organizational policy, in recruitment and promotion: that is to say, in the internal structure of institutional power and decision."<sup>9</sup> The movements were portrayed, much as any other aspect of society, in certain ways because of the way the news media itself operated. Gitlin recognizes that social reality also affects the media, and he looks at the ways in which the movements changed journalism and its ways of framing political activism.

One of the ways SDS affected the media, according to Gitlin, is that it legitimized the very concept of a political movement. While the media may have created an often stereotypic

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<sup>7</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) 24.

<sup>8</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) 27.

<sup>9</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) 28.

image of those involved in movements, it also allowed space for the views of those involved in movements to be voiced. Gitlin writes:

An activist, left or right, is now a stereotyped persona accorded a right to parade quickly through the pageant of the news... many movements which can be presented as working for (or against) concrete assimilable reforms have become regular, recognizable, even stock characters in newspapers and news broadcasts. The media spread the news that alternative opinions exist on virtually every issue. They create an impression that the society is full of political vitality, that opinions and interests contend freely—that the society, in a word, is pluralist.<sup>10</sup>

He also states that political opinions do not in fact contend freely, that the way they are presented by the mainstream media gives a false impression of political freedom and power for marginalized opinions. The mainstream system of press coverage Gitlin describes rarely allows for the movements to engage with the media, let alone for the media to “critically support” the various groups in the community. It only allows for the political actors to “parade through the pageant of the news.”

The idea of journalists supporting political movements can be seen in David Paul Nord’s description of the early American “associational” presses of the mid-1800s. These papers worked to encourage the associations, or political and social groups, in the community. According to Nord, the papers acted as catalysts of community activity, and were an inspiration to Alexis de Tocqueville, who believed the press in America was building democracy and community by engaging the readers. However, Nord writes that when the penny press appeared, readers were turned into passive consumers by the commercial appeal to a mass audience. He identifies commercialization as one of the primary blocks to an associational, or politically engaged journalism:

The participatory and associational nature of the newspaper was increasingly subdued in this new world of the commercial popular press. Neither agitation nor discussion played a central role for these new “penny papers.” They continued both functions to some extent, especially in the discussions of politics and in the promotion of local business...but, in general, the commercial papers were more interested in expanding circulations than in organizing communities of readers for political or social action...In place of an active group of readers who participated directly in the journalism process,

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<sup>10</sup>Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) 284-85.

the readers of the commercial popular press became an audience of passive spectators, watching a splendid show of which they were not a part.<sup>11</sup>

This associational press, then, was a temporary one that existed in a brief transition between the partisan party papers and the commercial penny press. In Nord's words, "it was a fleeting glimpse of what democratic journalism might have been in America—but never was."<sup>12</sup> Clearly, for Nord, the associational press model is one with many positive attributes. As he describes it, the associational press was a critical supporter of the associations in that it supported the associations' existence and efforts, but was often critical of their methods and goals.

It is important to note, as Nord does, that the participatory and associational functions of the newspaper continued to a certain extent. Participatory coverage continues to be a factor in the press, even in our current times. We can see this in the crusading coverage of certain topics, and in the increasing role of columnists and commentators in the media. However, with the commercial press this seems rarely to have been the major focus of the newspaper. Rather, as Nord writes, expanding circulation and thereby advertising revenue was the major effort of many commercial papers, a situation that continues today. According to the public or civic journalism movement, what the news needs is a reconnection between journalists and the many voices that constitute the public. Davis "Buzz" Merrit and Jay Rosen, have written about the goals of public journalism that:

the objective of our journalism must be to re-engage citizens in public life. To make that shift, we must take two steps: 1 add to the definition of our job the additional objective of helping public life go well, and then 2 develop the journalistic tools and reflexes necessary to reach that objective.<sup>13</sup>

In defining the job of the journalist as helping public life go well, public journalism actively engages in community life and by extension with both the groups and individuals in the community. Whether public journalists would see their role as specifically supporting groups engaged in social change depends on their own feelings about what would make public life go well. However, Rosen has written that public journalism "does not mean taking sides in favor of this policy or that party. But it does mean that journalism cannot succeed in the

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<sup>11</sup> David Paul Nord, *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2001) 104.

<sup>12</sup> David Paul Nord, *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2001) 92.

<sup>13</sup> Davis (Buzz) Merrit and Jay Rosen, "Imaging Public Journalism: An Editor and Scholar Reflect on the Birth of an Idea," Roy W. Howard Public Lecture In Journalism and Mass Communication Research, School of Journalism Indiana University, Bloomington, 13 Apr. 1995, 11.

fullest sense if democracy falters for the many or gets hijacked by the few.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, public journalism is not synonymous with advocacy or activist journalism, but it does share the idea of building democracy in a functional way. For Rosen, public journalism will help public life go well through providing information and giving voice to the public, not by making choices for the public. While Rosen’s idea of public journalism makes journalists into engaged observers, CUP’s idea of acting as an agent of social change makes journalists into observant participants.

CUP’s policies stated that the role of the student press was to take sides when the cause was considered worthy. CUP and its members supported many groups seeking social change, specifically those fighting for the rights of Natives, racial minorities, the Québécois, women, workers, and those fighting against specific issues such as South African apartheid and nuclear armament. Working with these groups was part of CUP’s own role as an agent of social change. CUP members worked with other agents of social change to address political issues actively, and to change the agenda of the news to present a more sympathetic view of those involved in political movements than that of the mainstream media. This work is consistent with CUP’s view of the role of student newspapers as agents of social change rather than disengaged observers, or even engaged observers as in public journalism. At the same time, some of CUP’s support was primarily symbolic. Motions in support of various groups were often passed by members at national conferences, but not followed up with further action. Often these motions were drafted to be merely symbolic and did not include any suggested actions of support. In other cases actions were not followed up or remembered after the conference ended—members’ good intentions faded once they were faced with the reality of producing a student newspaper.<sup>15</sup>

### **Critical Support**

The issue of critical support of other agents of social change is intertwined with the idea of the role of the press as an agent of social change and the student newspaper as an alternative to the mainstream news. CUP and its members’ support of various liberation groups often became advocacy, promoting a certain cause or point of view in their articles, and in many cases going beyond coverage to other forms of active support. Most often, CUP supported groups that were marginalized or ignored by the mainstream news media, such as the women’s movement in the early seventies and the gay rights movement in the early

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<sup>14</sup> Jay Rosen, *What Are Journalists for?* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999) 298.

<sup>15</sup> Eleanor Brown, Telephone Interview, 24 Jun. 2004.

eighties. However, in some cases CUP also supported groups that had more widespread support, such as the anti-apartheid movement. Support took the form of media coverage and direct action through advertising boycotts, sanctions, letter-writing campaigns, and other acts.

The majority of the groups CUP supported could be described as liberation groups. The first of these groups was the civil rights movement. As far back as 1959, the CUP code of Ethics stated, "Racial bias or prejudice should have no place in editorial policy, in any student publication."<sup>16</sup> This policy was in place long before any mention of prejudice based on sex or sexual orientation. CUP's first work to support the civil rights movement was in the early fifties, when CUP passed a motion urging members to take a stand against racial discrimination in all campus organizations including Greek letter societies.<sup>17</sup>

Another notable aspect to CUP's work with other civil rights and racial minority groups is that after its early start it tapered off dramatically. While CUP increasingly worked to support women's liberation, gay rights, Native rights, and Québécois nationalism, racial discrimination became less of a priority for CUP through the seventies and eighties. For example, the only case of CUP papers boycotting an advertiser for racism or racially insensitive material was the 1977 RCMP ad boycott. At the time, the RCMP was running a campaign of ads that "implic[d] that throughout its history, the RCMP has been a multi-racial force mirroring and dutifully dedicated to serving Canada's multi-racial society." An article in the *House Organ* explained that the boycott was a result of the view that the RCMP was racist. According to the article, the RCMP was originally a "racial unit (white) used to repress the self-determination of a racial minority (native peoples)," and that from that time forward, "the RCMP's relationship with native people and other minorities has been one fraught with racism, bitterness and violence."<sup>18</sup> Although, it seems unlikely that this was the only advertiser that used racist images or presented an organization with a racist history in a kinder light, the RCMP seems to be the only advertiser to have been boycotted or to have its ads refused for racism or racist content (other than companies who were boycotted for investment or involvement in apartheid South Africa). A 1981 advertising report commented that while there were complaints about sexism in advertising, there had been no complaints about racism in any of the Campus Plus advertising.<sup>19</sup> While CUP worked consistently against sexist advertising, even creating a guide for members to identify sexism in

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<sup>16</sup> CUP, "Ethics Committee Report (A Special Committee) 1959 as Amended," *National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1959) n.pag.

<sup>17</sup> CUP, "Report of the Committee on Editorial Policy," *Sixteenth Annual Conference Canadian University Press* (Ottawa: CUP, 1953) 43, Resolution 9.

<sup>18</sup> Mark Allain, "RCMP Distorts," *House Organ* Number 7 1978: 59.

<sup>19</sup> CUP, *CUP 44 National Advertising* (Ottawa: CUP, 1981) 17.

advertising, no such measures were seen for racist advertising. Even assuming that there were fewer blatantly racist ads than blatantly sexist ads does not fully explain this lack of involvement. Whereas much of CUP's work in relation to sexist advertising was to promote positive images of the sexes in advertising,<sup>20</sup> similar work was not done to encourage positive images of racial minorities in advertising.

One of the problems may have been that there were few in the CUP delegation to speak up for racial minorities. As mentioned previously, the majority of delegates at CUP conferences were white, and the majority of student journalists were white. The racial equality caucus, at times also called the racial minority caucus or anti-racism caucus, was set up in part to help address the issue of CUP attracting so few delegates of colour. The caucus met to discuss common concerns as well as to work on policy. The racial equality resource room, like the women's resource room, provided writing resources, writing samples, and source information to help student journalists deal with covering racial issues, and to help address racism in the newsroom. However, the more difficult job was getting racial minority students to write for student newspapers. According to Krishna Rau, the CUP human rights co-ordinator in 1988-89, recruitment was a major problem for many of CUP's members. "Most papers were only too happy to write about issues about how the university was racist and their city was racist or how terrible the world was, [but] most of them didn't really want to look inside their papers to ask why there were so few people of colour working at their paper," he said.<sup>21</sup> Eventually Rau came to the conclusion that CUP members were using the existence of the racial equality resource room to placate the concerns of racial minorities instead of making any active changes. Because of this, the 1991 racial equality caucus made a motion to eliminate the resource room at the following year's conference. The motion cited low attendance at events, few delegates accessing resources, and little interest from white delegates as the main reasons for discontinuing the room.<sup>22</sup> While the motion was defeated, it does reflect the distinction Rau made between members' willingness to examine external sources of racism and their apathy towards internal sources of racism. It also demonstrates an instance of a group inside of CUP pointing to the sometimes-hollow gestures of support that CUP gave in the place of more active participation. The problem of racism and participation by racial minorities in student newspapers is one that CUP has not yet been able to adequately address.

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<sup>20</sup> CUP, "Guidelines on Sexism in Advertising," *House Organ* Volume 42 Number 12: 29-31.

<sup>21</sup> Krishna Rau, Personal Interview, 14 Apr. 2004.

<sup>22</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 54th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1991) C-55, Motion 39.



It is perhaps because of the relative lack of racial minorities within CUP that CUP and its members most often addressed racial equality as a problem that happened in other countries. The changes that CUP made as a result of the women's movement happened in large part because of the relatively large number of women in CUP who just would not let the organization continue the way it had. Recognizing that this may sound like a case of blaming the victim, it may be that there was not the critical mass of racial minority delegates to force such internal changes to happen. It may be for this reason that, instead of examining the problems in their own newspaper offices that resulted in chronic under-representation of Native Canadians and other racial minorities in CUP, members lobbied universities to divest their holdings in South African companies and companies with holdings and investments in South Africa. This is not to imply that South African divestment campaigns were either not important or not effective: they were. But it is of interest that there was less local action taken by CUP and its members in terms of racial inequality in Canada and specifically on the campuses. This contrasted greatly with the ways CUP was involved with the gay rights and women's movements.

In addition to CUP's measures to try to ensure a voice for gay, lesbian, and bi-sexual delegates through the gay and lesbian caucus, CUP also worked with external gay rights groups. One group in particular was *The Body Politic* newspaper. In 1972, *The Body Politic*, a Toronto-based gay liberation newspaper, asked CUP for help with their distribution problems after the main national distribution company, Metro News, refused to handle the paper. CUP encouraged members to write articles about the newspaper, approach local and campus booksellers about distribution and help inform other campus groups about *The Body Politic*.<sup>23</sup> CUP seems to have been of some help to the newspaper, because *The Body Politic* approached CUP for support again in 1978 when it was "tried on a charge of using the mails to distribute immoral, indecent or scurrilous material."<sup>24</sup> Although the newspaper was found not guilty, in March 1979 the Attorney General of Ontario appealed the verdict, putting further strain on the newspaper. *The Body Politic* ran an ad in *The Globe and Mail* urging the Attorney General to drop the appeal. At that time the newspaper asked CUP and its members for support in its fight against the Attorney General. Two motions were passed to support *The Body Politic*, one at the Ontario regional conference, and a second at the national conference giving a donation of \$20 from CUP (as well as additional monies donated by delegates and member papers) and permission to print "Canadian University Press" as a supporting organization in *The Body Politic's* advertisement. In explaining the motion in the appendices,

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<sup>23</sup> "The Body Politic," *House Organ* 28 Nov. 1972: 4.

<sup>24</sup> CUP, *42nd National Conference: The Minutes* (Ottawa: CUP, 1979) 76.

the mover noted that *The Body Politic* “need[ed] to legitimize their importance in society by accompanying their ad with as many titles of organizations and names of individuals as possible.”<sup>25</sup> The aspect of giving legitimacy to groups is another way CUP acted as a politically engaged press. In working with and supporting groups the mainstream press did not, CUP enlarged the group of agenda-setters and voices serving as sources of information. In supporting *The Body Politic* and encouraging members to write articles sympathetic to the liberation newspaper, CUP recognized *The Body Politic* as a news agenda-setter. At the same time, it is interesting to note that while CUP passed a motion to support *The Body Politic*, it was a mostly symbolic gesture with little monetary weight behind it.

CUP also supported those working for gay rights through advertising boycotts of companies identified as homophobic. The main example was the CBC, which was boycotted by many CUP members when the broadcaster’s Halifax radio station refused to air gay rights groups’ public service announcements.<sup>26</sup> Other methods of support were of course coverage of gay rights and gay liberation issues (which in several cases resulted in the censorship or destruction of members’ papers), and through the lesbian and gay caucus. In 1982, CUP members unanimously passed the following motion affirming gay rights and the actions expected of CUP and its members:

...Whereas both the federal government and the provincial governments have refused to provide legal guarantees against discrimination for the gay and lesbian communities

Whereas the lesbian and gay communities suffer material discrimination in many aspects of their lives—in denial of social and economic rights, in police harassment and state sanctioned actions

Whereas the traditional commercial media and large sections of the “alternative” media have failed to provide coverage and support to gay liberation struggles

Be it resolved that CUP affirms that lesbians and gays are an oppressed minority in Canada denied of their civil and economic rights and ignored by much of the media

[Be it further resolved that] We call upon member papers to strive to inform their readers of gay and lesbian issues, campaigns and community needs

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<sup>25</sup> CUP, *42nd National Conference: Appendices to the Minutes* (Ottawa: CUP, 1979) 92.

<sup>26</sup> “Boycott CBC Radio Ads,” *House Organ* Number 4 1976-77: 14.

We further call upon member papers to give their support to those communities in their struggles for civil and economic rights and to give their support to attempting practically to sensitise heterosexual readers [sic] to an acceptance of the lesbian and gay communities...

The above would involve an attempt by papers at greater coverage in news and features of gay and lesbian issues, specific attempts to ensure that newspaper staff are accessible to gays and lesbians and, whenever possible, the production of special gay [sic] and lesbian issues.<sup>27</sup>

The motion describes several ways that CUP encouraged members to support the gay and lesbian communities—inform readers about the issues, sensitize readers to acceptance and generally increase positive coverage. CUP members clearly encouraged each other to engage with gay rights activists on their campuses, to be informed and to work to inform their readers. The motion also points to CUP's view of its coverage as an alternative to the "traditional commercial media" and even to the "'alternative' media." In identifying that "lesbians and gays are an oppressed minority" CUP members identified them as a liberation group working for social change, and in that way as working towards the same goals as CUP.

However, the aims of CUP were not always seen positively, either by those outside or inside the lesbian and gay community. Perhaps the most controversial activity of CUP papers in regards to gay rights was the printing of the "special gay and lesbian issues" mentioned in the 1982 gay rights motion. These editions were often stolen or vandalized, and papers received many angry letters from those on campus who didn't think the papers were printing appropriate material. For example, in 1990 the Memorial University of Newfoundland's *Muse* printed a special section entitled "A Gay Man's Guide to Erotic Safe Sex," which featured graphic descriptions of homosexual acts combined with safe sex tips in an effort to show that safe sex could be erotic. The university administration threatened to shut down the paper and have the staff charged with obscenity. To show support for *The Muse* staff, the section was added to the CUP news exchange and a number of papers reprinted it. Several of them, including the Dalhousie *Gazette*, the University of Winnipeg *Uniter*, and the Wilfrid Laurier University *Cord* were also punished by their students' unions for printing the section.<sup>28</sup>

University administrators and students unions were not the only ones to question the intentions of the supplements. John W. McFetrick, in a book about the history of the

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<sup>27</sup> CUP, "Motion on Gay and Lesbian Rights," *Appendices: Canadian University Press 45th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1982) 92.

<sup>28</sup> Jacques Poitras, "Knowledge and Power: Thirty Years of Ideology in Canadian University Press," thesis, Carleton U, 1991, 79.

University of Victoria *Martlet*, reflected on these special editions: "The special [gay and lesbian] edition offered for the first time real people claiming visible presence in the [AIDS] crisis. Though often written anonymously, many articles offered glimpses into the lives of those affected not only by the disease but its associative social stigma."<sup>29</sup> However, McFettrick questioned the implication that the "straight editors," in providing a "largely heterosexual student population with a *Martlet* that had a gay and lesbian theme," assumed that "gays and lesbians on campus needed the assistance of the straights to 'get their message out.'"<sup>30</sup> Whatever the reaction, the motivation for such special editions seems to have been to deal with social oppression and stigma that was literally a life or death matter. As the University of British Columbia *Ubyyssey* staff wrote in a 1988 editorial:

The *Ubyyssey* didn't want to run a Gay and Lesbian issue this year. We don't want to run one again next year either. In fact, we never want to run one again. When the bombings of gay bookstores stop, when the prejudice that gays and lesbians face is a part of the past, that year will mark the last time *The Ubyyssey* publishes a Gay and Lesbian Issue."<sup>31</sup>

In supporting the gay rights movement, CUP and its members became involved in the outcome of this movement for social change in a way that other news media did not. It is unlikely that a mainstream newspaper would have written a similar statement in an editorial, essentially stating, we have a stake in the gay rights movement and we will continue to report and to be involved until we see the change we are hoping for. That readers did not necessarily welcome this level of involvement seems to be something that CUP members were willing to live with.

It is necessary to point to the fact that partisan views are at times presented in commercial newspapers. From time to time commercial newspapers do champion a cause or a political party. However, the causes they choose are almost always much less controversial than those that CUP and its members supported.

There were several ways in which CUP worked with feminist groups to help legitimize them as sources in the media and set the agenda for reporting on women's issues. These included the women's caucus, women's resource room, a women's *House Organ*, guides to sexist advertising, and coverage of women's issues both in supplements and in

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<sup>29</sup> John W. McFettrick, "Keeping Things a Little Queer," *The Martlet: Fifty years of Newspaper (R)evolution* ed. Gefen Bar-on (Victoria: Martlet Publishing Society, 1998) 171.

<sup>30</sup> John W. McFettrick, "Keeping Things a Little Queer," *The Martlet: Fifty years of Newspaper (R)evolution* ed. Gefen Bar-on (Victoria: Martlet Publishing Society, 1998) 175.

<sup>31</sup> J.E. Clark, ed., *Back Issues: 80 Years of the Ubyyssey Student Newspaper* (Vancouver: Ubyyssey Publications Society, 1998) 93.

regular reporting. In many ways CUP's engagement with the women's movement shows the culmination of the agent of social change policy. CUP addressed structural problems with the organization of the newsroom that focused power in the hands of men, problems with coverage and language that downplayed the women's movement and marginalized the issues of sexism and abuse, and problems with advertising that stereotyped female roles as consumers or as inferior to men. All of the actions and implications of the "agent of social change" clause came together in CUP's work with the women's movement. (These actions are discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, which examines the women's movement and CUP.)

CUP also worked with groups that were trying to make social change outside of the area of so-called identity politics. CUP supported groups such as workers, environmentalists and nuclear disarmament activists, among others. As noted earlier, CUP was a definite critical supporter of the FLQ. Although mostly critical of the FLQ's methods, many in CUP were supportive of what the FLQ was trying to do and of its right to voice political dissent. Much of the CUP support for the FLQ stemmed from the two groups' self-proclaimed support for workers.

One of the first noted workers' groups that CUP supported following the FLQ crisis was the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) in its boycott of the postal code. A 1973 *House Organ* noted that the CUP office "[was] still using its 'Support the Postal Workers' rubber stamp instead of the code."<sup>32</sup> According to the article, use of the postal code would reduce the number of postal workers needed to sort the mail, and that those who did not get laid off would become non-unionized mail sorters rather than postal employees. Additionally, the article claimed that the letter sorting machines were "made by Nixon's friends at I.T.T." CUP encouraged member papers not to use the postal code and to tell readers to do the same, while the bulk of the mainstream news supported the switch to postal codes in the name of efficiency. Clearly CUP was supporting the CUPW not only in reporting on their cause, in contrast to the mainstream news, but through direct action. It seems clear that public journalism would find this act overstepping the boundaries of journalism. The fact that the postal code did eventually become the norm (and that it would represent much less of a threat to postal workers than e-mail and other technological advances) does not diminish CUP's involvement in the cause. These actions are consistent with the Statement of Purposes' instructions for members to, "mobilize against [the

capitalist] system where it is found to be preserving the class structure or to be oppressive to women, minorities or others within Canada.”<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, in 1968 CUP passed a motion to support the striking *Peterborough Examiner* workers.<sup>34</sup> Further, the staff of the University of Guelph *Ontario*, along with a group of citizens, published a weekly newspaper called the *Peterborough Free Press*, in support of the workers. They published the newspaper for almost two months.<sup>35</sup>

CUP members also supported striking workers through coverage of their demands and in some cases product boycotts. For example, in 1975 when the Vilas Furniture workers' union went on strike to abolish the bonus wage system and ensure safer working conditions in the factory, CUP members voted to support the workers and to boycott Molson Breweries, owner of Vilas.<sup>36</sup>

At the same time, it was more difficult to have CUP and its members examine their own role as employers. While staff democracy was promoted as well as committees to deal with sexual harassment, working conditions were frequently poor and pay often low. Although there was a suggestion by the CUP president in 1976, Francis Fuca, to unionize student newspaper employees, he never made a formal motion, and there is no evidence of any further effort to follow up on this idea. While worker's rights and unionization were supported by CUP, there did not seem to be a place for such regulation inside the student press, which relied heavily on volunteers and unpaid overtime. While in many cases this resulted in a systemic exclusion of those students who needed part time work to pay for school, CUP seems to have done little if anything to directly address this issue.

Giving legitimacy to groups through supportive news coverage was perhaps a more journalistically accepted way in which CUP supported other agents of social change. CUP gave the groups it supported a platform to voice their issues, and also encouraged members to use them as sources and agenda-setters for stories. Through seminars at conferences, issues files available to members, and style guides that gave guidance on the coverage of various issues, CUP encouraged members to use sources outside of those used by the mainstream news. For example, the *CUP Style Guide* for the fall of 1977 gave members suggestions on covering nuclear issues. The section offered members a list of possible stories such as nuclear waste disposal, nuclear power accountability, security issues related to nuclear power

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<sup>33</sup> CUP, "Services Report," *CUP 38 National Conference, 38 ½ Special Plenary Session* (Ottawa: CUP, 1975) 38.

<sup>34</sup> CUP, *31st National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1968) 17, 2/NB/68 and 4/NB/68

<sup>35</sup> Barbara Sullivan, "The Student Press in Canada," *Mass Media: Good, Bad, or Simply Inevitable? Research Studies for the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media* vol. 3 Special Senate Committee on Mass Media (Ottawa: Thorn Press, 1976) 244.

<sup>36</sup> CUP, *38 National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1975) 2.

and the threat of terrorist actions.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the guide listed sources, many of whom were activists, such as the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility, Energy Probe, and Citizens Opposing Radioactive Pollution. John Bowman, the author of the section on covering nuclear issues, wrote: "The idea that we should 'trust the experts' is no more generally accepted than in the field of science. Through the process of mystification...scientists are able to work in their labs without having to worry about public opinion despite the fact that the results of their labour can have profound effects on our lives."<sup>38</sup> In giving voice to other agents of social change CUP members seemed to be working towards changing this process of mystification and democratizing the decision-making processes around issues such as nuclear power. CUP demonstrated this type of support through education of journalists in relation to many issues including environmentalism, free trade and Native Rights.

It is notable that CUP was very hesitant about giving its support to students' union groups. Although the National Federation of Canadian University Students (NFCUS) had started CUP in 1938,<sup>39</sup> after NFCUS dissolved in 1968,<sup>40</sup> CUP had maintained a fair distance from all the students union groups. For a time after NFCUS dissolved and UGEQ, the Québec national student group fell apart, CUP was the only national student group of any kind in Canada. This may have increased the tensions between CUP and the new national and provincial student groups that started through the seventies and eighties. According to a report on student organizations written by D. O'Connor for CUP's 1976 special plenary session, "from 1969 to 1973 CUP was the only strong common organization of Canadian students. CUP became subject to councils' attacks as an 'outsider'. Most student leaders of the time regarded [national] co-operation by students as a waste of time, and CUP became the target of isolationists."<sup>41</sup>

This isolationism was also likely increased by CUP's work to encourage newspapers' financial autonomy from the students' unions. Rather than working to support the students' unions and various national student groups that emerged over the years, CUP was usually quite critical of their work. For instance, two motions aimed at encouraging students' unions to commit to freedom of the press clearly demonstrate CUP members' criticism of these groups. In 1982 CUP members passed a motion urging the Canadian Federation of Students

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<sup>37</sup> John Bowman, "Covering Nuclear Issues," *Issues: CUP Style Guide Fall '77* (Ottawa: CUP, 1977) 2.

<sup>38</sup> John Bowman, "Covering Nuclear Issues," *Issues: CUP Style Guide Fall '77* (Ottawa: CUP, 1977) 1.

<sup>39</sup> CUP, "Report on the Ryersonian Case," *Annual Fall Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1966) 14.

<sup>40</sup> Carl Wilson ed., "Canadian University Press: A Chronology," *Canadian Student Press Styleguide* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) 262.

<sup>41</sup> D. O'Connor, "CUP and Student Organizations," *38.5 Special Plenary Session* (Ottawa: CUP, 1976) 3.

(CFS) to adopt a motion to support freedom of the press. The motion noted, “Both CFS and CUP consider themselves to be agents of social change... [However] members of CFS have been known to disrespect paper’s right to autonomy.”<sup>42</sup> Similarly, in 1991, members passed a motion encouraging each newspaper to bring a motion to its students’ union to add a “freedom of the press” clause to the union’s constitution.<sup>43</sup> Clearly the unions’ interference in CUP papers was a large concern, and one that meant there was little possibility of CUP supporting the unions’ or organizations of unions.

According to Eleanor Brown, national bureau chief in 1989, there was a great deal of animosity between CUP and the students’ unions. “We hated them,” she said of the students’ unions.<sup>44</sup> Brown stated that CUP members believed that the press should not associate with the government, including student government, as the reason for this animosity. In some ways this seems to contradict CUP’s support of other groups that had less impact and association with student causes. However, the students’ unions’ effect on funding of CUP members made CUP more wary of supporting students’ unions and national student organizations. In any case, it is interesting that these two groups that supposedly both spoke for students, the students’ unions and the student newspapers, did not co-operate.

## **Conclusion**

For Todd Gitlin the way that the mainstream commercial media portrayed and interacted with activists and social movements in the sixties was “anchored in organizational policy, in recruitment and promotion: that is to say, in the internal structure of institutional power and decision.”<sup>45</sup> In attempting to change its portrayal of students, activists, women, and minorities, CUP addressed the internal structures of power that Gitlin writes about. CUP created a policy of supporting groups that worked for social change.

However, CUP did not support any and all groups working for social change. As with the rest of the Statement of Principles, CUP members seem to have taken a Marxist interpretation of the clause calling for support of other agents of social change. For the most part CUP officially supported groups working against oppression, for example, gay rights, women’s liberation, and workers’ rights groups among others. As in other areas of CUP’s

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<sup>42</sup> CUP, *Minutes: Canadian University Press 45th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1982) 109.

<sup>43</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 54th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1991) D-131, Motion 105.

<sup>44</sup> Eleanor Brown, Telephone Interview, 24 Jun. 2004.

<sup>45</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) 28.



work, its choice of which groups to support was also affected by the interests of those involved with CUP.<sup>46</sup>

Through direct action, advertising boycotts, coverage outside of the mainstream news scope, cultivation of activists as news sources, and education of journalists CUP and its members supported and critically supported many other groups acting as agents of social change. CUP also gave symbolic support by passing motions of policy that did not necessarily result in any actions. These symbolic shows of support were also usually for groups working against oppression.

However, although CUP's work was, in many ways, very progressive, there were some areas in which CUP failed to completely live up to its own policies of acting as an agent of social change. Foremost was CUP's work against racism. While CUP's efforts to work against sexism, both internal and external to the organization and its members, brought widespread and long-lasting changes, its work against racism seems to have failed to examine internal structures and attitudes that fostered racism. Secondly, because of the concerns over the editorial autonomy of members, CUP did not, or could not, support students' unions or national student organizations such as the CFS.

CUP's "agent of social change" clause required student journalists to engage with activist groups in a way that many other models of journalism have not. However, the use of the term "critical support" seems to indicate that CUP members at least attempted to maintain some critical distance from the groups they engaged with and supported. Supporting various activist groups was consistent with CUP's policy that the role of the student press was to "[assist] students in understanding and mobilizing against exploitation and injustice wherever it may be found, and emphasiz[e] the rights and responsibilities of the student."<sup>47</sup> The idea of acting as critical supporters of activist groups was an important part of CUP's own actions as an agent of social change.

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<sup>46</sup> Eleanor Brown, Telephone Interview, 24 Jun. 2004.

<sup>47</sup> CUP, *CUP 39.5 Conference Minutes* (Ottawa: CUP, 1977) 26.

## Chapter Five

### Agent and the Women's Liberation Movement

#### Introduction

A cartoon in the 1979-80 national conference newsletter provides perhaps the best idea of the complex and dynamic position of women in the student press and CUP in particular. The cartoon showed a woman turning off a television and wagging her finger at a group of boys (I use this term because the group is depicted to look like children) who are seated on the floor. The boys were shown saying, "Aw gee, Mom, you don't let us have any FUN!!"<sup>1</sup> The cartoon followed an incident at the 1979-80 conference where the CUP president, Maureen McEvoy, turned off a pornographic film ordered to the CUP hospitality suite. While an accompanying article entitled "Hypocrisy Now" noted that the delegates who ordered the film "displayed a blatantly sexist attitude," the cartoon clearly made light of the situation, showing it as harmless, if childish, fun that was "ruined" by the overbearing women in the organization. In fact, even the article seems to miss the point somewhat by focusing on the cost of the film (\$4.90) and the fact that CUP was footing the bill.<sup>2</sup> The cartoon showed a woman in power and at the same time the simple and pervasive sexism that her very presence would seem to eradicate. Although women in CUP made great headway in terms of policy within the organization, it was more difficult in practice to gain equal treatment. There was no shortage of women in positions of power in CUP through the years. However, this in itself is not an indication that CUP was not sexist. Rather, there was an ongoing struggle for equality in the organization and for the issues that women identified as problems to be taken seriously.

In its privileging of men in positions of power journalism was no different than many other areas of work previous to the women's liberation movement. However, according to several theorists, such as David Mindich and Barbara Freeman, journalism also at times was defined as a particularly male endeavor, and in this way resisted women's equality. Maurine H. Beasley and Kathryn T. Theus have written in their examination of the effects of the increasing number of women in journalism schools that journalism's sexism was even displayed in the terminology used to describe stories:

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<sup>1</sup> CUP, *42nd National Conference: Appendices to the Minutes* (Ottawa: CUP, 1980) 116.

<sup>2</sup> CUP, *42nd National Conference: Appendices to the Minutes* (Ottawa: CUP, 1980) 115.

the vocabulary of the news field itself carries blatantly sexual overtones. Front-page news stories that detail action are referred to as “hard-news,” while feature stories that appeal to the emotions are called “soft news.” Traditionally men reported the “hard news” and women the “soft news.”<sup>3</sup>

While it was not always the case that women reported only “soft news,” Beasley and Theus describe some ways in which sexist attitudes were built into journalism.

In part, sexism was sewn into the fabric of journalism along with the definition of objectivity as a masculine endeavour. Several theorists have identified a definition of objectivity as masculine.<sup>4</sup> This had the effect of limiting women’s input, which was discounted as emotional and non-rational. Additionally, according to Nancy Fraser, in defining the news as “public” affairs, much of women’s sphere of influence in the home was discounted as not fit for coverage.<sup>5</sup> The exception was the women’s pages and women’s magazines, which although they often reinforced gender stereotypes, also offered space for women to call for change.<sup>6</sup> However while there were exceptions, the majority of mainstream news depicted certain stereotyped images of women and feminism. Women were often defined by their achievement in the home and were described by their husbands’ names (for example, Mrs. R. J. Smith). According to an article in the 1977 CUP *House Organ*, the Canadian Press (CP) *Style Guide* for 1977 stated that “a married woman or a widow, if addressed as Mrs., always is referred to by her husband’s given name, never by hers.” The article went on to say that the 1974 *CP Style Guide* had advised that while “certain militant members of the women’s liberation movement wish to be known as Ms.” the term should not be used unless “insistently requested” and that articles should mention the request and the woman’s marital status.<sup>7</sup> At that time, CP insisted women in news articles be closely identified with their husbands. CUP, on the other hand, was clearly critical of such practices in the mainstream commercial press.

<sup>3</sup> Maurine H. Beasley and Kathryn T. Theus, *The New Majority: A Look at What the Preponderance of Women in Journalism Education Means to the Schools and the Professions* (Boston: University Press of America, 1988) 119.

<sup>4</sup> See David T.Z. Mindich, “Balance: A ‘Slanderous and Nasty Minded Mulatress,’ Ida B. Wells Confronts ‘Objectivity’ in the 1890s,” *Just the Facts: How “Objectivity” Came to Define American Journalism* (New York: New York UP, 1998). Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *The Phantom Public Sphere* ed. Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). Robert A. Hackett and Yuezhi Zhao, *Sustaining Democracy? Journalism and the Politics of Objectivity* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1998) 87.

<sup>5</sup> Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *The Phantom Public Sphere* ed. Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) 11.

<sup>6</sup> Valerie J. Korinek, *Roughing it in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 3.

<sup>7</sup> “Mrs.—Married, Widowed, Divorced,” *House Organ* 18 Jan. 1977: 13.

According to Freeman, even women reporters “tended to mention the qualifications of the women they covered in feminine terms” including mentioning physical appearance, clothing and marital status. Even when women did have notable achievements outside of the home, women’s home lives were commented on by the press, as were their physical attributes. Often positive physical attributes were mentioned as if in opposition to a woman’s career or abilities. Statements such as “she looked like a fashion plate but spoke with ringing conviction” reinforced the notion that a woman could not be good looking and intelligent.<sup>8</sup>

These images of women in the editorial content were reinforced by the images of women in advertising. In her work on *Chatelaine* magazine in the fifties and sixties, Valerie J. Korinek writes, “advertisers continued to depict women’s roles very narrowly,” even when the editorial did not.<sup>9</sup> In many cases, even publications that portrayed progressive images of women in their editorial content accompanied stories with sexist advertising. This seems to have been the case in some CUP papers as well as in magazines such as *Chatelaine*. Women in CUP and the women’s caucus in particular tried to combat each of these areas of sexism within their own newspapers, CUP, and journalism as a field. In this, they were not alone. Many women’s groups, and individuals throughout the sixties and seventies called for changes to the treatment of women in news, the newsroom, and advertising.

CUP’s efforts as an agent of social change can be seen clearly in its actions with the women’s movement. This one area brought together all of CUP’s major actions as agents of social change: organizational change at both a national and membership level; changes in coverage seen in the use of sources, story selection, and language; advertising boycotts and refusals of ads for sexist content. In examining these actions it is critical to ask how women in the organization were treated outside of the plenary floor when the tape recorders were turned off. This chapter looks at the role of women in CUP and the changes they made to both the organization and their individual papers. This chapter explores organizational changes CUP and its member papers made to address systemic sexism, the notion of objectivity as masculine, and what CUP did to alter this view. It also looks at CUP’s efforts to address the issue of sexist images of women through an examination of CUP’s work against pornography in the student newsroom and sexist advertising in the student newspaper.

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<sup>8</sup> Barbara M. Freeman, *The Satellite Sex: The Media and Women’s Issues in English Canada, 1966-1971* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2001) 86.

<sup>9</sup> Valerie J. Korinek, *J. Roughing it in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 122.

## Women, Men and Power in CUP

In 1967, Lib Spry was elected president of CUP. This made her the first in a long line of female presidents, vice presidents, feature writers, and bureau chiefs in the national office. While women's participation in this upper level of CUP administration has not been equal to that of the men, neither have they been excluded. In fact, in the 1970-71 CUP year, the office was run mainly by women, with Jennifer Penney president, Susan Reisler vice president, Liz Willick systems manager, and outside of the national office Dorothy Wigmore the Atlantic regional president, and Anne Boody the western regional field secretary.<sup>10</sup> However, an environment of sexism continued even as women held positions of power.<sup>11</sup>

In discussing women's involvement in CUP, Dorothy Wigmore, CUP president in 1972-73, pointed out that there was a discrepancy between what people said and how they acted. She said that often women had to be part of the so-called boys' club. The expectations of women were different, she said, and if they wanted to be part of the club, "they had to play along to a certain extent." Playing along meant not complaining about instances of sexism or sexual harassment and being able to laugh at blatantly sexist jokes. According to Wigmore, each woman ended up deciding the limit of how far she would push "women's lib stuff, as it got called."<sup>12</sup>

This attitude in the student press mirrored the mainstream press' resistance to women's liberation. According to Peter Desbarats, newspapers were, "despite the often liberal attitudes of their editorial writers and commentators... surprisingly conservative in their hiring and promotion practices."<sup>13</sup> The newsroom remained a male-dominated world for quite some time, especially at the upper levels. Desbarats cites a 1986 survey of Ontario daily newspapers that showed that although by that time thirty-one per cent of newsroom employees were women, they represented only nineteen per cent of the employees at or above the level of department editor.<sup>14</sup>

Women's participation in CUP seems to have followed a similar pattern. Although there are not accurate or complete records of delegates for most CUP conferences, the *Women's House Organ* of 1988 stated that the ratio of male to female delegates at the national conference was four to one in 1982 and three to one in 1987.<sup>15</sup> This low level of

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<sup>10</sup> CUP, "Officers of Canadian University Press," *Canadian University Press 33rd National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1970) n.pag.

<sup>11</sup> Dorothy Wigmore, Telephone Interview, 9 April 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Dorothy Wigmore, Telephone Interview, 9 April 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Desbarats, *Guide to Canadian News Media* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990) 97.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Desbarats, *Guide to Canadian News Media* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990) 98.

<sup>15</sup> CUP, *Women's House Organ* 25 Mar. 1988: 11.

participation by women had been a long-standing problem. A motion from the 1964-65 national conference mentioned the first concern with the low number of female participants:

Whereas CUP recognizes the equality of the so-called fairer sex, and whereas, moreover, there has been in the past some unhappiness among the delegates about the relative number of male to female delegates; moved that members be encouraged to promote and facilitate the participation of female students in their newspapers.<sup>16</sup>

Despite its lack of teeth and seeming innocuousness, this motion for the “fairer sex” received five abstentions and four votes against, but managed to pass with twenty votes in favour. The motion pointed to the connection between the staff of member papers and the delegates at CUP conferences. Delegate ratios could only be changed by increasing the number of women on the staff of member papers. A limited number of women participated in CUP in part because fewer women than men participated in their campus paper. By extension, one reason there were fewer women in positions of power in CUP was because there were fewer women in positions of power at member papers.

Although women’s enrolment at universities was increasing, their participation in student newspapers did not keep pace with these changes through the sixties and seventies. According to Statistics Canada, in 1965 the 25,261 female undergraduate students enrolled in post-secondary studies represented thirty-one per cent of the student body. By 1975, women represented almost half the undergraduate student body (just under forty-five per cent).<sup>17</sup> In 1978, CUP sent “Status of Women Questionnaires” to all members. The questionnaires asked women and men about the status of women in their offices. Although only eighteen members responded, their responses showed a pattern of low female participation. To the question “how many men and women on staffs?” fourteen responded more men than women, of which three reported twice as many men as women and five reported three times as many men as women. According to the report on the survey, “the respondents thought there had been an improvement at their paper over the last five years, and that there were more women on staff recently.”<sup>18</sup> The report concluded by stating:

newspaper staff [did] not believe they [had] any problems with sexism on their staff, nor [was] it considered a serious enough problem to warrant special recruiting for women. Respondents to the questionnaire believe[d] that if men

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<sup>16</sup> CUP, *Report 27th National Conference CUP* (Ottawa: CUP, 1964) 13, Motion 12/P/64.

<sup>17</sup> Statistics Canada, “University undergraduate enrolment, by field of specialization and sex, Canada, selected years 1861 to 1975,” *Statistics Canada: Historical Statistics of Canada* [www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/11-516-XIE/sectionw/sectionw.htm#Post](http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/11-516-XIE/sectionw/sectionw.htm#Post)

<sup>18</sup> “Status of Women Questionnaires,” *House Organ* Volume 41. No 5: 50.

played a greater role in the newspaper it was only because there was more of them.<sup>19</sup>

The report also noted a strong “don’t cause trouble attitude” where female respondents felt that the survey itself was raising problems that hadn’t been there before. “Presumably if there [were] no sexism problems on the paper the survey shouldn’t have caused any problems,” the report noted.<sup>20</sup> This idea that the survey might cause problems that had not previously existed seems to be indicative of the “play along” attitude that Wigmore identified.

Ten years later, a random sampling of CUP member papers by John Gushue, national bureau chief in 1986-87, showed that 68.5 per cent of CUP papers’ staff were male. This ranged in the editorial department from news editors, of whom only fifty-four per cent were male to editor in chiefs, seventy-six per cent of whom were male to sport editors, eighty-eight per cent of whom were male. On the business side of things, fifty-four per cent of office managers were male, while eighty-seven per cent of advertising managers were male. Overall, women represented only 31.5 per cent of the staff surveyed. Clearly, the student newspapers were resistant to change, much as the commercial newspapers that Desbarats examined. Interestingly, Gushue noted that overall, “in the Québec region, the ratio is 50/50 on most papers.”<sup>21</sup> It is not clear why this was so.

It was not just the lower number of women participating in student newspapers that was a concern. Women and men tended to participate differently. In 1982, Chyrisse Regehr, prairie bureau chief, wrote in her fall report:

Every paper I visited had more male staff than female, but what [was] perhaps more disturbing [was] that the male staff tended to participate a lot more freely in the decision-making and social aspects of the paper. Men [talked] more at staff meetings, their opinions [carried] more weight, and they [were] much more quickly integrated into the informal network around the office. None of which [meant] the men [did] more work. I found the women often did as much or more of the work than their male counterparts, but without the recognition.<sup>22</sup>

This idea that even those women working inside progressive organizations did not receive the recognition for their work is one that Myrna Kostash writes about in her work on the new-left movements of the sixties. “Women were an anonymous and individually invisible

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<sup>19</sup> “Status of Women Questionnaires.” *House Organ* Volume 41 Number 5, n.d.: 57.

<sup>20</sup> “Status of Women Questionnaires.” *House Organ* Volume 41 Number 5, n.d.: 57.

<sup>21</sup> “Sexual Equality, Statistics, & Student Newspapers,” *Women’s House Organ* 25 Mar. 1988: 15.

<sup>22</sup> Chyrisse Regehr, “Fall Prairie Bureau Report,” *Regions: Canadian University Press 45th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1982) n.pag.

army of labour on whose efforts the 'careers,' the charisma, the status of the male heavies were erected, but for which the women themselves received little or no recognition or reward," Kostash writes.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, many women in student newspapers seem to have received little recognition for their participation.

The equality of women in CUP, as well as in member papers took a long time to work out. One of the ways of addressing the issue was to recruit more women, and to improve the office environment and the power structures in the newspapers to encourage women to stay. Recruitment of women to member papers, and working to make member papers, and CUP as an umbrella organization, friendlier towards women were among the major tasks of the women's caucus.

One of the major issues in recruitment was to address sexist office environments that turned women away from working on the newspaper. In an article on recruiting women, Julie Wheelwright, CUP president in 1982-83, wrote:

While men on the paper may not consciously create a hostile environment for women, it happens all the time. The sexist jokes, the language that you use in addressing women, your attitudes, and your body language can all contribute to the problem.<sup>24</sup>

This sexism spilled into the student newsroom from both other male-dominated university clubs, and from mainstream journalism. In her work on women and the media in Canada during the sixties and seventies, Freeman notes that some media outlets encouraged "an atmosphere of male camaraderie, fed by heavy workloads and intense deadline pressures, encouraged a masculine 'mystique' about being a journalist that included, in some individual cases, heavy drinking on and off the job."<sup>25</sup> This masculine mystique was also apparent in some student newsrooms. As Regehr noted, men were often "much more quickly integrated into the informal network around the office."<sup>26</sup> A student newspaper is not only a workplace, it is also a social activity. In newspapers where the socializing excluded women, or made them uncomfortable, fewer stayed to work. Sexist attitudes took many forms—inappropriate jokes or touching, pornography in the office, or the habit of some male editors of ignoring female volunteers or giving them jobs answering phones or typing instead of reporting.

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<sup>23</sup> Myrna Kostash, *Long Way From Home: The Story of the Sixties Generation in Canada* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1980) 183.

<sup>24</sup> Julie Wheelwright, "Women & Recruitment," *CUP Style Guide* (Ottawa: CUP, 1986) 65.

<sup>25</sup> Barbara M. Freeman, *The Satellite Sex: The Media and Women's Issues in English Canada, 1966-1971* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2001) 66.

<sup>26</sup> Chyrisse Regehr, "Fall Prairie Bureau Report," *Regions: Canadian University Press 45th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1982) n.pag.



Such attitudes were not limited to member papers. The annual CUP conference, which was often held in a hotel over New Year's Eve, was often highly sexually charged, which in many cases led to overtly sexist behaviour. Sexist jokes were perhaps one of the most difficult to address. A frequent joke was made about the name of the CUP newsletter, the *House Organ*, and both of the CUP logos were frequently altered to resemble male genitalia. Changing this situation was not easy, as one respondent to the Status of Women Questionnaire noted, because many women, "felt intimidated sometimes about complaining because [they got] remarks that [they were] exaggerating or overreaching."<sup>27</sup> For the most part, the situation was addressed by almost sheer force of will, continuous work on the part of the women in CUP.

Many CUP members used annual women's editions to address problems with both recruitment and coverage of women's issues. These special editions focused coverage on women's issues by devoting an entire paper to examining sexism, contraception, abortion, violence against women, and other so-called women's topics. In addition, during the production of women's editions, many papers banned men from the newsroom. By allowing only women in the office during the production of these editions, women were given a safe space to learn. This helped women develop the skills and confidence to work on staff.

The women's caucus at the annual CUP conference worked in similar ways. It is not clear when the first women's caucus took place at a CUP conference. However, by 1973 the women's caucus had become "a regular feature of CUP conferences."<sup>28</sup> The women's caucus, like the other issues caucuses, gave women a chance to meet, discuss, and plan changes to their papers in terms of organization, recruitment, and story coverage. The women's caucus also gave more informed women a chance to share information with women who were not as aware of women's issues.<sup>29</sup> The caucus met to encourage women to run for positions on the planning commissions and to write motions of their own for plenary. In addition, the caucus elected three representatives, two women and a man, to the sexual harassment committee that met to discuss and act on any complaints of sexual harassment at the conference. According to a booklet on the women's caucus written in 1987, the caucus met on the first night of the conference to introduce all the female delegates to one another and encourage participation in the conference events and decision-making.<sup>30</sup>

The 1978-79 national conference was the first to have a formal women's resource room. The room provided writing resources and information about women's issues such as

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<sup>27</sup> "Status of Women Questionnaires," *House Organ* Volume 41. No 5, n.d.: 57.

<sup>28</sup> CUP, *House Organ* 28 Jan. 1973: 5.

<sup>29</sup> Eleanor Brown, Telephone Interview, 24 Jun. 2004.

<sup>30</sup> CUP, *Women's Caucus: Fiftieth Canadian University Press Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1987) 1.

violence against women, abortion, contraception, and the women's movement. CUP received an \$850 grant from the Secretary of State to fund the room and its resource person, Liz Bolton, for the first year. An article on the resource room that appeared in the conference newsletter explained that the centre "contain[ed] books and pamphlets on such issues as rape, birth control and planning, and women's roles in education and the work force." The article seems to respond to concerns about the cost of the centre by quoting CUP's business manager as saying that the costs of the centre were minimal and there would have been no saving by not having the centre.<sup>31</sup>

The women's caucus and resource room were women's-only spaces, allowing women to get away from men and often providing a safe space from incidents of sexual harassment. As one delegate noted in the *Women's Caucus Video*, the caucus was an important space for women, "because the whole rest of the world [was] a men's caucus."<sup>32</sup>

This is not to say that all women were in favour of separate men's and women's caucuses or women's-only spaces. Lynn Marchildon wrote in the *Women's House Organ* about trying to convince some women for the need to have the separate caucuses:

some people just don't want to listen. So, I decided I wouldn't waste my energy in a futile attempt to try to open their eyes... Instead I would just beg for tolerance. Just because you don't see a need for a women's caucus, I'd say, please don't deny other women the chance to get together and talk without men for a while.<sup>33</sup>

CUP encouraged special women's editions and many members published them. CUP also set up women's-only spaces and women's caucuses for women to meet alone at the regional and national conferences. These actions support the idea that the majority of CUP members were in favour of women having the opportunity to work on their own. However, at no time does there seem to have been a suggestion that the women's caucus should organize a women's-only version of CUP. In developing a women's caucus and women's-only spaces within CUP, the organization fit into a pattern of new left groups in the sixties and seventies identified by Kostash. According to Kostash, in Canada, women in new left organizations in the sixties caucused on their own and took their own actions, but continued to work within larger activist groups with men. This differs from the pattern in the United States, where women's groups tended to break away to form their own organizations. For Kostash, the fact

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<sup>31</sup> Steve Maroney, "CUP fosters feminist feedback," *The Free Truth: Official Newsletter of the 41st National Conference of CUP* 29 Dec. 1978: n.pag.

<sup>32</sup> *Women's Caucus Video*, documentary, Canadian University Press, 1992.

<sup>33</sup> Lynn Marchildon, "Thoughts on the Continual Justification of a Women's Caucus. (and Trying Not to Wretch...)" *Women's House Organ* 25 Mar. 1988: 6.

that the Canadian women's movement was not as alienated from the new left as a whole meant that "the men of the new left were held accountable to the women for their failure to fight for the liberation of women."<sup>34</sup> This was certainly the case in CUP, where men were seen not just as perpetrators of sexism, but also as partners in changing sexist attitudes. As a Wilfrid Laurier University *Cord Weekly* delegate said in the discussion of a motion for the Women's Rights Co-ordinator Committee. "Men are being excluded to a certain degree from the discussion of sexism. I'd just like to see a little more input and recognition of men into women's issues."<sup>35</sup>

However, some men, and some women as well, were concerned by what was seen as preferential treatment of women in CUP. Women's-only spaces, such as the women's caucus, and women's-only jobs, such as the women's regional co-ordinator, a position created in 1983 to promote equality,<sup>36</sup> were seen as sexist by some delegates, because they promoted different treatment for men and women. In the 1988 *Women's House Organ*, an anonymous author wrote about the debate surrounding the women's regional co-ordinator position, "They called it reverse discrimination... They didn't see why women should get special treatment. They said it was unconstitutional to have the position filled only by women."<sup>37</sup> Clearly however, the majority of members were in favour of such measures as CUP did have women's regional co-ordinators, and did have women's-only spaces in the form of the women's caucus.

Although women in CUP were often frustrated by the persistence of sexist attitudes in the organization, this is not to say that women in CUP or at all member papers faced the same levels of discrimination as those in professional newsrooms. By the mid-eighties CUP had made inroads against sexism in the organization at both a membership and national level. As Beth Ryan, national features writer in 1988 wrote:

the student press and commercial media often treat women in their midst in much the same way. There are the same subtle put-downs, the same open hostility, the same sexual harassment, the same relegation to menial tasks, the same male-dominated editorial positions and the same aversion to feminism and equality. But there is a main difference between CUP and the mainstream press. In an organization like CUP, which strives to create a better world,

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<sup>34</sup> Myrna Kostash, *Long Way From Home: The Story of the Sixties Generation in Canada* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1980) 183.

<sup>35</sup> CUP, *Minutes Canadian University Press 45th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1982) 108.

<sup>36</sup> CUP, *Women's Caucus: Fiftieth Canadian University Press Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1988) 3.

<sup>37</sup> CUP, *Women's House Organ* 25 Mar. 1988: 11.

members are conscious of the inherent sexism in our society and they make an effort to counter it with positive action.”<sup>38</sup>

In part, what CUP provided through its women’s caucus, women’s resource room, regional co-ordinators, and sexual harassment grievance procedures was an atmosphere that allowed women to complain about ongoing instances of sexism. While this did not stop those acts of sexism immediately, it did give women a set of procedures to follow to do something about them. As Deanne Fisher, who would become CUP president the following year, wrote in the 1988 *Women’s House Organ*, “CUP is a utopia compared to the real world. CUP women live surrounded by (supposedly) enlightened men who are (quasi) sensitive to the issues concerning women and (theoretically) committed to gender equality.”<sup>39</sup> This is not to say that these “(supposedly) enlightened” men did not want to be involved in improving gender relations and equality. As Wheelwright noted in her article on recruitment, “Men often say that they really want to change the problem, and their concern is genuine.”<sup>40</sup> While in some cases men’s input was in favour of maintaining the status quo, other men did make substantial efforts to change sexist attitudes.

However, even as women gained positions of power in the organization, implicit and explicit sexism continued. According to Dorothy Wigmore some of this came out in the discrepancy between what people said and what people did in regards to feminism and the women’s movement. “The women’s movement was really a big deal on campuses in the late sixties, early seventies, [but] male chauvinism was rampant,” she said. While issues of importance to the women’s movement, such as abortion and contraception, would get coverage in the student newspapers, many of the men did not view their own actions as potentially oppressive to women. Wigmore said that many of the men working on the student papers had expectations of non-committed sex on demand, and did not see their demands in terms of an imbalance of power.<sup>41</sup> As Kostash has written, “The ‘sexual revolution,’ as has been pointed out since, simply served in increasing the access men had to women, without the attendant responsibilities of traditional male-female relations.”<sup>42</sup>

In these and other ways, sexism, while acknowledged through policy, was often overlooked in day-to-day practice. In Wigmore’s words, while the organization and the

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<sup>38</sup> Beth Ryan, “So What Happens to Women Journalists in the Real World?” *Women’s House Organ* 25 Mar. 25, 1988: 9.

<sup>39</sup> Deanne Fisher, *Women’s House Organ* 25 Mar. 1988: 5.

<sup>40</sup> Julie Wheelwright, “Women & Recruitment,” *CUP Style Guide* (Ottawa: CUP, 1986) 65.

<sup>41</sup> Dorothy Wigmore, Telephone Interview, 9 April 2004.

<sup>42</sup> Myrna Kostash, *Long Way From Home: The Story of the Sixties Generation in Canada* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1980) 185.

people in it often talked the talk, they often failed to walk the walk.<sup>43</sup> While those in CUP said they worked against oppression, in their day-to-day actions, they often did not. Again, Kostash, identifies this devaluing of women's input as a pattern throughout the new left. While many leftist groups worked against oppression of visible minorities, many men, even on the left, did not consider women to be oppressed.<sup>44</sup> In CUP, for example, it was not until 1970 that women's contributions to their papers were acknowledged in CUP's by-laws and standing resolutions by "remov[ing] wherever semantically possible references using the masculine pronoun."<sup>45</sup> In the same year, CUP members changed the Code of Ethics to read: "racial and sexual bias or prejudice should have no place in the editorial policy of the newspaper,"<sup>46</sup> where the earlier Code had contained reference to racial bias and prejudice since 1959.

Despite what many women viewed as slow progress, women participated in CUP in greater and greater numbers over the years. Recently, CUP delegate participation has been close to university student enrollment in terms the ratio of men to women. While many of the positions of power in the national office, on the commissions that present policy motions to the plenary floor and in the newsrooms of many of the members, are still dominated by men, the situation has improved because of the persistent efforts of so many women and men.

### **Journalism and Objectivity as Masculine**

In several ways, journalism and objectivity have been defined as masculine. The notion of objectivity shares many similarities with the rational discourse of the bourgeois public sphere described by Jurgen Habermas. One of these similarities is a definition of rationality and objectivity as a masculine mode of thought. According to Nancy Fraser, the public sphere of the eighteenth century was not only masculine in terms of the gender of its participants, but also in its conception of what constituted both the public and rational critical discourse. For Fraser, the very idea of the rational discourse of the public sphere contained a bracketing of identity that privileged the masculine by positing the feminine as emotional rather than rational.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, Michael Warner has written, "The bourgeois public sphere

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<sup>43</sup> Dorothy Wigmore, Telephone Interview, 9 April 2004.

<sup>44</sup> Myrna Kostash, *Long Way From Home: The Story of the Sixties Generation in Canada* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1980) 187.

<sup>45</sup> CUP, *Canadian University Press 33rd National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1970) 10, Motion C/9/70.

<sup>46</sup> CUP, *Canadian University Press 33rd National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1970) 9, Motion C/1/70.

<sup>47</sup> Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *The Phantom Public Sphere* ed. Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) 5.

had been structured from the outset by a logic of abstraction that provides a privilege for unmarked identities: the male, the white, the middle-class, the normal.”<sup>48</sup> In other words, the very bracketing of identities that was supposed to put everyone on the same discursive level in the bourgeois public sphere, served instead to turn the very idea of rational discourse into one that was by definition white, middle-class and masculine. Similarly, Freeman has suggested that objectivity may be “male subjectivity in disguise.”<sup>49</sup>

Objectivity not only privileged male viewpoints, but it also came to be seen as a masculine effort. In his discussion of objectivity Mindich writes that for newspaper writers of the late-nineteenth century, “‘objective’ journalism, despite its relatively sedentary nature, was somehow a masculine endeavor,” best pursued by hard-drinking, hard-living, manly men.<sup>50</sup> Both Fraser and Mindich show how these definitions of rational critical debate and objective reporting as masculine served to eliminate women’s views from the public sphere and the field of journalism.

The definition of journalism as a masculine endeavour was used to exclude women from the practice by making them, by definition, unable to be objective reporters. As Hackett and Zhao write, “Objectivity disguises and denies how the culturally conditioned gaze of the observer helps to construct that which is observed.... It privileges the male as the gender that is more capable of ‘objective’ observation.”<sup>51</sup> The practice of objectivity promoted the idea that men were more capable of being good journalists. In this view, women could not be good reporters because, by definition, they could not report objectively. Thus, the exclusion of women from the field was constructed as simply a result of their inferiority in the task, not sexism. Because of this, Freeman writes even today, there remains a perception that the work of women journalists, regardless of their training is less “objective” than that of male reporters.<sup>52</sup>

Another way that objectivity privileged the masculine was in its definition of an appropriate source. In their work on media filters, Hackett and Gruneau write, “the gender imbalance in sources is strongly related to the media’s long-standing focus on political and

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<sup>48</sup> Michael Warner, “The Mass Public and the Mass Subject,” *The Phantom Public Sphere* ed. Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) 240.

<sup>49</sup> Barbara M. Freeman, *The Satellite Sex: The Media and Women’s Issues in English Canada, 1966-1971* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2001) 9.

<sup>50</sup> David T.Z. Mindich, *Just the Facts: How “Objectivity” Came to Define American Journalism* (New York: New York UP, 1998) 131.

<sup>51</sup> Robert A. Hackett and Yuezhi Zhao, *Sustaining Democracy? Journalism and the Politics of Objectivity* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1998) 87.

<sup>52</sup> Barbara M. Freeman, *The Satellite Sex: The Media and Women’s Issues in English Canada, 1966-1971* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2001) 10.

institutional authorities, who are still largely male.”<sup>53</sup> A similar privileging of the masculine can also be seen, according to Fraser, in the definition of the boundaries of public discourse. Fraser identifies the definition of public as a way of limiting the discussion of the “private” realm of women’s experience.<sup>54</sup> This was an issue that was addressed by the feminist slogan “the personal is political.” By relying on official sources, the majority of whom were men, and by limiting public discussion to masculine fields outside of the home, women were again cut out of the journalistic discussion. (It must be noted that many women in the fifties and sixties were in fact working outside of the home. However, because of what Betty Friedan has termed the feminine mystique, these women and their work was almost never acknowledged in the media.<sup>55</sup> Women were invisible workers even though in Canada women accounted for almost thirty per cent of the work force in 1961.<sup>56</sup>)

Journalism came to be seen as masculine through the definition of objectivity, the definition of and reliance on official sources, and the definition of which areas of life were news. In addressing each of these areas of masculine definition, the women in CUP (and their male supporters) made changes to their papers, CUP, and journalism. CUP tried in various ways to get rid of sexism in coverage on the news exchange and in members’ papers. CUP encouraged members to change story focus to include women’s points of view, address problems with sexist language, and add stories that examined women’s issues directly. The success of these measures was slow, as sexism was not only a part of the culture of the times, but also part of the fabric of both university life and journalism.

The idea that objectivity privileged the masculine viewpoint was addressed by a CUP writer through the humorous article “Who is this man?” which appeared in the 1985 National Conference newsletter, *Flush Left*. The article was written as a fictional short news story quoting “Subjective Women at the conference.” It examined the limitations of objectivity and pointed to its ability to privilege the masculine viewpoint of “Objective Man.”

“Objective news means we receive a white, male view of the world. How boring. Yawn. How distorted. How utterly one-sided,’ [said Subjective Woman One]... Sources say

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<sup>53</sup> Robert A. Hackett and Richard Gruneau with Donald Gutstein, Timothy A. Gibson and NewsWatch Canada, *The Missing News: Filters and Blind Spots in Canada’s Press* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2000) 188.

<sup>54</sup> Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *The Phantom Public Sphere* ed. Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) 11.

<sup>55</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique: By Betty Friedan with a New Introduction and Epilogue by the Author* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1984) 17.

<sup>56</sup> Statistics Canada, “Workforce, by Industrial Category and Sex, Census Years, 1911 to 1971 (Gainfully Occupied 1911 to 1941, Labour Force 1951 to 1971),” *Statistics Canada: Historical Statistics of Canada* [www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/11-516-XIE/sectiond/sectond.htm#Job%20Vacancies](http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/11-516-XIE/sectiond/sectond.htm#Job%20Vacancies).

[Objective Man] can be found in student and commercial newsrooms across the country.”<sup>57</sup> The article indicated that objectivity excluded the views of minorities and women. Instead of being non-sided, the article stated that objectivity is “one-sided.” This view is similar to the theories of Fraser and Mindich.

An example of addressing story focus, was seen in the fall 1977 *Style Guide*, which examined women in sport as an under-reported area, and recommended story angles for covering women in sport, as well as stereotypes to avoid. “[Women in sports] aren’t perverts or muscle bound freaks,” the article stated. “They are women whose participation in sport does not make them less ‘women’ but rather puts them in a better fitness category than the average Canadian.”<sup>58</sup> Little news space was given to women in sports, the article pointed out, except in areas “defined as women’s sports” such as swimming, diving, and figure skating.<sup>59</sup> The article also observed another difference in women’s sport coverage, the focus on female athlete’s beauty. The article noted that a male athlete would not be “recognized for the length of his eyelashes, the firmness and symmetry of his muscles, the style of his hair, but rather on his athletic abilities.”<sup>60</sup> The article called for changes to this double standards in coverage. The piece also pointed to systemic problems in sports coverage: “the large majority of readers of sports pages [were] men, and the sports pages help sell the paper,” and “most sports writers [were] male.” There were fewer ideas presented on how to change these problems other than the suggestion that these factors would change if the coverage changed. In part, coverage changed because women did not stop demanding that it change. As Beasley and Theus point out, “as the women’s liberation movement spread, women became more assertive in demanding different treatment both as consumers of media and as working journalists.”<sup>61</sup> The struggle against sexism was an ongoing battle that can be traced over and over through CUP’s style guides, motions, and minutes from the seventies through to today.

Use of sexist language was another way that newspapers spread sexist stereotypes. By using terms such as policemen, spokesmen, and fishermen, newspapers perpetuated the idea that these jobs could only be filled by men. As an article in the Simon Fraser University *Peak* entitled “Words Can Make Women Disappear,” pointed out, using terms such as “manpower, craftsman” or “statesman, forefathers, masterful, masterpiece,” had the effect of diminishing

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<sup>57</sup> “Who is this man?” *Flush Left: National Conference Newsletter* [Dec. 1985?]: n.pag.

<sup>58</sup> CUP, “Women in Sport & the Media,” *Writing: CUP Style Guide Fall ‘77* (Ottawa: CUP, 1977) Sport 5.

<sup>59</sup> CUP, “Women in Sport & the Media,” *Writing: CUP Style Guide Fall ‘77* (Ottawa: CUP, 1977) Sport 4.

<sup>60</sup> CUP, “Women in Sport & the Media,” *Writing: CUP Style Guide Fall ‘77* (Ottawa: CUP, 1977) Sport 5.

<sup>61</sup> Maurine H. Beasley and Kathryn T. Theus, *The New Majority: A Look at What the Preponderance of Women in Journalism Education Means to the Schools and the Professions* (Boston: University Press of America, 1988) 41.



women's contributions to society, to the point of making them disappear.<sup>62</sup> In the *CUP Style Guide 47*, published in 1984, Martha Muzychka, CUP president in 1985-86, wrote that some journalists defended their use of sexist language by saying that women's concerns were either "nitpicky or trivial" or that changing language use wouldn't make any difference.<sup>63</sup> Despite such comments, the *Style Guide* asserted that change would make a difference. "Language contains the ideas of society, and to date, language tells us that women hold second place. Not only are women invisible, but their actions and contributions to society are ignored or denigrated. By acknowledging women's place in language, we acknowledge their rightful place in society as equals to men," Muzychka wrote. The article suggested changes such as using the term "facilitator" instead of "chairman," "security guard" instead of "watchman," as well as "nurse" instead of "male nurse." Writers were also told to avoid using the terms "girl" or "lady," and not to use verbs "which diminish women's actions," such as "chatted" or "bickered." Finally Muzychka advised CUP journalists, "a good rule to remember: Would you use it if the subject was a man?"<sup>64</sup> Through articles such as this one, as well as seminars at regional and national CUP conferences, CUP tried to change sexism in member papers and the national organization.

While sexism was, and continues to be, a concern of many of the women in CUP, it has not always been a concern of all member papers, nor all staff of CUP. Because of this, the women's caucus and others concerned with sexism in member papers frequently censured, reported on, and complained about the sexism in member papers. The concerns about sexism continued as did blatant sexism in some member papers. In general, these articles fell into three main categories: articles that covered sexist campus events such as beauty pageants uncritically, photo columns that featured attractive female students with brief descriptions of their likes and dislikes, and sexist joke articles.

In the early to mid-sixties, many newspapers ran articles on the beauty contests that were a frequent event on campuses. These sorts of articles usually covered only local campus events and were not reprinted in the CUP news service. They also were often not critical of such events. For example, the cover story for the University of Victoria *Martlet* on October 23, 1962 was the crowning of the homecoming Queen,<sup>65</sup> and a story about the Sir George Williams University track queen going to Toronto to compete for the title of Queen of the

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<sup>62</sup> "Words can Make Women Disappear," *The Peak* 8 Mar. 1990: 11.

<sup>63</sup> Martha Muzychka, "Sexist Language," As reprinted in the *Women's House Organ* 25 Mar. 1988: 17.

<sup>64</sup> Martha Muzychka, "Sexist Language," As reprinted in the *Women's House Organ* 25 Mar. 1988: 17.

<sup>65</sup> Lydia Del Bianco, "Women Take Back the News," *The Martlet: Fifty years of Newspaper (R)evolution* ed. Gefen Bar-On (Victoria: The Martlet Publishing Society, 1998) 55.

Canadian College Bowl, made the front page of *The Georgian* in 1966.<sup>66</sup> These articles were not uncommon, especially with some campuses featuring several such events each year. However, these contests, not to mention the uncritical coverage of them, became increasingly rare through the seventies. This is supported by the controversy over the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) *Nugget's* coverage of the annual "Miss NAIT" beauty contest. In November 1979 the CUP news service ran a story about the Miss NAIT contest that called it "outdated" and "a thing of the past" and "not 'anti-sexist,'" but noted that it had been given an odd legitimacy by the presence of the director of the Alberta government's Women's Bureau as a judge. *The Nugget* ran the CUP article and asked readers to write in and tell them "Is NAIT sexist?"<sup>67</sup> Some CUP members certainly thought so and that year the Western Region of CUP passed a motion for *The Nugget's* membership to be reviewed at the next national conference.<sup>68</sup> While few papers were running articles celebrating beauty contests by the late seventies, *The Nugget* was certainly not alone in printing sexist material.

Several member papers printed weekly columns featuring a photo and write-up about a different female student each week with a brief description of her favourite activities and music and sometimes her measurements, as in *The Martlet*, which described one of their "Mart Mates" whose "sincere personality along with a trim 34-24-36 figure certainly makes for a winning combination."<sup>69</sup> Increasingly these columns were seen as sexist and began to receive a lot of criticism from the women's caucus and CUP members. Through the seventies, columns such as the *Martlet's* "Mart Mate" for the most part ceased to exist in campus newspapers. The Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) *Emery Weal's* "Wealer of the Week" column was similar to the "Mart Mate" column, with a large photo of a female student, frequently in tight fitting clothing, and a short description of her interests. Despite the fact that the "Wealer of the Week" was a student, the descriptions usually focused on interests outside of school. For example, the "Wealer" of November 3, 1978 was described as "enjoy[ing] disco music, snow and being with her friends."<sup>70</sup> It seems from comments that the "Wealer of the Week" received from CUP staff and members, that such columns were relatively rare by the late seventies. For example, a letter of complaint sent by Keith Wiley, a CUP staff member, to the *Emery Weal*, and reprinted in the January 1979 *House Organ*, stated: "I object to the Wealer of the Week column... The women's

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<sup>66</sup> "Track Queen Inherits Football Throne," *The Georgian* 18 Nov. 1966: 3.

<sup>67</sup> "Sexism: Alberta Women's Bureau one of Judges for Technical Institute Beauty Contest," *The Nugget* 1 Nov. 1979: n.pag.

<sup>68</sup> Gene Jamieson, letter to NAIT *Nugget*, 15 Oct. 1979, NAIT correspondence file 1979-80, CUP, Toronto.

<sup>69</sup> Heather Robb, "A Modern Woman's Look at the 50s," *The Martlet: Fifty years of Newspaper (R)evolution* ed. Gefen Bar-On (Victoria: The Martlet Publishing Society, 1998) 26.

<sup>70</sup> "Wealer of the Week," *Emery Weal* 3 Nov. 1978: 8.

movement has been trying to steer society away from this surface judgment of people... I'd feel degraded if I appeared as another pretty face in the Wealer of the Week. I am a lot more than just my body."<sup>71</sup>

While coverage of sexist campus events, and photo columns such as the "Wealer of the Week" seem to have ceased relatively early, sexist jokes were another matter and continued for much longer. In part, this may have been because of the view that such material was not sexist—it was a joke. Another factor was the age of the writers: many articles were literally sophomoric efforts. An article printed in the *Georgian* in 1966 is just such an example. The article was written as a dialogue between a man and woman in a "downtown discotheque." After the woman tells the man "get your hand off my tit," he tells her he is "a queer." The article implied that he had been turned off women because his first girlfriend did not love him enough and then got pregnant and had to have an abortion. In the end the whole story turns out to be just a way for the man to keep touching the woman's breasts, which of course, she lets him do.<sup>72</sup> It is hard to know exactly where to begin with objections to such an article: the implication that men are turned "queer" by heartless women, that all women are perpetually sexually available, but must be tricked into consenting to sexual activity, or that this is not hard because women are extremely gullible. Another joke article from the *Cord Weekly* in 1989 also featured a bar scene. The article instructed all the "bountiful big-breasted and tight-butted babes out there," to chill out about sexism. The piece went on to lament the days "when you could pick out what you wanted, crack it upside the head with a stick and drag it home by a handful of hair."<sup>73</sup> While such material did not get printed at every paper, it was not uncommon. According to an article on sexism in the February 22, 1978 *House Organ*, "most of the sexist material [was] photographs and joke issues...sexism for the fun of it...In the newspapers [they were] dealing mostly with women used as material for jokes. It seems that sexism [was] still funny, but racism [wasn't]."<sup>74</sup>

The continued use of sexist jokes, both in member papers and in the conference newsletters was frustrating for many delegates, male and female. "We're tired of playing 'thought police,' we're tired of being forced into the position of humourless stereotypes. But most of all, we're tired of having to put up with this kind of shit," wrote Faith Jones, Sarah Millin, Ivy Scott, Colin Tomlins, and Brendan Weston at the 1985 national conference in a letter that appeared in the conference newsletter. In addition to receiving letters of complaint about sexist copy, and write-ups in the *House Organ*, on occasion, frequent offenders were

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<sup>71</sup> Keith Wiley, "Letter to the Emery Weal Nov. 5, 1978," *House Organ* Jan. 1979: 59.

<sup>72</sup> Bill Temper, "Temper's Tantrums," *The Georgian* 18 Nov. 1966: n.pag.

<sup>73</sup> Bill Needle, "Your Biorythm," *The Cord Weekly* 26 Oct. 1989: 4.

<sup>74</sup> "Status of Women in CUP? Sexism for the Fun of it," *House Organ* 22 Feb. 1978: 3.

sanctioned by CUP. A letter from Gene Jameson, the Western region president at the time, to *The Nugget* indicated that the Western Region passed a motion in October of 1979 recommending CUP review *The Nugget's* membership, in part because the paper's "consistent use of sexist copy [was] in direct violation of [the CUP] statement of principles."<sup>75</sup> While the CUP documents do not record specific instances of sexism, according to an article in *The Alberta Report*, *The Nugget* was called sexist by CUP members because of "witticisms like: 'I hate men because they take me into alleys, dark dance halls and bedrooms, and when they get what they want they throw me away. Why should they take advantage of my small white body? After all, I'm only a cigarette?'"<sup>76</sup> *The Nugget* countered by stating that the "charges of sexism [were] quite vague," and asked CUP "to back up their accusations with facts."<sup>77</sup> Ultimately though, CUP censures had very little effect. Members that were accused of sexism were never forced to leave CUP, although some did quit.

Although complaints such as those by Wiley and the Western Region do not seem to have had much effect in terms of evicting members from the organization, they did act as a public embarrassment and discouraged other papers from publishing similar material. Public embarrassment was a tactic also used by the women of the national office in 1984, who posted examples of sexist copy from the members on the walls at the national conference. "We hope the wall hangings prompt delegates to question their claims to anti-sexist policies," the national executive wrote in their annual report to members.<sup>78</sup>

Actions against members for sexism were neither systematic, nor consistent. Although the regional women's co-ordinators at times screened member papers for sexist content, this was not done routinely.<sup>79</sup> Even when papers were found to be running sexist content in violation of the Statement of Principles, members seemed increasingly reluctant to interfere with each other's editorial content. For example, in 1990 two papers, the University of Toronto Scarborough College *Underground* and the Marianapolis College *Paper*, were accused of sexism and running sexist editorial content. After a long debate, the members passed motions that declared the two papers sexist and laid out plans for seminars to educate staff on each paper about sexism and sexist content, as well as mandating the regional CUP staff to monitor the papers for sexist content.<sup>80</sup> However, at the following national conference the motions accusing the two papers of sexism were declared "out of order and in flagrant

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<sup>75</sup> Gene Jamieson, letter to NAIT Nugget, 15 Oct. 1979, NAIT correspondence file 1979-80, CUP, Toronto.

<sup>76</sup> "He/She or Else," *Alberta Report* 16 Nov. 1979: n.pag.

<sup>77</sup> Brian Jameson, "B.J. Comments," *The Nugget* 13 Dec. 1979: n.pag.

<sup>78</sup> CUP, "Status of Women in CUP," *CUP 47 Commission Report: National Office* (Ottawa: CUP, 1984) n.pag.

<sup>79</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 53rd National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1990) 82.

<sup>80</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 53rd National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1990) Motion 73 and 74.

violation of the constitution of CUP,” and the membership passed a motion apologizing “to the papers for the grilling [the plenary had] put them through.”<sup>81</sup> It is not clear why the motions were considered to violate the constitution, which did allow CUP to “evaluate... members’ adherence to [the statement of] principles.”<sup>82</sup> However, in the late eighties and nineties, CUP members were increasingly reluctant to allow other CUP members to influence or oversee their editorial policy in any way. In part this seems to have come out of many members’ protracted battles to gain control of their papers from the students’ unions—having fought and won, they were reluctant to give up any of that control to others.

Although the changes in CUP were slow, there was also progress. The CUP news service ran many stories on women’s issues, sexual harassment, and assault. In 1979 a report on the CUP news wire stated that “the membership’s concern on this ugly issue [of violence against women] is high,” as the four stories run in the news wire were picked up for reprint thirty-five times by members. The same year nine stories about sexism were picked up fifty-two times by members.<sup>83</sup> The following year ten stories on women were picked up for reprint thirty-five times by members, six stories on sexism were picked up thirty-three times, six stories on sexual assault were picked up twenty-four times, and four stories on sexual harassment were reprinted seven times for a total of ninety-nine reprints on twenty-six news exchange stories. The 1983 figures increased to a total of twenty-eight stories on the news exchange dealing with sexism and women’s issues and 127 reprints of those stories by member papers. This high level of coverage by CUP and high reprint rate by members shows that CUP made changes to the coverage of women and women’s issues in the student newspapers. As the national executive wrote in their annual report in 1984, “Women in CUP are making their voices heard. Yes, we have come a long way.... But the complex and often tangled battle for women’s rights in CUP is still evolving.”<sup>84</sup>

### **Women as Objects: The Battle Against Porn in the Offices and Sexist Ads in the Pages of Canada’s Student Newspapers**

Perhaps the most tangled of the battles for women’s rights involved the images of women in both pornography and advertising. The fight against negative portrayals of women in media images took two main forms in CUP. The first was the issue of displaying

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<sup>81</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 54th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1991) D-132.

<sup>82</sup> CUP, “Standing Resolutions for Canadian University Press,” *CUP 47 Commission Report: Constitution* (Ottawa: CUP, 1984) 17.

<sup>83</sup> CUP, *Annual Report: Services* (Ottawa: CUP, 1979) 4-5.

<sup>84</sup> CUP, “Status of Women in CUP,” *CUP 47 Commission Report: National Office* (Ottawa: CUP, 1984) n.pag.

pornographic materials at national and regional conferences and in CUP member newsrooms. The debate around this question was on the one hand that the existence of pornographic material created an uncomfortable, even unsafe, work environment for women, and that on the other hand the regulation of such material constituted a violation of men's rights and the freedom of the press by restricting access to publications. The second form of the issue revolved around sexist advertising content. While this was in a few cases formulated as a question of freedom of expression, for the most part the debate over publishing sexist advertising was between the ideal of anti-sexism and the reality of the cost of running a newspaper. Again, the work of the women's caucus and others within CUP to change sexist attitudes in relation to sexist images in their newsrooms and papers was complex and long.

Pornography in the student newsroom has long been an issue in CUP. Whether the porn in question was in members' offices, or the CUP national office, or at the national conference, whether it was print, film, or online—for some reason the pornography debate continued for much too long. The debate goes something along the lines of, pornography is offensive to women, but no one should intrude on the "right" of people to read porn. For example, Rick Janson, the 1983-84 Atlantic regional bureau chief, related a situation at the *Dalhousie Gazette* in his 1983 winter report. When an editor at the paper brought a copy of *Playboy* into the office, other staff members introduced a motion at the next staff meeting to have the magazine banned from *The Gazette* office. However, instead of focusing on the issue of the effects of pornography in the office, the debate instead centred on the rights of the staff to "read whatever they like whenever they like and wherever they like."<sup>85</sup>

"The premise is in itself absurd," wrote Jansen. "You cannot stand in the middle of a busy street and read *Playboy* or you will be run over by a truck. Some associations state that if you bring pornography into their environment and are asked to put it away, if you refuse, it is considered to be a form of sexual harassment."<sup>86</sup> Indeed it was absurd, and yet, pornography in the offices of both CUP and its members continued to be an issue. However, there were also many actions against pornography such as the 1983 motion to cover or remove a *Playboy* pinball machine in the conference's hotel recreation room. The motion was carried to applause.<sup>87</sup> In many ways, pornography was a much less controversial or critical issue than the related issue of sexist advertising.

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<sup>85</sup> Rick Janson, "Zen and the Art of Newspaper Maintenance: ARCUP Winter Report," *CUP 46 Annual Reports: Regions* (Ottawa: CUP, 1983) 4.

<sup>86</sup> Rick Janson, "Zen and the Art of Newspaper Maintenance: ARCUP Winter Report," *CUP 46 Annual Reports: Regions* (Ottawa: CUP, 1983) 4.

<sup>87</sup> CUP, *CUP 46 Minutes* (Ottawa: CUP, 1983) 9.

Student newspapers advertised a wide range of products. Those that most often incorporated sexist themes or statements included ads for clothing, jewelry, movies, employment, cigarettes, toiletries, and condoms. According to Korinek, many ads aimed at women “employed themes of self-improvement or the cult of youthfulness, and highlighted insecurities about body appearances or hygiene.”<sup>88</sup> For example, an ad for Pristeen Feminine Hygiene Deodorant that was reprinted in the CUP *Guide to Sexist Advertising* told women that using their product was not only “essential to [their] cleanliness,” but it was also essential “to [their] peace of mind about being a girl. An attractive, nice-to-be-with girl.” The ad played on insecurities of “worry-making odors” from “the most girl part of” a woman’s body. Not only was the ad for a product that is potentially harmful to women’s health, the text was patronizing and portrayed women’s bodies as “troublesome.”<sup>89</sup>

Because of their differentiation along gender lines, clothing advertisements often used sexist or sexual themes. According to the CUP *Guide*, many ads displayed naked or nearly naked bodies unnecessarily, and frequently used sexist stereotypes. For example, an ad for a clothing store in Sherbrooke with the headline “Keep Bishop’s Beautiful” displayed a photo of a nude woman who appeared to be climbing the ladder of a slide or diving board. “Dress her at Au Bon Marche!” the ad stated. The image and the text seem to have very little to do with what is being advertised; it seems that the image of the nude woman was used only to grab attention. At the same time, the implication that women were responsible for the beautification of Bishop’s University by baring their breasts is certainly questionable.<sup>90</sup>

Similarly, ads for jewelry often contained sexist stereotypes, especially those for engagement rings, which were frequently advertised to the student market. For example, in 1974, the University of Manitoba *Manitoban* received an ad for engagement rings from the Independent Jewellers of Winnipeg. The paper refused to run the ad on the basis that it “contribute[d] significantly to the stereotype of women as the passive property of men.” According to a letter from *The Manitoban* to the Independent Jewellers, which was reprinted in the *House Organ*, the text and image of the advertisement were sexist. The image showed a “passive, sheltered woman-as-object under the benevolent arm of the dominant, possessive (if affectionate) man.” This impression of the woman as an object was reinforced by the headline of the ad, “You Chose Her Carefully.” According to the letter:

*The Manitoban* [had] developed an editorial policy that [prohibited their] publishing any material that [contributed], directly or indirectly, to the

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<sup>88</sup> Valerie J. Korinek, *J. Roughing it in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 141.

<sup>89</sup> CUP, *Guide to Sexist Advertising* (Ottawa: CUP, c. 1974) n.pag.

<sup>90</sup> CUP, *Guide to Sexist Advertising* (Ottawa: CUP, c. 1974) n.pag.

continued subjugation and alienation of groups of human beings based on race, religion, nationality, age or sex.<sup>91</sup>

Other ads showed women as the property of men in other ways. For example, an ad for Colt's cigarettes printed in the Douglas College *Other Press* received complaints for its implications that women were perpetually sexually available.<sup>92</sup> The image of women as always sexually available was also common in movie advertisements such as one for a film called *The Flamboyant Sex*, which was advertised in *The Martlet* in 1969.<sup>93</sup> According to a 1981 CUP national advertising report, "complaints about sexist material focused on movie ads."<sup>94</sup> Even movies that did not contain overt sexual content often advertised using sexist stereotypes. For example, an ad reprinted in the *Guide to Sexist Advertising* for a film about Mary Queen of Scots and Queen Elizabeth stated that Mary "ruled with the heart of a woman" and was shown to be pretty and passive, while Elizabeth "reigned with the power of a man," clearly implying that power is a masculine attribute.<sup>95</sup> Considering which way that story ends, the ad also seems to imply that the "masculine" characteristics of power are superior.

CUP's work against sexist advertising seems to have started in earnest in the early 1970s. That year Jennifer Penney wrote an article in the *House Organ* telling members not to publish advertising that ran counter to their editorial policy. "The advertising you use to simply keep functioning, is the advertising which sells the social structure you oppose, itself a contradiction to the different values you see yourselves promoting," she wrote.<sup>96</sup>

At the national conference later that same year, members passed a motion encouraging papers not to print Tampax ads, because of their sexist content. The motion also encouraged Youthstream, CUP's national advertising co-operative, to encourage Tampax to change the ad content. However, stopping sexist advertising was a long and difficult process, in part because the ways that papers received advertising were complex, and because of many papers' reluctance to relinquish any control over their advertising content to CUP.

Once the Youthstream advertising co-operative was established at the 1969 national conference, CUP members sold their own space to local advertisers, and Youthstream, and later Campus Plus, sold national advertising. With local advertisers, papers used their own discretion in terms of which ads they would run. With national advertising, it was a bit more

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<sup>91</sup> The Manitoban, "To The Manager Independent Jewellers Limited," *House Organ* 3 Oct. 1974: n.pag.

<sup>92</sup> Nancy McRitchie c/o the Other Press. "To Youthstream." *House Organ* Volume 41. Number 10, n.d.: 33.

<sup>93</sup> "Untamed Females." *Martlet* 27 Nov. 1969: 6.

<sup>94</sup> CUP, *CUP 44 National Advertising* (Ottawa: CUP, 1981) 17.

<sup>95</sup> CUP, *Guide to Sexist Advertising* (Ottawa: CUP, c. 1974) n.pag.

<sup>96</sup> Jennifer Penney, "Women and Men and First-Year Students are People Too," *House Organ* 25 Sept. 1970: n.pag.



tricky. The 1977 *CUP Editor's Manual* noted that it was "the opinion of the membership, established at a recent national conference, that advertising [constituted] editorial content and that advertisements which contain elements of sexual bias [had] no place in member papers."<sup>97</sup> According to an article by Keith Wiley in the *House Organ* in 1979, the Youthstream contract specified no sexist ads.<sup>98</sup> However, in practice, Youthstream seems to have left the responsibility of rejecting sexist advertising up to each member. Each member had to set its advertising policy with Youthstream by filling out an "Appendix B" form to list "brand names or certain types of advertising which the paper [did] not wish to publish."<sup>99</sup> This left individual papers to decide which advertisers, or which specific ads they would not run due to sexist content. Correspondence between some member papers and Youthstream indicates that often the ad sales personnel at Youthstream had different definitions of sexism than some of CUP's members. Because the contract stated that the paper was "obligated to run all national advertising which complie[d] with its... stated editorial policy,"<sup>100</sup> in the case that Youthstream and the paper disagreed about whether an ad was sexist, it appears that the paper had a choice of either running the ad or facing a twenty per cent charge.

In part to deal with these problems, as well as in response to advertisers who asked for definitions of sexist advertising, CUP developed guidelines on sexist advertising. The first guide was a booklet titled *Guide to Sexist Advertising*, published some time between 1974 and 1977, and the second was an article titled "Guidelines on Sexism in Advertising," which was published in the *House Organ* in the winter of 1980. These guides were sent to members, Youthstream, advertisers, the Canadian Advertising Advisory Board, and the Ontario Press Council.<sup>101</sup>

In 1979 CUP members passed a motion that guidelines for "objectionable advertising" be given to Youthstream to help clarify which ads should be rejected for sexism.<sup>102</sup> This request, and the fact that the Youthstream contract was up for renewal that year, may have spurred on the publication of the second guide. "Guidelines on Sexism in Advertising" began with a brief discussion "on the sexist nature of our society."

The values of our society are fundamentally "sexist", which is to say that the current definition of acceptable sexual roles and lifestyles is narrow, arbitrary,

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<sup>97</sup> CUP, "A Note on Sexist Advertising," *CUP Editor's Manual* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Ottawa: CUP, 1977) 59.

<sup>98</sup> Keith Wiley, "Youthstream Hidden Charges," *House Organ* 9 April 1979: 45.

<sup>99</sup> CUP, "National Advertising and Youthstream," *CUP Editor's Manual* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Ottawa: CUP, 1977) 56.

<sup>100</sup> CUP, "National Advertising and Youthstream," *CUP Editor's Manual* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Ottawa: CUP, 1977) 57.

<sup>101</sup> CUP, "Executive Reports," *Annual Reports 41st Canadian University Press National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1978) n.pag.

<sup>102</sup> CUP, *The Minutes: 42<sup>nd</sup> National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1979) 32.

and often coercively imposed, consequently stifling rather than liberating the growth and development of human potential.<sup>103</sup>

The “Guidelines” also included information on the mandate and motivation of having such a guide, a list of characteristics of sexist advertising, and a list of characteristics that CUP wanted to encourage in advertising. Along with more standard definitions of sexist advertising including advertising that stressed the differences between the sexes, used sex to sell products or get attention, showed or implied violence against women, or promoted negative sexual stereotypes, the “Guidelines” included as sexist, advertising that “[trivialized] the women’s movement by claiming—in contradiction to all the facts—or suggesting that the essential goals of the movement [had] been achieved, or even that significant gains [had] been made.”<sup>104</sup> The “Guidelines” also identified ads that discredited feminists or the feminist movement through caricature or trivialization as sexist.

Additionally, the “Guidelines” encouraged positive images of the sexes in advertising:

We’d like to see advertising that acknowledges that sexism is a major social, economic, political and cultural problem in our society by becoming part of the solution instead of continuing to perpetuate and disseminate the pervasive values and attitudes at the root of the issue. Secondly, we’d like to see the advertising industry show that it is truly committed to improving its standards and struggling against sexism of ads.<sup>105</sup>

The “Guidelines” listed nine suggestions for more positive advertising including ads that portrayed women and men treating each other as equals, ads that showed a larger variety of “types” of beauty rather than restricted ideals, ads that portrayed men and women interacting as friends or co-workers rather than always “hinting at sex,” and ads that challenged stereotypical sexual roles by showing men and women performing activities or behaviours not traditionally associated with their sex. “In other words we want to see men who can emote and look after children, and women who can intellectualize and drive big trucks, without being reduced in any way or trivialized,” the “Guidelines” stated.<sup>106</sup>

The CUP “Guidelines on Sexism in Advertising” echoed the earlier *Guide to Sexist Advertising* and other publications such as the Dorothy Aaron’s *About Face: Towards a*

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<sup>103</sup> CUP, “Guidelines on Sexism in Advertising,” *House Organ* Vol. 42. No. 12, n.d.: 26.

<sup>104</sup> CUP, “Guidelines on Sexism in Advertising,” *House Organ* Vol. 42. No. 12, n.d.: 29-30.

<sup>105</sup> CUP, “Guidelines on Sexism in Advertising,” *House Organ*. Vol. 42. No. 12: 29-31.

<sup>106</sup> CUP, “Guidelines on Sexism in Advertising,” *House Organ*. Vol. 42. No. 12: 29-31-32.

*Positive Image of Women in Advertising*<sup>107</sup>, and Courtney and Whipple's *Canadian Perspectives on Sex Stereotyping in Advertising*.<sup>108</sup> This would seem to show that CUP was on track with many other advocacy groups, but ahead of most other news organizations in attempting to eliminate sexist advertising.

However, it would take a long and concerted effort for advertisers to change. Again, the struggle for equality, both in CUP member papers and in the mainstream press was long and arduous. The main way that CUP helped papers to fight sexist advertising was to create systems for objecting, such as boycotts and organized ad refusals, as well as the definitions provided in the *Guide to Sexist Advertising*. While this did not mean an instant end to the problem of sexism, it did provide a method of encouraging change.

## Conclusion

In writing about mainstream daily newspapers and their exclusion of women, John Miller has written, "In hundreds of subtle and not-so-subtle ways, women are told the door is closed."<sup>109</sup> Sexism in the student newsroom worked in similar ways, whether it was through making women feel uncomfortable by bringing pornography into the office, discouraging women from taking "hard news" assignments, or belittling complaints about sexist language as "nitpicking." However, the women in CUP had the advantage that members were at least supposed to abide by the Statement of Principles, which advocated social progress, elimination of oppression, and after 1970 explicitly discouraged sexism. While CUP and its members often "paid lip service only to the ideas of liberation and the rejection of sexism," as a motion passed at the 1973 national conference stated, this still gave women and their supporters in CUP the opportunity to "demand better and more considerate behaviour in the future."<sup>110</sup> Perhaps the most effective method that CUP and its members used to make changes to sexist behaviour was to set a scene that made it possible to demand better. With the various grievance procedures, the women's caucus, Women's regional co-ordinator, and *Guide to Sexist Advertising*, among other things, CUP created methods of change, systems, structures, and procedures for making both complaints about sexism and for enacting change.

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<sup>107</sup> Dorothy Aaron, *About Face: towards a positive image of women in advertising* (Toronto: Ontario Status of Women Council, 1975).

<sup>108</sup> Alice E. Courtney and Thomas W. Whipple, *Canadian Perspectives on Sex Stereotyping in Advertising*, diss., York U, 1978, Toronto: York UP, 1978.

<sup>109</sup> John Miller, *Yesterday's News: Why Canada's Daily Newspapers are Failing Us* (Halifax: Fernwood, 1998) 135.

<sup>110</sup> CUP, *36<sup>th</sup> National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1973) 23, Motion N.B./2/73.

Whether it was through humour, such as an anonymous writer's suggestion that a delegate who said that the women's caucus members were not "real women" be considered "as a prime candidate for 1975's Paul Anka award for Lowest Consciousness of the Year,"<sup>111</sup> or through appeals to policy decisions such as the 1976 motion that set aside time to "discuss the use of role-reinforcing and exploiting graphics and copy in CUP papers,"<sup>112</sup> women and men in CUP fought to change sexism on their papers and in the national organization. That this fight was long should not detract from the efforts, or the effects, which were long lasting. In the fight to make CUP and member papers more egalitarian every aspect of the "agent of social change" clause was used—women changed the content of their papers in terms of coverage, language, and advertising, they changed the structures and systems in the student newsroom and in CUP that reinforced sexist attitudes, and they worked with other agents of social change throughout their struggles. Although sexism was so much a part of journalism, from sexist attitudes in the newsroom, the ideas of objectivity and news values, and in news coverage and advertising, CUP worked on each of these areas in some ways. None of these changes happened by themselves. They happened because the women of CUP always demanded better and more considerate behaviour in every area of the student newspaper.

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<sup>111</sup> *House Organ* 18 Mar. 1975: 8.

<sup>112</sup> CUP, 39<sup>th</sup> *National Conference Minutes* (Ottawa: CUP, 1976) 4.

## Chapter Six

### The End of an Era: Removing the “Agent of Social Change” Clause

#### Introduction

In 1990, three documents, or standing resolutions, explained CUP and its members’ philosophy, their view of the role of the student newspaper and the ways they believed journalists should conduct themselves. First, the Statement of Principles set out the shared views of the members. The Principles explained CUP’s policy that student newspapers should act as “agents of social change,” and generally how they should do that. It also stated the organization’s belief in the freedom of the press, and the specific ways that freedom could be maintained. The Statement of Principles stated, “these principles define us as a co-operative, and that collectively we have the right to set membership criteria and to evaluate, with full consideration for due process, members’ adherence to these principles,”<sup>1</sup> binding members to follow the policy, and giving CUP the job of policing members. Secondly, the Code of Ethics set out the ethical standards for CUP members, and described the actions journalists and newspapers should take to ensure that their work was ethical. Finally, the Statement of Purposes dealt specifically with the CUP national news exchange and detailed how the news service itself should reflect the shared principles of the members including acting as an agent of social change. The Statement of Purposes was the most explicit of the three standing resolutions in describing CUP as an organization working against the capitalist system and the oppression of women and minorities. At the 1991 and 1992 national conferences each of these documents was altered to reflect the changing beliefs and operations of the members and CUP. The changes to the standing resolutions included removing the “agent of social change” clause from both the Statement of Principles and the Statement of Purposes. This chapter traces the changes to CUP and its members that factored into the amendments to the standing resolutions.

By 1991, CUP was dramatically different than it had been in 1965, when the “agent of social change” clause was first introduced. For years, the organization had been hemorrhaging members and money. Plenary sessions were getting bogged down in political debates that some members saw as pointless and that many believed scared away new members. Fees had soared to prohibitive levels while services had been cut. It was getting harder and harder to justify CUP membership fees to editors and writers, let alone the

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<sup>1</sup> CUP, “Standing Resolutions for Canadian University Press,” *CUP 47 Commission Report: Constitution* (Ottawa: CUP, 1984) 17.

students' unions who in many cases paid them. For some members the only thing keeping them in the organization was the difficulty of withdrawing.<sup>2</sup> At the heart of the problem for many members and non-members was the "agent of social change" clause. For some it represented how CUP was stuck in the sixties, a reactionary dinosaur in a new political world. They saw CUP's journalism as hopelessly political in both its actions and coverage. For others the fact that the "agent of social change" clause was being attacked was a sign that CUP had lost its relevance, indeed its soul, in the face of increasing commercial and budgetary concerns. But everyone seemed to agree that the notion of acting as an "agent of social change" most clearly showed a division in the organization and polarized opinion about the future of CUP.

Taking the "agent for social change" clause out of the Statement of Principles did not cause a change in CUP as much as it reflected a shift that had already occurred in the membership. Fewer people involved with CUP seemed to describe themselves as Marxist or socialist at this time, although many still identified themselves as left-leaning. This was indicative of a switch from the largely Marxist-influenced and unified, although not homogenous, student movement of the sixties and early seventies, to a more fragmented student political scene influenced by identity politics in the nineties. When the idea of acting as an agent of social change had been most relevant, in the late sixties and early seventies, many staff seem to remember it more as an ideal that they personally aspired to than a policy.<sup>3</sup> The Principles had always been more often a reflection of what members believed than a prescription for what they should do. By 1991 the standing resolutions were outdated, and no longer reflected members' beliefs or actions. Additionally, many members identified CUP's politics as the barrier for the organization to appeal to a new, wider membership.

Members also came to see CUP as a service that they paid for, rather than a group they co-operated in. This affected how they viewed their relationship with the organization. For many members, the services no longer justified the fees, and as paying customers, they were unwilling to have CUP oversee their editorial policies. In some ways, CUP was also a victim of its own success. CUP had encouraged and supported members in gaining autonomy from their students' unions. Having fought hard for the right to control their editorial content, many members were unwilling to give away any of that autonomy in the name of CUP co-operation.

At this time, CUP moved toward promoting a more independent membership and a less politically engaged concept of the role of the press. It is not the case, however, that CUP

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<sup>2</sup> Krishna Rau, Personal Interview, 14 Apr. 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004.

and its members reverted to a traditional view of journalism. Rather, changing times and a smaller membership called for an acceptance of a variety of approaches, for flexibility, and for a step back from trying to enforce one view of the role of the press.

This chapter examines the multiple factors that led to the revisions to the CUP Statement of Principles and Code of Ethics in 1991 and 1992. This includes discussion of the CUP advertising co-operatives, Youthstream and Campus Plus, the spiraling drop in membership numbers and services, and the main themes in the debates about the Statement of Principles. The chapter also looks at what the 1992 changes accomplished, and how the new documents differed from the previous standing resolutions. The 1992 Statement of Principles and Code of Ethics are complete rewrites of the previous documents and it is difficult to compare the documents line-by-line. However, this chapter compares the overall themes and ideas put forth in each.

### **A Time for Change**

One of the major themes in the debate over the Statement of Principles was that members were leaving, or not joining, CUP because of the political views forced on members by the Statement of Principles. This view seems to have started in 1976, when the Queen's *Journal* and the University of Victoria *Martlet* declared themselves members under protest of the Statement of Principles, and threatened to leave CUP if the document was not altered.<sup>4</sup>

Added to this was the fact that many members were concerned about CUP fees and services. In 1975, CUP members had approved the first phase of an expansion plan that dramatically increased the costs of membership.<sup>5</sup> According to an article printed in *The Martlet*, the CUP budget had increased 109 per cent in 1975, and another seventy-nine per cent in 1977. This increase was paid for through membership fees.<sup>6</sup> Citing the "activist" nature of the Statement of Principles, and the increasing cost of membership, *The Journal* dropped out of CUP in the spring of 1977.<sup>7</sup> The University of Western Ontario *Gazette*, *The Martlet* and the University of New Brunswick *Brunswickan* also quit the same year.<sup>8</sup> These

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<sup>4</sup> "Martlet Pullout From CUP Possible," *House Organ* 1 Feb. 1977: 2.

Deb Sigler, "Journal Quits CUP as of April 30," *House Organ* 10 Mar. 1977: 37-38.

<sup>5</sup> Carl Wilson ed. "Canadian University Press: A Chronology," *Canadian Student Press Styleguide* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) 262.

<sup>6</sup> "Martlet Pullout From CUP Possible," *House Organ* 1 Feb. 1977: 2.

<sup>7</sup> Deb Sigler, "Journal Quits CUP as of April 30," *House Organ* 10 Mar. 1977: 37-38.

<sup>8</sup> Carl Wilson, ed. "Canadian University Press: A Chronology," *Canadian Student Press Styleguide* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) 262.

were all large papers that had been members for many years. *The Journal* was also a founding member of CUP, so its withdrawal held even more significance for CUP.

The effect of the withdrawals on CUP's revenue meant that the expansion plan had to be curtailed and services cut. Following the withdrawal of so many papers, the news service was cut from three times to once weekly. However, this did not mean a subsequent decrease in fees for the remaining members. Because CUP had many fixed costs, the fewer members the organization had, the greater the cost to the individual paper. At the same time, the fewer papers that participated in the news exchange, the less material there was available to CUP. As the news exchange was one of the main benefits CUP membership offered, as it got smaller fewer papers were willing to pay high membership fees. CUP found itself in a cycle of increasing fees and decreasing services that would take almost two decades to break.

In the early 1980s, this cycle was accelerated by another event that left CUP with even fewer members. In 1979 CUP's contract with the advertising co-operative Youthstream ended and the two organizations were unable to negotiate a new agreement. Instead, CUP started its own advertising co-operative, Campus Plus, in 1980, and the owners of Youthstream started a competitor, Campus Network. In the months following the creation of Campus Plus sixteen members left CUP.<sup>9</sup> The period fittingly became known as the Mass Exodus. While some members did in fact leave because of the Statement of Principles, many left because of the increased price of membership fees, or for the promise of "free" advertising from Campus Network, Campus Plus' competition.<sup>10</sup> While papers had to be members of CUP and pay CUP fees to receive ads from Campus Plus, Campus Network had no membership fees and was paid through commission on advertising sales.<sup>11</sup> The loss of so many members resulted in more cuts to CUP services, this time to the staff. In 1980 the position of vice president/features writer was cut, and in 1986 the regional field workers were cut. In 1988, Greg Ip, then editor of the Carleton University *Charlatan*, summed up the bleak outlook of the organization in an article entitled "CUP will be dead in two years." According to Ip, "The organization [was] collapsing under a vicious cycle of increasing fees and declining membership, a deadweight of bureaucracy, expensive and inefficient services, hypocritical ideology and a self-righteousness that [blinded] it to the need for reform."<sup>12</sup> While Ip was wrong about CUP's longevity, the Statement of Principles would face the guillotine in three years time.

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<sup>9</sup> CUP, *CUP44 National Executive Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1981) 2.

<sup>10</sup> CUP, *CUP44 National Executive Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1981) 2.

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Poitras, "Knowledge and Power: Thirty Years of Ideology in Canadian University Press," thesis. Carleton U, 1991, 64.

<sup>12</sup> Greg Ip, "CUP will be dead in two years," *House Organ* Spring 1988: n.pag.



For many members, the obvious problem with CUP was the Statement of Principles. Since services could not be increased nor fees decreased without more members, the document became a scapegoat for CUP's problems. As a delegate from the Langara College *Gleaner* stated at the 1992 conference:

We're getting down to the basic fact of we need more members, right? The statement of principles is the hindrance to getting new membership, and I know that there are papers out there not joining CUP specifically because of our statement of principles. So if we get rid of the statement of principles, there are papers out there who will join.<sup>13</sup>

It seems from comments such as this one that CUP members were motivated to become more politically moderate in order to attract more members. In part, the less radical political stance shown in the 1992 standing resolutions was a reflection of the campus community at the time, just as the 1965 standing resolutions had been a reflection of that period. The move away from acting as a politically engaged press was identified by some as a result of changes on campus. For example, in the 1982 regional report Glen Sanford, a CUP staff member, wrote that CUP was the victim of the growing conservatism on the campuses. According to Sanford, the result was smaller newspaper staffs and a quicker turnover rate. However, most importantly, he wrote, "CUPpies [were] losing their stamina. They're getting worn down. They [did not] want to think."<sup>14</sup> According to Sanford, through the eighties, conservatism on campus was resulting in CUP members conducting themselves more like the mainstream press with less politically charged coverage.

Krishna Rau, then editor of the University of Toronto *Varsity*, remembered the tipping point as 1988, the year that CUP allowed non-CUP members to join Campus Plus. "I think to some extent it changed the dynamic," Rau said during an interview. "It [was] also indicative of...this switch from sort of a starry eyed idealism, to a more sort of practical approach, where papers are saying, okay, hell, you know, let's make some money." Rau recalled an increasing number of papers that wanted to be a part of Campus Plus, and receive the national advertising, but that were "getting sick and tired of all this CUP bullshit" in terms of politics. According to Rau, once non-member papers were allowed to join Campus Plus, CUP became more politically moderate.<sup>15</sup> The move was also indicative of CUP's need for money at the time. Before that point, CUP members had viewed Campus Plus as part of the co-operative, a benefit of membership in CUP. Allowing non-CUP members to be

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<sup>13</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 55th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) C-24.

<sup>14</sup> Glen Sanford, "CUP we've got your principles tied up give up all your social change or..." *Regions* (Ottawa: CUP, 1982) n.pag.

<sup>15</sup> Krishna Rau, Personal Interview, 14 Apr. 2004.

represented by Campus Plus indicated a shift toward CUP members viewing Campus Plus as a for-profit advertising agency rather than the advertising co-operative it had been started as.

For Rau, the topics of major debate at the national conferences indicated this shift from political idealism to a more business-like approach. Rau said that at his first national conference in 1985, the major debate was about “which so-called liberation movements got [our] support. Whether we should officially support the IRA, or the Sandinistas or the Sendero Luminosa.” In contrast, the major debate at the last national conference Rau attended in 1991 centred on fees and services.<sup>16</sup>

So it was that several years of increasing fees and declining membership formed the backdrop to CUP members’ changes to the Statement of Principles, Code of Ethics and Statement of Purposes in 1991 and 1992. In the debates about the changes members specifically cited declining membership numbers as a major factor in their decisions. In order to attract and retain members, the Principles and Purposes were changed to be less overtly political, and to allow individual members greater editorial autonomy from CUP.

This is not to suggest that CUP’s development was like a pendulum swinging from a traditional to a radical view of the press and back again. While in some ways the revised Principles reflected a more traditional view of the newspaper and the news organization, they were by no means the same as those enunciated by the mainstream commercial press. This is perhaps shown most clearly in the 1992 rewrite of the Code of Ethics. The 1992 Code represented a much more sophisticated understanding of objectivity and fairness than the previous Code of Ethics. Together, the 1992 Principles, Purposes, and Code represented more moderate but nuanced approach to journalism that encouraged political engagement, but did not enforce it, and promoted each newspaper’s right to choose its own approach within a spectrum of political and civic responsibility.

### **Making Changes: Statement of Principles**

The 1992 changes to the standing resolutions addressed all of the major themes of the debate surrounding the role of CUP and the student press. Because there were conflicting opinions on some of the issues, the changes took a long time to hash out. However, the main issues were that the previous standing resolutions were irrelevant, vague, directed the editorial policy of the members too much, and weakened CUP and its members’ credibility and accountability—and that as a result of all of these factors, CUP was losing members.

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<sup>16</sup> Krishna Rau, Personal Interview, 14 Apr. 2004.

Once the debate gained enough momentum to create changes to the standing resolutions, it took two full years of argument at the national conference to change the documents. In 1991 revisions to the three standing resolutions were passed in principle. This was done to allow the members to take the changes back to their papers and discuss them before they ratified the amendments at the next year's conference. The 1991 changes included replacing the phrase "agent of social change" with "medium for social justice" in both the Principles and the Purposes. It seems that the change to "medium for social justice" was made as a compromise between those members who wanted the "agent of social change" clause out, and those who fervently believed it should stay. The debate over this change was so heated that conference organizers called Eleanor Brown, who was an alumna at the time, "in hysterics," asking her to come to the conference to help calm the arguments, and to protect the "agent of social change" clause.<sup>17</sup> However, after much discussion and debate during the year, the 1991 amendments were not ratified at the next conference. The Principles and the Code of Ethics were completely rewritten again in 1992, and brought back to the plenary for further debate. At the 1992 conference, the "medium for social change" clause was taken out of the Statement of Principles and remained only in the Statement of Purposes for the National News Exchange.

Although the members had been discussing changes to the standing resolutions for years, and for hours on that particular day, part-way through the 1992 debate, the Langara College *Gleaner* and the King's College *Watch* introduced a motion to drop the Statement of Principles entirely. The motion stated,

Whereas the responsibility of a Statement of Principles is that of individual papers, and CUP's purpose is to share resources, and not to serve as an overlord, and the new Statement of Principles is spineless and inconsequential, [be it resolved that] the CUP Statement of Principles be deleted from the CUP constitution and [be it further resolved that] individual member papers draw up their own Statement of Principles.<sup>18</sup>

The motion ultimately failed with only three in favour and twenty-four against. However, nine members abstained from voting, many of whom, including the University of British Columbia *Ubysey* and the Memorial University of Newfoundland *Muse* spoke out in favour of the motion during the debate.<sup>19</sup> It is noteworthy that about one third of the voting members were either strongly against the Statement of Principles or ambivalent about its

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<sup>17</sup> Eleanor Brown, Telephone Interview, 24 Jun. 2004.

<sup>18</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 55th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) E-2, Motion 22.

<sup>19</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 55th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) C-20 - C-28, Debate on motion 22.

continued relevance to the organization. While the Statement of Principles stayed in the CUP constitution, the 1992 revisions to the standing resolutions made members more responsible for maintaining their own principles rather than having them dictated by CUP. This reflected a changing role of the student press and a changing attitude towards CUP.

After the *Gleaner* motion failed, and after lengthy debate, the plenary passed the 1992 standing resolutions. The term “medium for social justice,” which replaced “agent for social change” the previous year, was taken out of the Statement of Principles and remained only in the Statement of Purposes. There were no other major changes to the Statement of Purposes over the two years.

The 1992 Statement of Principles was divided into four sections: a preamble, common principles, freedoms and responsibilities, and the role of Canadian University Press. This added two new sections explaining the document itself and setting out the role of CUP. This reorganization seems to have been motivated by some members’ wish for less complex documents that were easier to navigate. As one of the 1992 delegates from the University of Toronto Victoria College *Strand* said about the earlier Principles, “I resent the existence of a [Statement of Principles] that my paper can’t turn into a handy-dandy wall chart.”<sup>20</sup> The new organization made it much easier for members to find the specific clauses they were looking for, and perhaps even make the Principles into a wall chart.

The preamble stated the purpose of the document and set out its relation to members. It read, “We, the members of Canadian University Press, affirm that the student press in Canada has a vital social role, which will be expressed in a wide variety of editorial policies.”<sup>21</sup> Two key issues were dealt with in this short section: the role of the student press, and members’ right to interpret and enact the CUP Principles on their own.

The members eliminated the contentious “agent of social change” clause and replaced it with the statement that “the student press in Canada has a vital social role.” This new wording did not suggest that newspapers had to be politically engaged or actively create change, and was much less political. This more moderate view of the role of the press was consistent throughout the 1992 Statement of Principles.

Over the years, many members had argued that the notion of operating as an “agent of social change” was no longer relevant, and that members did what they wanted regardless of the Statement of Principles. As an anonymous entry in the 1984 regional reports stated:

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<sup>20</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 55th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) C-25.

<sup>21</sup> CUP, *Canadian University Press Constitution: As Amended and Revised by the 56th National Conference of Canadian University Press* (Ottawa: CUP, 1993) 26.

that agent of social change stuff isn't very realistic. The major role of the student press may or may not be to act as an agent of social change... But when the arguing is done and the few elite members of the newspaper staff who get to attend CUP conferences return to their papers, nothing more will be said... For the majority of people working with CUP the only role of the student press that matters is that of producing newspapers.<sup>22</sup>

According to this writer, while CUP members discussed the role of the press at conferences, this discussion of principles did not result in a difference at the papers. While several papers do seem to have acted on the principles stated in the CUP standing resolutions, for others, the pressures of producing a paper left no room for thoughts about loftier goals.

CUP staff and members in the 1970s, such as Jennifer Penney, do not seem to have viewed the role of activist and journalist as oppositional.<sup>23</sup> However, it seems that in the 1990s an increasing number of members saw a strong division between these two roles. For them, one was either a journalist or an activist. CUP's mixing of the two was viewed by some as the reason that the organization was losing members. Although he is arguing against the point, André Picard, then editor of the University of Ottawa *Fulcrum* and later president of CUP, addressed this view in a 1982 reply to the University of Toronto *Medium II*: "You raise some very important questions in your letter: why has CUP lost so many members in recent years?... Why is there not more emphasis on services?... Unfortunately, you dismiss all these problems as emanating from one source: the political nature of CUP."<sup>24</sup> Unfortunate or not, it was a view that many would come to hold. For those who believed that CUP was too political, the term "agent of social change" exemplified everything that they disagreed with in the organization. Altering the standing resolutions to be much less political, and perhaps most vitally to take out any vestige of "agent of social change" seems to have been a change made specifically to address this argument.

While it is not entirely clear from the debates, it may have been the ghost of the "agent of social change" clause in the 1991 Statement of Principles that resulted in the document not being ratified. That document had replaced the term "agent of social change" with "medium of social justice" and did not alter the clauses dealing with "assisting students in understanding and working against oppression and injustice."<sup>25</sup> The 1992 Statement of

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<sup>22</sup> CUP, "Report from the Field," *Commission Reports: Regions* (Ottawa: CUP, 1984) n.pag.

<sup>23</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004.

<sup>24</sup> André Picard, "The Fulcrum's Reply to 'The Problems with CUP,'" *Appendices: Canadian University Press 45th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1982) 29.

<sup>25</sup> CUP, "Standing Resolutions for Canadian University Press," *Canadian Student Press Styleguide* ed. Carl Wilson, (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) 264.

Principles was a complete rewrite of the earlier documents, and contained no mention of either “social change” or “social justice,” nor any explicit statement about working against injustice or oppression.<sup>26</sup>

The 1984 standing resolutions had stated that a main priority of the student press was to “assist students in acting against any system where it [was] found to be preserving a hierarchy based on power and privilege, or to be oppressive to women, lesbians and gay men, indigenous people or ethnic, religious or other minorities.”<sup>27</sup> The 1992 Statement of Principles took less of an advocacy role. The 1992 Statement of Principles did not promote what Schudson has called “mobilizing information”<sup>28</sup> as the earlier Statement had. However, the 1992 Principles did state that the student press should act as an alternative to the mainstream press by giving a voice to marginalized individuals and groups that had little or no access to other media. While this role had long been part of CUP’s policies, the 1992 document strengthened the notion, stating that members would “attempt to remove barriers (both subtle and overt) to participation of marginalized groups.”<sup>29</sup> While the 1992 Principles removed the overt references to advocacy of oppressed groups, it is clear that this was not simply a change back to traditional views, but a more complex view of how the student press should work with minority voices. In part, this may have been a reflection of the increased diversity on campuses and a greater emphasis on identity politics, which encouraged the idea that minorities should be allowed to speak for themselves, and discouraged persons of privilege from speaking on behalf of the disenfranchised.

While the Statement of Principles, which governed members’ actions, was changed considerably, the Statement of Purposes, which was explicitly aimed at CUP and the content of the news exchange changed very little. The only significant alteration was that the phrase “agent of social change” was replaced with “medium for social justice” in 1991.<sup>30</sup> This change was ratified in 1992. Whereas the Statement of Principles governed the members, the Statement of Purposes gave direction to CUP staff for the news exchange. The fact that it was the Principles rather than the Purposes of the News Exchange that members changed suggests that they were more interested in changes that altered CUP’s role in overseeing their

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<sup>26</sup> CUP, *Canadian University Press Constitution: As Amended and Revised by the 56th National Conference of Canadian University Press* (Ottawa: CUP, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> CUP, “Standing Resolutions for Canadian University Press,” *CUP 47 Commission Report: Constitution* (Ottawa: CUP, 1984) 16.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995) 197.

<sup>29</sup> CUP, *Canadian University Press Constitution: As Amended and Revised by the 56th National Conference of Canadian University Press* (Ottawa: CUP, 1993) 28.

<sup>30</sup> CUP, *Canadian University Press Constitution: As Amended and Revised by the 56th National Conference of Canadian University Press* (Ottawa: CUP, 1993) 31.

own editorial content, and less concerned with the political content of CUP's news exchange. This supports the idea that these changes were motivated by a desire to increase membership by making the editorial policies more flexible for members. If the motivation had been purely ideological, it seems certain that members would have also changed the Statement of Purposes.

The change in the focus of the organization from what Rau called "starry eyed idealism, to a more sort of practical approach" was addressed throughout the 1992 Statement of Principles with a decreased focus on politics and an increased focus on individuality and autonomy for members. Another part of that move to appeal to a larger membership was to give members greater freedom to interpret and implement the Statement of Principles in a way that suited their own staff and campus.

The preamble to the 1992 Statement of Principles stated that the role of the press would "be expressed in a wide variety of editorial policies."<sup>31</sup> This seems to address some members' complaint that the Statement of Principles dictated their editorial policy and confined them to a specific political view point. The preamble addressed the idea expressed in *The Gleaner* motion to abolish the Statement of Principles that members should be individually responsible for their principles. Members were no longer willing to have CUP evaluate them or censure them for their editorial policy. The holier-than-thou aspect of the evaluations of members' principles was also viewed as a contributing factor in CUP's declining membership. As mentioned in the last chapter, CUP members were increasingly reluctant to allow the organization to influence their editorial policy. Many of the papers had fought, or were fighting, for financial and editorial autonomy from their students' unions, and did not want to give that control to anyone for any reason. Some saw CUP's commitment to autonomy and freedom of the press, and its willingness to censure papers over their editorial content as contradictory.

For example, in 1990 CUP members passed motions declaring that two papers, the University of Toronto Scarborough College *Underground* and the Marianapolis College *Paper*, were sexist and had to attend seminars to educate staff on each paper about sexism and sexist content.<sup>32</sup> However, at the following conference the motions accusing the two papers of sexism were declared "out of order and in flagrant violation of the constitution of CUP," and the membership passed a motion apologizing to the papers "for the grilling [CUP] put them through."<sup>33</sup> This turn-around was indicative of CUP members' unease with having

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<sup>31</sup> CUP, *Canadian University Press Constitution: As Amended and Revised by the 56th National Conference of Canadian University Press* (Ottawa: CUP, 1993) 26.

<sup>32</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 53rd National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1990) Motion 73 and 74.

<sup>33</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 54th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1991) D-132.

editorial content dictated to them by the organization or the collective membership. This may have also been part of a change in thinking that saw CUP less as a co-operative of papers and more as a service that members paid for. As “customers” of CUP, members were, as the saying goes, always right and would not accept the organization telling them their coverage was inadequate.

The 1992 Statement of Principles eliminated the provision for CUP to “evaluate, with full consideration for due process, members’ adherence to [the Statement of] Principles.”<sup>34</sup> Instead, the 1992 Statement introduced a clause stating members, “should continually attempt to help each other to fulfill [the principles], taking into account the realities of student publishing.”<sup>35</sup> In stating that members should help each other fulfill the principles, rather than evaluate their abilities to do so, the 1992 Principles showed a co-operative spirit that seems out of keeping with the greater focus on individuality shown in much of the document. However, it was also indicative of the members’ attempts to find a middle-ground between the conflicting desires in CUP. On the one hand, in stating that members should continually help each other in fulfilling the principles, the 1992 document did not discourage members from commenting on other members’ editorial policies and content. On the other hand it eliminated the suggestion that members would be “evaluated” by other members or by CUP as an organization. This is consistent with the 1992 Principles’ preamble, which stated that members would express the principles in a variety of editorial policies. Similarly, the statement that criticism or help should take the “realities of student publishing” into account suggested that those realities would understandably get in the way of fulfilling the Principles at times, and that members could not reasonably be expected to be perfect.

The debate over CUP’s right to evaluate or dictate editorial policy to members dated back as far as *The Martlet* and *The Journal* declaring themselves members under protest of the Statement of Principles in 1976. In an article about the possibility of their dropping out of CUP *The Martlet* wrote, “While no particular fan of the capitalist system in which we all live, *The Martlet* finds the current statements to be an improper attempt to dictate the individual editorial policies of member papers by the National Office.”<sup>36</sup> *The Martlet* seems to have viewed the Statement of Principles as infringing on the right to freedom of the press. At that time, many of the members apparently disagreed with *The Martlet*’s view. They saw CUP’s policies as co-operatively created and enforced, and thus not dictatorial. For example, an anonymous writer who responded to *The Martlet* article with a letter in the *House Organ*

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<sup>34</sup> CUP, “Standing Resolutions for Canadian University Press,” *CUP 47: Constitution* (Ottawa: CUP, 1984) 17.

<sup>35</sup> CUP, *Canadian University Press Constitution: As Amended and Revised by the 56th National Conference of Canadian University Press* (Ottawa: CUP, 1993) 28.

<sup>36</sup> “Martlet Pullout From CUP Possible,” *House Organ* 1 Feb. 1977: 2.



stated, “Those policies and priorities [in the Statement of Principles] are decided by the membership of CUP: delegates from about seventy student newspapers across Canada, including the *Martlet*.”<sup>37</sup> According to this view, CUP did not dictate editorial policy because CUP was the members, therefore members were choosing their own editorial policy, and thus the freedom of the press was not abridged.

By 1992, however, the feeling had changed and many members saw the Statement of Principles as an editorial policy imposed on them from above. For example, a delegate from the University of Manitoba *Manitoban*, speaking in favour of the *Gleaner's* motion to drop the Principles altogether said, “One of the biggest problems we had with CUP [was] the Statement of Principles, and not so much what it [said], but what it [was] trying to do. Basically, it [was] trying to put twenty or thirty different papers, under one blanket, which you really can't do.”<sup>38</sup>

While CUP had always run as a co-operative, with members each having equal opportunity for representation on commissions and equal voice and vote on motions of policy, this new idea of co-operation emphasized the rights of individual members more than the rights of the collective. The new Statement of Principles, which changed the relationship between CUP and its members, giving much more power to the individual, reflected that new view. It also made for a much more flexible co-operative for members, which now had more power to interpret the Principles in developing their own editorial policies. These changes seem to have been aimed at attracting new members as well as retaining those members that were not interested in politically engaged coverage.

### **Making Changes: Code of Ethics**

The Code of Ethics of Canadian University Press was first written in 1959. The Code set out procedures journalists and newspapers should follow to ensure ethical coverage and treatment of sources. Over the following three decades there were several changes made to the Code. Three clauses were taken out—one saying that student journalists should identify themselves before obtaining an interview, another stating that the editor should not necessarily exclude a student point of view that was contrary to editorial policy, and a third stating that all copy including advertising “must conform with the canons of morality and good taste.”<sup>39</sup> A few clauses were also added including one that stated, “the editor should

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<sup>37</sup> “To the *Martlet*,” *House Organ* 1 Feb. 1977: 70.

<sup>38</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 55th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) C-20.

<sup>39</sup> CUP, *Ethics Committee Report: A Special Committee* (Ottawa: CUP, 1959) n.pag.

fully realize his or her personal responsibility for everything published.”<sup>40</sup> In the late sixties, the term “unbiased” was replaced with the term “fair,”<sup>41</sup> and in 1970, all masculine pronouns in the Code were replaced with gender-neutral terms.<sup>42</sup> While many publications used the terms fair and balanced, it is noteworthy that CUP instead used fair and accurate. This reflected an understanding that balance, or giving equal weight to differing arguments, did not necessarily get any closer to an accurate portrayal of the news.

In 1986 the membership added a clause to the Code explaining how fairness should be practiced:

Student journalists should strive to be as fair as possible in their reporting by seeking out all points of view they deem relevant to the issue at hand. The practice of fairness precludes: a) reporting unsubstantiated opinion as fact; b) condemning persons or groups by inuendo [sic] or hearsay; c) distortion of meaning by over- or underemphasis, or by placing facts or quotations out of context, or by using headlines not warranted by the text.<sup>43</sup>

The same year, CUP members added another clause dealing with conflict of interest:

“Student journalists shall refrain from reporting on matters in which they deem themselves to have a direct conflict of interest. Student journalists will strive to disclose all conflicts of interest to other members of staff.”<sup>44</sup> These two clauses codified the rituals of fairness by setting out the actions that fairness included and precluded. This was taken even further with the 1992 rewrite, which expanded the Code and included a whole section on fairness and accuracy, as well as another on privacy and legal responsibility.

The 1992 rewrite of the Code of Ethics was the first major rewrite of the entire document since 1959. It was organized similarly to the 1992 Statement of Principles with a preamble and three following sections on bias and honesty, fairness and accuracy, and privacy and legal responsibility. While the 1992 Statement of Principles represented a more moderate view of the role of the press, the 1992 Code showed a much more sophisticated understanding of journalistic ethics than any of the documents that preceded it. The Code set out to help student journalists and newspapers gain credibility by providing them instructions on how to act ethically. The 1992 Code addressed several issues that the earlier Code of Ethics did not. For example, the 1992 Code included sections on ethical treatment of photographic and graphic elements of the newspaper, plagiarism, dealing with material

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<sup>40</sup> CUP, “Standing Resolutions for Canadian University Press,” *CUP 47: Constitution* (Ottawa: CUP, 1984) 17.

<sup>41</sup> CUP, “COE for the Canadian University Press,” *National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1967) 11.

<sup>42</sup> CUP, *33<sup>rd</sup> National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1970) 10, Motion C/9/70.

<sup>43</sup> CUP, *Constitution CUP Forty-Nine* (Ottawa: CUP, 1986) n.pag, Motion 50.

<sup>44</sup> CUP, *Constitution CUP Forty-Nine* (Ottawa: CUP, 1986) n.pag, Motion 54.

meant to incite hatred, and letters to the editor. At the same time as it was a much clearer explanation of journalistic ethics, the 1992 Code also recognized that “rigid regulations and laws cannot always anticipate the exigencies of a situation,”<sup>45</sup> and that there may be cases in which the public good overrides other ethical considerations. In this and other ways, the 1992 Code of Ethics showed a highly considered approach to journalistic ethics. The understanding of bias, as we shall see, was especially telling of the maturity of the document.

Several changes to the Code of Ethics seem to have aimed at making CUP and its members more credible, and clarifying the ideas of objectivity, fairness, accuracy, and accountability. The 1992 Code of Ethics opened with a preamble that stated: “We, the members of Canadian University Press, recognize that student journalists can only be effective in their aims if their publications are credible and respected.”<sup>46</sup> While increased credibility and respect is arguably the implicit aim of any Code of Ethics, this was the first time that CUP explicitly stated this idea in policy. Credibility seems to have been a preoccupation of the members during this period. This may have been related to many CUP members’ struggles for autonomy from their students’ unions. It was often important for papers to be able to prove their credibility in order to make a successful bid for autonomy. For many, the issue of credibility was also linked to CUP’s loss of members.<sup>47</sup>

Other facets of credibility include accountability and accessibility, both of which were debated during the 1992 discussion of the standing resolutions. For most of the papers the idea of accountability was a sticky issue. The question of whom the student press should be accountable to was one of the main problems. CUP members seem to have been concerned that if the standing resolutions stated that the papers had to be “accountable” they would be required to make changes based on the criticisms of the university administration, faculty, or what a 1991 motion in favour of freedom of the press called, “hostile student councils... maverick students [or] police morality squads.”<sup>48</sup> As a delegate from the Memorial University of Newfoundland *Muse* said, “I am really loathe to rush into something and throw accountability [sic] if only because I personally hate to be accountable to say, the engineering faculty, and their students.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> CUP, *Canadian University Press Constitution: As Amended and Revised by the 56th National Conference of Canadian University Press* (Ottawa: CUP, 1993) 29.

<sup>46</sup> CUP, *Canadian University Press Constitution: As Amended and Revised by the 56th National Conference of Canadian University Press* (Ottawa: CUP, 1993) 29.

<sup>47</sup> Doug Smith, “The Statement of Principles Debated – Continued,” *House Organ* n.d.: 35. “Best in the West,” *House Organ* 14 Nov. 1974: 9.

<sup>48</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 54th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1991) D-131, Motion 105.

<sup>49</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 54th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1991) D-131, Motion 105.

Other members expressed the feeling that papers should be accountable to their own principles rather than the tastes of the community. For a delegate from *The Martlet*, sometimes being accountable to the Statement of Principles meant not worrying about what the audience would think:

I think we just want to say that accountability doesn't always mean telling people something they want to hear. Accountability is bringing up ideas and things people have never thought of. I keep thinking of the Muse's article on safe sex for gay men. They were almost closed down, there was huge numbers of people [sic] within their community that did not like it, but they had to hear it.<sup>50</sup>

Similarly, according to a delegate from the York University *Excalibur*, "Over the last twenty-five years or so, the best achievements of the student press have involved students offending their communities and readers."<sup>51</sup>

After much debate, the term accountability was not added to the standing resolutions. However, the 1992 revisions included the addition of several clauses promoting accessibility. For example, members added new clauses stating that "student publications exist as an essential component of the student communities they come from, and should be accessible to those communities," that each members' staff "should be open to, but not necessarily limited to, all students," and that "the publications [would] attempt to remove barriers (both subtle and overt) to participation of marginalized groups."<sup>52</sup> Each of these clauses addressed credibility indirectly by requiring that the papers be open and accessible to the student communities they covered. This change did not represent a radical shift from CUP's previous standing resolutions, but it was representative of CUP members' increased awareness of their own sometimes tenuous credibility.

CUP's search for credibility included discussion of the terms objectivity, fairness, and accuracy, and changes to the Code dealing with those terms. Although the Dalhousie *Gazette* introduced a motion to have the common principles "stress the necessity of an effort to maintain objectivity in university press reporting,"<sup>53</sup> the motion failed. As a delegate from the McGill *Daily* said, "bringing up the word 'objectivity' [was] kind of misleading and lying about what [student newspapers do]." The delegate also said that it was important that CUP

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<sup>50</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 55th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) C-12.

<sup>51</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 55th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) C-12.

<sup>52</sup> CUP, *Canadian University Press Constitution: As Amended and Revised by the 56th National Conference of Canadian University Press* (Ottawa: CUP, 1993) 26-28.

<sup>53</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 55th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) C-16.

clarify that being objective was not something reporters could possibly do.<sup>54</sup> The idea that objectivity was impossible to achieve had been expressed before in CUP style guides,<sup>55</sup> but it had never before been a point of policy. While objective or unbiased reporting had not been a policy of CUP for decades, the 1992 rewrite enforced the idea that this was not just willfulness on the part of CUP members, but rather that objective reporting was not possible. Under the heading “Bias and Honesty” the first section of the body of the 1992 Code of Ethics read:

Journalists’ perspectives are determined by their positions within society, and will be necessarily biased. They must therefore recognize the political implications of their work, and attempt to treat their subjects fairly despite their biases.<sup>56</sup>

This showed a much more complex understanding of bias than had previously appeared in the Code. While Robert Hackett has commented that the use of the term “fair” instead of the term “objective” does not necessarily represent a real change in philosophy,<sup>57</sup> the CUP Code of Ethics goes further than merely swapping the two terms. For many student journalists, the CUP standing resolutions were a first introduction to how journalists should work. The description of what bias is told students not only what to aim for in good reporting, but also the philosophy behind those goals. It was also important to note the emphasis on social position and the idea that journalism is an inherently political act. Although CUP members removed the “agent of social change” clause from the Statement of Principles in 1992, the Code of Ethics showed a more complex understanding of political engagement. The main thrust again seems to have been to encourage an acknowledgement of journalism as necessarily political, but also to leave the degree and type of political action up to the individual newspaper or journalist (within a certain range).

In addition to this clause explaining bias, another significant change was the explanation of conflict of interest that was added to the Code in 1992. Specifically, CUP members added a clause stating that “membership in a disadvantaged ethnic, racial, gender, sexual, class or otherwise identifiable social group [should] never be construed as a conflict

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<sup>54</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 55th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) C-16.

<sup>55</sup> CUP, *News for Beginners* (Ottawa: CUP, 1988). This booklet on writing introduces the idea that “we let our biases decide what information to include, which people to talk to, and in what order to present the facts and opinions in the story” and for those reasons journalists cannot be objective.

<sup>56</sup> CUP, *Canadian University Press Constitution: As Amended and Revised by the 56th National Conference of Canadian University Press* (Ottawa: CUP, 1993) 29.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Hackett, “An Exaggerated Death: Prefatory Comments on ‘Objectivity’ in Journalism,” *Deadlines and Diversity: Journalism Ethics in a Changing World* eds. Valerie Alia, Brian Brennan and Barry Hoffmaster (Halifax: Fernwood, 1996) 42.

of interest, even when reporting on issues directly affecting the group in question.”<sup>58</sup> This clause addressed one of the ongoing problems in CUP, participation of minorities. This change was reinforced by a clause in the Principles that publications must “attempt to remove barriers (both subtle and over) to participation of marginalized groups.”<sup>59</sup> These were important changes that also helped address one of the negative aspects of objectivity—the idea that the best reporters were those with unmarked identities. By saying that membership in a “disadvantaged group” could not be seen as a conflict of interest, CUP worked against this problem in the traditions of objective reporting, and encouraged members to use the minority voices that it simultaneously encouraged them to accept onto their staff.

A more sophisticated understanding of objectivity and bias was just one of the ways that CUP members changed the standing resolutions. While in the previous Code of Ethics only one clause addressed the issue of libel law, and privacy was not mentioned at all, the 1992 Code of Ethics contained several paragraphs under the heading “Privacy and Legal Responsibility.” Again, these changes seem to have been an attempt to establish credibility for CUP and its papers. The 1992 Code of Ethics is a mature and sophisticated view of journalistic ethics, and one with political flavour. It encouraged political engagement through a recognition of journalism as a political act and a view of conflict of interest that helped to foster minority voices. Thus, it can be seen that the changes that CUP made to the standing resolutions in 1992 were multi-faceted.

## **Conclusion**

The 1992 revisions of the standing resolutions allowed for greater flexibility for both members and CUP itself. The revisions were aimed in large part at helping CUP keep the members it had and attract new members, not through increased service or decreased fees, but through appealing to a broader audience by moderating its political stance. Members were granted greater flexibility in interpreting and applying the Statement of Principles to themselves. CUP in turn was granted greater flexibility to seek new members. The 1992 standing resolutions encouraged members to interpret and implement the Statement of Principles in their own way. The standing resolutions were also much less politically oriented. This gave CUP a greater range of potential new members, including many papers that had dropped out of the organization.

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<sup>58</sup> CUP, *Canadian University Press Constitution: As Amended and Revised by the 56th National Conference of Canadian University Press* (Ottawa: CUP, 1993) 29.

<sup>59</sup> CUP, *Canadian University Press Constitution: As Amended and Revised by the 56th National Conference of Canadian University Press* (Ottawa: CUP, 1993) 28.

As CUP came to be seen as a service,<sup>60</sup> its politics had sometimes come between the organization and its “customers.” In the 1988 conference newsletter, Gordon Clarke, a delegate, wrote, “CUP membership no longer view the organization as a co-op, which requires a commitment to the whole over individual concerns. Instead, members view the CUP as a service organization.”<sup>61</sup> This seems to have been a factor in the demands for greater autonomy and flexibility for members.

At the same time, CUP was still a co-operative and one that in the early 1990s arguably no longer represented its more moderate members. As a delegate from the King’s College *Watch*, one of the papers in favour of deleting the entire Statement of Principles, commented in 1992, “at least half the delegates here are going to have to compromise their own paper to accommodate CUP.”<sup>62</sup> Many of the members had moved away from the politically engaged role of acting as an agent of social change. Some identified this movement away from engagement as a result of changes on campus.

According to Tu Than Ha, CUP national features writer in 1988, CUP members were conducting themselves more like the mainstream press with less politically charged coverage through the eighties.<sup>63</sup> However, this change had been happening for years without an accompanying change to the standing resolutions. Similarly, members had made suggestions for changes to the standing resolutions on many occasions without any action ever taking place. So what was different at this time that allowed for such a drastic rewrite? In part it had to do with the two-step process of accepting changes in principle in 1991. This gave members a year to think about the standing resolutions and forced them to reconsider the motion again the following year. The 1992 standing resolutions succeeded where previous rewrites had failed for several reasons. The document’s more moderate politics and flexibility calmed the conservative papers and those concerned with attracting new members, while its emphasis on accessibility, its acknowledgement of journalism as a political act and, rather ironically, its flexibility also gave something to the more politically engaged papers. In rewriting the standing resolutions members not only made the organization more open to new members who were not as politically engaged as CUP had been in the past, but also made it more reflective of the members’ thinking. Without these dual purposes it may not have passed. A delegate from *The Cord*, a paper that had left in part because of a dispute over the Statement of Principles and returned after the 1991 rewrite, commented on the document

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<sup>60</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 55th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) C-22. Debate on what attracts new members to CUP, most papers say the resources and the news wire.

<sup>61</sup> Gordon Clark, “CUP’s new Paradigm,” *CUP 51 Newsletter* [Dec. 1988?]: n.pag.

<sup>62</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 55th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) C-21.

<sup>63</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 54th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1991) D-48.

saying that it was necessary, but that it also had to be true and “reflect the nature of the beast.”<sup>64</sup> In other words, the Statement of Principles had to reflect how the organization actually operated. With the 1992 rewrite, it appears the standing resolutions became more reflective of the nature of the beast, rather than what the beast had been years ago.

There was very little that anyone could argue against in the 1992 standing resolutions. By reinforcing the organization’s credibility, the revised policies also made CUP fees easier to justify to members and students’ unions. As Kaplan writes, “Unlike other professions, reporters cannot boast of any formal credentialed training, nor specialized technical knowledge, nor an esoteric occupational language. Journalism vends its wares in the public arena and misses all those professional traits which might grant it an exclusive authority to depict our social world.”<sup>65</sup> Without this sort of professional code it was difficult for student journalists to justify the cost of CUP to their students’ unions. Once CUP could be explained more clearly as a professional organization, CUP fees, it was hoped, would be less of an issue.

Two major themes arose over and over in the arguments about changing the Statement of Principles: money and politics. As in most cases, with CUP, the two were intertwined. While removing “agent of social change” from the Statement of Principles showed a shift in CUP’s politics, it would take more than that to take the idea of agent out of the organization. Because several members had added the clause to their own constitutions and perhaps because it had already been around for so long, the phrase was used for over a decade after it was officially removed from CUP’s policies. In fact, in 2004, the McGill *Daily* and *Concordia Link* tried to add a clause to the CUP constitution that the role of the student press was to act as an agent of social change. The motion was defeated.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 55th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) C-27.

<sup>65</sup> Richard L. Kaplan, *Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865-1920* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2002) 3.

<sup>66</sup> Daniel Cohen, Personal Interview, 18 Feb. 2004.



## **Conclusion**

### **CUP and the Possibilities of a Politically Engaged Press**

For many theorists, the root of the problems with the news media is that they have stopped serving us, the audience, and started serving business interests instead. In the case of publicly held businesses, media corporations have legal responsibilities to make the most profit they can. This has led to attempts by owners to decrease the costs associated with producing the news by using economies of scale and encouraging journalists to write low-cost copy. This in turn seems to have resulted in an ever-increasing barrage of the meaningless at the expense of the meaningful—news about celebrities and celebrities of the moment, stories about scandal, human interest pieces of little interest, and advertising disguised as editorial content. These articles are less costly to produce than in-depth features or complex political pieces, and appeal to the widest audience through the logic of the lowest common denominator. The factors implicated in this situation—commercialization and advertising—multiplied with a journalistic work ethic that promotes reliance on official sources under the guise of objectivity and detachment has created what seems like an unending cycle, making it impossible to change what journalism has become. The solutions, when offered at all, seem unreachable. It is not clear how or if many of these plans for media reform would work.

Before we can come up with solutions however, we have to examine several questions. What is journalism for? What is it that we expect of journalism? What is its role? At any one time there is more than one answer to each of these questions. But if we do not ask them, we let the owners of media outlets answer the questions for us. Within this context, this study of the history of CUP offers some interesting ideas about different forms of press organization.

From 1965 to 1991, CUP members answered the question “what is journalism for?” by stating in their policies that the student press should act as an agent of social change and mobilize students against injustice and oppression. In addition, CUP policies stated that the student newspapers should be an alternative to the mainstream commercial press. Later these ideas came to be articulated more clearly in the Statement of Purposes for the National News Exchange as working to change the capitalist system where it was found to be oppressive to women and minorities, and where it maintained a class structure. CUP serves as an excellent case study of a politically engaged press organization that has experimented with a variety of organizational structures and methods to work towards the goal of social change. In examining the history of CUP and how its members interpreted their role, we can gain some

insight into alternatives to the mainstream media. This study examined the factors that led CUP members to adopt the policy of acting as agents of social change, how that policy was acted upon, what implications it had for both CUP and its member papers and ultimately what led to members changing CUP's statement about the role of the student press. Through this case study we can come to some important conclusions about the possibilities for a politically engaged journalism and the conditions it needs for survival.

When the "agent of social change" clause was first introduced into the Charter of the Student Press in 1965, there was no recorded debate on the motion, and in fact no one interviewed for this study remembered the motion at all.<sup>1</sup> CUP's main focus at that time was to improve the national news service by setting up a telex system and increasing the number of staff working out of the national office.<sup>2</sup> In 1968 the newly renamed Statement of Principles was amended to state more strongly that the, "major role of the student press is to act as an agent of social change."<sup>3</sup> However, there was again little debate on the motion.<sup>4</sup> The first year that the CUP national office seems to have taken the idea of acting as agents of social change seriously was in 1970, during the October crisis. However, even at this time, it is notable that Jennifer Penney, CUP president at the time, did not remember referring to CUP's policies regarding the role of the press. The CUP national office staff of 1970 worked very much in the role of agents of social change, believing they needed to supply students and the underground press with information about the October crisis that was sympathetic to the FLQ. However, their work seems to have been informed by their own beliefs and political work, rather than CUP policy statements.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the changes CUP and its members made to their operational structures were consistent with the idea of acting as agents of social change. CUP members worked toward improving democratic control inside their papers, making it so that journalists would have input into the entire operation of the newspaper. CUP also promoted and supported members working toward financial autonomy from their students' unions. The combination of these two ideas, financial autonomy and staff democracy, was quite a radical view of newspaper operations where journalists themselves collectively controlled the entire production of the paper from budgeting to staffing to selection of the editorial cartoon. CUP members also put in place measures such as issues caucuses and the gender alternating speakers list to ensure that a diversity of voices were heard in CUP's decision-making

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<sup>1</sup> Don Sellar, Personal Interview, 20 Apr. 2004. John Kelsey, Personal Interview, 25 May, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Don Sellar, Personal Interview, 20 Apr. 2004.

<sup>3</sup> CUP, "Standing Resolutions," *31<sup>st</sup> National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1968) 31.

<sup>4</sup> CUP, *31<sup>st</sup> National Conference Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1968) 4.

<sup>5</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004.

procedures. In these ways CUP's experiences and efforts mirror many of the other forms of radical media and ideas theorists have put forth for media reform.

In 1992, CUP needed to attract a wider membership. Many members viewed the declining membership numbers as being a result of CUP's politics. For these members the "agent of social change" clause was indicative of a mind-set that had lowered CUP's credibility and attractiveness to new members. Whether or not this was a matter of fact is not entirely clear. In most cases it appears that members dropped out of the organization over high fees and a promise of free advertising with Campus Network, CUP's advertising competitor.<sup>6</sup> What is clear, however, is that many members connected CUP's political views, especially CUP's stated mandate to operate as an agent of social change, with its financial state. Because members viewed the "agent of social change" clause as a direct cause of the loss of members, the clause was dropped in order to try to increase membership. Considering the heated battle over the elimination of the idea of working towards social change or social justice, it seems unlikely that the "agent of social change" clause would have been removed when it was if it were not for concerns over money. This view is supported by the fact that the phrase "agent of social change" was used by CUP members and staff for at least a decade after it was removed from the Statement of Principles. Many members had added the phrase to their own constitutions, and did not remove it when CUP did. Similarly, a watered-down version of the clause, "medium for social justice," remained in the Statement of Purposes for the National News Exchange for several years. This demonstrates that the idea of acting as an agent of social change had deep roots within CUP—it is unlikely that the clause would have been removed for ideological reasons if the organization had not been under financial pressures at the same time.

The 1992 Statement of Principles was much more politically moderate and gave members greater flexibility to interpret and implement the principles than the previous document. Rather than stating that the role of the press was to act as an agent of social change, the 1992 Statement of Principles stated only that the press had a vital social role and left it to the individual papers to determine precisely what that role was.<sup>7</sup> These changes are consistent with the members' wish to attract a wider membership through moderating CUP's politics.

Media critics often view money as the force that corrupts journalism. As Schudson writes, journalists and journalism historians have taken as a given the idea that in journalism,

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<sup>6</sup> CUP, *CUP44 National Executive Report* (Ottawa: CUP, 1981) 2.

<sup>7</sup> CUP, *Canadian University Press Constitution: as Amended and Revised by the 56th National Conference of Canadian University Press* (Ottawa: CUP, [1993]) n.pag.

money corrupts.<sup>8</sup> However, as he writes, there is clearly “more than one way to be a commercial media organization.”<sup>9</sup> There is a spectrum of operational modes and ways of using money to form a news organization, especially outside of the commercial model. For CUP members, having a guaranteed source of money through student levies and having control over financial decisions allowed them to act as agents of social change. One of CUP’s most innovative and lasting ideas was to encourage members to become financially autonomous from their students’ unions and thereby take control over both their editorial and budgetary decisions. As well, CUP’s increased funding through the sixties, which improved services to members, gave the organization the flexibility and human resources to experiment with both a politically engaged role of the student press and new organizational methods.

At the same time as it seems to be the case that CUP’s politics were watered down in an attempt to gain new members, it is also the case that without the influx of revenue and services that accompanied the 1965 changes to the Charter of the Student Press, CUP’s actions as an agent of social change would have been much less effective. The role of the press that the 1965 Charter of the Student Press advocated, one that was actively engaged with students as citizens and worked to change the social structure and promote students’ rights and responsibilities, required much more of journalists than the previous Charter. Without CUP’s telex system supplying a daily wire service and the field secretary working with papers to encourage better and more in-depth coverage, fewer CUP members would have had the time to devote to writing analytical pieces, ferreting out alternative sources for stories, and being politically engaged themselves. When those services were cut as a result of members dropping out of CUP, the activist role began to be more difficult to maintain. Without the infrastructure to support acting as an agent of social change, it became increasingly difficult for CUP to justify the activist role promoted in its policies. The fact that CUP did not have a guaranteed source of income, such as its members did, and that it relied disproportionately on membership fees may have made the organization more susceptible to pressures to be less politically engaged.

A politically engaged press requires a large amount of financial support. While we often like to think that worthy causes can survive with little or no support, or even that they will be “tainted” by too much money, this does not seem to have been the case with CUP. Rather, a drop in funding seems to have made it difficult to maintain the services and support needed for a more politically engaged role of the press.<sup>10</sup> Even organizations trying to

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Schudson, “Review Essay: News, Public, Nation,” *American Historical Review* (April 2002): 493.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Schudson, “Review Essay: News, Public, Nation,” *American Historical Review* (April 2002): 494.

<sup>10</sup> While it is outside of the scope of this work to examine this issue in depth, I would also like to speculate that political engagement on campus was also affected by a dramatic increase in tuition fees. The result of fee

address what they perceive as the injustices of the capitalist system still have to pay rent and wages. The politically engaged role of the press takes more money than a non-engaged role because it requires more of writers and editors in terms of time and effort. This means both that it is a role that a commercial newspaper is less likely to take, and that any alternative press that pursues this role needs to have secure financing.

At the same time, money was not the only factor at play in CUP members voting to change the standing resolutions in 1992. Many members were less willing to act as agents of social change and some who had left CUP had explicitly cited the Statement of Principles as a factor in their decision.<sup>11</sup> Another factor in CUP's ability to work as a politically engaged press was the political engagement of its community of readers during that period. While this factor is much more difficult to pin down, it is no less important. It is very difficult to chart the rise and fall of levels of engagement or feelings of community. However, Robert Putnam has observed a decline in community engagement in the wider population in his book *Bowling Alone*.<sup>12</sup> While it is not within the scope of this work to delve into the questions of student citizenship, it was clear in looking for research for this study that the area is sorely under-researched. At a time when tuition fees are soaring and the need for post-secondary education is escalating, this would seem to be an area that needs to be examined.

The observation that student citizenship seemed to decline in the late eighties is consistent with CUP's members removing all reference to the student as citizen from CUP's policies in 1992. An integral aspect of the 1965 Charter of the Student Press was the idea that students were citizens with rights and responsibilities. This was a new idea of the student, one that was reflected in students' demands for input into academic life and self-governance. The fact that CUP's policies from the mid-sixties to the early-nineties stated that members would encourage students' rights and responsibilities as citizens is consistent with the idea that CUP members were involved in building a community of readers. According to Michael Schudson, newspapers can help either to build a community or a public depending on how they engage readers. He has described the difference between the two by stating, "the former tends to imply a common emotional identity, the latter only a common set of norms for public conversation."<sup>13</sup> Elsewhere Schudson has built on Benedict Anderson's idea of the imagined community and described the media as helping to "establish in the imagination of a people a psychologically potent entity—a 'community'—that can be located nowhere on the

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increases is that an increasing number of students have to take part-time jobs and are unable to participate in campus activities and politics.

<sup>11</sup> Deb Sigler, "Journal Quits CUP as of April 30," *House Organ* 10 Mar. 1977, 37-38.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (Toronto: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> Michael Schudson, "Review Essay: News, Public, Nation," *American Historical Review* (April 2002): 484.

ground.”<sup>14</sup> But he also seems to be saying that community building is contingent on the media’s ability to create that emotional identification between readers.

Within the Canadian student population it seems that during the 1960s, and 1970s students viewed themselves as a community. Being a student came to mean more than simply that one took classes; it was an integral part of one’s identity. This is supported by the observation made in a 1963 conference report that students were beginning to work together as a community to create change: “Many students are beginning to realize that they can have some influence on the world around them, on both a campus and an external political level, (witness student action in Québec, the U of BC’s ‘back Mac’ campaign, the U of T’s March for Canada).” The report went on to say that within this context of a politically active student community, the student newspaper should take on the role of interpreting student actions.<sup>15</sup>

For CUP, the shift that took place in the mid-sixties from addressing a public to building a community was affected by the cohesiveness and connection of its audience of readers. While it is an oversimplification to say that the student movement of the sixties was homogenous or monolithic, it was united in many ways. Students at the time seem to have viewed being a student as part of their identities. It would seem that through the late eighties and early nineties that university students lost some of their sense of community and identity as students. They no longer shared the emotional identity Schudson refers to. Rather, they shared what he calls a common set of norms—the fact that they were students was no longer an emotional tie, but rather a common circumstance. While students in the sixties viewed being a student as an integral part of their identity, for students in the nineties this was not the case. They no longer seemed to view each other as student citizens, rather merely as individuals who happened to be in school. Although it is not within the scope of this study to determine the factors that have led to this situation, there are several changes in the universities that may have affected students’ views on the campus community and student citizenship. It is likely that tuition fee increases, which have led to an increasing number of full-time students carrying part-time jobs during the school year, and a view of students as consumers rather than participants in their own education, have affected students’ sense of community. Another factor that may be involved is larger class sizes, which isolate and alienate students.

This change of view may have also reflected a change in the political climate from a Marxist-influenced student movement to a diversity of student political movements more influenced by identity politics. The Marxism that was part of the general student movement

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<sup>14</sup> Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995) 15.

<sup>15</sup> CUP, *Conference: 1963 Reports* (Ottawa: CUP, 1963) n.pag.

of the sixties and seventies influenced the interpretation of the earlier Statement of Principles. While the “agent of social change” clause is not specific in terms of the type of change it would like to see, the Statement of Purposes for the National News Exchange is much more explicitly Marxist.<sup>16</sup> The standing resolutions also seem to have been consistently interpreted as Marxist. However, this may not have fit with the political climate on campus, especially the more politically active campuses, in the early nineties.

The 1992 Statement of Principles contained no mention of the student as citizen or student rights and responsibilities. It is interesting to note that in the long debates that took place at the 1991 and 1992 conferences about the changes to CUP’s statement of principles, not one person remarked on the clause referring to the student newspaper’s role in encouraging the rights and responsibilities of the student. Perhaps this was because none of the CUP delegates at these conferences thought of themselves as having rights and responsibilities specific to their identities as students. Without a united and politically engaged community to address it is difficult for a politically engaged press to survive. Equally, the role of the politically engaged community in supporting the student newspaper with politically active and informed volunteers should not be underestimated. This is not to say that students were necessarily less political during the nineties, but rather that political action did not revolve around the “student” community or the “student” identity. To say that there was no “student movement” is not necessarily to say that students themselves were not politically active, rather that their action was not contingent on their identity as students. During the early nineties, students’ political action seems to have splintered into various community groups on campuses, such as lesbian gay and bisexuals and racial minorities, each prioritizing working on their own concerns rather than working primarily together. As an umbrella group, it was especially difficult for CUP to deal with this new plurality of communities on campus.

The third factor that supported CUP and its members’ ability to work as agents of social change was the journalists’ belief that they were a part of the communities that they addressed. Jennifer Penney, Dorothy Wigmore and others have described those involved with CUP during the seventies as also being involved in a variety of other student actions. Although they do not specifically articulate it in this way, student journalists in the mid-sixties to late-seventies seem to have viewed themselves as part of the community they were reporting on. Not only do Penney and others describe their own work within the larger student movement, they were actively involved in various groups, and brought their activism

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<sup>16</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004.

into the CUP organization.<sup>17</sup> However, by the nineties it seems that student journalists felt alienated from the larger student community in many ways. This is supported by the debate over accountability at the 1992 national conference. CUP members were clearly uneasy about the concept of being held accountable to the students on their campuses. The debate shows a reluctance to add any concept of accountability to CUP's policies, perhaps because of a belief that the student journalists' views and those of their fellow students were so far apart as to be irreconcilable.<sup>18</sup> With the erosion of the sense that student journalists were a part of the politically engaged community they were addressing, it became increasingly difficult for CUP's papers to act as an engaged press or agents of social change. Again, this may have been a reflection of the splintering of student political action into a plurality of communities rather than one overarching student movement.

In the mid-sixties, three factors came together to allow CUP to develop into a radical alternative media group. These factors were members' financial independence and stability that did not rely on advertising or sales as a primary source of funding, a politically engaged community of readers, and journalists who saw themselves as part of that political community they were addressing. The engaged community of readers and journalists provided the will, and money provided the way for CUP and its members to experiment with acting as agents of social change. However, the formation of a politically engaged press did not guarantee that these factors would remain in place. Through the late 1980s all of the factors that helped CUP act as an agent of social change seem to have eroded to a certain extent. As a result, it seems to have become increasingly difficult to maintain a politically engaged role of the press. This is consistent with the observations about CUP's changes to its standing resolutions in 1992; they were a result of financial problems within the organization, as well as decreased (or at least dramatically altered) political involvement on campus, and a growing distance between student journalists and the rest of the campus life. To state that the radical press alternatives need money as well as engaged readers and journalists to function is perhaps not particularly novel or surprising. However, it is a fact that seems too often to be overlooked. While the mainstream commercial press depends on a wide circulation and advertising revenue for its survival, the radical alternative press depends on alternative sources of funding, and engaged journalists and readers. Without these in place, the alternative press is faced with altering its goals or closing down.

As a case study, CUP sheds light on some other proposals and theories of media reform, and presents some suggestions about what alternative media needs to function. In its

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<sup>17</sup> Jennifer Penney, Personal Interview, 25 Mar. 2004. Dorothy Wigmore, Telephone Interview, 9 Apr. 2004.

<sup>18</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 55th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) C-12.



use of democratic work models, CUP was similar to many forms of radical media, which Downing et al. have identified as having a tendency to try to be “somewhat more, or sometimes considerably more democratic than conventional mainstream media.”<sup>19</sup> CUP was one of the considerably more democratic organizations. Similarly, CUP’s experiment as an agent of social change also included several other aspect that Downing et al. identify in the radical media. These included a wider range of information and ideas than are portrayed in the mainstream media, a closer relationship with social movements and a greater responsiveness to activist voices excluded from the mainstream media.<sup>20</sup> In each of these ways, CUP can be described as a radical media alternative according to Downing et al’s criteria.

The measures that CUP and its members used to work as agents of social change put into practice a variety of ideas for media reform. For example, in its work as an engaged press, some of CUP’s methods were similar to those of public journalism. Both CUP’s actions and the public journalism movement had the goal of encouraging citizens to recognize and act on their rights and responsibilities in public life. However, in many ways CUP promoted a much more active view of journalism. Where CUP saw journalists as agents, public journalism seems to see journalists as participants in a conversation. For Jay Rosen, public journalists cannot be leaders,<sup>21</sup> whereas for CUP, the work of journalists was to encourage students and student politicians to work against oppression, and where needed to do that work themselves. All of these actions imply leadership of the student community. The idea that the student press was a leader in student opinion was voiced by a delegate from the York University *Excalibur* at the 1992 national conference, who stated, “Over the last 25 years or so, the best achievements of the student press have involved students offending their communities and readers.”<sup>22</sup>

The public journalism movement has attempted to re-engage citizens in public life by changing the relationship between journalists and the community. While Davis (Buzz) Merrit and Jay Rosen identify that “public life cannot regain its vitality on a diet of information alone,” they seem to posit that a new kind of journalism can reinvigorate public life without

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<sup>19</sup> John D.H. Downing with Tamara Villarreal Ford, Geneve Gil and Laura Stein, *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements* (London: Sage Publications, 2001) xi.

<sup>20</sup> John D.H. Downing with Tamara Villarreal Ford, Geneve Gil and Laura Stein, *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements* (London: Sage Publications, 2001) 44.

<sup>21</sup> Jay Rosen, *What Are Journalists for?* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999) 258.

<sup>22</sup> CUP, *Minutes of the 55th National Conference* (Ottawa: CUP, 1992) C-12.

other accompanying changes.<sup>23</sup> This seems to be disputed by CUP's example. It does not seem to be the case that engaged journalism alone can engage citizens, nor that a politically active journalism can thrive without a politically active citizenship. Schudson has written that democracy and journalism are mutually constitutive.<sup>24</sup> The same could be said of a politically engaged citizenship of readers and a press that acts as an agent of social change: they make each other possible.

The connection between the political engagement of the student community and CUP's actions as an agent of social change is consistent with Downing et al.'s description of the complex relationship between social movements and radical media. "Movement upsurges appear both to generate and to be stimulated by radical media. Conversely, at times when such movements are at a low ebb, the flood of alternative media also subsides."<sup>25</sup> Downing et al. are careful in applying causality to this relationship, and that care seems to be warranted. The relationship between the political community and the radical media is in many ways symbiotic rather than causal: they feed off of one another rather than one causing the other to exist. This certainly seems to have been the case with CUP. Rather than creating the student movement, CUP amplified it, and was in turn expanded and encouraged by it. What this suggests for those attempting to create politically engaged or activist media is that the most promising place to start is within those communities that are already politically engaged, rather than those that are not. While this may seem like preaching to the choir, it can also be seen as the most effective way to get the choir to sing louder and in key. The politically engaged media also gives the politically engaged community an opportunity to grow. As David Nord has written, "Communities are built, maintained, and wrecked in communication."<sup>26</sup> Combining an engaged community and an engaged press encourages growth and maintenance of each.

In contrast to Merrit and Rosen, Robert McChesney sees media reform as only one part of a larger political project to re-energize democracy. For McChesney, "The only hope for significant media reform in the United States (and elsewhere) will be the emergence of a strong left political movement that puts media reform on the political agenda."<sup>27</sup> Media

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<sup>23</sup> Davis (Buzz) Merrit and Jay Rosen, "Imaging Public Journalism: An Editor and Scholar Reflect on the Birth of an Idea," Roy W. Howard Public Lecture In Journalism and Mass Communication Research, School of Journalism Indiana University, Bloomington, 13 Apr. 1995. 11.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995) 31.

<sup>25</sup> John D.H. Downing with Tamara Villarreal Ford, Geneve Gil and Laura Stein, *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements* (London: Sage Publications, 2001) 23.

<sup>26</sup> David Paul Nord, *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2001) 2.

<sup>27</sup> Robert McChesney, *Rich Media Poor Democracy: communication politics in dubious times* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1999) 282.

reform on its own is unlikely to work, but at the same time, an action to increase functional democracy will not work without a democratic media. CUP's example would seem to support McChesney's view and demonstrate that this type of democratization is possible on at least a small scale—the fact that CUP's democratization of the student press happened concurrently with increased student self-government is more than coincidence.

In the case of CUP and its members, the action for media reform came from journalists who were members of larger social movements. The fact that it was journalists who suggested and made the changes to their work in CUP is consistent both with their efforts to control the means and goals of their work as well as with more general ideas of freedom of the press. The press is, understandably perhaps, highly resistant to efforts at reform that come from outside. However, in the commercial system, freedom of the press is threatened not only by outside forces, but those “inside” the business office. In this situation it becomes difficult for journalists themselves to choose media reform, especially reform that comes with a high price tag. CUP's work to recognize journalists, and only journalists, as having the rights to make decisions about the newspaper made it possible for student journalists to choose to work as agents of social change. It is significant that the 1992 changes to the standing resolutions strengthened this concept in CUP's policies.<sup>28</sup>

According to Clemencia Rodriguez, in academia we have a tendency to study alternative media, or what she calls citizens' media, looking for a straight movement from point A, non-democratic or non-engaged media, to point B, democratic or politically engaged media. Instead, she writes, “what we find is a multitude of small forces that surface and burst like bubbles in a swamp. But in the same way that these bubbles are a clear sign that the swamp is alive, we should approach democratic communication as a live creature that contracts and expands with its own vital rhythms.”<sup>29</sup> From this perspective, CUP's 1992 standing resolutions, although they promoted a less politically engaged vision of the student press, should not be viewed as a failure of CUP's experiment as a politically engaged press, rather it should be viewed as a shift in the life of the organization. Certainly, in their ability to sustain CUP as an organization, the changes to the standing resolutions in 1992 cannot be viewed as a failure. Similarly, Schudson argues that when we dismiss as failures movements that did not result in utopic conditions, “we badly fail to recognize our own times.”<sup>30</sup> Let it not be said that we have dismissed the many lasting changes that CUP and its members did

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<sup>28</sup> CUP, *Canadian University Press Constitution: As Amended and Revised by the 56th National Conference of Canadian University Press* (Ottawa: CUP, [1993]) 28.

<sup>29</sup> Clemencia Rodriguez, *Fissures in the Mediascape: An International Study of Citizens' Media* (Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 2001) 22.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Schudson, *The Good Citizen: A History of American Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1998) 308.

make by focusing on their removal of the “agent of social change” clause. For example, CUP continues to promote staff democracy and student newspaper autonomy and many of the issues caucuses, especially the women’s caucus, still operate at national conferences.

CUP’s changes gave members greater flexibility in terms of their degree of political engagement. While after 1992 the organization’s policies no longer promoted a politically active role of the press in terms of acting as an agent of social change, CUP has continued to work towards financial autonomy of newspapers and democratic control by journalists. While members removed overt references to working against oppression from the policy statements, they reinforced references to increasing accessibility and promoting minority voices in the news pages. Further, by encouraging the financial stability and independence of CUP and its members, the changes to the standing resolutions maintained the basis for future political engagement. In these ways, CUP’s policy changes cannot be viewed as a simple linear progression toward one model of engaged press, but rather as a dance among various models.

Perhaps CUP’s greatest contribution to media reform in Canada has been the many students who have passed through its conferences and policy sessions, and questioned the ways the media operate. As Rodriguez has written, the achievements of alternative media can be understood as the encouragement and creation of empowered citizens who continue acting politically even after they leave the medium that helped build their abilities.<sup>31</sup> Hackett and Zhao write, “The ‘vocabulary of precedents’ which journalists learn through newsroom practice may have more to do with the organizational imperatives of the corporations which employ them than with abstract ethical principles.”<sup>32</sup> Through its work as an agent of social change, CUP gave almost thirty years worth of student journalists a different vocabulary of journalistic practices to take with them into their future work. According to Eleanor Brown, national bureau chief in 1988, the “agent of social change” clause was very important in developing the political awareness of many CUP participants. “For those of us who did go out and actually make a change, a part of it was because of that clause,” she said. “I think because of the feeling of self-importance and of purpose that it gave us.”<sup>33</sup> Open up almost any newspaper in Canada and you will find the names of those involved with CUP through the years, not only in the writers’ bylines, but also in the stories themselves. Those who have

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<sup>31</sup> Clemencia Rodriguez, *Fissures in the Mediascape: An International Study of Citizens’ Media* (Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 2001) 159.

<sup>32</sup> Robert A. Hackett and Yuezhi Zhao, “Are Ethics Enough? ‘Objective’ Journalism Versus Sustainable Democracy,” *Deadlines and Diversity: Journalism Ethics in a Changing World* eds. Valeri Alia, Brian Brennan and Barry Hoffmaster (Halifax: Fernwood, 1996) 45.

<sup>33</sup> Eleanor Brown, Personal Interview, 24 Jun. 2004.

worked with CUP have contributed significantly to public life in Canada, as journalists and writers, but also as union leaders, activists, teachers, professors, lawyers, judges, and politicians. As the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media stated, “as a training ground for journalists—Peter Gzowski, Pierre Berton, Stephen Leacock, Ross Munro, John Dauphinee—[the student press] has been unexcelled.”<sup>34</sup> What CUP provided in its constant policy discussions and questioning of the role of the press, was a space for several generations of Canadians to discover, in practice rather than in theory, that the way the mainstream media functions is not the way it has to be. That process of discovery continues for many students today, and with any luck will do so for some time into the future.

Regardless of the policy changes CUP members made in 1992 removing explicit reference to social change and oppression, CUP is one of the largest and the longest lived experiments in alternative media in Canada. It is one that continues today. Seen in this light, CUP gives obvious hope about the possibilities for alternative media in this country.

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<sup>34</sup> Special Senate Committee on Mass Media, *Mass Media: The Uncertain Mirror Report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media* vol. 1 Special Senate Committee on Mass Media (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer for Canada, 1970) 185-86.

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