

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

**Conflict or Collaboration?: A Study of Press Coverage
of the 1993 and 1997 Alberta Provincial Elections**

by

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to a fuller understanding of how the media cover provincial election campaigns in Alberta. The two primary objectives of this study are to (1) determine if press coverage of the 1993 and 1997 Alberta provincial elections provided the electorate with the information it needed to make informed decisions, and (2) to test the political spectacle/hegemony theory and the hypothesis that journalists are overly-critical and frame stories strategically.

The results of a content analysis of a sample of newspaper articles collected from the 1993 and 1997 campaigns suggest that news coverage was hegemonic and that the majority of stories were placed in strategic frames. However, news was overwhelmingly neutral, not negative. The study concludes that because the majority of stories focused on the elections as races and the leaders as contestants, less news was devoted to important issues.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

One of the foundations of democratic theory is that rulers govern on behalf of the people. Although politicians make decisions that effect us all, ultimately power resides in and with the public. When the masses are no longer satisfied that their rulers are making decisions which are in a society's best interests, the people have the ability to peacefully replace government. However, in order to make decisions about leaders, the public needs information about their actions and the policies they are instituting. To usher in new rulers, the public needs to know who is running for office and what kinds of policies they would enact if elected.

The media play a pivotal role in the process of democracy, especially in this century. Society has become so large that many Canadians do not live close to provincial legislatures or the House of Parliament. We rarely see our MLAs or MPs in person. Instead, we gain information about politics through the mass media. Tuen Van Dijk points out that "most of our social and political knowledge and beliefs about the world derive from the dozens of news reports we read or see every day" (1991, 110). Perhaps now more than ever, the media are our main conduit to the world of politics.

A media free from the influence of politicians, big businesses and special interest groups is an integral part of the democratic system. Benjamin Page writes, "Democracy can work well. But if the information provided to the public is inaccurate, incomplete, misleading, or full of outright lies, then perhaps even a rational public can be fooled"

(1996, 2). Without accurate, unbiased information, we may vote for people we don't really believe in or support policies that go against our core values because we do not have the means to fully access candidates and their platforms.

There is a large body of research which states that the media are interfering with and damaging the democratic process. Joseph Cappella and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1997) and Thomas E. Patterson (1994) argue that the media undermine the authority of government through consistently negative coverage of politicians. This coverage has fostered a sense of cynicism in the public. People no longer believe their politicians and, as a result, have become alienated from the political process. In addition, politicians are unable to get their messages to the public because journalists ignore the details of plans and policies, preferring instead to concentrate on intrigue and scandal. Constant criticism has also led politicians to choose popular, quick-fix solutions to problems instead of long-term solutions that are unpopular but more efficient.

Hackett and Zhao (1998) write that the journalistic code of objectivity has skewed news so that only elite voices are cited. This means that many viewpoints never make it into the news and therefore, the public does not have enough information to make informed decisions. Cook argues that the "norms of objectivity and impartiality" have created a media which is no longer guarding the public interest (1998, 5). Instead, the media are another arm of government and news is nothing more than a joint production of government and the media.

Taras (1990) reviews the many factors that have led to a decline of democracy. For one, media covering Parliament and provincial legislatures are constantly being

manipulated by interest groups, spin doctors, politicians and peer pressure. As well, the domination of television news, the rise of critical journalism, and the speed with which modern communication systems deliver the news have changed the way politicians relate to the public. These developments have had several effects including: a reduction in the time politicians have to formulate opinions and policy; a focus on visual presentation instead of the details of issues and policies; and a public that has become cynical because politicians are often depicted in a negative fashion.

The common thread running through these theories is that the media are threatening the democratic process by relaying inaccurate, incomplete, biased or misleading information to the public. If any or all of these theories is correct, the democratic process in Alberta may be in a state of disarray because citizens are not getting sound information about their politicians and the decisions they are making.

The 1993 provincial election in Alberta was a race that the Liberal party could have won. The public's opinion of the governing Conservatives under the leadership of Premier Don Getty was at rock bottom. The Getty government had been plagued by a series of financial scandals and Conservative party members were seen as fat cats feeding at the public dish. However, with Ralph Klein at the helm the Conservatives managed to guide public opinion back to their side and capture another election.

The 1997 election campaign began in a different climate. During the previous four years, Klein and his government reduced budgets in virtually every department. Despite the fact that so many Albertans felt the sting of the cuts, Klein and his government were re-elected with an even greater majority. One question this thesis seeks to answer is

whether or not the media, either consciously or unwittingly, played a role in the election of the Conservative party in the 1993 and 1997 elections. In other words, could voters seeking detailed information about candidates and their platforms get it from the Alberta media?

This thesis will approach these questions using two different theories of media/state relations. One theory, championed by Hackett (1991) and Kellner (1990), is that the media reinforce the dominant hegemony. The second theory this thesis will test is that which is supported by Patterson (1994), and Cappella and Jamieson (1997). This theory posits that the media focus on the negative aspects of a politician at the expense of more important policy issues. The thesis question is:

Which theory best explains coverage of the 1993 and 1997 elections, the political spectacle/hegemony model or the theory that journalists are overly-critical and frame stories strategically, and why?

If the political spectacle/hegemony theory is applicable to press coverage of the 1993 and 1997 elections in Alberta, a quantitative content analysis of election news in different newspapers should demonstrate that articles about Premier Klein mirrored his political agenda and the image he wanted to construct of himself, while marginalizing the discourse and images of Liberal and New Democrat leaders. Coverage of Klein should have been positive or neutral and issues should have been framed in a manner that supported his policies. If the theory that journalists are overly critical and frame stories strategically is applicable to election coverage in 1993 and 1997, articles should have contextualized events and issues in terms of wars, races, contests and battles. In addition,

party leaders should be portrayed in a negative fashion.

If coverage fits into either one of these theories, then it is slanted, biased coverage that could ultimately have a detrimental effect on the democratic process in Alberta. Stories that are hegemonic could limit the choices of voters by printing news that supports the Klein government and its policies while at the same time, either not mentioning or marginalizing alternative solutions and opposition politicians. If news fits into the strategic/negative news theory, voters might be disillusioned with the leaders of all parties and the political process in general and could be inclined not to vote at all.

POLITICS AND THE BOOM/BUST CYCLE

A brief history of the political landscape under the Conservative governments of Premiers Peter Lougheed (1971-1985), Don Getty (1985-1992) and Ralph Klein (1992-present) will give the reader a context in which to place the 1993 and 1997 elections.

In the spring of 1993, the Conservative Party under the leadership of Premier Ralph Klein won the provincial election. The margin of victory was not stunning in itself with the Conservatives losing eight of their previously held seats, thereby picking up 51 of 83 available ridings. But the fact that the Conservatives won at all was remarkable. Further, the Liberals, with 32 seats, formed the largest opposition in the history of the province.

When Ralph Klein won the leadership of the Conservative party in the fall of 1992, he inherited a party trailing a long list of political scandals and financial failures. Many people blamed Premier Don Getty for the failures, but in a sense the responsibility was not

his alone. In part, Alberta's boom and bust economy was to blame. When Premier Peter Lougheed's Conservatives won their first election in 1971, the province was beginning a boom cycle because of developments in natural resources and strong world markets. In 1970, revenues from resources were \$233 million. Ten years later, these revenues had rocketed to \$4,657 billion. (Tupper, Pratt & Urquhart, 1992). The spin-off effect of surging resource revenues meant overall growth in other sectors and drew more people to the province to work or search for employment.

Lougheed responded to this flood of wealth with increased spending, particularly in the years preceding elections. In the decade between 1970 and 1980, expenditures on government programs rose from \$1.104 billion to \$6.294 billion (Tupper, Pratt & Urquhart, 1992). After 1980, nonrenewable resource revenues began to drop and in 1986, the year Premier Getty won his first election, world oil markets collapsed and resource revenues plummeted from an average of \$4.3 billion a year in the first half of the 1980s to around \$2.3 billion a year starting in 1987 (Cooper, 1996).

Getty responded by cutting program spending in the departments of environment, transportation and utilities, recreation, culture, and general government. Spending in education was frozen and healthcare increases fell behind provincial inflation rates, forcing hospitals to close beds and layoff staff (Tupper, Pratt & Urquhart, 1992). On the other hand, government increased its financial support of the private sector in the form of guaranteed debentures and loans as it attempted to continue with economic diversification plans which originated with the Lougheed government.

The accumulated deficit grew from complex circumstances and scholars do not

always agree on the cause. For instance, Barry Cooper writes, “Most of the fiscal difficulties encountered by the Getty Government resulted from revenue shortfalls. Things were made worse in fact and much worse in perception by the persistently unrealistic assumptions made by the Treasurer, Dick Johnston, that oil prices would improve” (1996, 43).

Other analysts pin the deficit problem on the fact that government was using guaranteed debentures and loans to attract and keep businesses and industries in Alberta. Lured by the perceived economic windfall of diversification, government was “brimming with bright ideas on how to spend money”(Tupper, Pratt & Urquhart, 1992, 48). But all too often, government backed the wrong horse. The failure of the Principal Group cost Alberta taxpayers \$100 million. The collapse of the Alberta-Pacific Terminals meant a loss of \$10 million and another \$12 million disappeared when Peter Pocklington defaulted on a government loan. The largest loss to the province was the failure of NovAtel, which ended up costing approximately \$600 million. These were the big losers, but there were many smaller investments that went awry including ventures in “steel plants, pulp mills, a computer design company, a canola crushing plant, a magnesium plant, and a company that manufactured laser cutting machines” (Tupper, Pratt & Urquhart, 1992, 51).

It should be remembered that not all of these loans were made by the Getty government. For instance, the Lougheed government backed the Principal Group. Cooper points out, “At the end of the day, Premier Getty simply carried on the original Lougheed errors. . . . Premier Lougheed started the misguided policy, but his successor took the blame when things went wrong” (1996, 45). However, the public seems to have a short

memory and blame for the financial disasters was placed squarely on Getty's shoulders.

Premier Getty had other problems that increased the public's dissatisfaction with the man and his party. One big factor was his relationship with the media. Relations began on a positive note because Getty was fairly open with reporters and met with them often. However, as scandals began to erupt the media turned up the heat and Getty distanced himself from journalists. According to Savage Hughes and Taras (1992), the media began to go after Getty in part because they believed they were being treated poorly by him.

Getty also made a number of mistakes the media seized on, the worst of which occurred when he was photographed playing golf after his office had said he was working outside of the office. The incident might have been forgivable if it hadn't happened on the day that the Principal Group finally collapsed. Although this incident occurred in 1987, the media's respect for the premier never recovered and he was plagued with a hostile press for the remainder of his days in office (Savage Hughes & Taras, 1992; Lisac, 1995).

At the same time, there was growing public rage at Alberta MLAs for their perceived abuse of public funds. In 1992 it was revealed that many politicians were claiming living expenses upwards of \$20,000 a year, even though some of them lived just outside of, or even within, Edmonton's boundaries. Also in 1992, Treasurer Dick Johnston, who had previously announced the budget was balanced, revealed there was actually a \$2.3 billion deficit. With the responsibility for these and other blunders dropped into his lap, Getty's resignation in 1992 came as no great surprise.

Although he served as Environment Minister in Getty's cabinet, Ralph Klein was not tainted by these financial scandals. When the leadership race was held in December of

1992, Klein was cast as a front-runner along with Health Minister Nancy Betkowski. It has been said that the focus of the race was not on the ideological differences between the two, but on who was less connected to Getty (Stokes & Archer, 1995).

Following his election as party leader, Klein announced that he intended to deliver a balanced budget. The public may have been unimpressed with this statement since the Getty government had repeatedly made the same declaration and failed every time. However, when Klein announced that he was appointing a commission to examine MLA remuneration and then eliminated the pension plan for MLAs it became apparent that this Premier was different.

Nevertheless, the specter of the Getty government was never far from the public's mind. Klein responded by running a campaign in 1993 that was largely based on his own image and he won. The Conservatives only took 44.5 per cent of the popular vote and lost eight ridings, bringing their total to 51 seats. And despite the fact that with 32 seats the Liberals formed the largest opposition in Alberta's history, the Conservatives had a majority government.

Over the next four years, Klein made true on his promise to reduce the debt and expenditures without raising taxes. Virtually every area of the budget was cut. Perhaps hardest hit were health, education and family and social services, which account for close to three quarters of the province's budget expenditures. In conjunction with the cuts, the Klein government also engaged in a massive restructuring of government and a significant program of privatization.

In healthcare, budgets were cut, wages were rolled back, hospitals, beds and

operating rooms were closed, health-care premiums were raised, medical services not considered essential (such as eye examinations) were delisted and regional medical boards were consolidated. In the Departments of Education, and Advanced Education and Career Development, wages were rolled back, budgets were cut, public school boards were consolidated, administrative expenditures for school boards were capped at 4 per cent of a board's total costs and tuition fees at post secondary institutes were increased

There were also changes made in the way the government conducted business. It repealed a number of regulatory acts in agriculture, the dairy business and industry in an effort to lower operating costs and make it easier for people to do business. (Cooper, 1996). The Municipal Government Act was amended to reduce provincial government responsibility and accountability in certain areas. The province, in its continuing effort to "get out of the business of doing business" (Johnson & Boras, 1995), also privatized services including the sale of liquor, tourism marketing, government licensing operations, and the operation of some provincial parks. Assets such as the ACCESS Television Network, Alberta Resources Railway Corp. and North West Trust were also sold. Money from the sale of these properties reduced government operating expenditures and provided funds to apply to the provincial debt.

These are only a few of the changes which were implemented by the Klein government between the 1993 and 1997 elections. The massive reduction and restructuring touched many Albertans, often in a painful fashion. And yet, in the 1997 election Albertans gave Klein an overwhelming vote of confidence. Conservatives won the handily, increasing the number of Conservative seats from 51 to 63 and taking 51.2 per

cent of the popular vote.

A central question this thesis seeks to answer is why. Why did the Conservatives win the 1993 election at a time when the public clearly mistrusted the party? And why did they win again in 1997 after they reduced services and increased user fees? In an attempt to answer these questions, this study will review newspaper coverage of both elections.

METHODOLOGY

Newspaper coverage that the Conservative, Liberal, New Democrat and Social Credit party leaders received during the 1993 and 1997 campaigns was subjected to a quantitative content analysis. Content analysis can be a valuable way of determining the frequency with which specific variables are published. However, content analyses must follow explicit parameters if they are to be considered valid. Berelson has defined content analysis as a “research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communications” (1971, 18). According to Berelson, the opinions, values, beliefs and biases of the researcher should not play a role in the findings. Wimmer and Dominick (1987) also acknowledge the importance of conducting work in an unbiased, systematic fashion when they write that another researcher should be able to complete the same content analysis and produce the same findings.

In order to achieve these standards of rigor in this work, sampling and categorization methods were clearly established so that other researchers could duplicate the procedures followed. This clear delineation of coding rules also ensured that work was

carried out in a systematic fashion.

Both the manifest and latent content of articles were subjected to scrutiny.

Manifest content refers to the content that is physically located within the text. In other words, the researcher can code for a word, such as battle. In this thesis, manifest content included variables such as which leader was mentioned first in an article, which leader dominated the article, and whether or not specific topics were mentioned in the article. Latent content can be defined as meaning inherent in the text. Obviously, meaning is more difficult to code because two coders can review the same piece of text and arrive at different interpretations (Babbie, 1992). In this thesis, determining whether a story's tone was positive negative or neutral could be regarded as coding for latent content. Looking for strategy and issue frames would also be coding for latent content.

Quantitative research is based on the assumption that the number of times a word, phrase, idea or symbol is repeated is important. However, there are data that a content analysis cannot provide. As Berelson notes, ". . . content analysis proceeds in terms of what-is said, and not in terms of why-the-content-is like that (e.g., 'motives') or how-people-react (e.g., 'appeals' or 'responses')" (1971, 16). Quantitative analysis can demonstrate that something is occurring in the news, however, it will not demonstrate why that symbol is appearing. Bailey and Hackett write, ". . . content analysis does not prove the presence of particular filters in the news system" (1997, 5). The researcher cannot draw causal inferences based on a quantitative analysis of content.

In order to make that connection, I conducted interviews with 15 journalists and political strategists. The results of these interviews were compared and contrasted to data

from the quantitative analysis. This comparative analysis provided an in-depth look at how the election was conducted and how journalists and handlers perceived the campaigns.

SAMPLE

Newspapers were selected in Edmonton, Calgary and Lethbridge in order to determine if coverage varied with different newspapers in different cities. The researcher wanted to determine if newspapers in specific locations appeared biased toward any particular party or leaders. Articles from the Calgary Herald, the Edmonton Journal, the Edmonton Sun, the Lethbridge Herald and Alberta Report were analyzed.

The Calgary Herald was chosen as a site because of its reputation as an excellent, unbiased newspaper. The researcher wanted to determine if coverage was unbiased despite fact that the majority of seats in Calgary have gone to the Conservatives for over a decade. The Edmonton Journal has the reputation of being a newspaper which is highly critical of government. The Edmonton Sun, like its sister paper in Calgary, is said to support the Conservative government and Premier Ralph Klein in particular. The Edmonton Journal and the Sun were selected as sites of analysis to determine if there was any bias in two newspapers located in a city which has, in recent years, voted in more opposition candidates than ruling party candidates.

The Lethbridge Herald is a rural city in southern Alberta, which is viewed as a Tory stronghold. However, within Lethbridge the Liberals do enjoy fairly strong support. In both 1993 and 1997 one of the two available seats in Lethbridge went to the Liberals. This newspaper was selected as a site of analysis because it represents rural and southern

Alberta readers.

And finally, Alberta Report was selected because of its reputation as a right of centre publication. This weekly news magazine has the reputation of being openly partisan and its publisher is a strong supporter of the federal Reform Party. One fact that makes this site interesting from an analytical point of view is that Premier Ralph Klein supports the federal Tories, not the Reform Party.

Articles selected had to include information about one of the four party leaders who were running in either 1993 or 1997 elections. In 1993, party leaders were Progressive Conservative leader Ralph Klein, Liberal Laurence Decore, New Democrat Ray Martin and Social Credit leader Randy Thorsteinson. Leaders in 1997 were Klein, Liberal Grant Mitchell, New Democrat Pam Barrett and Thorsteinson. While the articles did not have to be primarily about any or all of the candidates, candidates did have to receive substantial mention. The exception to this was in stories in which the candidate was initially identified with the party and then the bulk of the story dealt with the party. For example, a story on party platforms that mentioned Premier Klein and then referred to the Conservatives as Klein's Conservatives, would be coded. While these stories were not about the candidates themselves, they did reflect the leaders because in elections, parties are identified with leaders.

Provincial election campaigns in Alberta run for 28 days. However, data was only collected for 13 of these days. Coverage during the first three days of the campaign was analyzed because the researcher felt it was important to determine what kind of tone was established at the beginning of the campaign.

Televised debates have become an important part of campaigns and during each provincial race, at least one live debate between candidates was aired. Newspaper articles which ran the day of the debate and the day following the debate were collected and studied. Debate coverage was analyzed the morning of the debates to determine what kinds of predictions were being made with respect to the debates (the newspapers being examined are all morning papers). Articles the day after the debates were analyzed to determine how the debates were covered.

And finally, the last eight days of the campaign were analyzed. Generally, election campaigns gather momentum and interest during the last 10-days. It can be argued that coverage during the last week might have been more influential in terms of voter behavior, therefore the researcher felt it was important to study coverage during this time period.

Data from Alberta Report had to be collected in a different manner because the magazine is weekly, not daily. Because of this, dates of publication did not match the dates which had been established for the collection of newspaper articles. In addition, magazines were not published the day of, or the day following, the debates. For these reasons, articles were collected from the magazine each week during both the 1993 and 1997 campaigns.

Unfortunately, this thesis does not deal with television coverage of either campaign. There is no doubt that television is an important medium in society. When television arrived on the scene in the 1950s, a growing number of people began turning to the medium for news. Now, a greater number of people obtain their news from television than from newspapers. An effort was made to try to obtain television footage of both

elections. However, the private television stations that were contacted either do not keep tapes on file for more than a year or would not allow the researcher access to the tapes. Therefore television coverage of the 1993 and 1997 elections was unavailable.

However, the importance of newspapers in society should not be underplayed. For one thing, newspapers often set the agenda for the electronic mediums. One of the reasons for this is that newspapers are not faced with the same size and time constraints that television is. Newspapers have the luxury of running full-page articles or even series of articles on specific issues. In order to develop these stories reporters are given the time to dig into issues, a luxury many television reporters do not have. As one long-time political journalist in Alberta noted, this leads to a scenario where newspapers break stories and television scrambles to follow their lead. If newspapers do play an agenda setting function for the other media in Alberta, it is important to study their content.

In addition, newspapers also reach a large number of people. Average weekday circulation figures for the Edmonton Journal were 159,245 in 1993 and 141,659 in 1997. At the Edmonton Sun, average weekday circulation figures were 83,283 in 1993 and 72,289 in 1997.¹ The Calgary Herald's weekday sales were 119,415 in 1993 and 111,990 in 1997. In Lethbridge, the Lethbridge Herald's circulation was 25,048 in 1993 and 21,633 in 1997. These circulation figures include both urban and rural subscriptions as well as the sales of individual papers from newspaper boxes and stores. Readership figures

¹Edmonton Journal figures are for Monday to Thursday and Saturday. 1993 Edmonton Sun figures are for Monday to Friday. 1997 Sun figures are for Monday to Saturday. Lethbridge Herald figures are for Monday to Saturday runs and Calgary Herald figures are for Monday to Thursday.

for each newspaper are larger because newspapers are often read by more than one person. For instance, average readership of the Edmonton Journal in 1997 has been calculated to be 354,000 readers per weekday (excluding Fridays). So, while newspapers may not reach as many people as television, they are read by a substantial number of people.

PROCEDURE

Coding rules and the code sheet were developed to attempt to answer the hypothesis posed in Chapter 1 (For detail see Appendix A: Coding Rules and Appendix B: Code Sheet.) Variables were created to determine if any leader was given favorable or unfavorable treatment. Variables were also established to determine whether the tone of coverage of leaders was positive, negative, neutral or mixed. A variable was developed to determine whether stories were placed in issue, strategic, mixed or other frames.

The sample of newspapers articles was compiled by the researcher who went through microforms of back issues of the Calgary Herald, the Edmonton Journal, the Edmonton Sun and the Lethbridge Herald. Alberta Report was viewed in a bound format. Articles were copied and coded using the Statistics Package for the Social Sciences. A pretest was conducted to ensure variables and coding rules accurately measured for concepts such as hegemony, tone and frames.

Coder reliability can be a problem in social science research. For this study, one coder worked with all data and although this eliminated any concern over inter-coder reliability, it would be unreasonable to expect that one coder's responses and conclusions

would be consistent when coding over 500 articles. To check for coder reliability, an independent analyst reviewed coding results.

First, the independent analyst randomly selected 106 cases, or 20 per cent, from the total number of cases. Then coding decisions were checked and any differences were drawn to the attention of the researcher. The differences were reviewed by the author and a decision was made as to whether the variable in question should be changed.

A total of 5300 decisions were scrutinized. The reviewer disagreed with 68 decisions, representing 1.28 % of the total number of decisions reviewed. It should be noted that the agreement level of 98.72 % is well within acceptable limits established in social science research (Saraswati, 1997; Babbie, 1992; Savage Hughes, 1990).

OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

The literature review in Chapter 2 will take a look at the major theories which are important to this thesis. It will begin with a review of Murray Edelman's work on the role of symbols in politics. Edelman (1988) maintains that politicians and publics work together to create specific images of leaders. He also writes that the creation of issues is a deliberate fabrication with politicians, the media and the public jointly constructing a common reality.

Edelman's theories on the construction of events based on a society's dominant discourse lead naturally into hegemonic theory. Chapter 2 will also look at hegemony as it relates to the role of the mass media as disseminators of dominant values. The ideas of Todd Gitlin, Robert A. Hackett and Douglas Kellner, who all hypothesize that the news

media reinforce the dominant hegemony, will be examined.

Chapter 2 then moves on to a second popular theory: strategic framing. This hypothesis advocates that the media are extremely critical of politicians and focus on the mistakes they make instead of the issues and policies they put forward. A chief supporter of this viewpoint is Thomas E. Patterson (1994) who, in his landmark work on coverage of U.S. political campaigns, found that stories about election campaigns were primarily negative. Patterson and Capella and Jamieson (1997) found that election articles focus on the “game” of politics and that news highlights the strategies being employed by candidates in their efforts to win.

Chapter 3 attempts to determine who controlled the news agendas: journalists, Klein and his campaign staff, or opposition leaders. This section combines material drawn from news articles with information from in-depth interviews conducted with journalists, politicians and political strategists involved in both elections. Because both campaigns were dominated by the image of Ralph Klein, a detailed look is taken at the Premier’s media management skills and the campaigns he ran.

The results of the quantitative content analysis of news articles will be covered in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 discusses the basic characteristics of the sample including the number of stories that ran in each newspaper, the topics and genres which were most frequent, and the placement of stories within newspapers. Chapter 5 reviews the tone of coverage and discusses the frames that stories were placed in. In both Chapters, statistical data are augmented with examples drawn from news articles and from interviews.

The concluding section, Chapter 6, will summarize and meld the theories, content

analysis and results of interviews to arrive at some conclusions about the 1993 and 1997 elections. These conclusions will be tested against the original research question to determine if the media's coverage of the campaigns contributed to Klein's election and re-election.

CHAPTER TWO

SYMBOLS, CYNICISM AND THE MEDIA

This thesis starts from the premise that the election of Premier Ralph Klein and his Conservative party in the 1993 election was surprising given the state of the economy and the performance of Klein's predecessor, Premier Don Getty. In 1997, Klein's Conservative party was elected again, despite four years of serious budget reductions. This research seeks to determine what kind of role the press in Alberta played in the election and subsequent re-election of Premier Klein and the Conservatives.

To answer that question, this project will test election coverage against two theories of media/state relations. The first is the theory that the media are a hegemonic force within society. The second is that the media are cynical and extremely critical of politicians, focus on their weaknesses, and undermine authority. This thesis will attempt to determine if one theory is consistently dominant, if media coverage fluctuates between the two, or if neither theory applies in Alberta. This chapter will survey the works of authors who support the hegemony theory and the theory that the media undermine the image and authority of politicians.

This chapter will begin with a review of Murray Edelman's theory of the political uses of symbols and symbolic language. The idea that political issues and the images of politicians are merely symbolic constructions is a recent one which stems from postmodern theory. Edelman is one of the chief proponents of this theory.

The discussion of the symbolic uses of politics will segue into theories of

hegemony. Edelman's hypotheses flow naturally into the hegemonic theories of writers such as Todd Gitlin, Douglas Kellner and Robert A. Hackett. These scholars argue that the media reinforce the dominant hegemony by repeating the symbolic messages created by political elites. If Edelman is correct, that politicians and their issues are symbolic constructions designed to appeal to specific ideologies, then these symbolic constructions will be mirrored by media coverage.

From symbolic construction and hegemony, this chapter will shift to an opposing theory of media/state relations. This theory, which is identified with Thomas E. Patterson and Joseph N. Cappella and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, states that the media are highly critical of politicians. These authors maintain that the media focus on the personal weaknesses and mistakes of politicians, at the expense of policy issues. This has led the public to view politicians and journalists with suspicion and cynicism.

EDELMAN AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF POLITICS

For over three decades, Edelman has written about politics as a symbolic construction. Through the years his basic premise has remained the same, however the theories he draws on have changed. To read Edelman's successive works is to find a peculiar mix of structuralism, poststructuralism, postmodernism and rhetorical theory.

Edelman draws on the idea that discourse is symbolic and that words and objects are arbitrarily connected to concepts. The language of a culture is both structured by that culture and helps to structure that culture. He writes, "In subtle and obvious ways cultures shape vocabulary and meaning, and men respond to verbal cues" (1964, 115). But

meaning is relative and people do not respond to verbal cues in the same way. Individuals draw on their own experiences and beliefs when interpreting discourse and therefore each individual defines reality in a unique way.

On their own, individual words do not have power. Instead, discourse is influential because of the “needs and emotions” that it appeals to (1964, 115). For Edelman the world is a confusing, complex place and people want, need and desire structure and security. Discourse produced by the state and politicians provides that structure by giving shape to the world and creating meaning. Edelman notes that “language forms perform a crucial function by creating shared meaning, perceptions, and reassurances among mass publics” (1971, 65). This meaning is fabricated through the use of myths and metaphors.

However, myths and metaphors create some situations and filter out others. Says Edelman, “Language does not mirror an objective ‘reality,’ but rather creates it by organizing meaningful perceptions abstracted from a complex, bewildering world” (1971, 66). In other words, there is no such thing as an objective fact, or a singular truth. Meaning, truth and objective reality are created through symbols, linguistic and otherwise, in response to the needs and wants of the public.

Because words are aligned to needs and emotions, they are powerful tools that can be used to elicit specific responses from the public. Words or phrases can become symbolic cues which stir powerful emotional responses in people. For instance, in the heyday of McCarthyism, “communism” was a powerful word that evoked a strong emotional response from people, be it positive or negative. This was only because McCarthy used the word as a symbol of evil and danger. But the word, communism, was

not the cause of the emotional response; it was the trigger. As Edelman writes, “The word is not in itself the cause; but it can evoke everything about the group situation that lends emotion to its political interests, abstracting, reifying, and magnifying” (1964, 116).

McCarthy seconded the word and used it to stimulate a climate of fear and hatred.

Words are ideological and can be used to mobilize the masses. By appealing to the values, ideologies and ideals of the majority, politicians can create and use symbols to move people to action, and to gain support or acquiescence for their actions. Edelman says, “Syntax and the prevailing sign structure thus implicitly express the ideology of the community, facilitate uncritical acceptance of conventional assumptions, and impede the expression of critical or heretical ideas” (1964, 126). Symbols, and the narrative news stories in which they are placed, do not function by appealing to logic and reason; they have nothing to do with empirical evidence. Instead, they reinforce systems by appealing to dominant ideologies, values and beliefs.

Leaders, writes Edelman, are “signs of competence, evil, nationalism, future promise, and other virtues and vices and so help to introduce meaning to a confusing political world” (1988, 37). When politicians become leaders of a province, or a country, they assume symbolic responsibility for some or all of the aspects of that country or province. Leaders are also blamed for failures and praised for successes even though they may not be responsible for any of these. Part of the reason for this is that the media do not place issues or problems in a historical context, instead they focus on the personality and actions of a politician.

Although leaders may try to construct images of themselves that convey some of

these values, the public also has a role to play. Edelman states that the word leader connotes leadership. However, he asserts that the term is used incorrectly in the case of politics because leaders rarely lead, nor are they free to cast themselves in any image (Edelman, 1964). The public attaches meaning to its leaders and in some respects, the “leaders must follow their followers” (1988, 37).

And just as leaders are a construct of the public, social problems are also creations of the public, political leaders and powerful political groups. Certain social situations exist for years before they are considered problems. Often this occurs because the ideological premises upon which the perceived problem is based are so widespread and pervasive that no one thinks to challenge them. For example, in Canada, Natives were marginalized and subjected to cultural genocide. However, no one thought it was a problem because of the pervasive belief that Natives were a primitive people who needed to convert to Christianity and a “civilized” (read European) way of life.

According to Edelman, problems do not just exist, they serve specific ends. Often a problem is created so certain solutions can be employed. The cause of the problem, and the solution tendered, help reinforce a specific ideology or belief. For instance, saying that welfare roles are high because people are lazy reinforces a classic libertarian ideology. Edelman writes that blaming the poor for their own poverty “is also to exonerate economic and political institutions from that responsibility and to legitimize the efforts of authorities to change the poor person’s attitudes and behavior” (1998, 132). Governments can pose workfare as a way to take people off social assistance if the public first believes that recipients are irresponsible and have the ability to fend for themselves.

However, says Edelman, proposing one ideological solution also keeps the public aware that opposite attributions of responsibility and solutions are being circulated. Within every society, there are opposing myths which struggle for attention and legitimacy. For instance, an opposing myth to blaming poverty on laziness is the belief that social systems are basically exploitive and that the poor are the victims of the elite. Edelman asserts that calling explicit attention to one myth will arouse doubts because it calls counterevidence to mind. Saying that the poor are lazy, activates memories of people who are poor because they are handicapped or have learning disabilities. Therefore, a more effective way to activate a myth is to refer to it in a casual or indirect way; by mentioning the “welfare problem” for instance (Edelman, 1998, 133). These indirect references activate dominant myths without stimulating counter evidence.

Crisis are manufactured for slightly different ends. A crisis is sudden, acute and a sign of instability within society. When politicians begin to talk about crises, they are usually insinuating that people will have to suffer some sort of deprivation. Edelman writes that “like ‘problems,’ crises typically rationalize policies that are especially harmful to those who are already disadvantaged” (1988, 31-32). And, like problems, crises are also manufactured to justify specific solutions.

But unless the audience is willing to accept a certain set of circumstances as a problem, politicians will not be able to use the problem to their advantage. In order to gain support for their stances, politicians and powerful groups may attempt to attract media attention by saying the public is at risk, or is threatened by the problem. They may also stage pseudo-events to help demonstrate that there is a problem.

When the media recreate these messages they are helping the state send its hegemonic message to the public. The media, therefore, play an important role in the transmission of signals from politicians to the public.

Edelman (1988) notes that we become aware of politics and political spectacles through the news. He also points out that the media need to attract large audiences to remain financially viable and profitable. Therefore, it is in their best interests to report news that will appeal to a mass public. News is also constructed to encourage particular interpretations of events and to support specific ideologies.

However, news does not reinforce one specific ideology because there are so many voices clamoring for inclusion. The news can be seen as a battleground where various institutions and groups strive to have the media interpret events in ways that support their own ideologies and doctrines. As Bennett and Edelman point out, "Public officials and interest groups work constantly to shape the news that is reported, since support for themselves and their causes rises and falls with the narratives people notice" (1985, 161). But counterhegemonic speakers and groups are not often successful in getting their messages to the public. According to Bennett and Edelman ". . . it is novelty, uncertainty and ambiguity that seem least tolerable in mass political discourse" (1985, 158). Discourses with ideologies that lay far outside of the dominant hegemony are ignored, therefore, marginal groups must locate their solutions and opinions in the terms dictated by the dominant group.

In addition, people do not interpret news in the same way. Each individual brings his or her own historical and situational context to a story. This means that a particular

story will captivate some people and bore others. It also means that when a story is ambiguous, audiences can project their own meaning into it. People are not passive absorbers of information. They play an active role in the construction of political meaning.

At the same time, the news itself is carefully constructed. Edelman writes, "The media decide what is worth reporting. Some people and organizations are accepted as 'news sources'" (1988, 91). Other scholars have also shown that the people and groups most often used as sources of news are society's elites - governing politicians and dominant businesses (Bennett, 1990; Cook, 1998; Gans, 1979). The use of official sources highlights their role in society's hierarchical structure, thereby reinforcing the status quo.

Edelman also points out that the news is rarely about issues. More often the focus of a news story is on the leader, his discourse and the action he is taking. Edelman notes that the "everyday reporting of the political spectacle systematically reinforces the assumption that leaders are critical to the course of governmental action" (1988, 46). This focus on the leader reinforces the message that a particular leader is crucial to a specific course of action. It also reduces the media's ability to provide substantive stories on issues and policies.

Stories also provide links to other scenarios because they often contain incomplete references to other narratives. Drawing on Derrida's concept of trace, Bennett and Edelman (1985) note that stories never erase other messages. Instead, they always contain traces of what has not been said. So, for instance, a reference to fair social policies may lead some people to reference stories about the unfair treatment of the elderly and handicapped. But more often, the stories that individuals recall help to reinforce dominant

ideologies.

Stories told by the media are not objective truths, they only seem to be because they are repeated time and time again. Politicians spit out serialized plots with standard villains and heros. As Bennett and Edelman point out “. . . stock political narratives disguise and digest ideology for people who prefer to represent themselves as passive or objective reporters of the world around them” (1985, 159). This message, that discourse reinforces the dominant hegemony, is a strong link between Edelman and theorists who believe that the media help to reinforce the dominant hegemony. It is to these theories that this chapter will now turn.

Edelman has theorized that political reality is a matter of interpretation. Further, politicians try to shape how the public constructs political reality by attempting to control the symbolism of politics. Therefore, politicians create themselves and issues in the image that they believe the public wants or needs. The media assist politicians in this symbolic creation because they relay information from politicians to the public.

The theory of the media as a hegemonic force is found in works by Todd Gitlin, Robert A. Hackett, and Douglas Kellner. This section of Chapter 2 will begin with a look at Antonio Gramsci's views on hegemony. It will then look at how Gitlin, Hackett, and Kellner apply Gramsci's theory of hegemony to today's modern media.

GRAMSCI'S HEGEMONY

Antonio Gramsci was imprisoned by Mussolini's fascists in 1926 because of his involvement with the Italian Communist Party. He died 11 years later, still imprisoned.

While his imprisonment can be seen as a tragedy, it also marks the period when Gramsci undertook work that forever changed the concept of hegemony. Hegemonic theory was not explicitly spelled out in Marxism, but was later introduced by Lenin (Simon, 1982; Bocock, 1986). This early view of hegemony focused on politics as the main site of hegemonic struggle and was limited to periods of revolution. (Simon, 1982).

Although Gramsci's concept of hegemony is still very rooted in Marx's theory that the mode of production contributes to the domination of the masses, it also recognizes the educational role of institutions within society. Gramsci expanded the purview of hegemonic forces to include civil society and the state, as well as the economy (Bocock, 1986, 28). Gramsci's economy refers to the mode of production within a society, including the social relations that are integral to the means of production. The state refers to bureaucracies such as welfare, the law, and the civil service. But most importantly, Gramsci links the state to instruments of violence and force within a society such as laws, prisons, the police force and the army. Civil society includes other organizations which are not funded by the state but which contribute to the dissemination of the dominant ideology. The boundaries of the state and civil society shift as the state becomes more or less involved in these organizations. For instance, a broadcasting system that is state-funded and controlled can be privatized, thereby moving from the state to civil society.

Gramsci believed that in an ideal society the ruled would give their consent to be governed but would also direct the rulers. This fusing of the ruled and rulers comes through the exchange of knowledge and passion over ideas. He writes:

If the relationship between intellectuals and people-nation, between the

leaders and the led, the rulers and the ruled, is provided by an organic cohesion in which feeling-passion becomes understanding and thence knowledge (not mechanically but in a way that is alive), then and only then is the relationship one of representation (1971, 418).

This organic melding would not be forced, but would rise from a conjoining of ideas, understanding and belief. Gramsci agrees that a group can rise to power through the use of force. However, he points out that its hold on society will be weak and tenuous because it will face extreme opposition. The ruling group have difficulty enacting change on society because it does not have the consent or support of the majority.

The exchange of feeling and understanding between the rulers and the ruled means that both are connected on an emotional level. Bocock points out that leaders should not be distant from those that they rule. He says that “those political leaders who seek hegemonic leadership must address the sentiments of the nation-people and must not appear as strange or alien beings who are cut off from the masses” (1986, 37). If there is an exchange and sharing of feeling, understanding and knowledge, then the leaders and the led will be situated on common ground and will work together for the betterment of society.

In a phrase that seems to anticipate structuralism, Gramsci recognized that “in ‘language,’ there is contained a specific conception of the world” (1988, 325). Gramsci appears to be saying that meaning is located within language, therefore that language will shape the way individuals interpret the world and their own experiences. However, the meaning of words is often controlled by the hegemonic group in that society, although that

meaning can be contested by marginal groups. T.J. Jackson Lears writes that “the available vocabulary helps mark the boundaries of permissible discourse, discourages the clarifications of social alternatives, and makes it difficult for the dispossessed to locate the source of their unease, let alone remedy it” (1985, 570). If the repressed do discover why they feel ill at ease within a society, they may still have difficulty getting anyone to take them seriously because stories that do not use hegemonic discourse, or fall outside of the dominant ideology, are ignored or discounted.

Key to the spread of hegemony through consent are a society’s intellectuals. Gramsci defines intellectuals as “the dominant group’s ‘deputies’ exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government” (1988, 306). Gramsci does not define an intellectual as an academic who sits in an ivory tower. Instead, intellectuals are people in society who tend toward “intellectual elaboration” (1988, 321). These people are society’s doctors, lawyers, priests, teachers and journalists who spread hegemonic values through their actions and their discourse.

But the flow of hegemonic information is not one way. Gramsci notes that “every teacher is always a pupil and every pupil a teacher” (1988, 348). This dialectical relationship exists between rulers and the ruled as well as between intellectuals and non-intellectuals. In this fashion, all groups within a society interact to create and re-create hegemonic knowledge. For Gramsci, the masses are not a passive group to be spoon fed an ideology. Instead they play an active role in the creation and transformation of ideas, beliefs and values.

MASS MEDIA AND HEGEMONY

The mass media play a key role in the dissemination of knowledge from rulers to the ruled. Gramsci writes that the press are the “most prominent and dynamic part” of the “material organization aimed at maintaining, defending and developing the theoretical or ideological ‘front’” of the governing party (1988, 380). In the Italy that Gramsci knew, the media were closely connected to political parties and, as such, the messages they sent were necessarily ideological. Today’s mainstream media have distanced themselves from political parties, although there are people who argue that this distance is in appearance only. There are a number of modern scholars who believe that the media are a hegemonic force within society despite the fact most news organizations are not affiliated with particular parties. It is to an examination of the work of Todd Gitlin, Robert Hackett and Douglas Kellner that I will now turn.

TODD GITLIN

In his 1980 book, The Whole World is Watching, Todd Gitlin examined the hegemonic role of the mass media. Gitlin chronicled media coverage of the organization Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in the mid to late-1960s and found that public reaction to the SDS was based on images of the organization as portrayed through news stories and visual images. He also discovered that members of the SDS began to define their own movement in terms of what they saw in the media.

The SDS began attempting to control news coverage of itself by playing the media’s game, but they were not alone on the playing field. Gitlin writes, “As movement

and media discovered and acted on each other, they worked out the terms with which they would recognize and work on the other; they developed a grammar of interaction” (1980, 22). This interaction allowed for the use of some frames, or story angles, but it eliminated others.

Gitlin adheres to some of Gramsci’s central ideas. He writes, “. . . I retain Gramsci’s core conception; those who rule the dominant institutions secure their power in large measure directly and indirectly by impressing their definitions of the situation upon those they rule and . . . significantly limiting what is thought throughout the society” (1980, 10). Gitlin recognizes that consent, not coercion, is the preferred way to maintain power. In addition, hegemony is not confined to politics, instead it operates through a web of state structures, civil institutions, and social and cultural practices.

Like Edelman, Gitlin starts from the premise that the modern world is confusing and complex, and that people are physically distant from the centres of political power. Therefore, the public looks to the mass media for meaning and interpretation. Echoing Stuart Hall (1982), Gitlin writes, “They name the world’s parts, they certify reality *as* reality - and when their certifications are doubted and opposed, as they surely are, it is those same certifications that limit the terms of effective opposition” (1980, 2). The media produce and reproduce the ideologies of the hegemonic group.

Gitlin points out that ideology helps to “define - and define away - its opposition” (1980, 2). As producers of ideology, the media set the terms for discussion. In fact, the public may never even know a movement or issue exists if the media choose to ignore it. Gitlin writes that certain arguments posed by marginalized groups will not be covered by

the media if the terms of argument fall outside of the dominant frame of analysis.

Movements can attempt to gain coverage by staging events. But even if the media do cover these events, they can still be marginalized because the media determine the story angle or frame. As Gitlin points out “Mass media define the public significance of movement events or, by blanking them out, actively deprive them of larger significance” (1980, 3). The media can also make the solutions of marginal groups appear unrealistic and the proposals of the state look rational and reasonable.

Gitlin contends this is partially due to the media’s code of objectivity. If journalists are to retain their credibility they must be seen as offering objective truths. The code of objectivity suggests journalists can achieve this by being fair, unbiased, balanced and accurate (Hackett & Zhao, 1998).

This code leads journalists to cover more than one side of an issue, but always from the angle of opposition and contestation. In the instance of the SDS movement, the media achieved balance by showing pictures where “suited businessmen or government officials (were) juxtaposed against images of protestors - often bearded and bedraggled” (Gitlin, 1980, 4). However, these pictures established two oppositional camps: the camp of the legitimate (the suits and government officials) and the camp of the illegitimate (the bearded and bedraggled). This story angle, or frame, had all the appearances of objective reality. But in fact, it supported the dominant ideology by marginalizing the SDS. The frame led the public to interpret the movement and its goals as illogical and irrational.

Framing theory, according to Pan and Kosicki, “views news texts as a system of organized signifying elements that indicate advocacy of certain ideas and provide devices

to encourage certain kinds of audience processing of the texts” (1993, 55-56). Not only do journalists need frames to help them process and organize information quickly, members of the public use cognitive frames to make sense of the world around them. Framing is necessary, but Gitlin (1980) says audiences should ask why one particular frame and not another? Unfortunately, this important question is difficult for the public to formulate because so many frames are implicit and are therefore difficult to see.

DOUGLAS KELLNER

Kellner’s 1990 book, Television and the Crisis of Democracy, focuses on the role that television plays in disseminating hegemonic information. It is his contention that television serves to reinforce and produce dominant views by creating reality through its interpretation of events. Kellner writes that studying the media as a hegemonic force means analyzing “how they define situations, set agendas, and filter out oppositional ideas; and how they set limits and boundaries beyond which political discourse is not allowed” (1990, 18). Hegemonic discourse is a nebulous web that filters through society, creating limits of what can be thought and spoken. For Kellner, the media help spin that web.

However, hegemonies are never total or static. Kellner writes that television occasionally “promotes (liberal) change and social reforms” (1990, 6). Change occurs when major social upheavals can no longer be contained or when members of a society begin to believe that there is something wrong with a system, institution, regulation, war, etc. Kellner writes, “A hegemony model . . . posits divisions within both the working class and the ruling class and sees the terrain of power as a shifting site of struggle, coalitions,

and alliances” (1990, 17). In this struggle, the media assume different positions based on historical context. At one time they might support a capitalist ideology, at another they might support socialist policies.

Kellner writes that the definition of ideology should be extended to move beyond class and economic struggle to include “theories, ideas, texts, and representations that legitimate interests of ruling gender and race as well as class powers” (1995, 58). However, in Television and the Crisis of Democracy, he appears to take a rather Marxist view of society. Although he draws on Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, he focuses on economics as determining how specific ideologies dominate a society. Kellner ties the media into this economic theory: “Above all, the media are businesses that are governed by the bottom line and must attract large audiences” (1990, 168). The mass media are owned and operated by large corporations whose main interests lie in profit. In order to be profitable, the media must ensure that their news coverage does not offend anyone. Thus, they reproduce what the dominant and the dominated already believe to be true.

This link to corporate interests also manifests itself in other ways. Because the media are part of the corporate elite, they try to promote the interests of the elite in order to protect their own position in society. Although there are always disputes between the ruling class and counterhegemonic groups, the media generally support the ruling class. Kellner writes that “under the guise of objectivity, television intervenes in this matrix of struggle and attempts to resolve or obscure conflict and to advance specific agendas that are prevalent within circles of the ruling strata whose positions television shares” (1990, 20). The media purposely support hegemonic groups because they belong to the same

power structure.

However, television is not the only source of hegemonic information. Politicians feed the media and the public information brimming with symbols that represent specific values and ideals. Kellner writes that politicians construct themselves and their issue positions to represent a picture of reality that is favorable to their ideological goals.

There are a number of ways politicians and their handlers project specific images. One is the photo opportunity. These are carefully orchestrated to present an ideological message. Television ads are also meticulously scripted and shot, and even television debates are orchestrated with spin doctors rushing to interpret events.

Kellner also makes an important point when he notes that the media create meaning by omitting certain stories, not covering specific angles, and choosing to ignore certain scandals while covering others. These selections and omissions can help to reinforce a dominant hegemony if they focus positively on the incumbent and negatively on opposition politicians.

Although Kellner's study is based on American presidential politics with a focus on television, his results may also be applicable to Canadian or provincial politics. To look at how a Canadian applies the theory of hegemony to Canadian media, I will now turn to an analysis of Robert Hackett's work.

ROBERT HACKETT

Like Kellner, Robert Hackett notes that the media strive to attract large audiences. However, Hackett points out that because audiences vary from city to city,

newspapers which are part of the same chain but located in different cities may have diverse ideological tones. While Hackett admits that owners do attempt to control editorial content, he contends that this type of interference is not the norm because owners realize that their newspapers must appeal to readers.

Hackett criticizes the assumption that audience wants dictate content. He states, "Media content is influenced by economic realities other than audience preferences - such as the disproportionate influence of affluent consumers, and the insulation of monopoly newspapers from readership demand . . ." (1991, 70). Advertisers want audiences with disposable incomes who can purchase the products being advertised. Monopoly newspapers, on the other hand, know they are the only game in town. Readers have nowhere else to turn if they are offended by content.

There is another factor at play which influences the media's hegemonic messages - objectivity. Hackett and Zhao write, "Journalists thus serve two lords: profits, and the truth" (1998, 55). Standards of objectivity push journalists to be fair, balanced, unbiased and accurate. The journalist must be seen to be telling the truth and must also take steps to distance herself from her text.

Hackett and Zhao argue that objectivity assumes a specific epistemology; it presumes that there is a truth to be told. They write, "If journalism objectivity is to be taken seriously as an attainable ideal, it follows that it must be possible to separate facts from values and the observer from the observed" (1998, 84). Journalists and members of the public who think that a reporter can treat a story objectively, believe that there is a singular truth that can be explained.

However, postmodernism and other factors are challenging journalism's code of objectivity. For one, many people no longer believe that there is one truth that can be told and are suspicious of anyone who says they have a claim to truth. As well, the status of journalists has diminished in the eyes of the public. This is partly because the mainstream media have moved away from objective standards to blatant subjectivity. The line between objective journalism and infotainment-style journalism is becoming blurred. In addition, the rise of celebrity journalists who tour speech circuits for large fees is aligning journalists with the rich and elite when they have traditionally been seen as underdogs fighting for the rights of the common human.

Although some researchers believe that the media are vehicles for the transmission of ideological information, Hackett notes that there are several factors which must be taken into account before accepting the theory. For one thing, hegemony is never total or static. In addition, Hackett points out that "the media system itself is not monolithic, nor does it immaculately reproduce the dominant ideology" (1991, 18). If the media touted only hegemonic views, negative stories about political scandals and military incompetency would not appear. But they are covered and this has led Hackett to argue that the media can be seen "as a site of struggle over meaning, a struggle whose outcome is not entirely predetermined or predictable" (1991, 19).

Hackett also contends that consent is a necessary component of hegemony. Within a society, the elites at the top are constantly trying to persuade those at the bottom that the ideologies of the rich are natural and apply to everyone. Hackett points out that ". . . consent is won, in part, by getting people to understand and interpret the real

conditions in which they live their daily lives, in ways which support, or at least do not radically challenge, existing social relations” (1980, 57).

Hackett offers four explanations for how hegemonic ideology attempts to establish consent:

First, it seeks to neutralize class antagonisms by, for example, redefining them as differences of culture or individual intelligence. Second, hegemonic ideology naturalizes existing dominant relations . . . Third, it suppresses or fails to identify important aspects of social relations . . . Finally hegemonic ideology generalizes the particular into the universal, or the partial into the whole. (1991, 57)

Through this four-step process, elites convince the lower classes that the interests of the dominant group are natural and universal.

Hackett also points out that hegemony is not reproduced just by ruling elites. Rather it is circulated within society by hegemonic agents, such as teachers and journalists, who reproduce the ideologies through their normal work routines. In journalism, the routines surrounding objectivity spread hegemonic ideology. In fact, Hackett says “the media constitute a hegemonic apparatus *par excellence*” (italics his) (1991, 59). This is due to the fact that the media are always available to audiences, that they offer the public definitions of and resolutions to problems and that, despite their different forms, the media are similar in ideologies.

News values also play a role in the repetition of dominant ideologies. Hackett notes that news can be seen as a “process of selection and construction” (1991, 76).

Media organizations must decide where to locate their bureaus and reporters, what events and people to cover, and what kind of angles to place on stories. They make these decisions based on a set of values that establishes when an event qualifies as news and when it does not. News should be timely, it should be located nearby, it should have an element of drama and conflict, and it should have a human interest angle. As well, editors strive to balance news shows or newspapers so that there is a mix of local, national and international news, as well as human interest stories, political stories, crime stories, etc.

Although these codes and work routines are seen as marks of objectivity, Hackett asserts that they also reinforce the social hierarchy. He maintains that news values “have inscribed within them social relations of power and inequality; they constitute a link between social stratification and signification. In that sense, news values are an ideological code . . .” (1991, 78). Ideology is further reinforced by the marginalization or exclusion of the voices of those who do not represent society’s elite.

These three theorists have slightly different approaches to the mass media. However, they all use the theory of hegemony to illustrate the fact that the media most often act to reinforce the dominant hegemony. All three scholars write that hegemonic reporting is threatening democracy because people don’t have access to information, ideas or solutions that lie outside of the dominant ideology. This takes away the public’s right to choose, because all choices fall within the hegemonic frame.

STRATEGIC FRAMES AND CYNICISM

There are, however, theorists who approach media/state relations from quite a different perspective. These authors believe that the media are highly critical of politicians and virtually ignore important issues of policy. This threatens the democratic process in at least two ways. For one, the public are becoming increasingly cynical and avoid politics and elections. As well, they can no longer make decisions about candidates based on their stands on issues and policies. This chapter will now turn to analyzing the work of Thomas E. Patterson, and Joseph Cappella and Kathleen Hall Jamieson.

THOMAS E. PATTERSON

Patterson's theory of media/state relations contrasts sharply with the theories discussed so far. While Edelman sees politics as mere symbolism with journalism employed in its service, Gitlin, Kellner and Hackett argue that journalists relay the messages of the hegemonic group to society. On the other hand, Patterson believes that journalists are too critical of politicians.

Journalists do not criticize the issues or policies a politician represents; they criticize the politician. Patterson writes that "reporters have a variety of bad-news messages, but none more prevalent than the suggestion that the candidates cannot be trusted" (1994, 7-8). The media concentrate on a politician's blunders and flaws. Patterson says the mistakes a politician makes "give reporters an opportunity to reveal to the public the 'real' candidate behind the image" (1994, 153). The coverage of scandals also lasts far longer than coverage of issues or policies.

Patterson notes that the Progressive movement at the turn of the century attempted to curb government power through initiatives such as the referendum and recall. In journalism, the movement took the form of muckraking, which “portrayed politics as a struggle between decent citizens and self-serving parties and groups” (Patterson, 1994, 18). The movement’s aim was dual: to expose corruption and to help reform government so that citizens could be governed more directly. However, the trend toward muckracking dissipated with the rise of the ideals of objective journalism. In the 1970s, the rules of reportage changed again because of events such as Watergate and the Vietnam War. The media felt that they failed in their duty to the public by taking politicians such as Nixon and Johnson at their word and they began to scrutinize politicians more closely. Now, asserts Patterson, journalists have openly “turned on” politicians (1994, 21). As evidence he points to his own research which shows that between 1948 and 1992, negative coverage of presidential candidates increased to the point where it easily surpassed positive coverage.

Patterson puts part of the blame for this on the media’s switch from descriptive reporting (which is relaying just the facts) to its current practice of interpreting the news. Interpretive pieces have historically been relegated to the opinion and editorial pages. However, Patterson believes that reporters now inject their own interpretations of a politician’s statements or actions directly into news stories. In addition, journalists will interview analysts, members of the public and members of the opposition to find spokespeople whose statements reflect the frame they are using. In fact, the comments of the media and their sources are so opinionated, that Patterson believes they go beyond

what can be defined as interpretive, or even aggressive, reporting. Instead, comments and stories now “represent advocacy journalism” (Patterson, 1994, 107).

The media are also guilty of applying a “game schema” as a frame to use in analyzing election campaigns. Journalists can apply this frame precisely because they are interpreting, rather than reporting, the news. According to Patterson:

Whereas descriptive reporting is driven by the facts, the interpretive form is driven by the theme around which the story is built. . . The interpretive style requires the journalist to act also as an analyst. The journalist is thus positioned to give shape to the news in a way that the descriptive style does not allow. (1996, 102)

This game frame depicts politics as a game which politicians play to win. The election is covered as a horse race, with stories focusing on who is ahead, who is behind, which kinds of strategies are being used by politicians, and whether these strategies have been successful or not.

Patterson states that this type of reporting is ideological in nature because “politicians are assumed to act out of self-interest rather than also from political conviction” (1996, 103). This negative view of political leaders trickles down to the public and has had the effect of alienating them from politicians. Patterson admits that the public’s perception of candidates is not entirely determined by the media. However, the constant use of the game schema, with its harsh indictment of politicians, has led to a public that is becoming increasingly cynical about politics and politicians.

One of the most detrimental effects of this constant negative coverage is that it has

eroded the ability of politicians to govern efficiently. Patterson contends:

The effect is to rob political leaders of the public confidence that is required to govern effectively. Leaders must have substantial latitude if they are to pursue politics that will serve the public interest in the long run.

The discontinuous, fluid and transient form of politics that the press generates works against such leadership. (1996, 106)

In the face of media and public criticism, politicians are driven to seek quick solutions to long term, deeply rooted problems. Patterson also asserts that government as a whole has been weakened by the anti-political stance of journalists because a public that believes that government is incompetent is more likely to support right-wing attacks on government activism. The lack of public support hampers government's ability to govern because there is strong support for a reduced role for government.

In addition, people are not being given the information that they need to make decisions. Patterson claims journalists will often defend their reporting style by saying that the public is not interested in policy. However, he shows that when the public are given the opportunity to question candidates, they focus on issues and policy, not gaffes and poll results as journalists do.

This, argues Patterson, is having a negative effect on the democratic process. The media are the main conduit between the public and its politicians. Unfortunately, the messages of journalists reach the public more often than the messages of politicians. Patterson notes, "The trend toward interpretive reporting has diminished the voices of those who are involved in the representation of values. Theirs must be the larger voice if

the news is to provide the type of marketplace of ideas that serves democracy's needs" (1996, 108). This concern that media coverage of politics will have a negative impact on democracy is also evident in the work of Cappella and Jamieson.

JOSEPH CAPPELLA AND KATHLEEN HALL JAMIESON

Cappella and Jamieson (1996, 1997) admit that there has never been an "idyllic" period in which there was not some mistrust of politicians. However, they write that in today's society, public cynicism regarding politics has reached a new high. Their studies have shown that "subtle changes in the way news stories are framed can affect consumers' responses, activating their cynicism when strategic or conflict-oriented frames are used" (1996, 71). These frames don't just foster disrespect toward politicians; journalists are also being viewed with cynicism as well.

Strategy frames highlight who is winning and losing the campaign, use the language of battle and games, focus on the performance of candidates, and accentuate poll results. Even when a candidate's policies are mentioned, they are placed in the strategy frame and this makes it appear that candidates are using policy positions just to attract voters. This kind of coverage sends the message that politicians are only interested in winning the "game." They appear disinterested in the public good and in serving the needs of voters.

Another disturbing finding of the researchers is that this type of strategic frame is not just being applied to campaigns. Cappella and Jamieson (1997) studied coverage of the healthcare debate in the U.S. and found that over 60 per cent of television and print

stories were framed in a strategic manner. In analyzing audience response to the coverage, they found that audiences learned both strategic and substantive information from strategic coverage. However, they found that strategic news in television and radio enhanced the recall of strategic news, more than substantive news aided in the recall of substance.

Does this mean that audiences reading strategic stories become more cynical? Cappella and Jamison answer yes. As well as analyzing election stories and healthcare reform stories to determine whether or not they fell into a strategic frame, Cappella and Jamieson (1997) also studied audience reaction to the news. The results of their study showed that audience cynicism is activated by strategic news frames. They write, “Strategic coverage may remind the audience of the self-interest of actors in winning the campaign or the public policy debate. When the motivations of each side in a campaign or debate are colored by accusations of self-interested action, one response may be to dismiss both sides and eventually the process itself” (1996, 81).

Surprisingly enough, they also found that issue-based stories activated audience cynicism as well. They attribute this to the fact that issue stories were often written from an “oppositional” stance in which every solution proposed was countered by criticism of it (1997, 160). Cappella and Jamieson posit that this type of coverage leads to a public which ends up rejecting all solutions and feeling cynical about the debate itself.

There are more angles than just the strategic frame. There are also “conflict, personality, issue and episodic frames” (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997, 77). All of these frames operate by highlighting certain aspects of stories and downplaying others. In news consumers, these frames trigger a cognitive response; they activate certain neural

networks, or schemas, which help readers or viewers interpret the story. In their research, Cappella and Jamieson assume that audiences learn from news and that what they learn depends on the news frame. News that is consistently strategic will teach the audience that politicians are self-interested and only care about winning.

Unlike Patterson, Cappella and Jamieson do not focus as closely on the negative tone of coverage. While they did grade stories on evaluative tone, they do not dwell on the results for long. In comparing the coverage of the healthcare debate to news of the 1992 presidential campaign, they found that there was more negative news in the healthcare debate (1996). They attribute this to the fact that in the healthcare debate, the participants were more often representatives of pharmaceutical, health insurance and medical companies, than they were politicians. These people had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo and therefore offered criticism of reform proposals without offering any compromise positions. This critical focus led to a high level of negative news. As well, in studies of the healthcare debate and the presidential campaign of 1992 showed that in both, negative references far outweighed neutral and positive references (1997).

CONCLUSION

This chapter began with an examination of Edelman's theory that politicians symbolically construct images and issues to gain and maintain power. Edelman also stresses that the public are involved in constructing images and symbols. In fact, he argues that politicians are not free to be whatever or whomever they want. Instead, they must follow the dictates of society.

From Edelman this project stepped into hegemony theories provided by Gitlin, Hackett and Kellner. Hackett and Gitlin focused their studies on the elite mass media's coverage of counterhegemonic groups. Kellner examined television's role as a producer of culture. All three draw on the theory of hegemony as outlined by Antonio Gramsci, but each has a slightly different perspective. Gitlin contends that counterhegemonic groups must follow the media's rules if they want coverage. Kellner posits that television is both a hegemonic and counterhegemonic force. Hackett says the drive for profit and the media's code of objectivity push journalists to repeat hegemonic discourses.

The second theory that this chapter discussed was one which claims that the media undermine the authority of politicians. Patterson and Cappella/Jamieson both write that the news media no longer practice objectivity. Patterson believes that journalists openly attack politicians and focus on their negative traits. Both Patterson and Cappella/Jamieson argue that the media frame election campaigns in a strategic way that makes it appear that politicians are only in the "game" to win. Journalists portray politicians as having little interest in the public good or the needs of the people. The public has bought into this strategic frame because it has been repeated so often and the end result is a public that is disenchanted with politicians. This has made it more difficult for politicians to govern because when seeking solutions to problems, they must pander to public opinion instead of taking action that is unpopular but effective.

It should be noted that there are commonalities between these two theories. For one, the proponents of each theory agree that democracy is being threatened by media coverage. The hegemonic theorists believe that free and open discussion in society is being

hindered because the public rarely hears the voice of counterhegemonic groups, except in a negative context. The strategic-frame scholars believe that journalists' unrelenting criticism of politicians is destroying the public's faith in the democratic system and in politicians. People are no longer interested in hearing what their politicians have to say, because they no longer trust them. They are also staying away from polling booths on election days.

It is against the backdrop of these two theoretical frameworks, the media are hegemonic vs. the media are cynical, that evidence gathered through content analysis and interviews with journalists and political advisors will be placed. This project aims to determine whether news coverage of the 1993 and 1997 elections can be explained by one of these theories. It is more likely, however, that the researcher will find that both of these theories apply at different times and in different mediums.

The next chapter will focus on the media strategies used by politicians during the 1993 and 1997 campaigns. It will draw on interviews with journalists and campaign workers to provide an account of how politicians attempted to control the news agenda and how journalists reacted to those attempts. Attention will be drawn to the relationship between the Legislature press gallery and politicians, and the media management skills and repertoire of Premier Ralph Klein will be examined.

CHAPTER THREE

REPORTING ELECTIONS IN ALBERTA

If politics is a battle between elites for the control of resources, then elections can be viewed as the ultimate sites of contestation. During campaigns, political parties fight to win voters by attempting to control the flow of information that reaches the public. The struggle for control of the election agenda occurs not just between the incumbent party and opposition parties, but between these groups and the media as well. Semetko, Blumler and Weaver write that once the writ is dropped, the public is witness to the “unleashing in earnest of an implacably competitive struggle to control the mass media agenda, a struggle that pits, not only candidates and parties in contestation for agenda domination, but also political campaign managements against news organization teams” (1991, 176).

This chapter will examine the battle for control of the election agendas in 1993 and 1997 against the backdrop of Alberta politics in the 1990s. It will show that the media, the incumbent party and the opposition parties all vied to control mass media agendas during the 1993 and 1997 Alberta provincial election campaigns. It begins with a brief review of the theories of agenda setting and agenda building, then investigates the way in which the media in Alberta cover provincial politics. The experiences of politicians and journalists on the campaign trails are also examined in order to determine how the war for control was waged.

Campaigns represent a short period of time when politicians attempt to win votes by convincing members of the public that they can best govern society. They can do this

by winning the war of words and images. This contest is waged through a variety of means. Candidates speak directly to voters through venues such as campaign rallies, public forums and door-knocking blitzes. But they also speak indirectly to the public through the news media. However, the media are not mirrors who merely reflect information provided to them by candidates. Instead, messages are filtered through a variety of screens which range from the creed of objectivity that journalists follow to the requirements of newsrooms to the personal views of reporters themselves.

Candidates know this and have a variety of tactics they draw on in an attempt to put their own spin on stories. As Taras points out, the stakes in this fight for control of the agenda are high:

The election is largely decided by whose agenda becomes the dominant one. Each party wants to move the election battle to its territory by fighting the election on its themes. The party that sets the context and frames the issues is the most likely to win. To do this a party not only has to wage an information campaign against the other parties, it also has to get the media to adopt its logic, its vocabulary, its version of issues and events. (1990, 153)

The contest to control the war of words can be regarded as agenda building which is a path of inquiry connected to agenda setting.

Agenda-setting theory posits that the media establish which issues the public perceive as important. As Bernard Cohen so aptly put it, a mass medium “may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful

in telling its readers what to think about” (as quoted in Brosius & Weimann, 1996). In the first empirical study of agenda setting, McCoombs and Shaw (1972) compared what a group of voters in Charlotte, North Carolina said were major issues in the 1968 presidential campaign with the content of the mass media voters that accessed during the campaign. Their research demonstrated that there were high levels of agreement between what voters and the mass media defined as key issues. McCoombs and Shaw noted that while their findings did not conclusively prove that media established the agenda, the study’s results “strongly suggest an agenda-setting function of the mass media” (1972, 184).

While subsequent studies have supported the agenda-setting effects of the mass media, other research has shown that agenda-setting is not a simple linear process in which agendas flow unimpeded from the media to the public. Weaver points out that the strength of media effects depends on a variety of factors including “the campaign context, the length of time being considered, the interests and prior knowledge of voters, the nature of the media coverage, and type of issues and the kind of effects being measured” (1994, 348). Another important factor in agenda setting appears to be the influence of knowledgeable individuals within communities. Brosius and Weimann (1996) draw on the two-step flow theory of communication to demonstrate that early recognizers can influence not only the public’s agenda, but the media’s agenda as well.

Their study highlights an important recent direction in agenda-setting research: the study of how the media’s agenda is built. Weaver and Elliott (1985) believe that it is important not to forget that the media do not merely reflect a reality to the public; they

filter and shape the messages they send. They write that “. . . it is not quite accurate to speak of the press setting agendas as if it is mainly passing on priorities set by other actors and institutions in the society” (1985, 87). Not only do journalists shape stories, other actors are also attempting to control how stories are played. While Weaver and Elliott do not discount agenda-setting theory, they stress that it is important to study how the battle for control of the agenda is waged.

If it is true that media cues determine which issues are salient, then the study of how agendas are built becomes even more important. For instance, if the incumbent candidate is winning the agenda-building battle during an election campaign, then news should be hegemonic. Story content, placement and even length should favor the party in power. Concurrently, opposition messages will either not reach the public or will be subordinate to the dominant message. This, in turn, interferes with the democratic process because elections should be about choice and if one group is controlling the agenda, voters' options are being restricted.

COVERING THE LEGISLATURE

The number of journalists covering the Legislature has been steadily declining in recent years and much of the decrease has been in the electronic news organizations. In 1991, there were 42 members in the Legislature Press Gallery. Of these, 27 represented the print media and 15 were from television and radio (Engleman, 1992). In 1993, this

number had declined to approximately 30, most of whom were active members.¹ Among the electronic media represented with full-time staff were the television stations CBC, CFCN, ACCESS TV and CFRN, and the radio stations CISN, CFCW, CHED, CKUA and the now defunct Standard Broadcast News. By 1997, there were 24 gallery members but only 16 of these were on-site full-time. Presently there are 22 members but just 14 are active.

There are fewer print media represented. Currently there are 11 full-time print journalists representing the Edmonton Journal, the Edmonton Sun, the Calgary Herald, Canadian Press, Alberta Political Scan and Insight Into Government. The Globe and Mail and Alberta Report send staff to cover special events.

But the most notable decline is in the electronic media - there are now three electronic journalists working the Legislature full-time. They represent Broadcast News, CBC Radio and CBC TV. The Edmonton radio station CHED, Nornet Broadcasting, CBC French Radio, CBC French TV, CFCN, ITV and A-Channel are gallery members but only send staff for major announcements. One reason for this decline may be that electronic newsrooms simply don't have the resources to staff the Legislature full-time. However, a second reason may be that politics simply do not provide the exciting visuals that television news requires. The publish or perish maxim which exists in the halls of academia can be applied to newsrooms as well. The goal of a journalist is to get stories into the newspaper or onto television. And of course, the best location to have one's story

¹ Active members are those who are at the Legislature every day when the session is on and most days when the Legislature isn't sitting. Non-active members attend only when an important event is occurring, such as the reading of the Throne Speech or the budget.

placed is at the top of the newscast or on page one.

Most of the stories emanating from the Legislature on a daily basis don't qualify as lead items for television because they lack exciting visuals. The shots that the journalist ends up with are "talking heads." One government communication official knows television journalists who don't like working the Legislature because "it's so damned tough to get pictures and if you don't have pictures, you're never going to be on the top of your newscast. You're never going to be able to bump off the traffic accident with all the blood on the side of the highway by some political story, as important as that political story may be."²

This leads to a curious situation in which newspapers set the agenda for political news in the province. Increasingly, most radio and television stations will monitor morning newspapers to determine if there is any story worth covering at the Legislature. If there is, a reporter will be sent in. As radio journalist Bill MacLoughlin puts it "People fly in, metaphorically speaking, and just cover the big issue of the day so they're not outdone by the competition, but there's not a lot of depth" (Personal interview, November 25, 1998). What's interesting is that these reporters arrive at the Legislature willing to cover the story from an angle pre-determined by the newspaper story they've read.

Television is often regarded as a more influential news medium than print because it attracts a larger audience. Therefore, it is interesting to note that viewers are really

² A number of people interviewed have requested that their names be withheld. In order to protect the identity of these subjects, names and dates of interviews are not included. In some instances, words have been changed or eliminated in order to remove any idioms which could identify the speaker.

seeing a political news agenda that has been set by newspapers. One long-time political reporter believes that government takes the print media quite seriously because it knows newspapers “drive the agenda.” This belief was supported by a Conservative campaign official who said if “the newspapers get something they’ll do what they will with it and the next day the tv assignment editors will tell their reporters to go and get them the same story that the Edmonton Journal or the Calgary Herald had that day.” As I shall show shortly, this agenda-building function of the newspapers figured predominantly in Conservative plans to kick off the 1993 campaign.

There is also the feeling among some people that the Legislature Press Galley set the agenda by engaging in a form of pack mentality. Pack journalism refers to the trend of independent journalists to gather together to cover a story in the same way. Often the term is linked to the coverage of scandals. Veteran journalist George Bain makes a strong statement when he asserts that the correct term for pack journalism should really be “induced predator psychosis” (1994, 73). Larry Sabato uses the term “feeding frenzy” as another way to describe the pack phenomenon that occurs when the media scent a scandal (1991). He writes that a feeding frenzy occurs when the media relentlessly cover a scandal in the same fashion. In an unflattering comparison, Sabato asserts that the media and piranhas have the same philosophy: “If it bleeds, try to kill it” (1991, 6). However, the term pack journalism can also apply to the way in which journalists cover everyday stories.

Pack journalism can occur when journalists work in close quarters for extended periods of time. The homogenization of news is not planned. Rather, it occurs informally as journalists trade opinions and information. In the Legislature during a session, reporters

work in close quarters. They sit together in a special observation section assigned to them in the Assembly Chamber of the Legislature. They also work in a labyrinth of minuscule offices in the basement of the Legislature and frequent the Legislature Cafeteria which is just down the hall. In other words, the atmosphere is fertile ground for germinating the seeds of pack journalism.

Some people believe that, with the exception of the Edmonton and Calgary Sun newspapers, the Legislature press gallery regularly cover stories from a similar perspective. Angles aren't established in any type of formal story meeting; instead the process occurs casually. Rod Love, former Chief of Staff for Premier Klein, asserts that gallery members do set the agenda: "Well, they do it everyday, in the cafeteria of the Legislature with the exception of the Sun. They all sit around and talk about what stories are hot and what's not and what's going on." (Personal interview, March 22, 1999). And although the term pack journalism is a pejorative one from the perspective of journalists, some do admit that it does occur within the ranks of Legislature reporters.

Of course, not all journalists believe they control the news agenda. MacLoughlin, who covered the Legislature for 10 years, said "We've laughed about that a lot, about, you know, sitting around a table in the cafeteria having coffee, joking that we are setting the province's news agenda for the day, but that's because it's so far from the truth." MacLoughlin admitted that there is a tendency for reporters to watch each other to determine what their reactions to certain stories are. And he said that there is some "mutual reinforcement about what's a good story."

However, he points out that reporters are not independent actors who pick and

chose which stories will and won't be written. To some extent the stories covered by journalists are dictated by news editors. As MacLoughlin put it, "One of the things that does tend to produce homogenous coverage isn't reporters, it's the deskers." Deskers, or editors, monitor the competition and will send reporters to "match" a story the competition has. While the practice of matching can be a positive one if the stories replicated are important, it can also discourage reporters from going after their own angle on a story. This practice also highlights the fact that some pack coverage is due to the competitive nature of journalism and the struggle to attract audiences. Ignoring hot stories covered by the competition is to risk losing readership or audience share.

There are also assertions that certain media outlets set the tone of coverage. Some people closely connected to the Legislature believe that the CBC and the Edmonton Journal set the news agenda. One Conservative campaign worker said, "Typically the pack is led by the CBC and the Edmonton Journal. It doesn't mean other members of the pack can't come up with a better angle on the story of the day than those organizations, but if it's endorsed by those people then that'll be the story of the day." Some journalists assert that individuals, not news organizations themselves, have influence. One reporter believes that columnists tend to command a lot of respect within the Legislature gallery. The level of respect may be fueled by a reporter's ability to break stories. Reporters or columnists with good inside sources, who are privy to leaks and gain more front page stories, are more highly regarded than those who don't.

On the other hand, there is one media organization which is uniformly despised by journalists from other media outlets: the Edmonton Sun. Without exception, journalists

interviewed expressed contempt for journalists from the Sun because they view the newspaper as having a pro-Conservative bias. Some reporters believe that Sun journalists and columnists receive preferential treatment from government because they give favorable coverage to Premier Klein. These journalists say that the Sun is favored during scrums and news conferences and that they get more leaks than other news outlets. They also accuse Sun reporters of asking “soft” questions during scrums and news conferences. Calgary Herald columnist Don Martin said, “This is a government that plays favorites, manipulates the media through the use of selective leaks and the Sun is nothing short of the Premier of Alberta’s press office as far as I can see. I’ve never seen a critical word, never, of this government written in the Sun” (Personal interview, November 27, 1998).

If it is true that Sun journalists are allowed to ask questions more frequently, and that these questions tend to focus on the positive, it means that other journalists have less opportunity to ask critical questions.

But not all journalists believe that the Sun’s positive bias, if there is one, works in the newspaper’s favor. One journalist said:

In some cases there might have been, at times, the perception that they got leaks because they were so nice in their editorials and in everything. They’d never challenge the Premier. But quite frankly, I think Southam news has had bigger and better leaks over the years and, if anything, the Journal’s been slammed many times publicly by Klein for being so anti-government. And the (Calgary) Herald gets lots of leaks. So personally, I don’t think it pays off to be seen as being a mouthpiece for the Premier or his office.

Within the ranks of staff at the Legislature, there appear to be differing opinions on whether or not the Sun is biased. Rod Love believes the newspaper has leveled criticism against government: "I think by and large the Sun is balanced. I mean we've taken our fair shots from the Sun, no question about that." However others maintain that the Sun does support the policies of the Conservative government. A communications specialist with the government sees the Sun as the "conservative press" in Alberta. According to a Conservative campaign worker, Sun staff would cover Conservative events that other media wouldn't attend: "You know, during the campaign, if we needed a photo op or something, we could call the photo staff at the Sun and they'd be over there and just do whatever we wanted, pretty much."

Liberals who were involved in the election campaigns did not have the same kind of experiences with the Sun. One campaign worker who was with Grant Mitchell's tour recalled that there were certain Sun reporters who were drawn to anything negative. On the other hand, Liberal campaign staff admit that there were neutral stories which were written by Sun staff. Former Liberal Leader Laurence Decore agreed that certain Sun reporters appeared to be negatively biased toward his party and that, on the whole, he sees the Sun as a pro-Conservative newspaper. However, Decore did note that on one occasion, when he complained to the Sun newspaper about coverage, a journalist was removed from covering the Liberal campaign.

It is his opinion that the Calgary Herald and the Edmonton Journal are neutral newspapers. However, he believes the CBC favors the NDP party. As an example, Decore pointed to recent coverage of the 1999 provincial budget:

I watched media coverage of the budget and Pam Barrett received front page position, electronically, at least electronically. She holds two seats.

The Liberals hold 16. There is a leader of the opposition. What does that tell you? It seemed to me that was frequently the case with the NDP. They don't deserve the kind of attention that they get from the CBC.

Representatives of the Conservative government apparently have a negative view of the CBC. Staff at the CBC know this and one reporter said that CBC journalists don't receive any leaks from the Conservative government because CBC staff are held in such disregard.

Leaks are a way to control the media because they can be used to reward journalists who provide favorable coverage. But there were other techniques the Klein government used to control the flow of news. For example, Rod Love was good at alerting journalists that a big story was forthcoming. Reporters would not be given the complete story, but word would be dropped that they should keep their heads up.

As well as providing information to ensure coverage, staff also employed a variety of methods to keep journalists from reporting stories. One of these was outright intimidation. For instance, it has been said that Rod Love often attempted to control the media by either threatening or cajoling reporters and editors (Steward, 1995). Gillian Steward, a former managing editor at the Calgary Herald, remembers witnessing Love attempting to intimidate a reporter by revealing that he would be golfing with the journalist's boss within the week (Gillespie, 1999). According to Steward, it was Love's way of letting the reporter know that he had the power to make the journalist's life difficult.

Another technique used by Love and staff in the Premier's Communication Office was bundling, where a sensitive story was released with a packet of other news stories. The deluge of information was designed to overwhelm journalists and deflect attention away from the sensitive issue. And yet another method used to prevent a story from gaining too much ink was to release the information just prior to a weekend or during a time when the public wasn't paying much attention to news.

Occasionally, both techniques were used simultaneously. Bill MacLoughlin recalled a day he has dubbed "Black Thursday" because the incident occurred on a Thursday before Good Friday. MacLoughlin remembers that the Legislature was quiet late Thursday afternoon because many people had left for the long weekend. During the day, there had been no news releases posted on the door of the Premier's Communication Office. Then suddenly, at 4:26 p.m., about five of them were tacked up, some of which were on major issues. With journalists gone and a long weekend in sight, the stories were virtually guaranteed little coverage. MacLoughlin noted that journalists might have been able to track down the responsible communications officer for comment on the releases, but added that journalists know that "if they've taken the time to put it out at 4:26, he's (the communications officer) not answering the phone."

Many of these methods are used by politicians elsewhere. But one thing that is unique about Alberta politics is Klein's own distinct media style. Many journalists regard him as fairly open and they have a level of trust and respect for the man. These opinions and Klein's media style may shape the way news is covered in the province, therefore it is important to take a look at Premier Klein and his relationship with the media in Alberta.

PREMIER KLEIN AND THE MEDIA

When Ralph Klein was elected as leader of the Conservative Party in December of 1992, he brought with him a new way of dealing with the media. During the 1992 leadership race, Klein vowed to make government more open and accessible to the public. Following his election as leader, journalists found that the new Premier himself was more open and accessible than former Premiers Peter Lougheed and Don Getty.

During his tenure in office, Peter Lougheed maintained tight control over the media's agenda through a variety of means. Savage Hughes (1990) notes that one of the most important of these was meeting with the media in structured forums, such as news conferences and interviews, where Lougheed could determine which questions he would or would not answer. After his statements were delivered, he rarely answered questions. This meant that the messages he gave the media during news conferences would be reported relatively intact. In addition, access to the Premier was tightly managed. Savage Hughes (1990) points out that this not only controlled the dissemination of information, it highlighted the importance of any issue the Premier was addressing.

While it can be said that Premier Lougheed was very skilled in manipulating the media, the same does not apply to Premier Getty. Initially, Getty made an effort to establish a positive, open relationship with the media (Savage Hughes & Taras, 1992). He made himself available and would speak to reporters frequently on any issue. However, this changed when the man and his government came under attack following a series of financial scandals. By the end of his term in office, relations between the media and Getty were openly hostile and the Premier would often go for weeks without speaking to

journalists.

The media's relationship with Premier Ralph Klein stands in stark contrast to their relationship with Getty. As a former television journalist, Klein has a first-hand understanding of the needs of reporters. He is also adept at playing to the cameras and is able to speak over the heads of reporters directly to the cameras, thereby making better contact with television audiences. Klein's style of media management was probably a breath of fresh air to reporters who were used to trying to scale the wall Getty had built. It is interesting to note that Klein did not develop this style after his election as leader. He has always been very accessible.

As a seasoned television journalist and former public relations officer, Premier Klein entered politics in the 1980s with more knowledge of the media than most politicians. It was during his tenure as a reporter that he developed the "common, beer-drinking man" reputation that sticks with him today. As a journalist, Klein haunted the seedy side of Calgary and associated with a variety of people who were regarded as "socially unacceptable" such as prostitutes, bikers and Chinese immigrants (Dabbs, 1995, 30). He was somewhat of an outcast in the newsroom and he often avoided socializing with the media pack (Dabbs, 1995).

In the 1960s, the tavern at the St. Louis Hotel was the favored spot for civic employees, journalists and politicians. Klein, however, kept to himself and frequented other, less popular, venues. However this behavior changed when he was campaigning for mayor. According to Dabbs, it was former Calgary Mayor Rod Sykes who showed Klein the value of politicking in bars. During his 1980 mayoralty campaign, Klein began to

spend more time mingling with voters at the St. Louis. The media jumped on it:

“Immediately after the victory, news writers looking for an angle seized on the St. Louis as the symbol of the rumpled, boozy ‘mayor of all the people’ caricature they were crafting for Klein” (Dabbs, 1995, 51). According to Dabbs, Klein knew good publicity when he saw it and began to play to the image.

He was also good at public relations and made many public appearances. Gillian Steward recalls that Klein had a populist style when he was mayor: “He was out there doing things, all kinds of crazy things and attending all kinds of functions. He wasn’t so much a working mayor as he was a public relations kind of mayor that made people feel good about being Calgarian and made them feel enthusiastic about their city” (Personal interview, January 23, 1999).

This ability to interact with people on a personal level has been credited to the days he spent working as a reporter. Calgary Herald columnist Robert Bragg contends that Klein developed very good people skills during his 11 years as a television journalist:

He learned how to make connections directly with people you’re working with - the crews you’re working with, the politicians you’re interviewing, the other journalists you’re hanging out with and the developers and the lobbyists and the clerks and the bureaucrats and the commissioners and all those people. (Personal interview, January 23, 1999).

Klein has also always been very good at dealing with journalists. Roman Cooney, a Calgary Herald editor, said Klein had a “phenomenal relationship” with the media in terms of his willingness to speak directly to reporters. (Personal interview, January 23, 1999).

Some politicians avoid dealing with the media and assign that responsibility to staff. Klein didn't hide behind his people; he dealt directly with journalists.

Robert Bragg opined that journalists were often lenient on Klein: "... during that whole period when he was mayor in Calgary I would say the press was kind to him. Maybe partly because of Rod Love, maybe partly because of Ralph. Ralph's a charming guy who knew how to schmooze the press and nobody ever really felt the urge to go after Ralph." It has also been suggested that Klein was given an easy ride because he presided over Calgary as mayor at a time when there was relatively little controversy.

Love said that when Klein was elected as Mayor in 1980, he made it a policy to be accessible to journalists. And, said Love, it continues to be his policy: "He didn't change his media strategy one bit when he moved upstairs from Environment to the Premier's office. And journalists who covered him as Environment Minister will tell you that's the way he always was. It wasn't 'Oh my God we're in the Premier's Office. We need a new media strategy.'"

In fact, Klein becomes upset when the media portray him as unavailable. Ashley Geddes recalls Klein's reaction to a story Geddes wrote in which he said the Mayor had refused comment:

I was working through Rod Love, his assistant, and he (Love) checked with him several times and finally Klein took off out a back door and I was sort of right outside their office and so I said he refused comment and he didn't like that. And I saw him the next day in the stairway and he just started shrieking. He was really upset, and you know for most politicians,

that's a standard. They refuse comment on lots of things.

Several journalists have also commented that the Premier, like many politicians, hates to be filmed walking away from the cameras. In fact one reporter said he believes that it helps to have cameras around when interviewing the Premier because he is more inclined to stay and answer questions when the tapes are rolling.

But Klein's willingness to speak with the media appears to be more involved than simple concern about being seen as unavailable. A number of journalists believe that the Premier enjoys a good debate. Edmonton Journal columnist Mark Lisac noted:

He just leaves the impression that once he becomes engaged in a conversation he just is loath to end it. The pattern in news conferences or scrums is that as long as the questions keep coming, unless he has some pressing other business, he'll stick around . . . I don't know what the reason is but he'll just keep talking even when his aides are trying to drag him away. (Personal interview, November 26, 1998)

But while there is a lot of access to Klein in the form of informal scrums, he doesn't often grant one-on-one interviews to journalists except at Christmas time.

Access to the Premier has also changed over time. One reporter recalls that when Klein was first elected to office, he was very easy to speak to and that reporters talked to him almost at will. Rolling scrums, where journalists fire off questions while following a moving target, occurred regularly. However journalists began to complain about these. One journalist recalled, "He'd be walking and everyone would sort of be firing questions and cameramen would be falling over and people would be getting squashed. It was kind

of dangerous and besides he was walking so he didn't really have any time to think about a question." Reporters requested that these scrums be moved to the Media Room inside the Legislature. One reason was that they thought Klein would be more "obliged" to answer questions. Klein complied with the request.

Currently, Premier Klein meets with the media for a short news conference each afternoon when the Legislature is in session. Although they still complain about limited access to the Premier, journalists will admit they probably enjoy more access than do journalists in other provinces. And others point out that reporters do run out of questions and unlimited access would not necessarily lead to more or better stories.

Klein's media style during news conferences is as unique as the frequency with which he holds them. News conferences allow politicians the means to exert tighter control over the flow of information. Politicians can require that questions be asked in an orderly fashion. In addition, they have time to formulate answers. Many politicians use these features of news conferences to their advantage. For instance, Peter Lougheed maintained tight control over news conferences. Staff would indicate which reporter would be allowed to speak and, at times, Lougheed simply refused to answer particular questions.

Klein, on the other hand, often doesn't appear to have an agenda at these quasi-scrums. Lisac noted, "He just stands at the podium and waits for questions. There's no indication that he wants to guide that session into any particular direction." Klein is also willing to answer questions he clearly doesn't like. Lisac said:

It's almost amusing at times, you can tell that one or two reporters have

been annoying him for what ever reason and it's not really clear, but he'll proceed to answer their questions and even take more questions from them than from some of the other reporters. Maybe it's just because they are being more aggressive in asking them, and maybe that's one of the things he doesn't like. but even while he's giving signals that he doesn't care for this, he'll still be taking and answering questions.

Other journalists concur with Lisac's assessment. For instance, it is often stated that the Premier does not like the CBC but despite that, he will take questions from CBC reporters.

However, that's not to say that interviewing Premier Klein is a cakewalk. He may be open and accessible, but he is not a pushover. There have been occasions where Klein has left news conferences because he hasn't liked the line of questioning. There have been other instances when the Premier has threatened to walk out if reporters did not change their tack. At times he has even telephoned reporters to indicate that he is displeased with a story.

More often, when Klein doesn't like a line of questioning he'll throw questions back at the reporter. Geddes explained: "If he's starting to get a little edgy or irrate at your line of questioning he tends to look the reporter right in the eye, maybe use their first name and say 'What if' and challenge you. Start asking you questions. He likes to cut off debate of a line of questioning he doesn't enjoy. He'll try to get in an argument with a reporter."

Don Martin agreed that Klein will often turn the tables back on reporters and

recalled a recent incident that occurred when testimony that Environment Minister Ty Lund gave in a court case was criticized by the judge on the case. Klein met with reporters after the judge's comments were published and they were pressing him for his thoughts on the issue. Martin said:

Now most of the premiers in Canada would sort of wilt at the sight of that kind of thing initially. Klein walks out waving court transcripts around, not the judgement, the transcripts and says "Have you wretched media guys read these? These are the court transcripts. How dare you criticize Ty Lund unless you've read the transcripts." Well the media didn't see that coming and we didn't really fight back as aggressively as we probably should. But the point is Klein's trying to cover up.

Martin points out that reporters were taking up the issue of the judge's comments in the decision. They weren't interested in Lund's testimony or in the technical evidence that was presented in court. However, they were blind sided by Klein's attack on them and were unable to respond in kind.

Klein also has an almost uncanny ability to read the political winds and shift with them. He also displays a willingness to act unilaterally to mollify an angry public. A case in point lies in his actions to scrap pension plans for MLAs in 1993. The plan had been a bone of contention with the public. While journalists and new Conservative MLAs called for a reduction or elimination of the plan, old guard Tories wanted to hang onto their pensions. The media bombarded Klein for weeks with questions about pensions. Finally Klein decided to eliminate the plan, but the manner in which the decision was made bears

close scrutiny. Geddes remembers the incident well:

It really reached a fever pitch, that issue. He came out of the House one day, it was during a session, we chased him to his office basically, and he was still steadfastly saying he wasn't going to do anything about pensions . . . and about, oh, maybe 20 minutes later, when everything had died down he came sauntering out without his suit jacket on, his hands in his pockets and there were a few of us kind of standing around and he said "I had a chance to think about this," and he basically announced right there that he was cutting, scrapping, the pension plan.

Within the space of 20 minutes, Klein could not have consulted widely with his advisors or cabinet ministers. It appears that he knew this was an issue that could sink the Tories in the upcoming election and he acted to quell the tidal wave of criticism.

These situations, where Klein usurps the decisions of his ministers, are not infrequent. In fact, Klein often appears to set policy when in front of the media. In the fall of 1998, Klein announced a health summit would be held. Geddes contends that the health minister was embarrassed by the announcement because he knew nothing about it. Martin said "even Klein's closest advisors will tell you that that was not anywhere on the radar screen. It wasn't even there until Klein walked onto a radio show and decided 'Well, I need to do something to take some heat out of the health issue.'" Incidents like these demonstrate Klein's ability to use symbolic action to keep the public on side. They may also help to establish a sense of trust within the public sphere because they show that the Premier is willing to take quick, decisive, dramatic steps to fix a perceived wrong.

Another way that trust is fostered is through Klein's ability and willingness to admit to a mistake. There have been numerous times when the Premier has acknowledged he's erred. Bragg points to the MultiCorp affair as an example: "He admitted it. 'My wife had shares. We sold them. Next question.' And over the long haul it worked. It went away." This method of damage control ensures that issues pass like brief summer showers. And perhaps his willingness to admit a mistake also enhances Klein's image as an average guy who, like everyone else, occasionally fumbles the ball.

It is likely that tactics such as these that endear Klein to a portion of the public. It would not be outside of the realm of reason to suggest that journalists are not immune to them either. A number of reporters interviewed did express respect for Klein. This may be due to the fact that he is fairly accessible and is willing to take their questions even though he is clearly uncomfortable with the issue or query. As one reporter notes, "You know the one thing that I respect about Premier Klein is he stands there and generally he will at least listen to your questions. Whether or not he'll answer them the way you feel he should is another issue. But he will stand there and he takes it every day from reporters."

Klein also has the ability to make people feel as if they are part of the group. For instance, Martin notes that Klein will learn the first names of reporters and use them: "There are reporters who've never had 30 seconds alone with Ralph Klein who just can't believe it when he walks into a scrum and starts calling them by their first name."

Some journalists also feel that Klein appears to be more genuinely friendly and less contrived than other politicians. For example one reporter, in comparing Klein with Liberal Leader Laurence Decore, said that Decore never came across as a friendly person.

On the other hand, Klein does: “Ralph Klein would come out and he’d be more joking, he’d be more laid back, he’d look you in the eye. Sometimes it would be very tense and very confrontational, but at the same time, more often than not, you’d realize that we’re all human beings here.”

This quote emphasizes Klein’s image as a common man who is just trying to do his best. A pivotal part of this image is that Klein can be trusted because he is an average, honest guy. For the public, Klein stands separate from the political elite who are viewed with much suspicion and cynicism. It appears that some journalists also think Klein can be trusted. This is apparent in the following comment from Martin: “I get the feeling that the public sees Klein pretty much as we do in that inside that overweight, not exactly Paul Newman-looking face there’s an honest guy that wouldn’t try and deliberately and maliciously harm you just to gain something for himself.” This belief is also apparent in statements from others. One journalist said that he thought the Premier was “fairly up front” while another characterized the Premier as being “fairly open on the whole.” Roman Cooney said, “His personality is such that if there’s an opportunity and someone asks a question I think that he’ll give it an honest answer.”

Another reporter expressed respect for the fact that in answering questions, Klein does not pretend he knows everything. One journalist pointed to Klein’s background as a reason to respect the man: “You have to look at where he started out and where he is now and the fact that he does make himself accessible, that he is willing to stand there and face a countless number of questions from reporters. I wouldn’t do the job.”

Most journalists insist that Klein’s continuing popularity does not influence their

reporting. One reporter points to the MultiCorp story as an example: “We went after him pretty hard on things like MultiCorp . . . that was a really hard time for him and we didn’t cut him any slack.” Another journalist reports similar sentiments: “My job hasn’t changed since the day I got down here. You still ask the questions that need to be asked. You don’t back away from anything just because he’s a popular premier.”

But can journalists report critically on a politician that they admire? Timothy Crouse writes that reporters “always believe” that they can be friends with a candidate and maintain their objectivity (1973, 194). It is Crouse’s contention that reporters who are friendly with sources can’t always achieve the emotional distance required for this kind of balance. And while no journalists interviewed for this thesis would qualify themselves as friends, or even acquaintances, of the Premier, many of them did express a level of admiration and respect for the man.

A number of journalists, such as George Bain (1994) and Marjorie Nichols (1992), have commented that the atmosphere between journalists and politicians has become poisoned with suspicion and mistrust. It is their contention that this has led to harsh, overly-critical reporting. Crouse writes that every U.S. president eventually comes to recognize the press “as a natural enemy” (1973, 191). Thomas E. Patterson (1994) also writes that an adversarial relationship has developed between politicians and journalists because of the media’s penchant for controversy and scandal.

However, in Alberta, the situation does not mirror what is happening in other regions or countries. While Conservative campaign staff certainly believe that the media are hostile, critical and drawn to controversy, most journalists interviewed did not express

hostility, contempt or dislike. Their attitudes lead to an interesting duality - reporters insist that they are critical of government and the Premier, but express admiration for the man at the same time. It appears then, that the adversarial relationship scholars have pinpointed in other venues does not apply in Alberta to the same extent, or in the same way.

1993 - MIRACLE ON THE PRAIRIE

Election campaigns start long before writs are dropped. Parties begin to pave the way for their policies, candidates are put in place, volunteers are rallied and funding is sought. In Alberta, the Conservatives were preparing for the 1993 election during their 1992 leadership campaign.

When Premier Don Getty announced his resignation in September of 1992, the party was at rock bottom in the polls. The public was outraged by a series of financial disasters such as NovAtel, the collapse of the Principal group and moves such as the 30 per cent pay increase MLAs had given themselves in 1989. The public viewed the Conservative government with suspicion and mistrust. One Klein campaign worker said that polls and focus groups held during the 1992 leadership campaign showed that the public no longer believed politicians would keep their word. He recalls the surveys showed that, "People wouldn't believe promises . . . Albertans were looking for action. They were looking for symbolic things that demonstrated that we were going to pay attention to them again." When he was elected as leader of the PC party, Klein gave the people exactly what they were looking for.

In the 1992 leadership race, Klein vowed to reduce the size of government and

make government more accessible and open to the public. Just days after his December 5 victory, Klein moved to fulfill these promises. On December 9, he announced he was collapsing the 16 cabinet and caucus committees into four. He also stated he was reorganizing their structure so that each would be chaired by backbenchers, not ministers (Johnson & Geddes, 1992). The size of cabinet was also reduced from 26 to 18. A week after these announcements, Klein warned civil servants that steps were being taken to reduce the size of government.

Throughout the winter and spring of 1993, the Klein government continued to differentiate itself from the Getty government. Klein appointed an independent financial review commission to study the state of economic affairs in the province and make recommendations. A round table of people who were supposed to represent the interests of Albertans was established to study the budget. Cabinet ministers took a five per cent cut in salaries and deputy ministers accepted a 2 per cent reduction. Perhaps the most dramatic move came when the Premier announced he was eliminating the MLA pension plan. And finally in May, just before the election was called, Treasurer Jim Dinning released a budget which stated spending would be reduced by 20 per cent.

In dropping the writ, Klein said he would not run a campaign on spending promises, but would focus on his six-month record as Premier. A senior campaign official said, "We set up both the 93 and 97 campaigns making absolutely no promises, or as few as we could manage. The idea was to demonstrate action before campaigns and then ask for people's approval of those actions."

The Liberals were running on a similar platform of deficit and debt reduction.

However as an opposition party, they couldn't actually demonstrate that they would cut spending. Laurence Decore explained: "There needed to be action shown to the public and he (Klein) came forward and showed action. I couldn't do that, I was the leader of an opposition party" (Personal interview, March 16, 1999). The New Democrats, under Ray Martin, took a different approach to debt and deficit reduction by advocating a tax-the-rich plan.

Part of the Conservative communications plan in 1993 was to get a message directly to the people. The election writ was dropped at noon in Calgary in order to capture the noon television news. Campaign staff knew that the announcement would be covered live and they reasoned that a live feed meant Klein's image and discourse would reach the public before newspapers could put their own spin on the story. They also thought that a noon release would help build excitement for a 6 p.m. rally which was being held in Edmonton where the Conservatives felt they needed to show strong support. It is also no coincidence that the Edmonton rally was held during the early evening news hour.

And although campaign officials said there was no overt attempt to avoid the Legislature media, who were regarded as hostile, they do admit that they didn't go out of their way to make it easy for the press gallery to cover Klein. As one senior campaign official put it, "We did not run a media campaign at all during either 1993 or 1997. . . both the 93 and 97 campaigns were built around talking to Albertans and to local media, but specifically not to the Alberta Legislative Press Gallery association." Media were given itineraries and told that it was their business how they got to events. Rod Love pointed out, "We knew that the media did not like the government and probably wasn't going to

give the government a break and so there was a conscious effort in the 93 campaign to try and go around or over the heads of media and talk directly to Albertans unfiltered.”

The Conservative’s decision not to use a bus is interesting because it is so atypical of how most parties run campaigns. The usual practice is for political parties to rent buses or airplanes and allow the media to accompany the leader throughout the campaign. In fact, a variety of other services, such as telephones, faxes and refreshments, are available for journalists. In his revealing book, The Boys on the Bus, Timothy Crouse acknowledges the professional way in which the McGovern campaign staff handled the media: “They booked reservations on planes, trains and hotels; gave and received messages; and handled Secret Service accreditation with a fierce Teutonic efficiency. And handed out reams of free information” (1973, 6-7). Crouse asserts these “womblike conditions” (1973, 7) helped to foster pack journalism on the McGovern campaign trail and allowed campaign managers to control the flow of news.

In Alberta in 1993, Conservative campaign strategists did not believe that providing these services to reporters would benefit their campaign. Instead, they were wary of the dangers of pack journalism and believed that journalists would control the agenda if they rode a bus.

Conversely, the media believe that the danger in riding a campaign bus is that the candidate sets the agenda. To ride the bus on a regular fashion is to risk becoming too involved with the people you are supposed to cover. As William Fox, former press secretary for Brian Mulroney writes, riding the bus can create “the journalistic equivalent of the Stockholme Syndrome” (1994, 89). Campaign workers gain more control over the

news agenda because reporters lose their objectivity. As well, journalists who are on the bus do not tend to do as much investigative work because they are away from their office files. Instead they are limited to covering campaign events.

Laurence Decore used a bus occasionally in the 1993 campaign. The party also rented a TV satellite truck which the electronic media could use, for a fee, to conduct live interviews with Decore. The action was widely criticized by media who saw it as a blatant attempt at manipulation (Alberts, 1993).

Reporters recall having a lot of access to the Premier. One campaign worker remembers seeing the Premier scrummed 18 times in one day while campaigning in Edmonton's Old Strathcona district: "Every time the Premier stopped to talk to somebody, 20 reporters surrounded that person, asked them what they asked the Premier and then went and did another scrum with the Premier about what he said to that person."

This experience highlights the perception of many people that there was more interest in the 1993 campaign than there was in the 1997 race. There are a variety of explanations offered for the greater preoccupation with the 1993 campaign. For one thing, the public and journalists perceived that this election was a genuine contest because the Liberals stood a good chance of winning.

A second factor may have been the personality of the Premier. Both the media and the public were unfamiliar with Klein. As Rod Love said, "In 1993, he'd only been the Premier for six months and it was still a wary kind of relationship. He was a bit of a mystery to the media in the 93 campaign and by 97 they knew him."

The Conservatives also played Klein as a major drawing card. The party took steps

to ensure that Klein was the focus of the campaign after research demonstrated that Albertans viewed the Premier's personality more positively than they did the image of the Progressive Conservative Party.

This focus on Ralph Klein came as a surprise to opposition members and his image was difficult for opposition candidates to combat. Lethbridge East MLA Ken Nicol recalls that the Liberals were unprepared for the impact that Klein's personality had on the race:

We went into and prepared for the 93 election on the basis that as long as we talked about fiscal responsibility and balanced budgets we were gonna win the election. Well, all of a sudden Ralph's Team came along, right out of the blue, and were saying exactly the same thing and we didn't adjust . .

. Mr. Klein had that public persona, that public credibility, just by his persona, that we didn't have and we didn't adjust. (Personal interview, March 16, 1999)

Nicol believes that the Liberals might have had more impact if they had started to challenge Premier Klein's stance by asking him for details on his budget-cutting plans. Laurence Decore remembers that there were suggestions the Liberals focus on Klein's record as mayor: "There's some suggestion that we should have been more aggressive against him in the Calgary area. . . . In reflection, I think we should have gone harder against him in terms of his own background and the things he didn't do financially and fiscally as mayor, that I did."

Both Decore and Nicol believe that the media were fair in their coverage of Liberal campaign issues, with the exception of the Suns. They also believe that the media gave a

lot of coverage to the debt and deficit issue. Some journalists think they gave it too much play. Geddes believes that reporters were swept along by debt crisis rhetoric being touted by both the Liberals and the Conservatives:

You have to remember that during the Getty days, we were covering one financial disaster after another and it seemed like every week or two there was a new explosion. So you got into this mode where you were writing so many stories about the mishandling of finances and then all of a sudden Ralph comes along and Decore singing in the same chorus behind him.

It is Geddes's contention that after years of fiscal mismanagement, reporters found it difficult not to support Klein's agenda.

But there were events on the campaign trail that swept away the debt and deficit issue. The first significant incident occurred during the first week the campaign when Laurence Decore condemned free-standing abortion clinics while speaking on The Ron Collister Show, a live radio call-in program. His comments that free-standing abortion clinics were wrong and should not be funded with public dollars were picked up by the media and played for days. Immediately following the radio show, journalists telephoned their counterparts working the Klein campaign to inform them of Decore's statements. Martin and Klein were quizzed about their abortion policies following Decore's initial statement, however their views were never given the same amount of play.

This may have been because their stands were more neutral than Decore's. Klein repeated his standard phrase, that abortion is between "a woman, her doctor and God," and said that while he was not personally in favor of free-standing clinics, it would be

difficult to close them because they were private institutions (Cunningham & Geddes, 1993). Martin supported a woman's right to have an abortion and said that closing private clinics would reduce a woman's access to abortions in Alberta (Aikenhead, 1993b). Neither of these statements was as news worthy as Decore's on-air assertion that "We say, no, no, no to free standing abortion clinics" (Aikenhead, 1993b).

The Premier's statement, that he did not personally support free standing clinics, was not that much different in substance than Decore's. However, it was Decore who spent the better part of a week trying to repair the damage done. This might be because Decore was much more expansive in his comments than Klein was. Decore simply provided the press with more copy. This incident seems to show that Klein recognized a potentially damaging situation and avoided it. His stock comments and sparse answers allowed him to deflect potentially negative publicity away from himself (although it must be noted that Decore's statements also helped draw attention from Klein).

Members of the media said that Decore's comments had to be highlighted because they showed a specific side of him. One reporter said, "When the leader of a party says something like that you can't help but say 'Wait a minute what does it say about this guy?' And what is it that he's not telling us about himself and his ideology? You can't help but focus on it and try to dig deeper." Perhaps Decore's comments did warrant investigation. But it is telling that Klein, who expressed a similar attitude with less punch, wasn't treated in the same fashion.

The media's reaction over the abortion issue also shows how the creed of objectivity can lead to controversial stories. Once Decore had made his initial comment,

the media attempted to balance the story by seeking comments from Klein and Martin. But in soliciting these comments, the media also created a sense of drama and excitement. This was furthered when Dr. Henry Morgentaler was drawn into the fray.

There were other issues that sidelined the debt and deficit. In week three of the campaign, Premier Klein was criticized after he suggested that daycares, hospitals and universities rely on bingos and raffles to cover shortfalls that occurred in the wake of budget cuts. This statement was overshadowed when Calgary Glenmore Tory candidate Diane Mirosh revealed that a Liberal MLA was against including homosexuals in human rights legislation. Not only did her information highlight divisions within the Liberal party, it may have angered Liberal supporters who were in favor of equal rights for homosexuals. One analyst believes that the story may have increased support for the Conservatives among anti-gay voters in the province because it highlighted the Liberals' pro-gay rights policy (Mustapha, 1993).

In the end, none of these issues derailed or seriously dented support for the Conservatives. It could therefore be said that the Conservatives, with their focus on Klein and debt elimination, won the agenda-building war. In 1997, the Conservatives attempted to run a similar campaign. It was low key, there were no promises, and the focus was once again on the personality of Premier Ralph Klein.

1997 - HE KEPT HIS WORD

The writ for the 1997 election was dropped the same day the government released its 1997-1998 budget. In calling the election, Klein said there would be no major campaign

promises and that if re-elected the Tories would continue with their policy of fiscal restraint. The plan was to run on the government's record, not on anything new that the government was going to do. The Liberals, under leader Grant Mitchell, accused the Conservatives of being more concerned about the bottom line than people and vowed the Liberals would inject more money into social programs such as hospitals. Pam Barrett, leader of the New Democrats, said the Klein government cut too deeply and quickly and promised to increase the minimum wage.

Klein's personality was again a big factor in the election campaign. According to one journalist, it was the only factor: "The election campaign got stripped to one raw issue awfully fast . . . the public image of Premier Ralph Klein. Can you trust him or not?" (Lisac, 1997). Campaign managers acknowledge that the primary focus of their campaign was on Klein. One campaign official noted "Essentially the only question that we asked Albertans is 'Is Ralph Klein the right guy to do the job?'" Billboards were erected with pictures of Klein and the simple message "He kept his word." This campaign was built on the issue of trust because Conservative party research had shown that honesty was what Albertans admired most about the Premier.

The public's admiration for Klein was evident on the campaign trail. Liberal MLA Ken Nicol recalls his experience campaigning in his Lethbridge East riding:

I would go door-to-door and you know most people would say "Mr. Klein, isn't he just a great Premier. You know Ken, you've done a good job locally but boy Mr. Klein has been a great Premier." And you'd say, well do you like what he did to healthcare? No. Do you like what he did to

the education system? No. Did you like what he did to the people who were in need? No. Did you like what he did to our highways? No. Did you like . . . you know, just go down the list and you'd get no, no, no, no. Well what did you like about Mr. Klein? "Well, he's just a great Premier isn't he?"

Although Nicol won his seat back in 1997, he said he couldn't have predicted his victory based on public response to his door-knocking campaign.

The focus on Klein's personality was not lost on journalists. A campaign official who accompanied Klein on the 1997 trail recalls reporters trying to develop a story on the "cult of Klein." He said:

During 97 there was a little flurry of activity amongst the news media during the campaign which they called the cult of Ralph. And for several days they ran around, the press gallery ran around behind Ralph saying "Is there really a cult around you? I mean the whole campaign seems to be built around you and so there must be this cult, right Ralph? Please tell us there's this cult." So the they could write the cult story, right?

The incident is interesting in that it demonstrated the media's attempt to develop a story which could be regarded as titillating and rather sensational.

Once again, the Conservatives decided to run a grass roots campaign without a bus. However, instead of a motor home, the Premier used a car and focused on meeting people and local media. He also flew more than he did in the 93 campaign in an attempt to reach as many of the swing ridings as possible.

In 1997, Grant Mitchell used a bus for the duration of the campaign. On board were telephones and fax machine which the media could use. Coffee and tea were also available. A Liberal party worker on the 1997 campaign believes it can't hurt to provide services to the media: "I've been at news conferences where the feeds don't work or there's not a proper phone or something and you can hear the media complaining and you know they're angry. And if they're going into the story angry . . . I mean who knows if it really affects their writing but . . ."

The number of journalists on the Liberal bus varied. Reporters from the Edmonton Journal were with the campaign constantly, although the individuals were rotated. With the exception of two columnists, no one from with the Calgary Sun or the Edmonton Sun rode on the Liberal bus. Generally, the electronic media took their own vehicles and reporters from other newspapers were there sporadically.

Members of the Conservative campaign believe that there were fewer journalists covering the 1997 campaign than there were in 1993. This applies to both Legislature reporters and to the local media in small towns. A senior campaign official noted that in 1993, it was almost guaranteed that in small towns the Klein tour would be met by the editor of the newspaper. An interview with Klein would be conducted and photographs of the Premier and local dignitaries, such as the mayor, would be taken. However in 1997, typically a reporter would show up, spend a few minutes asking questions about local issues and then leave. There were also fewer requests for interviews with the Premier in 1997.

Reporters also believe there was less interest in the campaign. Ashley Geddes

recalls attending a Klein speech in Calgary and seeing only two other reporters. Another journalist noticed that only a few media outlets would send reporters to cover Klein's trips to small centres in remote regions.

There are varied explanations offered for this lack of interest. Workers on the Tory campaign believe that there was less interest because both the public and journalists were familiar with Klein. Then too, Klein tried to underplay the election as part of his strategy. Another explanation is that there was less interest in the election because early polls were predicting a Tory landslide. Geddes pointed out, "You're much less likely to get enthusiastic and do a lot of extra kind of theme-type stories if you don't think there's a real race." It should be noted that editors also determine how much coverage an election will get because they allocate resources such as reporters, money and space in the newspaper.

Perhaps the Tory campaign strategy had something to do with the lack of coverage. The Liberals tried to encourage coverage by staging a number of media events to attract television cameras. For instance, when Grant Mitchell unveiled the Liberal's education policy, he spoke using 1000 apples as a prop. According to Mitchell, the 1000 apples represented the number of teachers the Liberals would hire if elected. In another instance, Mitchell dropped a wrecking ball outside of the vacant Charles Camshell Hospital in Edmonton in an attempt to draw attention to his party's commitment to healthcare. These pseudo events did not always play well with the media and at least one reporter believed they were "hokey."

In the Conservative camp, no pseudo events were staged for the media. In

addition, Klein refused to be drawn into the back-and-forth volley that the media try to develop between candidates. A senior campaign official said:

We didn't set up a lot of opportunities for us to get into, excuse the language, pissing contests with political rivals through the media . . . We weren't making any policy statements so there's nothing much to react to. On the opposition side, if they said something we said "Fine, that's their position, we'll see." You know, we just stayed out of the fight.

Journalists were aware that Klein was more in control of himself during the 1997 campaign. A reporter recalls that Premier Klein's responses to questions appeared to be very rehearsed. The Premier was also adept at repeating the same line over and over again. The journalist said that "this wasn't the kind of off-the-cuff Ralph who sort of made it up as he went along and endeared himself to everybody. You know, the guy that was around in 93." Another journalist had the perception that Klein lacked enthusiasm on the campaign trail, that he was merely going through the motions.

The rehearsed statements offered by Klein made it difficult for reporters to find angles for their stories. One journalist asserts that reporters were asking questions on issues such as healthcare and education. But either they weren't being answered or the responses to questions were always the same. One journalist said, "Klein would show up in places and there'd be very few announcements . . . speeches would be very short and to the point. You could ask questions, but it didn't revolve around anything. As we say in the business, 'what was the hook?'"

For example, a journalist would ask a question about the government's plans for

healthcare, but the Premier would respond by pointing to the fact that government had reinvested in healthcare. The focus would always be on the past performance of government. Of course, this was no mistake - it was part of the Conservative communications strategy to focus on the past.

There were instances where issues did surface. One example was the attempt by the Liberals to highlight the use of VLTs. According to the Edmonton Journal, Grant Mitchell started the ball rolling by saying his party would phase out VLTs over three years (Arnold & Johnsrude, 1993). It is interesting to note that in the Calgary Herald, it is the Liberals who are responding to a first strike by Premier Klein (Pommer, 1997). In fact, the Liberals raised this issue when they kicked their campaign off in a bar where the owners had removed their VLTs. The story died within days, but one Liberal party worker didn't regard this as a failure because the Liberals didn't want their campaign to be based on one issue.

As well as feeling that Klein was more controlled in his comments, some journalists had the perception that campaign workers were attempting to make it difficult for reporters to follow them. One journalist said "I don't think he (Klein) wanted us around to catch him slipping up. I think the philosophy of the campaign was make no mistakes and the easier it is for the press to get to you, the more likely they are to catch you in a gaff." Another reporter recalls arriving in Fort McMurray to a rather cold reception from Klein's entourage.

This reporter's perception is correct. Klein's staff weren't happy to see the media. One of Klein's handlers recalled "Well, there's some truth to that because the Legislature

press gallery, being the Legislature press gallery, I was never personally very happy to see them anywhere.” And Love pointed out, “when you’re in government, no news is good news.”

The reporting of polls can be viewed as an instance where the Conservatives lost control of the news agenda. One campaign worker said that when polls released two weeks prior to the election predicted the Tories would take most of the seats in Alberta, strategists began to worry. They knew there was a danger that people would vote for the other parties just to ensure there was some opposition in the Legislature. However, they also knew they were unable to prevent the reporting of polls. The campaign slipped out of their hands a second time when it was leaked to the media that Klein had settled with the province’s doctors.

But overall, it appears that the Conservatives were able to control the agenda-building process for most of the election. Both the Liberals and the media tried to raise issues such as healthcare, education and VLTs. However, the Conservatives managed to sidestep these and run a quiet campaign based on the issue of trust.

CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the way in which the incumbent party, the opposition Liberals and the media attempted to build the agenda during the 1993 and 1997 campaigns. It began with a discussion of how reporters cover the Alberta Legislature. It was shown that both journalists and the Conservative government attempt to control the news agenda. It was also noted that the media perceive Premier Klein to be fairly open and

accessible, especially when he is compared to Premiers Lougheed and Getty and premiers in other provinces. For their part, Conservative government officials are suspicious of journalists and their motivations and admit they try to control the news agenda.

So who was successful in setting the agenda for the 1993 and 1997 elections? If results are anything to judge by, the Conservatives won the battle in both campaigns. It was their aim in the 1993 campaign to distance themselves from the Getty government and focus on the personality of Premier Klein and it appears that they achieved this goal. Conservative campaign workers, members of the Liberal leader's entourage and journalists agree that the media paid a great deal of attention to the debt and deficit issue and to the personality of Premier Klein.

In 1997, their victory makes it appear that the Conservatives controlled the agenda again. In this instance, the Conservatives wanted to run a low key, quiet election. By all accounts, there was less interest in the campaign and fewer journalists covering the Premier's tour of the province. There continued to be a strong focus on the Premier's personality and the issue of trust. And finally, by carefully controlling his responses to questions, the Premier may have thwarted the attempts of journalists to raise issues which might be controversial such as the effects of cuts on healthcare and education.

The findings in this chapter represent the perceptions of the people involved in the campaign. The feelings, beliefs and even the experiences of individuals, while valid in and of themselves, may not reflect actual election coverage. In the following two chapters, the results of the content analysis of newspaper stories will be discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

In this chapter, data from the content analysis of articles collected in the Edmonton Journal, the Calgary Herald, the Calgary Sun, Alberta Report and the Lethbridge Herald will be introduced. The assessment begins by reviewing the number of stories which ran in these publications and then discusses the frequencies with which various topics were mentioned and how often specific genres occurred. The placement of stories within newspapers is also examined. In most instances data have been divided according to year to determine whether or not coverage of the elections differed by year.

FREQUENCY OF PUBLICATION

A total of 510 articles were collected from the Calgary Herald, the Edmonton Journal, the Edmonton Sun, the Lethbridge Herald and Alberta Report and coded. As noted in Chapter One, newspaper articles were collected during 13 of the 28 days of the campaign. Table 1 indicates that 52 per cent of the stories collected ran during the 1993 election. In terms of numbers, this means that there were 24 fewer stories collected in 1997. Many people interviewed had the perception that the 1997 campaign was a “non-election” that received less media attention than elections had in past years. However, these figures show that each publication ran a comparable number of stories in 1993 and 1997 during the days for which data was collected. During the 1997 election, coverage increased slightly in the Edmonton Sun, remained the same in Alberta Report, and

decreased in the Edmonton Journal and Calgary Herald. The most notable decline was in the Lethbridge Herald which ran 13 fewer articles in 1997. This is a sizeable drop given that the total number of election articles that appeared in the Lethbridge Herald plummeted from 38 in 1993 to 25 in 1997.

Table 1

Publication Crosstabulated by Election Year: Number and Percent of Articles Collected

Medium	Election Year		Election Year	
	1993		1997	
	No. of Articles	% of total ^a	No. of Articles	% of total ^a
Calgary Herald	61	22.8	51	21
Edmonton Journal	89	33.3	83	34.2
Edmonton Sun	72	27	77	31.7
Alberta Report	7	2.6	7	2.9
Lethbridge Herald	38	14.2	25	10.3
Total for Year	267		243	

Note. Using Chi Square it was determined that the observed distribution did not differ significantly from the expressed distribution.

^a Percent totals do not equal 100 because of rounding.

As Table 1 indicates, in both years the Edmonton Journal carried more articles than the Calgary Herald and Edmonton Sun on the days for which the stories were collected. It is notable that even the Sun carried more articles about the election than the Calgary Herald. One reason for this difference might be that both the Journal and the Sun serve audiences which are located in Alberta's capital city. More emphasis might be placed on provincial politics in these newspapers. However, it must also be pointed out that the Herald's circulation is significantly larger than that of the Sun. Weekday circulation at the Herald was 119,415 in 1993 and 111,990 in 1997. The Edmonton Sun's weekday circulation was 83,283 in 1993 and 72,289 in 1997. Even though the newspapers are located in different cities, it might be expected that the larger newspaper would devote more resources and space to the election. In addition, the Herald is located in a city which not only has a strong Conservative base, but is also home to Klein's own riding. When these factors are taken into account, the fewer number of articles found in the Calgary Herald is somewhat surprising.

The lower number of articles in the Calgary Herald is also interesting because it appears to confirm the feelings of journalists who were interviewed. A number of reporters and columnists felt that the Herald did not cover the 1997 election as well as the Journal in terms of the amount of coverage. Journalists also implied that the quality of coverage in the Herald was not as good as the Journal's. Figures in Table 1 show that the Herald's coverage was lower than the Journal's in 1997 and that the actual number of stories the Herald carried in 1997 was lower than in 1993. So the perception that there was not as much coverage in 1997 as there was in 1993 is correct. However, Chi Square

results showed no relationship between the number of stories that ran and the year of coverage. It should be pointed out that these are numerical summaries only and do not assess the quality of coverage.

FOCUS OF ARTICLES

The main topic of stories was tabulated to determine what the dominant subjects were during the sample collection period for both campaigns. When topic variables were examined, it was found that in both 1993 and 1997 most stories fell into the topic category of campaign. This category included articles which focused on subjects such as the debates, polls, strategies, pseudo events staged for the purpose of the campaign, and a leader's standing and/or performance in the campaign. Of the 267 stories coded in 1993, the five top story categories were the campaign (56.2%), the debt/deficit/budget (10.5%), taxes (3.4%), healthcare (3.7%) and abortion (3%). Other topic variables, such as education, social services and the environment, were also coded but counts in these categories were minimal (below 3%).

Stories that specifically mentioned Don Getty and his record made up 6.4 per cent of stories reviewed in 1993. However, when the category is expanded to include stories about the old Tory government (without specific mention of Getty's name), old guard MLAs such as Diane Mirosh, and financial fiascos such as Novatel, the variable makes up 10.1 per cent of the stories coded in the 1993 election.

The subtopics of stories were also coded. These were topics that were mentioned in the body of copy, but were not the main focal point of the article. Data from these

variables show that in the 1993 campaign the debt/deficit/budget category was evident in 22.1 per cent of stories, taxes were mentioned in 14.6 per cent, social services in 12.4 per cent and healthcare in 8.6 per cent of stories.

There were a large number of mentions of Premier Getty and the Tory record of financial mismanagement in the subtopic category. However, it should be explained that to qualify as a subtopic, a subject only had to be mentioned in one sentence. Often these mentions were buried in the middle or near the end of stories. So what this figure really means is that Don Getty and the Tory record were briefly mentioned in nearly 20 per cent of stories

For instance, near the end of the 1993 campaign the Edmonton Journal ran an inside story which focused on the movements of the leaders during the last days of the race. Klein and Decore are quoted offering predictions about the election outcome. Decore predicted a Grit win but then expressed his frustration that the Tory's were riding high in polls. He said "Yes, it's baffling that a party that's ruined Alberta economically can fall behind a one-man band" (Helm, 1993a). This quote could have reminded the public that the Tories had a poor record of fiscal management. However, the remark was obscured by the fact it was placed in the middle of a strategically framed story which focused on the election outcome predictions of Klein and Decore.

Given the high level of public outrage over the scandals that rocked the Getty government in its last year, it is notable that there weren't more stories that focused on the Conservative's recent record. Journalist Bill MacLoughlin opined that it would have been in the best interests of Liberal strategists to point out that many of the Conservative

politicians responsible for the scandals were running for office again. He said “I was surprised in that campaign that the Liberals didn’t just say ‘Novatel, Novatel, Novatel, Novatel, Novatel,’ cause that was what, \$640 million? And a lot of it had been fairly recent” (Personal communication, November 25, 1998). Based on the fact that there were a large number of subtopics dealing with the Tory record, it is apparent that opposition leaders or reporters were raising the subject. It is interesting that the information wasn’t being used as the primary story angle more often.

Of the 243 stories coded from the 1997 race, 51 per cent were about the campaign, 18.1 per cent were about healthcare, 7 per cent were on the debt/deficit/budget, 3.7 per cent were on taxes and 3.3 per cent were about education. When subtopics are analyzed, results show that healthcare accounted for 21 per cent of the total. Other categories with higher frequencies were education (12.8%) and debt/deficit/budget (11.5%). VLTs were mentioned as subtopics in 5.8% of stories in 1997.

The low frequency rate of the VLT story is a surprise given that the subject was being subjected to intense media scrutiny. Early on in the campaign, it was predicted that VLTs would be one of the main issues (Lunman, 1997; Worrone, 1997). In addition, a report on the effects of VLT’s in Alberta, prepared by the City of Edmonton’s community services department, was released on the third day of the campaign. Initially, there were a flurry of stories on VLTs, but the storm blew over quickly. VLTs were the main topic of just 2.9 per cent of stories in 1997 and all of these ran on days three and four of the campaign.

The increase in healthcare stories and healthcare subtopics in 1997 is not

surprising. Massive cuts to the system had caused an increase in public concern about the healthcare system. Nurses were threatening to strike during the 1997 campaign and settled near the end of the campaign. In addition, during the last week of the campaign it was revealed that the government had struck an agreement with doctors that lifted their fee cap.

Opposition parties had been drawing on the healthcare issue from the beginning of the campaign in an attempt to discredit the Tory government. Liberal leader Grant Mitchell and ND leader Pam Barrett said Tory cuts to healthcare were too deep and that the system was in jeopardy. But often, these mentions occurred in stories which were about the race itself and healthcare was relegated to the rank of a subtopic.

For instance, the Calgary Herald ran a story in which members of public were asked what issues they thought would dominate the campaign. Healthcare came up as a key topic. However, the focus was on how the issue would benefit or harm a leader's position in the race. One man predicted "Premier Ralph Klein will handle criticism on the two issues very well" (Stewart, 1997). In the same article, another person said that anyone campaigning on youth crime would "come out victorious" (Stewart, 1997).

Even leaders used the healthcare issue to promote their campaigns. In a guest column with the Calgary Herald, Barrett warned readers that Klein had not finished cutting healthcare (Barrett, 1997). However, she did not go into detail about the effect of the cuts on the system. Instead, the healthcare discussion rallied around her major theme which was the need for an effective opposition. In instances such as these, healthcare was less a fundamental issue than it was a tool that opposition parties used to win seats.

Another 1997 subtopic category which was folded into stories about the campaign was education which was mentioned in 12.8% of articles. This figure is higher than its 1993 counterpart, which isn't surprising given the turmoil that was occurring in the education system because of budget cuts. However, it is notable that there weren't more stories that focused primarily on education given that tuition fees had increased and class sizes had risen in the public system and at post-secondary institutions.

GENRE OF ARTICLES

When the genre of stories is examined, it becomes apparent that campaign-generated stories dominated both elections. Articles which fell into this category were those that were either a direct result of the campaign or those that would not be important enough to cover if not for the election. Included were pseudo events staged by candidates, reports on polls, the platforms of candidates and campaign analyses by pundits.

When genre is crosstabulated with election year, it becomes apparent that in 1997 there was an increase in the number of hard news stories and a decrease in the number of campaign-generated stories (See Table 2). In 1993, hard news stories made up 16.9 per cent of the total while campaign-generated stories accounted for 45.7 per cent of the total. In 1997, hard news coverage jumped to 27.4 per cent of the total while campaign-generated news declined to 37.9 per cent. However, according to Chi Square analysis, there was no statistically significant relationship between genre and election year.

Table 2

Story Genre Crosstabulated by Election Year

	Election Year				
	1993		1997		
Genre	% of total	Frequency	% of total	Frequency	Total
Hard News	16.9	45	26.3	64	109
Feature	4.5	12	2.8	7	19
Campaign-Gen.	45.7	122	37.9	92	214
Editorial	6.7	18	3.3	8	26
Column	13.9	37	16.9	41	78
Personality	3.4	9	2.9	7	16
News Analysis	4.1	11	2.5	6	17
Interviews	1.1	3			3
Vox Pop	2.6	7	6.2	15	22
Other	1.1	3	1.2	3	6
Total	100	267	100	243	510

Further, there was an increase in the number of columns in 1997, but a decrease in the number of editorials. These changes meant that columns accounted for 13.9 per cent of coverage in 1993 and 16.9 per cent of coverage in 1997 while editorials accounted for 6.7 and 3.2 per cent of coverage in 1993 and 1997. The sharp decrease in editorials was due primarily to the fact that the number of editorials in the Lethbridge Herald declined dramatically. However, the Edmonton Journal also ran five fewer editorials in 1997. With the exception of the Lethbridge Herald and Alberta Report, all media organizations

marginally increased the number of opinion pieces they ran. When the categories of editorials and opinions are collapsed, calculations show that the percentage of opinions and editorials which ran each year remained relatively constant at 21 per cent in 1993 and 20 per cent in 1997.

The percentage of editorials and opinions can be regarded as fairly substantial and is in keeping with the findings of other researchers. For instance, in a study which used similar criteria for article choice, Dalton et al. (1998) found that 20 per cent of the articles they coded fell into the op/ed category. This points to the importance of editorials and columns within a newspaper. Editorials reflect the stance of the newspaper as a whole. While columns reflect the opinions of the author only, Page (1996) points out that newspapers can still control the content of columns by denying space to some columnists and actively soliciting the work of others.

The finding that hard news increased in 1997 while campaign-generated news decreased is interesting when placed in the context of the 1997 campaign. Premier Klein entered the 1997 race with polls in his favor and his personal popularity continued throughout the campaign. The province had just undergone four years of serious budget cuts and it appeared that Klein attempted to make austerity a virtue. In calling the election, the Premier announced that the campaign would not be an exciting one because of the status quo budget. He noted there would be no “glitzy campaign or costly promises” (Johnsrude, 1997a). These statements reinforced the message of restraint that government had been sending to the public for the previous four years and set the tone of Klein’s campaign.

During the race, Klein and his handlers did not make it easy for reporters to cover his campaign. During campaigns, parties generally expend a great deal of effort providing services to journalists in an effort to gain coverage. They book buses so the media can accompany leaders, ensure that telephones are available at campaign stops so that reporters can call in stories, and reserve hotel rooms for journalists. However, on the Klein campaign, none of these niceties were offered. No telephones were made available and, more importantly, no bus was provided for journalists who wanted to accompany Klein to his campaign stops. One veteran journalist says it was often a mad scramble to keep up with the Premier:

You might have an event in Sherwood Park and he'd finish and you'd scrum him and then he'd take off and go to Fort Saskatchewan or something and . . . he'd be driving pretty quickly, and you'd have to zip into your car and go into a little town that you didn't know and find . . . the local Legion Hall . . . you always got there but . . . they didn't make it easy.

This same reporter recalls that a number of Klein's campaign events were under covered. For example, the reporter attended a Klein rally in a northern Alberta town where only four media organizations were represented - the Edmonton Journal, the Edmonton Sun, CBC and the Globe and Mail. But even events that were easily accessible appeared to be bypassed by the media. Journalist Ashley Geddes recalls that just he and two other reporters covered a campaign speech that Klein gave to police officers in Calgary midway through the 1997 campaign (Personal interview, November 26, 1998).

But while there were fewer campaign-generated stories about Klein in 1997, this

cannot immediately be attributed to the difficulty journalists had in covering him because the data show that all candidates were given less play in this category. This decline in coverage seems to provide evidence to support the perception of journalists and campaign workers who said there appeared to be less interest in the 1997 campaign.

As shown in Chapter 3, Klein's handlers wanted to run a low key campaign. But if Klein's plan was to reduce his own coverage in the media by running a kind of stealth campaign, the strategy wasn't entirely successful. He still captured the lion's share of mentions and stories. The difference is that the mentions were carried in news stories, not articles generated by the campaign.

ATTENTION PAID TO LEADERS

In fact, Klein was the central figure in an even greater number of articles in the 1997 election than was the case in 1993. In the 1993 election, he was the focus of 84 articles, or 32% of the total number of articles which were collected and coded. Laurence Decore was the primary focus in 16% of articles while Martin was highlighted in 13%. Social Credit leader Thorsteinson was featured in 2 per cent of articles. Thirty-nine per cent of the articles coded in 1993 didn't focus on any particular leader.

In 1997, Klein was the primary focus of 89, or 37 per cent of articles collected. Grant Mitchell dominated 13.2 per cent of stories, Barrett was featured in 10 per cent and Thorsteinson was the focus of 1.6 per cent. Thirty-nine percent of the stories didn't focus on any leader.

Of the 45 hard news articles collected from the 1993 campaign, Klein was the

focus of 40%. In 1997, he was featured in 45% of the 64 hard news articles. He was also covered more frequently in campaign-generated news in 1997. In 1993 he dominated 27.9% of the 122 articles on the campaign while in 1997 he was main character in 30.4% of 92 articles.

Premier Klein not only dominated more articles, he was also mentioned more often than other candidates in articles that he did not dominate. To explain, an article might be about New Democrat leader Pam Barrett, but mention the name of another leader such as Klein or Mitchell in the text. Out of the 267 articles coded in 1993, Klein either dominated or was mentioned in 82 per cent of the articles. By comparison, Laurence Decore dominated or was cited in 67 per cent of them, Ray Martin dominated or was mentioned 55 per cent of the time and Randy Thorsteinson dominated or was mentioned in 2.2 per cent of the articles. (Note: more than one leader could be cited in an article, so percentages do not equal 100.)

In 1997, leaders of the opposition parties were mentioned in articles that were not primarily about them less often than their counterparts were in 1993. Premier Klein was mentioned in 86 per cent of articles coded, an increase over 1993. However, Grant Mitchell dominated or was cited in just 58 per cent of the articles while Pam Barrett either dominated or was mentioned in 39 per cent of the articles. Figures show that Social Credit leader Randy Thorsteinson enjoyed more publicity in 1997. He was the central focus or was mentioned in 14 per cent of articles.

And finally, the research found that Klein was mentioned first most often in stories that were not dominated by a specific leader. In 1993, he was mentioned first in 75 per

cent of articles that were not dominated by a specific leader while in 1997 he received first mention in 76 per cent of these stories. Even when stories were primarily about other leaders, Klein's name was occasionally mentioned first. For instance, Premier Klein received first mention in four of the 39 stories which were dominated by Laurence Decore. In the 32 stories which were about Grant Mitchell, Klein received first mention in six of them.

Interestingly, Klein was not mentioned first in any of the articles which focused on Pam Barrett. And, in the 84 articles (1993 and 1997 combined) which focused on Ralph Klein and mentioned at least one other leader, there was only one occasion in which the other leader was mentioned first. That instance occurred in the 1997 election and the leader was Grant Mitchell.

These figures show that Premier Klein received more coverage in terms of the overall number of stories and that his name also received favorable placement in a majority of stories. Not only were consumers reading more stories about Klein, his image was recalled and reinforced when his name was mentioned in stories that weren't primarily about him. In addition, stories which mention Klein's name first were often constructed so that the views of other leaders were being measured against Klein's views.

This was evident in the articles which announced the election call. Although all of the articles announcing the elections in both years talked about the platforms of each leader (with the exception of Thorsteinson), Klein was always mentioned first. This is because as Premier, Klein called the election. However, this meant that his platforms were mentioned first and that they became the standard against which others were measured.

For instance, when the 1993 campaign kicked off, the Edmonton Journal ran an article which began with Klein predicting that a tough battle would ensue. Further down, the article says “Both opposition leaders promised to give Klein the tough election he is predicting” (Crockatt & Helm, 1993). By mentioning Klein first and including the word “promised” in relation to opposition leaders, the authors of this article have placed the opposition leaders in subordination to Klein. He has stated the course of action and they appear to be promising to follow that path. Other stories are constructed in a similar fashion with Klein establishing the terms of discussion. Often this occurs simply because he is placed first in the story.

In terms of placement, Tables 3 and 4 show that in stories that he dominated, Klein received favorable placement within publications because more of his stories appeared on the front page. In 1993, 15.5% per cent of the stories that Klein dominated appeared on the front pages of publications. This percentage of placement is slightly higher than the figures for Decore and almost twice as high as Martin’s percentage. In 1997, the difference in the placement of stories between leaders was much higher. Klein also dominated the editorial page. However, in both years, opposition candidates led the ratings on special pages devoted to election coverage.

Table 3

Location of Story by Dominant Leader (1993)

Location of Story	Dominant Leader within Article (1993)			
	R. Klein	L. Decore	R. Martin	Thorsteinson
Front	13 (15.5%)	5 (11.6%)	3 (8.6%)	0
Inside	5 (6%)	3 (7%)	4 (11.4%)	1 (25%)
Op/Ed	17 (20.2%)	6 (14%)	5 (14.3%)	0
Election Pg.	42 (50%)	27 (62.8%)	21 (60%)	3 (75%)
Other	7 (8.3%)	2 (4.7%)	2 (5.7%)	0
Total	84	43	35	4

Table 4

Location of Story by Dominant Leader (1997)

Location of Story	Dominant Leader within Article (1997)			
	R. Klein	G. Mitchell	P. Barrett	Thorsteinson
Front	20 (22.5%)	1 (3.1%)	1 (4.2%)	0
Inside	6 (6.7%)	3 (9.4%)	4 (16.7%)	0
Op/Ed	17 (19.1%)	4 (12.5%)	1 (4.2%)	1 (25%)
Election Pg.	41 (46.1%)	20 (62.5%)	17 (70.8%)	2 (50%)
Other	5 (5.6%)	4 (12.5%)	1 (4.2%)	1 (25%)
Total	89	32	24	4

The figures in Tables 3 and 4 should be interpreted with caution. It must be pointed out that more stories were written about Klein, therefore the actual number of stories that ran on certain pages are bound to be higher. Despite this, the disproportionate percentage of front page stories on Klein for those election days studied, especially in 1997, cannot be discounted. In terms of prestige, placement on page one outweighs placement on other pages. Page one is reserved for the most important information of the day. Page one is also the page readers see first and sometimes, it is the only page readers scan. Giving Klein front page status ensured that his image and his name would be reinforced in the public's mind more often than the names of other leaders.

The preceding discussion shows that Klein appeared to be favored in terms of the number of mentions, number of dominant stories, placement of a leader's name within a story and location of article. This bias could indicate that coverage of the 1993 and 1997 elections served to reinforce the dominant ideology within Alberta. If an incumbent is mentioned more often in stories, his or her views are reaching the public more frequently.

But, manifest content is not the only form of communication that takes place in an article or opinion piece. Factors such as story placement on a page or within a paper, name placement, and the amount of coverage also send messages to readers. When journalists fail to give the views of opposition leaders the same amount of coverage as the incumbent, they inadvertently transmit the message that opposition views are not as important as the Premier's. The same message is transmitted if the incumbent regularly receives more instances of favorable placement both within stories and within publications than opposition leaders are accorded. This marginalization of other voices helps to

reinforce the dominant hegemony.

The fact that Premier Klein enjoyed more publicity than leaders of the opposition parties is not surprising. In elections, incumbents are generally at an advantage when it comes to the volume of media coverage. For one thing, as decision makers they generate more hard news stories because of the activities they are involved in. They also have more to answer for. After all, they are the people in power; they are the ones who have been making decisions and spending money for the past few years.

In addition, incumbents provide better copy than leaders of the opposition because they have greater name recognition with the public. Therefore, it is easier for a reporter to “sell” a story to an editor if the incumbent is featured in it. Journalists are also drawn to sources who are seen as authoritative. Fox writes, “By convention, reporters choose authoritative sources over other potential sources; the more senior the official, the more authoritative that source is presumed to be and the better his or her prospects are for making news” (1994, 71). In provincial politics, the top source is the premier.

Edmonton Journal columnist Mark Lisac said that journalists covering the Alberta legislature were aware that their editors would more readily publish a story quoting Klein than one that didn’t. He noted that “there have been times while waiting for Klein after question period - not often but more than once - when it has been possible to hear journalists assembled in the TV room make a crack about depending on the Premier to provide a story” (Personal communication, December 7, 1998).

Incumbents also have the power to generate news because they control the purse strings and are able to make spending announcements or promises during the campaign.

Interestingly, Klein began the 1993 campaign by promising to make no promises. Despite his vow that there would be “no expensive promises” or “costly new initiatives” announced, Klein said he would consider injecting funds into the Edmonton’s Northlands Coliseum and “sweetening the pot” so that the government could sell the Gainer’s meat-packing plant in Edmonton (Bray, 1993; Harder, 1993a; Aikenhead, 1993a).

The Liberals accused Klein of “buying votes” by promising \$43 million for highway work and \$35 million for rural hospitals (Harder, 1993b). Klein responded that funds for the projects were already contained in existing budgets, thereby inferring that they weren’t really campaign promises. Whether they were budgeted for or not is irrelevant from the point of view of this thesis. The fact is that the announcements did get ink for Klein. So too did his promises to eliminate the deficit and lobby for tougher youth crime laws. (Helm, 1993b; Helm, 1993c).

In 1997, Klein again said no campaign funding promises would be made. However, as the campaign wore on, it became clear that not only would Klein not make any spending promises, he would not commit to any definite course of action either. Journalist Larry Johnsrude pointed out that although he was campaigning on the slogan “He kept his word,” Klein was saying “precious little about what ‘word’ ” he would keep if elected to another term in office (1997b). As noted in Chapter Three, Tory strategists planned this election as a campaign on the past policies and actions of the Klein government.

CONCLUSION

The results of this section of the analysis show that coverage of the 1993 and 1997 elections differed by year and by city. Not only were there fewer stories carried in 1997, in both years the Calgary Herald carried fewer stories than the Edmonton Journal and the Edmonton Sun. The results also show that in both years, most of the stories that ran were generated by, or focused on, the election campaign. This means that coverage of the campaign focused on the race itself and not on wider issues that might be of concern to voters such as healthcare, education and social services.

In addition, the analysis showed that Premier Klein received most of the coverage in both years. This occurred despite the fact that he attempted to run a low-key campaign during both campaigns. Results also show that stories which featured Klein received favorable placement within newspapers.

These findings support Patterson's (1994) conclusions that stories about issues and policies are being pushed aside in favor of stories about the campaign itself. The findings of this section also can be used to support the hegemony theory. It could be argued that by focusing on the campaign and not issues such the effect of budget cuts on healthcare, education and social services, coverage reinforced the status quo by making it appear that there were no problems which Klein could or should be held accountable for.

Statistics show that of the elections stories collected and coded in 1993, only 18 per cent were on front page. In 1997, that figure drops to 13.6%. Most readers are aware that top news stories are placed on front. In deciding to place most election coverage on the inside pages, newspapers were sending the public a message that the campaign was not

important or exciting enough to warrant front-page importance. This, in turn, could have been interpreted to mean that there were no major issues that the government should have been held accountable for. In other words, the dominant hegemony was supported simply through lack of coverage.

But while the amount and frequency of coverage are important, the type of coverage a politician receives is also relevant. Studies show that an increasing number of stories about politicians are negative in tone. Patterson (1994) writes that in modern political contests “candidates are seldom portrayed as leaders and representatives; they are routinely made to appear deceptive, hypocritical, and manipulative” (1994, 204). There is some speculation that this negative tone has an effect on the way the public perceives politicians and the political process. Cappella and Jamieson argue, “If, as various agenda setting, framing and priming studies have shown, media coverage can shape how the public thinks about politics, it seems plausible to see press coverage as a factor in the declining confidence in such institutions as Congress” (1996, p. 75). If negative coverage does lead to a cynical, disenfranchised public, it is important to determine whether or not coverage of Alberta elections is primarily positive, negative or neutral. It will also be worth discovering if all party leaders were covered in a similar fashion, or if some enjoyed preferential treatment while others were covered in a negative way. In the chapter that follows, tone of coverage and story frames are examined and discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE

TONE OF COVERAGE AND DOMINANT FRAMING

This chapter has two distinct thrusts. It begins by focusing on the tone of coverage that leaders received during the 1993 and 1997 Alberta provincial elections. Discussion of tone starts with an examination of the tone of coverage each leader received in each year. Then the tone of coverage of leaders in each newspaper is considered. The focus then shifts to an investigation of the relationship between articles and frames. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings.

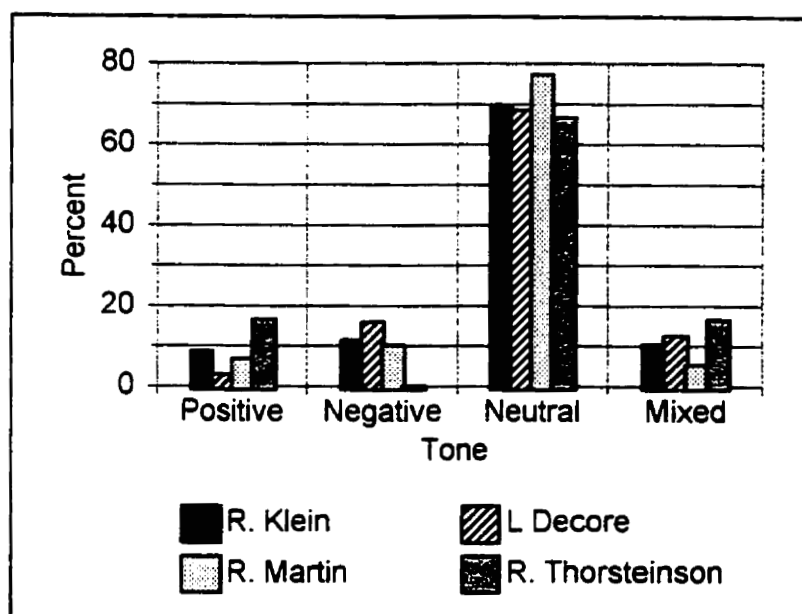
TONE OF COVERAGE BY YEAR

On the surface, there was virtually no shift in the tone of coverage between 1993 and 1997. In 1993, 71.2 per cent of all references were neutral while in 1997, 73.1 per cent were neutral. Positive references were at 6.4 per cent in 1993 and 6 per cent in 1997 while negative references were 12.7 per cent in 1993 and 12.4 per cent in 1997. It is not surprising to find that there were more neutral than positive or negative stories given the code of objectivity that journalists follow.

On first glance, the statistics do support results revealed in studies by Patterson (1994) and Cappella and Jamieson (1996): that negative news outweighs positive news in stories that are not neutral. However, these percentages are deceptive because they do not accurately reflect differences in the coverage of leaders. Negative news did not always outweigh positive news.

Figure 1

Tone of Coverage by Leader (1993 Election Campaign)



Note. Ralph Klein (n = 219), Laurence Decore (n = 176), Ray Martin (n = 148) and Randy Thorsteinson (n = 6).

A closer look at the data reveals that positive, negative and neutral references were not distributed evenly among party leaders. As Figure 1 shows, Ray Martin received a higher percentage of neutral coverage than the other leaders (77%). Following Martin was Klein (69.4%), then Decore (68.8%) and Thorsteinson (66.7%).

Although the percentages show that Thorsteinson received the most positive coverage (17%), this figure is somewhat deceiving because of the small number of cases involved. The Sacred leader was only mentioned six times in the 1993 campaign and of

those six mentions, one was positive, one was mixed and four were neutral. Following Thorsteinson in positive coverage was Premier Klein (8.7%). Martin's positive coverage was two percentage points behind Klein. Decore's positive coverage sat at a low 2.8 per cent.

Premier Klein, Laurence Decore and Ray Martin all received more negative than positive coverage. Of these, Decore received the highest percentage of negative coverage - 16 per cent compared to Klein's 11.4 per cent and Martin's 10.8 per cent. It might be somewhat surprising that Decore's negative coverage was higher than Martin's. After all, one of the ND leader's main platforms was raising taxes for high-level income earners and the corporate sector to support services such as healthcare, education and welfare. It was not a popular stand in a conservative province where the public had accepted arguments that the best way to reduce the budget deficit was to curb spending.

Decore, on the other hand, was advocating a program of budget cuts similar to that touted by Klein. Martin actually dubbed Decore and Klein the "slash and burn twins" (Panzeri, 1993). Given the similarities of Klein and Decore's platforms and the unpopularity of Martin's, Decore's higher negative rating seems out of place.

One explanation might be the abortion issue which exploded on the third day of the campaign and plagued Decore for much of the race. While appearing on The Ron Collister Show, a live radio talk show in Edmonton, Decore said he thought there was something "repugnant" about free-standing abortion clinics and he advocated closing them (Aikenhead, 1993b). Following the talk show, Decore travelled to Nisku where he repeated his comments during a scrum after his campaign speech. Apparently, during the

trip from the radio station to Nisku, Decore's handlers did not warn him away from his hard line stance, nor did they start to plan for damage control. One reporter remarked that if this had happened, Decore's comments might not have received the play that they did.

It is widely accepted that journalists are drawn to controversy and this example seems to highlight that supposition. After all, these were the opening days of the campaign and the policy and issue platforms of candidates were new, and therefore newsworthy. While in Nisku, Decore, debt clock by his side, had talked about the need to reduce spending and get the deficit under control. However, his policy statements were destined to remain scribbles in the notebooks of reporters in the face of his controversial statements over abortion.

When data are more closely examined, it shows there were eight stories which were primarily about abortion and Decore was mentioned in all of them. In four of them, the tone of coverage was negative, in two it was neutral and in two of them it was mixed. Nevertheless, even when the four negative mentions in abortion stories are factored out, Decore's percent of negative references was still higher than those of other candidates.

So where were the majority of Decore's negative references found? Seventeen of his 28 negative mentions were in "campaign race and/or strategy" stories. When genre and Decore's tone were crosstabulated, the results showed that of the 28 negative references to him, 36 per cent were in columns and editorials. Of the remainder, the majority were in campaign-generated news, hard news and vox populi sections. Of the five positive references, only one was in an editorial. The rest were in features, campaign-generated news and vox pop categories. These results suggest that the abortion blunder was

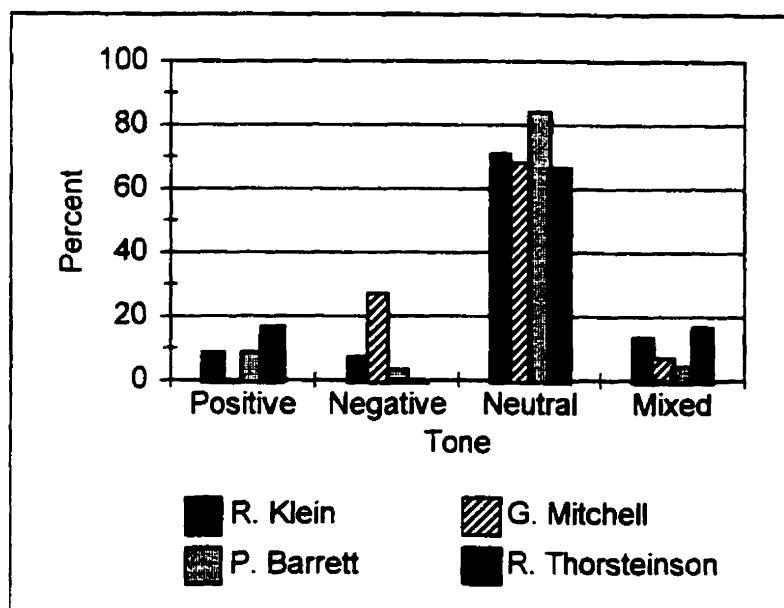
probably not the reason Decore received more negative mentions than anyone else.

One explanation for Decore's higher negative numbers may be that the 1993 race focused tightly on personality instead of issues. From the beginning, the focal point of the election was Klein's personality. The Premier, in attempting to distance himself from past Conservative governments, ran on a slogan of "Trust me." Decore and Martin ran on issues. Personality won the race for media attention and with that turn, Klein's victory was virtually assured. There is little doubt that Klein has a commanding personality. This fact was highlighted over and over in articles and editorials. Against this onslaught, Decore did not figure well. For instance, in an Edmonton Journal editorial, both Decore and Martin were leaders of "earnest and fairly dull opposition parties" (The Ralph factor, 1993). Decore was also criticized for miscalculating campaign strategy (Helm, 1993e) and as being "dogged by the ghost of Ralph Klein" while campaigning (Cunningham, 1993). In a contest against the personality and popularity of Klein, Decore simply stood no chance.

In 1997, most coverage was neutral once again (See Figure 2). With the exception of Grant Mitchell, all leaders had more positive than negative references, although in terms of numbers, positive and negative references were similar to each other. For instance, Klein had 18 positive and 15 negative references while Barrett had eight positive and three negative references. These data do not support the findings of researchers such as Patterson (1994) and Cappella and Jamieson (1996) who found that the number of negative references to candidates outweighed the positive.

Figure 2

Tone of Coverage by Leader (1997 Election Campaign)



Note. Ralph Klein (n = 209), Grant Mitchell (n = 142), Pam Barrett (n = 94) and Randy Thorsteinson (n = 35).

Barrett also had the highest percentage of neutral coverage, as did ND leader Ray Martin in 1993. The majority of Barrett's positive coverage was in hard, feature and campaign-generated news stories. Only one of the eight positive references was found in a column. Of the three negative references to Barrett, two were in a column while one was in a vox pop story.

Of the 18 positive references to Klein, 8 were generated in op/ed pieces while one was in a news analysis. The remainder were in various types of news articles. Of the 15 negative references, 10 were in op/ed pieces, 2 were in news analyses and the remainder

were in various news stories.

One of the most fascinating pieces of information revealed by the analysis of tone is that in 1997 Liberal leader Grant Mitchell received no positive coverage in the sample of data collected. In addition, with 38 references, his negative coverage was a great deal higher than any other leader's. Twenty-seven of the negative references were in stories about the election campaign. However, there were also negative references to him in the topic categories of healthcare, the budget/debt/deficit and VLTs. Meanwhile, Klein had eight negative references and Barrett had 3. Mitchell's level of neutral coverage was also lower than anyone else's. And where Mitchell had no positive coverage, Thorsteinson had no negative coverage.

It is difficult to explain Mitchell's high level of negative coverage and lack of positive coverage. One reason may have been because of the reporting of polls during the campaign. These polls, which research companies conducted in conjunction with news organizations, showed that Mitchell had low approval ratings from voters. When the results were reported, they placed Mitchell in a negative light. For instance, one Edmonton Journal story noted Mitchell had a 50 per cent disapproval rating and continued with "... even 25 per cent of those who said they intend to vote Liberal thought Klein would make a better premier than Mitchell . . ." (Geddes, 1997).

In another instance, comments about Mitchell in a vox populi story that appeared in the Edmonton Journal were extremely negative (Thomson, 1997). Any public image damage inflicted by the story may have been compounded by the fact that the people who were interviewed were primarily Liberal supporters. In addition, the interviews were

conducted in a coffee shop located in Mitchell's own riding of Edmonton McClung. One man said that he was voting Liberal because of the candidate in his own riding, not because of Mitchell. Another person argued "I would vote for the Liberals in spite of Grant Mitchell" while another said that he was going to vote for Klein because of Mitchell (Thomson, 1997). And yet another called Mitchell "arrogant."

Even some of Mitchell's own candidates did not want to be associated with him. In Calgary, one Liberal candidate was quoted as saying "... I said to Grant, 'No offence. I don't need you here'" (Alberts, 1997). The fact that these negative comments came from the Liberal's own base of supporters and candidates may have helped tarnish Mitchell's image.

Journalists were well aware that Mitchell was disliked by the public and by Liberal candidates. Radio journalist Bill MacLoughlin noted that Mitchell was unpopular with some of his own candidates before the election was called. He said that after the 1994 Liberal leadership campaign one Liberal MLA referred to Mitchell as the "anti-Christ" (Personal interview, November 25, 1998). In every leadership race, there is rivalry between candidates which inevitably leads to bitterness between those who won and those who lost. However, it is MacLoughlin's contention that 1994 Liberal leadership race was especially bitter and that some wounds never healed. Mark Lisac, a columnist with the Edmonton Journal, also observed that many people didn't like Mitchell: "People may have been wary of Laurence Decore but a lot of people seemed to actively dislike Grant Mitchell" (Personal interview, November 26, 1998).

It could be argued that in the stories cited, reporters were merely quoting people

they interviewed and that they did not speak to anyone who had a positive word to say about Mitchell. On the other hand, reporters do collect much more material than they use. It could be that they consciously or unconsciously selected negative comments when composing their stories. Columnist Robert Bragg believes that journalists like to pick on politicians that they perceive to be weak (Personal interview, January 23, 1999). Perhaps journalists wrote negative stories because they perceived that Mitchell was weak.

However, opinion pieces and editorials are not dependent on quotes from other sources. When Mitchell's tone is crosstabulated with genre, the results show that 37 per cent of the 38 negative references were found in columns and editorials. This seems to indicate that columnists and editorial writers were not supportive of Mitchell either.

Mitchell might have entered the 1997 election with an image already damaged because of public relations problems created by the 1994 Liberal leadership campaign. As MacLoughlin says the campaign was a "nasty, really, really nasty" affair with candidates accusing each other of tampering with voter registration and proxy voting procedures. It was even alleged that members of the Mitchell camp stole letters containing Personal Identification Numbers (needed for telephone voting) out of the mailboxes of Liberals who had indicated they were going to vote for other candidates. These accusations of wrongdoing were compounded by technical glitches in the electronic voting system. According to Bragg, the way in which Mitchell was elected permanently tainted his image. Said Bragg, "You get slotted in this political business and if you get slotted the wrong way, or in Ralph's case the right way, you get an incredible amount of momentum or negative momentum out of that."

For Mitchell, it may have been impossible to shake the image of being the ineffectual leader of a party that couldn't even organize and run a proper leadership race. William Fox writes that the public appears to believe that "if a political formation cannot run an efficient campaign, then it probably cannot run an efficient government" (1994, 86). Mitchell may not have been to blame for any of the problems during the leadership campaign, however responsibility would have been attributed to him because he was leader of the party and therefore, as Bragg puts it, "he was sunk" when the provincial election was called.

TONE AND NEWSPAPER

Tone of coverage was also crosstabulated with news organization and year in order to determine if any of the newspapers was biased toward a particular leader in a given year. The raw data show absolute counts of positive, negative and positive tone by newspaper and by year. Data in this form makes it difficult to compare coverage by newspaper because differences are not immediately apparent. In order to determine whether or not leaders were treated differently by various publications, a positive tone index was developed by converting the ordinal data to a continuous scale. This approach provides a common basis for the comparison of tone in the coverage received by leaders according to year and newspaper.

In making the conversion the following steps were taken:

Step 1: For each leader's coverage in each of the five mediums, the researcher calculated the maximum score possible using the following conversion factors: Negative =

1, Neutral = 2 and Positive = 3. (It should be noted that the Mixed tone category was collapsed into the Neutral category for the purposes of this analysis.) The maximum possible score for any leader in a medium was calculated by multiplying the total number of the leader's mentions in that medium by 3. For example, in 1993, Premier Klein received a total of 56 mentions in the Calgary Herald and $56 \times 3 = 168$. Klein's maximum possible score in the Calgary Herald in 1993 is 168.

Step 2: Using the conversion factors cited above, the aggregate score for each leader in each medium was calculated by multiplying the totals of each tone category by the corresponding conversion factors. For instance, in 1993 in the Calgary Herald, Klein received 5 positive mentions, 8 negative mentions and 43 neutral mentions. Therefore, his aggregate score is: $(5 \times 3) + (8 \times 1) + (43 \times 2) = 109$.

Step 3: The tone index was calculated by expressing the aggregate score as a percentage of the maximum possible score. Returning to the example of Klein's coverage in the Calgary Herald in 1993 we find that $(109/168) \times 100 = 64.9\%$

These calculations were carried out for each leader in each newspaper and each year. The results show differences in the treatment of leaders by publication and year. Because the positive category was given a weighting of three, index figures reflect the positive tone of a leader's citation.

It is important to note that these calculations do not show the absolute amounts of positive or negative coverage a leader received. The index shows if there was a difference in treatment by a newspaper. By comparing index figures with the raw data, it is possible to explain what factors appear to be responsible for the differences expressed by the index

The researcher is aware that there are limitations to this approach and that the results should be interpreted with caution. In converting ordinal data to a continuous scale, the researcher is attempting to extract more information from the data than was originally available in the raw data set. The index shows the rank and relative differences between leaders and newspapers, however it does not show the amount of the difference. For instance, in 1997 Premier Klein's score in the Calgary Herald was 70% while Grant Mitchell's was 57.5%. The researcher can say that these figures show that Premier Klein received preferential treatment in the Herald in 1993. However, she cannot say that Premier Klein's coverage was 12.5 per cent better than that of Mitchell's because the index does not demonstrate the amount of difference, only that there is one.

The data in Table 5 show that Klein and Martin were treated similarly in the Calgary Herald, the Edmonton Journal, the Edmonton Sun and the Lethbridge Herald. There is a difference in the way that they were treated in the Alberta Report, however, it must be noted that the data are distorted because Alberta Report's sample size is small ($n=7$). The percentages show that Decore was treated differently by the Edmonton Journal and the Edmonton Sun when compared with other leaders and with other mediums.

Although the treatment of Decore in the Journal and the Sun is not as preferential as that of other candidates, it is surprising to find this difference in the Journal because it has the reputation of being a newspaper which is critical of the Conservative government. It seems reasonable to expect that less preferential coverage would be given to Klein, not Decore.

Table 5

Tone Index for Leaders by Newspaper and Year (1993)

	LEADERS (1993)			
Medium	R. Klein	L. Decore	R. Martin	R. Thorsteinson
Calgary Herald	64.9%	67.4%	66.6%	66.7%
Ed. Journal	65.7%	61.9%	64.5%	66.6%
Ed. Sun	65.6%	60.6%	63.2%	0%
Alberta Report	80%	53.3%	66.7%	83.3%
Leth. Herald	65.6%	66.7%	68.2%	0%

On the other hand, the Edmonton Sun is viewed as a newspaper which supports the Conservative government and Klein in particular. A number of journalists have commented on the Sun's bias. Calgary Herald columnist Don Martin was characteristically blunt in his assessment when he said, "The Sun chain, both in Calgary and Edmonton, considers Ralph a friend" (Personal Interview, November 27, 1998). The data show that in terms of rank order, Decore is behind Martin, who is second, and Klein, who is first. Therefore it does not appear that Decore's lower rating is the result of bias toward Klein because of the Premier's ideology. If the Sun were favoring Klein because he was a Conservative, the results should rank Martin behind Decore because of Martin's left-wing policies.

Table 6

Tone Index for Leaders by Medium and Year (1997)

	LEADERS (1997)			
Medium	R. Klein	G. Mitchell	P. Barrett	R. Thorsteinson
Calgary Herald	70%	57.5%	74.1%	74%
Ed. Journal	62.9%	58.5%	66.7%	66.7%
Ed. Sun	70.1%	55.1%	66.7%	71.4%
Alberta Report	66.7%	66.7%	100%	75%
Leth. Herald	71%	62.2%	66.7%	66.7%

Table 6 shows that in 1997 there were wider deviations in the way that leaders were treated within publications and between publications. Of these, the most noteworthy is the difference in treatment given to Grant Mitchell relative to the other leaders as opposed to his treatment in each publication. With the exception of the Alberta Report, Mitchell ranked last in all publications. The reason for the difference is that Mitchell did not receive any positive stories. In addition, the percentage of his negative coverage was higher than all other candidates. For instance, in the Calgary Herald, 28.6% of the references to Mitchell were negative. In the same paper, Klein's rate of negative coverage was just 3.6%

A second interesting fact revealed by these data is the difference in the way the Edmonton Journal treated Klein. If Alberta Report is left out of the analysis because of a low sample size, it appears that the Calgary Herald and the Lethbridge Herald gave Klein

more positive treatment than did the Journal. This finding bears out the perception of many of those interviewed who have noted that the Journal was more critical of Premier Klein during the 1997 campaign than other papers.

These same journalists were also critical of the Herald for not being tough enough on Klein. Calgary Herald figures show that Klein, Barrett and Thorsteinson all received similar treatment. It should be noted that one reason for the high scores of Thorsteinson and Barrett is that neither leader received any negative coverage in the Calgary Herald. Klein did receive negative coverage, but it was minimal: only two out of 50 references to the Premier were negative. It is interesting that journalists interviewed did not perceive that the treatment of Barrett and Thorsteinson was positively biased. Perhaps this is because of the sheer number of stories involved. There are so many more stories written about Klein that coverage of the other leaders might have been less memorable.

In the Lethbridge Herald, Klein ranks above the other candidates, demonstrating that he was given more positive treatment in that newspaper. Given that southern Alberta has long been considered a Conservative stronghold, this finding isn't surprising. Still, the Liberals in Lethbridge do enjoy fairly strong support and the party took one of the two available seats in the city in both years. However, figures presented in the tone index do not demonstrate that the newspaper gave Grant Mitchell any type of preferential treatment to placate Liberal supporters in the community.

The index also highlights the differences in the ways that the elections were covered in both years. While there were some variations between candidates and publications in 1993, the range of differences was not stunning. Although Decore did

receive more negative mentions, the index indicated that differences in treatment were not sizeable. Alberta Report of course, was the exception. One of the benchmarks of good journalism is balanced coverage and it appears that in 1993, publications did treat leadership candidates in a relatively equal manner.

In 1997 however, newspapers did not achieve the same level of balance. The tone index indicates that coverage of leaders was different within each medium. In fact, the level of difference in percentages shows that coverage provided by all mediums was biased against Mitchell. The index also shows that coverage was not strongly biased in favor of Klein. However, this statement must be qualified. Although the index shows that Klein was treated in a fashion that was similar to Barrett and Thorsteinson in some mediums, it must be remembered that in terms of numbers of articles, he outweighs them. So even though the index shows that Thorsteinson received higher percentages in the Calgary Herald, he was only mentioned in nine stories compared to Klein's 50.

This approach to analysis does appear to support the theory put forward by researchers, such as Robert Hackett, Todd Gitlin and Douglas Kellner, that news supports the dominant hegemony. In 1993, Klein was battling the legacy of a Conservative government that had tried to spend its way out of a recession. Both Decore and Klein ran platforms based on fiscal restraint and the need to cut spending in major areas such as healthcare, education and social services. Both the public and the business community appeared to accept this ideology of fiscal restraint. In fact, even journalists found themselves caught up in the rhetoric.

The fact that most everyone believed that the province was in serious economic

shape would have presented a conundrum to journalists: how do you cover an election where most everyone agrees on the problem and the solution? What filled the void left by the absence of an issue was a race based on personality. The question became who is the best person to fix the problem? In a race based on personality, Klein is difficult to beat. But, the Premier's personable nature does not fully explain why he did not receive harsher treatment. Voters were asked who they trusted more and if trust was the issue, then Klein could have been held accountable for the past actions of the Conservative government of which he was a part. This might have shown up as increased negative coverage of Klein, but high levels of negative coverage weren't evident in the articles collected.

The one naysayer in the campaign was Ray Martin who wanted to maintain programs by taxing the rich. Yet despite the fact Martin was going against the ideological grain, he still received treatment that was similar to that received by other candidates. This can be partially explained by the fact that the campaign was one based on personality, not issues. There was no need to be critical of Martin or his platform because platforms weren't the issue. In addition, with Klein's victory predicted early on in the race, newspapers may have decided it wasn't worth picking on Martin who wasn't seen as a major contender. It is interesting to note that while Martin wasn't marginalized in terms of tone, he was with respect to the number of stories published and placement of those stories.

In 1997, Mitchell and Barrett were both critical of the way Klein's budget cuts impacted social programs. But it was Mitchell who drew the less favorable treatment, not Barrett. In fact, Barrett's coverage was similar to Thorsteinson's and they were running

on platforms that were on opposite poles of the political spectrum. But once again, tone of coverage in newspapers can be explained by noting that the 1997 race was one based on personality not issues. While it is true that deep cuts had been made to fundamental areas such as healthcare and education, Klein had injected funds into these areas in the 1997/98 budget, thereby sending a positive message to voters that the roughest part of the ride was over. Klein's campaign dwelt primarily on himself and his past actions. Campaign slogans, such as "He kept his word," focused attention on Klein. Tory signs all featured a prominent picture of the Premier and an Alberta PC website featured items such as a "Letter from Ralph" and "Ralph's bio" (PCs are running, 1997). This emphasis on the Premier, coupled with the fact that he was reticent when asked about subjects such as healthcare, made it difficult for reporters to draw attention to any potential issues. Coverage of the 1997 election can be seen as hegemonic because it upheld the status quo.

The second theory being tested in this thesis is that journalists cover elections as if they were horse races and place little emphasis on the issues and policies advocated by candidates. This type of coverage is said to lead to an increase in the number of stories which are critical of politicians. Articles collected were analyzed to determine whether or not they fell into a strategic or issue frame and it is to an analysis of this variable that I will now turn.

ISSUE FRAMES VS. STRATEGIC FRAMES

In 1993, 20.6 per cent of the 267 stories coded were placed in issue frames while 66.7 per cent were in strategic frames. In 1997, the figures are similar with 23 per cent of

the 243 stories collected running in issue frames while 64.6 per cent of stories had strategic frames. In both years, the remainder of stories were in the mixed or other categories.

When the placement of negative references is examined, the results show that most negative references to leaders can be found in strategic stories. In 1993, 84 per cent of the 25 negative references toward Klein are in stories with strategic frames. Seventy-five per cent of the 28 negative references toward Decore and 78.6 per cent of the negative references toward Martin are in strategically framed stories. Thorsteinson did not have any negative references in 1993.

In 1997, 33.3 per cent of the 15 negative references to Klein were in strategic frames while 40 per cent were in issue frames. All three of the negative references to Barrett were in strategically framed stories while 81.6 per cent of the negative references to Mitchell were in strategic frames. Once again, there were no negative references to Thorsteinson.

While these figures show that most of the time, negative references were found in strategically-framed stories, the research does not show that the majority of strategically framed stories were negative. In fact, the majority of strategically framed stories in both years were neutral.

When genre and frame were crosstabulated, the results show that 47 per cent of strategically framed stories were campaign-generated stories. This represents 75 per cent of all the campaign-generated stories which ran in both years. These were stories which would not have been covered had it not been for the election. They were about the

platforms of candidates, the pseudo events staged by candidates, as well as articles about the debates and polls. While these stories were not primarily negative, they did frame both elections as races in which the candidates were competitors. Leaders were shown jockeying for position and the focus was on their performances. Stories were often filled with war and battle metaphors and the underlying theme was not on what leaders said, but how they said it.

Perhaps the consummate strategic stories were to be found in debate coverage. These stories represented almost every characteristic of the strategic story. Candidates were described as self interested, the focus was on their performance and the language of battle resonated. For instance, an Edmonton Journal article on the 1993 debate began with “Premier Ralph Klein took it on the chin and feisty New Democrat leader Ray Martin landed many of the blows in the leaders’ debate Thursday” (Helm, 1993d). This story did not begin by talking about the issues that were debated or the stands taken by leaders. Instead the focus was performance and the discourse sounded like the reporters had attended a boxing match, not a political debate.

There were questions asked by a hand-picked audience. However, none of these questions was mentioned in the article. Instead, readers learned that a “relaxed and smiling Martin drew most of the applause from the crowd” with his answers (Helm, 1993d). Again, readers were told who the better performer was. No mention was made of the questions put to leaders or what their responses were. Therefore, readers never found out what the stands of leaders were or what issues were key with the audience.

A few policy items were raised in the story. However, they were framed in terms

of competition and accusation. Klein said he would eliminate the deficit in four years.

Decore “attacked” the promise as “cheap Conservative talk” and Martin implied that Klein and Decore were both liars (Helm, 1993d). The story wrapped up with leaders assessing their own performances.

The debate-as-performance metaphor could also be found in columns and vox populi stories. In an article on viewers in Slave Lake, the focus was on the performance of candidates - who won, who lost and what the best lines were. There was one issue mentioned, but it was tied to the race: Decore was said to have “won points” for his views on forestry issues (Crockatt, 1993). This type of coverage underplayed campaign issues and reinforced the view that the candidates were merely performers staging a show for the audience.

Strategic frames could be found in genres other than campaign-generated news. For instance, in 1993, 66.7 per cent of the editorials coded and 91 per cent of opinion pieces were in strategic frames. In 1997, 37.5 per cent of editorials and 73 per cent of columns were strategically framed. Editorials and opinion pieces can be viewed as locations where writers have the space and the freedom to delve more deeply into issues and policies. However, this analysis showed that writers used their space to analyze the race and the performance of leaders rather than issues and platform policies.

Of hard news stories, one-third were strategically framed in 1993 while 60.9 per cent were in 1997. One instance of hard news being placed in a strategic frame occurred in the last week of the 1997 election. Just days before the vote, it was revealed that Premier Klein had lifted the fee cap imposed on physicians. The frame on this hard news story

became strategic when leaders of the opposition parties were quoted saying Klein lifted the cap in an attempt to buy the votes of physicians (Kaufmann, Moore & MacDougall, 1997). It should be noted that this angle occurred in the Edmonton Journal, the Calgary Herald and the Edmonton Sun. This story highlights Patterson's assertion that journalists look for conflict:

For reporters, controversy is the real issue of campaign politics. The press deals with charges and countercharges, rarely digging into the details of the candidates' positions or the social conditions underlying policy problems. It is not simply that the press neglects issues in favor of the strategic game: issues, even when covered, are subordinated to the drama of the conflict generated between the opposing sides. (1994, 137)

The stories on the fee cap issue focused on the conflict generated between candidates. The stories also depicted Klein as a self-serving politician caught in the act of attempting to bribe voters. This angle did not allow Klein to provide a detailed, reasoned explanation as to why he lifted the caps. Instead, he was pictured trying to defend his position in the face of attacks from opposition candidates. This example shows that when strategic frames dominate the news, readers learn little about a candidate's issues or policies.

CONCLUSION

This chapter began with a discussion of the tone of coverage of both the 1993 and 1997 elections. It was noted that all candidates received primarily neutral coverage in both

years and that in 1997, leaders received more positive references than negative. The exception to this was Liberal leader Grant Mitchell who received no positive coverage in the articles coded for this thesis.

An index developed to analyze tone was examined and it was noted that the index indicates that in 1993, leaders were treated in a similar fashion by the publications studied. In 1997, there was a marked difference in the way that leaders were covered. Most notable was that when leaders were placed in rank order in terms of treatment, Mitchell came up last in every publication.

From there, frames were discussed and it was noted that during both years, strategic frames were used more often than issue frames. While the majority of strategically framed stories were neutral, most negative references could be found in stories that were strategically framed.

The results of the analysis of tone and framing support the theory that news is hegemonic and the theory the most stories are strategically framed. However, the preceding analysis does not show that most strategically framed stories are negative. This result does not mean that neutral strategic stories have no impact on levels of cynicism in voters. While candidates in these stories may not be portrayed in a negative way, the strategic frame itself can be viewed as negative because politics is cast as a game. For example, an editorial may neutrally report on candidates' standings in the campaign. But when the campaign is framed as a race, both the election and the politicians become tainted through their articulation to the idea of elections as races. So although it appears that strategic stories lend themselves well to negative coverage, neutral strategic stories

may still trigger negative effects in readers.

In the final chapter, I'll synthesize the theories being tested, information from the interviews and the results of the content analysis to provide a comprehensive picture of the 1993 and 1997 campaigns.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

It's been said that it's impossible to unseat an incumbent without a pressing issue. In 1993, the issue that could have unseated the Conservatives was the legacy of the Getty government. In 1997, the Premier could have been held accountable for the previous four years of restructuring and cutbacks. In particular, healthcare was looming as a major public concern. However, in both instances the Conservatives won easily.

This thesis attempted to determine what the nature of news coverage was during these two election campaigns. Were issues covered well enough? Was government held accountable for its actions? Was the public given enough information to accurately judge who the candidates were and what their parties stood for? In a democratic society, citizens need this information to act as informed voters.

To answer these questions, two theories of media-state relations were tested, namely the political spectacle/hegemony model and the strategic/negative model. The first theory posits that news reinforces the dominant hegemony through a variety of means including story content, story placement and the portrayal of subjects within news articles. The second suggests that news, especially election news, is wrapped in a strategic frame in which political actors are portrayed as contestants in a race. Their words and actions are judged on the basis of performance. This theory also suggests that the majority of strategic coverage is negative.

In this, the sixth and concluding chapter, the results of the quantitative content

analysis and qualitative interviews shall be measured against the theory that media are agents of hegemony and the theory that media cover stories from a negative/strategic angle. First, the major quantitative findings will be examined in light of Murray Edelman's theory that politics is a symbolic creation. This will flow into a discussion of the media as a hegemonic force and then the issue of strategic frames will be addressed. Finally, the implications of these findings for journalists, politicians and democracy in Alberta will be examined.

SYMBOLS AND THE PREMIER

Murray Edelman (1988) sees politics as a construct that is jointly mediated by the public and by politicians. In a world which is fraught with disorder and anxiety, politics bring order and calm. Therefore, the public is willing to accept and engage in the construction of symbols offered to them by leaders. Edelman writes that once a leader is elected, he assumes the role of symbolic figurehead for that political system. In addition, the leader's image is jointly negotiated between the public and the leader.

Edelman's theories are difficult to operationalize in empirical research. However, the results of qualitative data can be used to support Edelman's theory that leaders and political issues are negotiated. A classic example of a leader whose identity has been collectively negotiated can be found in the persona of Premier Ralph Klein who is viewed as a beer-drinking, fun-loving, down-home kind of guy. In Chapter 3, it was shown that Klein's image appears to have strong roots in actual behavior. If this is the case, if Klein really did associate with prostitutes and bikers and spent a lot of time socializing at the St.

Louis, a key point is that he did not attempt to cover up his activities. In fact, Dabbs (1994) contends that Klein actually went out of his way to foster this image. Here then, we have the beginnings of a symbolic image - one that portrays Klein as a common-man.

According to Edelman, the public takes part in the creation of this image. The reason why they might want to could lie in the nature of Albertans themselves. Several people interviewed opined that Klein mirrors an image of Albertans to Albertans. The people of this province have a long history of fighting for survival: they've battled the elements, they've fought the depression and they've been pitted against an oppressive federal government.

This struggle continues today. We still lose people every year in the wilderness, farmers continue to depend on the weather for survival, and fluctuating international resource markets mean we are not economically stable. While everyday existence is not a life and death struggle for most people, Albertans may still have the perception that the odds are against them. In addition, people are taught to believe that the democratic system is fair, that people reap what they sow and that if they work hard they will succeed.

Premier Klein embodies this belief. This high-school drop out from a broken home managed to work his way to the top political position in the province. And though he is arguably not the man he was 30 years ago, Klein has managed to maintain this image of an average Joe who made good. In the person of the Premier, the public has found a symbol whose existence proves the work ethic. In addition, to being hard working, Klein is also seen as trustworthy. One reason for this may be because in the Alberta ethos the work ethic and honesty work hand in glove.

Edelman suggests that politics creates anxieties and certainly, in 1992 the public in Alberta was anxious. Politics also creates myths to sooth those anxieties. A charismatic leader can become a source of political stability, even in the face of failure and broken promises (Edelman, 1971). Klein offered this type of charismatic leadership to a public disheartened and disenchanted with politics and politicians.

This image of Klein as both average and honest has a long history. During the elections, Klein was portrayed on billboards in casual clothes with the text “He listens, he cares,” in the 1993 campaign and “He kept his word” in 1997. However, the slogans could not work on their own. As a Conservative campaign worker pointed out, people didn’t believe words, they wanted proof. As the incumbent Premier, Klein was able to take action to reduce the size of government and battle the debt and deficit prior to the 1993 campaign. Once actions were taken, they could be articulated to the discourse of caring and honesty the Klein campaign apparatus was manufacturing.

Stating that Klein’s actions were symbolic and that the discourse was manufactured does not diminish their reality. Perhaps Klein is honest and does care. And there is no denying that many MLAs lost thousands of dollars in pensions when Klein killed the pension plan. However, when concrete actions were articulated to the abstract values of truth, caring and honor, they created a separate symbolic entity in the person of Klein. And although this unity may seem natural, it is not. As Stuart Hall (1986) points out, articulations are non-necessary connections: “An articulation is thus the form of the connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time” (italics

his) (1986, 53). As a symbol, Klein could have been cast in any image. However, in 1992 Conservative strategists decided on this particular image of Klein because polling and focus groups showed them what the public wanted in a decisive leader.

Today, Klein and the public continue to actively maintain this symbolic image of the man. This is evident in Don Martin's comment that the public won't tolerate criticism of Klein: "I used to get more calls because I dared suggest Ralph Klein did anything untoward in MultiCorp than I ever did from people calling up saying attaboy Don, keep on him." The public does not want the image defiled.

One might ask why the public supported Klein in 1997 despite the massive restructuring that took place between 1993 and 1997. A reason for this might be that Klein got the public to "buy into" the proposal that the only way to deal with the debt and deficit was through massive cuts. Edelman notes that voting reassures the public that they play a role in public policy formation. Klein ran on a budget-cutting platform in 1993. Once Klein was elected, the public became partial owners of the solutions that followed because they had voted for him. A series of roundtables also helped foster the impression that the cuts were the result of public will.

In the 1997 campaign, Liberal leader Grant Mitchell and New Democrat leader Pam Barrett both attacked Klein's cuts and restructuring. However, these attacks may have actually helped the Premier. Edelman writes that attacks on incumbent leaders help the image of the leader because they draw attention to the fact he is "powerfully influencing events" (1968, 80). In Alberta, people wanted a strong leader who would take action, not make idle promises. The howls of protests from angry people caused

controversy in the media, thereby drawing attention to the changes which were underway.

And what of the role of the media in all of this? They reinforce the idea that leaders are essential to the course of government action by focusing attention on politicians instead of issues (Hershey, 1993). In the case of the Alberta elections, this attention on the leadership issue would have benefitted the Klein camp because of the strong image the Premier and the public had constructed prior to the 1993 election and during the years between that election and the 1997 race.

HEGEMONY AND THE ALBERTA ELECTIONS

Hegemony theory posits that rulers are able to govern through the process of coercion and consent. Of these, consent is the most powerful means of governing because people agree to the dominant ideology. According to scholars, the media play a key role in disseminating the dominant ideology because they mediate the messages which flow between rulers and their people. But hegemonic systems are never total. Oppositional groups always exist within a society and struggle to make their views known.

According to hegemony theory, the media support the dominant ideology for a variety of reasons. Todd Gitlin (1980) and Robert Hackett (1991) suggest one of these is the code of objectivity that journalists adhere to. While the objectivity creed forces the media to cover two sides of an issue, one side is ultimately portrayed as legitimate while the other is marginalized. Except in rare circumstances, the marginalized group is the counter-hegemonic group.

Quantitative data show that coverage of the 1993 and 1997 Alberta elections was,

for the most part, supportive of the dominant hegemony. One piece of evidence to support this statement is that Premier Klein dominated coverage. More stories were written about him and he was given favorable placement within newspapers. And even when stories were not about the Premier, he was occasionally mentioned first. Interviews with journalists showed that they knew their editors would favor stories which were about the Premier.

News about the Premier might not be hegemonic if it was negative news. However, data show that in both years most quotes from the Premier or comments about him were neutral. Although there were more negative stories than positive in 1993, the difference is slight (nearly 9% of the references to Klein were positive while 11.4% were negative). In 1997, his positive references outweighed his negative, but most coverage was still neutral.

References that are positive can be seen as overtly supportive of the dominant hegemony. However, even neutral news can be viewed as hegemonic because it surreptitiously supports the status quo by not criticizing it. Given that 78 per cent of the news about Klein was neutral or positive, it appears that coverage supported his views and proposals.

It should be pointed out that all leaders received primarily neutral coverage. Does this mean that their ideologies were supported as well? Not necessarily. In 1993, Liberal leader Laurence Decore received more negative coverage than any of the other leaders in the 1993 race. This occurred despite the fact his fiscal platform was similar to Klein's. This adds more evidence to the case that news is hegemonic because it is clear the

incumbent Klein received better coverage.

Martin, whose position was decidedly left of center, actually received more neutral coverage than the other leaders. However, the number of stories which Martin dominated is nearly three times fewer than those Klein dominated and he received less front page coverage. Tone is not the only way a candidate can be marginalized. Just by lack of coverage and placement, Martin's views were neutralized.

Coverage was similar in 1997 when Klein dominated 89 stories and ND leader Pam Barrett only dominated 24. Again all leaders received more neutral than positive or negative coverage. Liberal Leader Grant Mitchell, however, received no positive coverage whatsoever and more negative coverage than anyone else. In addition, he dominated 32 stories, which is just eight more than Barrett. This is interesting because at the time, the Liberals were the official opposition with 32 seats in the Legislature. The NDs had none. Whatever the reasons for the negative references, it is clear that this type of coverage relegated Mitchell to the margins.

It could also be argued that the media were more hegemonic in 1997 than they were in 1993. For one thing, there were more stories about Klein in 1997 than there were about leaders of the other parties. In addition, there were fewer stories about Mitchell and Barrett than there were about Martin and Decore. By sheer force of numbers, Klein's views and values were given greater prominence and importance.

One reporter said that in 1997 it was impossible to write issue stories, because the Premier just wasn't commenting. Here is an example of how the regime of objectivity creates news that is hegemonic. As part of the code of objectivity, reporters must seek out

sources who are seen as appropriate. As Premier, Klein is a key source. Therefore, when he refused to comment, there was no story. Even if journalists had sought out other, less prestigious sources, editors might not have accepted the story because of their desire for sources whose views were seen as valid and authoritative.

In 1993, few stories were written which linked the Klein Conservatives to the Getty Conservatives. Klein and his managers knew they had to distance themselves from the Getty government. They did so by 1) taking a series of drastic steps to cut government spending and 2) focusing on the personality of Premier Klein. This strategy appeared to work for there were few mentions of the financial disasters that occurred under the Getty regime and, in effect, this omission wiped the Tory slate clean.

But, as Hackett (1991) points out, the media are not monolithic and hegemony is never total. Different publications have different agendas. For instance, most everyone interviewed believed that the Edmonton and Calgary Suns were supportive of the Conservative cause. It is interesting that the statistical analysis does not provide strong proof of this. The tone index in Chapter Five shows that in 1993, Ralph Klein, Laurence Decore and Ray Martin all received similar coverage. In addition, the difference in tone by medium and leader was also slight. In other words, no one was treated very differently.

There was, however, a distinct difference in 1997. That year the Sun did give preferential treatment to Premier Klein as compared to other leaders. Klein also received better coverage in the Sun than he did in the Edmonton Journal and the Calgary Herald. But most references were neutral and, despite the belief that the Sun never criticizes the Conservative government, Klein did receive 8 negative references in 1993 and 2 in 1997.

So what accounts for the perception that the Sun is Conservative? One reason could be the format of the newspaper. As a tabloid, the Sun is more sensational than the Journal or the Herald. Headlines can be very large and often use language that is more dramatic. As well, the language of headlines tends to be colloquial. When headlines are positive, this casual discourse gives the appearance that the newspaper is friendly toward the subject. When the headlines are negative, the tone is more like light-hearted scolding than serious criticism.

Headlines often refer to the Premier as “Ralph” and even “Ralphie,” in addition to the more formal “Klein.” On the other hand, during the campaigns Decore and Martin were rarely referred to by their first names and when they were, the tone was always mocking. The use of Klein’s first name does make it appear that the newspaper is friendly toward the Premier, even when the headlines are neutral. So while the news might not always be positive, often the headlines will make it appear that the newspaper favors Klein.

It was also the opinion of many journalists and campaign workers that the Edmonton Journal was a highly critical newspaper. Once again, the statistics don’t bear out this perception. In 1993, the Journal’s treatment of all three leaders was similar while in 1997 their treatment of Pam Barrett was more preferential than their treatment of Klein and Mitchell (who was the lowest on the tone index). In terms of other newspapers, the Journal’s coverage of candidates does not stand out as unusual in 1993. However, in 1997 it can be said that when compared with other newspapers, the Journal gave less preferential treatment to Klein and more preferential treatment to Barrett than did the

Herald and the Sun. This demonstrates that hegemonies aren't total and static. They do vary from publication to publication and even within publications.

STRATEGIC VS. ISSUE FRAMES

Thomas E. Patterson (1994) and Joseph Cappella and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1997) write that media have become overly critical of politicians. Key to this is that criticism is aimed not at policies and issues, but at the people themselves. Patterson asserts that the dominant message the media send is that politicians cannot be trusted because they are concerned with their own interests, not those of the public.

Patterson also criticizes journalists for interpreting the news instead of merely describing it. When reporters move into an interpretive role, they often evaluate the news from the assumption that politicians are self-interested. Most often, this message is relayed to the public through a strategic frame. This frame focuses on politics as a race or a game in which the politicians become contestants. The language of war and gaming is used, poll results are highlighted and stories focus on the performances of politicians.

As shown in Chapter 5, coverage of both campaigns in Alberta was overwhelmingly strategic. This frame was used on stories that were about election events, such as the debates or stops on the campaign trail, and on issues such as healthcare. The data also show that most of the negative references to leaders were in stories that were strategically framed. These results are concurrent with those from the studies conducted by Patterson (1994) and Cappella and Jamieson (1997).

However, Patterson does not appear to have a neutral category, therefore all of his

stories were coded as either bad or good news. Cappella and Jamieson did have a neutral category, but found that negative references far outweighed neutral or positive references. In this thesis, most news that was coded was neutral, not negative. This means that the majority of strategic stories in both years were neutral.

One reason for the differences in the level of negative news may be that Patterson focuses on “evaluative” news, which is by nature either good or bad. Another reason might be due to the subjective nature of coding for latent content. And finally, a third reason might be that there is less negative coverage of elections in Alberta than in the American newspapers studied by Patterson and Cappella and Jamieson.

Patterson also shows that in campaign coverage, the amount of evaluative news has surpassed news that merely describes an event. In this thesis, evaluative and report-style news were not separated. Therefore it is impossible to say what proportion of news on the Alberta elections was negative because it was evaluative.

Another difference between this study and Patterson’s is that the amount of negative news decreased in 1997 as compared to 1993. Patterson shows that negative news has risen over the past three decades. This finding begs the question why? Patterson asserts that for journalists, news is controversy and controversy is negative. His belief is shared by Conservative campaign workers in Alberta. Rod Love said: “That’s their stock in trade. The coin of the realm. If there’s no controversy, there’s no journalists.” Comments by journalists seem to support this stance. One reporter said that in 1997, when it was revealed that doctors had reached a behind-doors agreement with Klein, the media had some “fun” for a couple of days and another journalist noted that the 1997 election

may have been under covered because there was no excitement.

So, if journalists are drawn to controversy, why didn't more of it show up in 1997 coverage? Perhaps it's because in Alberta, in both the 1993 and 1997 elections, the news agenda was controlled primarily by the Conservative party. They ran a quiet campaign with few announcements and Klein refused to take the bait when it was dangled by reporters. However, a shift in the political allegiances of the Calgary Herald and the Edmonton Sun may also account for the increase in positive news. (This shift may be the reason for the preferential treatment Klein was given in both of these papers in the 1997 election.)

According to Patterson, the media do not discriminate in their choice of victims; any politician can be portrayed in a negative fashion. However, the results of this study show that the two Liberal leaders received most of the negative coverage. Patterson also asserts that the dominant message of the media is that candidates cannot be trusted and that journalists want to show the "real" candidate behind the image. This was evident in comments by the journalist who said that it was the responsibility of reporters to uncover the secret ideologies of the "real" Laurence Decore.

However, it doesn't appear that this focus was applied to other candidates. One of the reasons for this may be that Klein appears to be an open book. It was the opinion of journalists that Klein answers questions to the best of his ability. In fact, two journalists said they felt Klein was genuine, not manipulative, when answering questions. He has also been frank about his weaknesses, admitting that he drinks and that he used to spend a lot of money at the racetrack. As for New Democrat leaders, perhaps no one cares enough to

dig: the party is often discounted because it is not seen as a major political player.

Just because strategic news wasn't overwhelmingly negative doesn't mean it didn't have an impact on the way in which voters perceived the campaign. The results of Cappella and Jamieson's studies show that strategic framing of political news leads to the recall of strategic, not issue, information.¹ This could mean that readers learned more about a candidate's performance and political maneuvering than his or her stand on policies, even when the strategically-framed story was about an issue.

The original premise of this thesis was that news would be hegemonic, strategic, or neither. It appeared that negative news could not be hegemonic because it would be critical of politicians and the political process. However, data in the sample show that news coverage of the Alberta elections was hegemonic and strategic at the same time. It is my contention that strategic coverage in the 1993 and 1997 elections actually helped support the dominant hegemony in two ways: 1) it was not negative news and therefore was not critical of politicians and, most importantly, 2) issue stories which could have called into question the policies and practices of the Conservative government were displaced by strategic stories.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLITICS AND THE NEWS

The implications of this research for politics and media coverage of elections in Alberta are not good. While the results of this work should not be regarded as the last

¹ Their results show this effect is less pronounced in readers of print news than it is in viewers of television news.

word on the elections, they should give people pause to think about the state of democracy in Alberta because they seem to show that news is hegemonic and that coverage of elections revolves around personalities involved in the race and not the issues. This does not bode well for the democratic process.

Klein mirrors to many Albertans an image of themselves they like. He has become a symbol of the common man: one who likes a beer, makes mistakes, but is, at heart, an honest and guileless person. But, this image is only a construct. The persona of Klein could be fashioned in a number of different ways, for every person is a mixture of often contradictory traits. The image of Klein as a common man is predominant - but Klein is now a man who mixes with executives and power-brokers. The 1997 campaign slogan said "He listens, he cares" - but Klein is sensitive to criticism and at times he can appear very uncaring. He says he will work hard for the people of Alberta - but it is clear that some of the policies his government has invoked have worked to the financial detriment of some citizens. These few examples indicate that Premier Klein, like many people, is a complicated man. The public image presented to voters is only one way to perceive him.

The identification of any leader with an image or ideology is dangerous because it can draw the public's attention away from the real effect of policies. A key to gaining and maintaining power is the creation of meaning. Beliefs about leaders, problems, enemies must all be constructed in a way which makes proposed solutions look rational, logical and legitimate. The candidate that can accomplish this is the candidate that wins. This is why control of the media agenda is so important in a campaign.

As watchdogs, the media should be making the public aware that there's more to a

candidate than the image that is portrayed by that candidate. They should also be drawing attention to the fact that more than one solution exists for every problem. And in many instances, the validity of problems themselves should be questioned.

In election coverage, the use of the strategic frame does not allow the media to raise these questions because coverage is focused on campaign events and the outward appearance of political performers. And in Alberta, Klein's unique bond with Alberta voters makes it difficult for the media to be critical of him or his policies. The regular routines of news gathering and the regime of objectivity also hinder the media in going beyond traditional sources to voices of the marginalized and disenfranchised.

The strategic frame also influenced the way campaigns were conducted.

Conservative campaign members admitted they did not run media campaigns because they felt the Legislature Press Gallery would distort any messages they tried to send. Therefore, the public found out very little about the Klein government's future plans. Clearly, this wasn't in the best interests of voters who needed, and deserved, that kind of information. But to be fair, strategists had a point. The media's use of the strategic frame meant that policy information would not have reached the public even if it had been released. Or if it had, it would have been framed in a way that marginalized its importance. For all of these reasons, it is clear that journalists need to rethink their use of the strategic frame in election coverage.

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APPENDIX A

CODING RULES

1. News stories selected for coding must include information about at least one of the leaders of a political party. Stories that are about MLA candidates should not be coded. Do not code stories which could be considered briefs such as those under the “Ask the Leaders” or “Notes” sections. Do not code stories which are about a non-election issue and only mention a leader in passing. For instance, a story might be about a parade and mention that Premier Klein is going to appear. A story of this nature should not be coded.
2. News stories selected for coding must be on some aspect of the 1993 or 1997 election campaign. These could be stories which arise from campaign speeches, television debates, media conferences, news releases or responses to the statements of others. Stories about Klein or leaders of the other parties which are not about the election should not be coded. For instance, if a story notes that Klein is meeting with the Prime Minister, it should not be coded unless the story has been given an election angle or hook. The only exception to this rule is for stories which run on election pages, but have no apparent link to the election other than through this placement. For instance, a story about Klein’s decision on a policy issue that does not mention the election should be coded only if it is found on a special election page.
3. Coding for 1993 will begin on May 19. Coding for 1997 will begin on Feb. 12. Coding for both years will end the day of the election.
4. **“Day of Campaign”** refers to the incremental day of the campaign, not the date the story ran. For example, in 1993, day 2 will be May 19, day 3 will be May 20, etc.
5. The number that identifies the correct response on the coding sheet entered into the

SPSS file.

6. If the **“Other”** category is selected, specific details should be provided in a separate computer file.

7. **“Which Leader dominates the Article”** refers to the primary focus of the story. If one leader receives more coverage than the other, then that leader should be selected as the focus. If all leaders receive approximately the same amount of space, the “none or mixed” category should be selected. If the focus of the story is primarily about an issue and a leader is mentioned in connection with it, then the “none or mixed” category should be selected.

8. **Tone of coverage:** this is the general impression the coder is left with after reading the article. Tone could be determined by the facts that are covered, by the quotes of other people who are commenting on the politician, or by the opinions of the writer as evidenced in the article, editorial or column. Tone will be positive, negative, mixed or neutral.

Positive news: The discourse will have a positive feel and may offer statements which can be viewed as supportive of that candidate.

Negative news: The text will be critical of either the leader or the position or policy that person has put forward.

Neutral news: This coverage is neither negative or positive. It appears unbiased, balanced and objective.

Mixed news: Has an element, or combination, of positive, neutral and/or negative news.

9. **Genres are:**

Hard News: A factual style of story with the most important information first. Often these stories will be breaking, or will focus on a new development in a continuing

story. These articles should be viewed as stories that would be news, even if the election were not on. So, for instance, Lawrence Decore's comments about abortion, and Henry Morgentaler's subsequent response to them, would be considered hard news. But, Ray Martin's visit to an elementary school would not be.

Feature Articles: These are stories that are not breaking events and, therefore, do not have the same "edge" or element of timeliness that hard news stories do. They are often general interest stories that provide more detail and background than hard news stories.

Campaign-generated news: These stories are being covered because of the campaign. They don't have the "edge" that a hard news story typically has. On the other hand, they don't provide as much detail as features. These can be viewed as stories that are only being covered because they occurred within the context of the election. They are also stories which arise from events that are being staged because of the election. Leadership debates fall into this category because they are only being held because there is an election, as do stories on polls.

Editorials: These are columns that run on the editorial page. They are unsigned and are not the expressed opinions of one individual. Instead, they represent the position of the paper.

Columns: These are the opinions of an individual who is a regular contributor to the medium. The author could be a regular columnist or a reporter who is writing a column. Guest columnists also fall under this category

Interviews: These are interviews which have been directly transcribed. Although portions of the interview may have been omitted, no major editing of the material has taken place and they are run in a question and answer format.

News Analysis: An in-depth thought piece written by a reporter or columnist about an issue or event. Generally these are lengthy and contain background information. They may reflect the writer's opinions.

Personality Profiles: These stories will focus on the background and personal life (past, present or both) of the candidate. Stories that fall into this category also include

those that are about a leader's political views.

Vox Pop - These are stories which focus on "person on the street" opinions. The story will be comprised of quotes from members of the public talking about an issue and/or a politician.

10. **Frames:** a frame is defined as the angle or thematic structure of the article. It can be viewed as a hypothesis, either stated or unstated, which glues together all the pieces of the story. This frame, or theme, acts like an interpretive device for the reader.

Issue Frame - This frame will focus on an issue, such as health care or educational reform. Stories that fall within the issue frame will highlight various issues and/or the policies surrounding the issues. These stories will offer detail and may provide background on the issue or policy. These stories will provide information about what is being said about the issue from both supportive and critical stances.

Strategic Frame - The candidate's actions, his policies and platforms will all be examined in terms of how they effect the candidate's standing in the election race. Stories may include information about a leader's standing with the public and predictions about gains and losses. Stories will focus on the campaign as a contest or a race with leaders battling for specific positions.

11. **Focus of Article** - coders should select the primary focus of the article. A maximum of two categories can be checked. If there are many issues mentioned, the coder should list them in the subtopics section of the code sheet.

Campaign Race and/or Strategy - The focus is on the race, who is winning or losing; what kinds of strategies are being employed. Stories about polls and the debates fall into this category.

Healthcare: A focus on the healthcare system in Alberta, including stories about hospital budgets and strikes.

Social Services: Stories are about services provided by the Department of Social Services such as social assistance.

Premier Don Getty's Record: These stories focus on the past actions and policies of Premier Don Getty and how that record is affecting current candidates. Stories selected for this category must include Don Getty's name. Stories that merely refer the record of previous Conservative government's should not be coded in this category.

Crime and Law: These stories are about the legal system or crime and its effects.

Senior Citizens: Stories about services to seniors.

Education: Includes public and private systems as well as post-secondary. Budget stories and labor unrest stories about education are included in this category.

Debt/Deficit/Budget: These stories can focus on just one area or may combine information from more than one area. So, for instance, stories that are about the budget but contain no information about debt reduction should be coded. If a story talks about budget cuts to health care, then both categories should be checked if both receive equal play. However, if a story is primarily about budget cuts, and mentions cuts to hospitals in a paragraph, then select budget cuts under the focus section and health care under the subfocus section. If a story primarily about hospital budget cuts, then select healthcare as the main focus.

Energy and Natural Resources: Oil, gas, forestry and mining industries. If the story looks at the effect of an energy or natural resource company on the environment, both categories should be checked.

Environment: Focus on the environment, wilderness areas, parks, recreation. If the topic is the effect of an energy or natural resource company on the environment, both categories should be checked.

Taxes: Stories on taxes. These can be about proposes tax increases, tax cut or taxes currently being levied.

Job Creation: A focus on the creation of jobs.

VLTs: These stories will focus on some aspect of video lottery terminals.

Abortion: These stories will focus on some aspect of the abortion issue.

12. **Subtopics Mentioned in Article:** (Note - Coders should select as many categories as applicable. The primary focus of article should not be selected again.) These are other topics which receive mention in the article. For instance, an article might be primarily about debt reduction, but also mention health care cuts too.

APPENDIX B
CODE SHEET

- 001 ID — — — —
- 002 MEDIUM
- 01 Calgary Herald
 - 02 Edmonton Journal
 - 03 Edmonton Sun
 - 04 Alberta Report
 - 05 Lethbridge Herald
- 003 YEAR
- 01 1993
 - 02 1997
- 004 DAY/MONTH
dd-mm-yy
- 005 DAY OF CAMPAIGN

- 006 LOCATION OF ARTICLE
- 01 Front page
 - 02 Front with inside turn
 - 03 Inside
 - 04 Op/Ed page
 - 05 Election Page
 - 06 Other _____
 - 07 Sun's 4
 - 08 Cover Story
- 007 WHICH LEADER DOMINATES THE ARTICLE:
- 01 Ralph Klein
 - 02 Laurence Decore
 - 03 Ray Martin
 - 04 Grant Mitchell
 - 05 Pam Barrett
 - 06 Randy Thorsteinson
 - 07 None or mixed

- 008 RALPH KLEIN QUOTED OR MENTIONED IN ARTICLE
01 yes
02 no
- 009 LAURENCE DECORE QUOTED OR MENTIONED IN ARTICLE
01 yes
02 no
03 Not Applicable
- 010 RAY MARTIN QUOTED OR MENTIONED IN ARTICLE
01 yes
02 no
03 Not Applicable
- 011 GRANT MITCHELL QUOTED OR MENTIONED IN ARTICLE
01 yes
02 no
03 Not Applicable
- 012 PAM BARRETT QUOTED OR MENTIONED IN ARTICLE
01 yes
02 no
03 Not Applicable
- 013 RANDY THORSTEINSON QUOTED OR MENTIONED IN ARTICLE
01 yes
02 no
- 014 IN ARTICLES CITING KLEIN AND AT LEAST ONE OTHER LEADER, WHICH LEADER IS MENTIONED FIRST:
01 Ralph Klein
02 Laurence Decore
03 Grant Mitchell
04 Ray Martin
05 Pam Barrett
06 Randy Thorsteinson
07 Not applicable
- 015 TONE OF RALPH KLEIN'S COVERAGE:
01 Positive
02 Negative
03 Neutral
04 Mixed

- 05 Not applicable
- 016 TONE OF LAURENCE DECORE'S COVERAGE:
- 01 Positive
- 02 Negative
- 03 Neutral
- 04 Mixed
- 05 Not applicable
- 017 TONE OF RAY MARTIN'S COVERAGE:
- 01 Positive
- 02 Negative
- 03 Neutral
- 04 Mixed
- 05 Not applicable
- 018 TONE OF GRANT MITCHELL'S COVERAGE:
- 01 Positive
- 02 Negative
- 03 Neutral
- 04 Mixed
- 05 Not applicable
- 019 TONE OF PAM BARRETT'S COVERAGE:
- 01 Positive
- 02 Negative
- 03 Neutral
- 04 Mixed
- 05 Not applicable
- 020 TONE OF RANDY THORSTEINSON'S COVERAGE:
- 01 Positive
- 02 Negative
- 03 Neutral
- 04 Mixed
- 05 Not applicable
- 021 GENRE
- 01 Hard News
- 02 Feature
- 03 Campaign-generated news
- 04 Editorial
- 05 Column

- 06 Personality Profile
- 07 News Analysis
- 08 Interview
- 09 Vox Pop
- 10 Other _____

022 DOMINANT FRAME

- 01 Issue
- 02 Strategic
- 03 Mixed
- 04 Other _____

MAIN FOCUS OF ARTICLE 1 Yes 2 No

- 023 Campaign Race and/or Strategy
- 024 Healthcare
- 025 Social Services
- 026 Premier Don Getty's record
- 027 Crime and Law
- 028 Senior Citizens
- 029 Education
- 030 Debt/Deficit/Budget
- 031 Taxes
- 032 Energy and Natural Resources
- 033 Environment
- 034 Job Creation
- 035 Other _____

OTHER TOPICS MENTIONED IN ARTICLE 1 Yes 2 No

- 036 Campaign Race and/or Strategy
- 037 Healthcare
- 038 Social Services
- 039 Premier Don Getty's record
- 040 Crime and Law
- 041 Senior Citizens
- 042 Education
- 043 Debt/Deficit/Budget
- 044 Taxes
- 045 Energy and Natural Resources
- 046 Environment
- 047 Job Creation
- 048 VLTs
- 049 Abortion
- 050 Other _____

SUBTOPICS MENTIONED IN ARTICLE		1	Yes	2	No
051	Campaign Race and/or Strategy				
052	Healthcare				
053	Social Services				
054	Premier Don Getty's record				
055	Crime and Law				
056	Senior Citizens				
057	Education				
058	Debt/Deficit/Budget				
059	Taxes				
060	Energy and Natural Resources				
061	Environment				
062	Job Creation				
063	VLTs				
064	Other				