

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

PETER LOUGHEED AND THE PRESS:

A STUDY OF AGENDA-BUILDING

by

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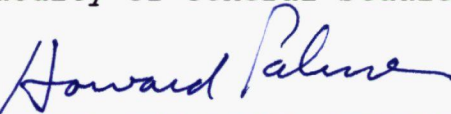
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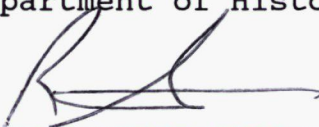
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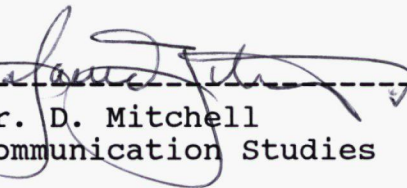
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ABSTRACT

This thesis illuminates the relationship between newspaper journalists and Peter Lougheed, the Premier of Alberta from 1971-1985. The following questions will be answered: Did Lougheed receive predominately positive coverage throughout his first and last term in office? To what degree are conflict and symbiosis, as described in the Grossman and Kumar model, evident in Alberta's political reporting? Who set the political agenda in Alberta, the provincial government or the press? What accounts for the coverage Lougheed received?

These questions were answered with the aid of a content analysis of 1137 newspaper articles reported in the Calgary Herald and the Edmonton Journal for the years 1971 to 1975 and 1982 to 1985. The statistical analysis was supplemented with interviews from Peter Lougheed, the journalists that covered him and key members of Lougheed's staff.

The results of the study indicate that the predominate tone of coverage differed by term in office. Lougheed received positive coverage in 61.7 percent of Edmonton Journal articles and 43.8 percent of Calgary Herald articles during his first term. Supportive coverage decreased to 36.9 percent in the Edmonton Journal and 30.7 percent in the Calgary Herald during his final term as Premier.

It was concluded that the change in tone appeared to be a reflection of the "times" in Alberta rather than Lougheed's personal abilities or unique journalistic traditions in Alberta. Furthermore, the change in tone, coupled with the personal recollections of journalists, suggested that the periods of conflict and symbiosis anticipated by the Grossman and Kumar model were evident in political reporting in Alberta. Finally, it was the unanimous view of Lougheed, government officials and journalists that Lougheed controlled the political agenda in Alberta. His aptitude for controlling the agenda appears to be a result of Lougheed's tight control over access to information in his dealings with the press.

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The successful completion of any major undertaking is rarely done alone; this work is no exception.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The role of the news media in disseminating political information and images has been a primary concern to many scholars. The importance of the news media as a channel of political information becomes apparent through the Dependency theory of communication.¹ Ball-Rokeach and Defleur maintain that the mass media fill an important information gap that results from a loss of direct contact with societal institutions such as the government. Their Dependency model is based on the premise that as society grows and becomes more complex, people begin to lose direct contact with the larger societal system in which they live. As a result people become dependent on the media to provide a link to the rest of society.

Ball-Rokeach and Defleur maintain that the media bridge an information gap that results from the separation of the individual from societal institutions. As Lasswell explains the importance of this bridge,

In democratic societies, national choices depend on enlightenment, which in turn depends upon communication; and especially upon the equivalence

¹ Ball-Rokeach, S.J. & Defleur, M.L. (1976). A dependency model of mass-media effects. In Communication Research. 3, p.3-21. p.6.

of attention among leaders, experts and rank and file.²

The political system is dependent on this bridge because the actions and decisions of political leaders take place in the absence of the public they represent. Walter Lippmann maintained that,

The world that we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind. It has to be explored, reported, and imagined.³

More recently Nimmo and Combs stated that,

the pictures we have of politics are not the products of direct involvement but are perceptions focused, filtered, and fantasized by a host of mediators.⁴

Thus the public's conception of politics is not the result of direct contact with various political institutions but is a reality mediated by the media. The media has the responsibility of informing the public about the political process. Given that responsibility, the media plays a vital role in the development and preservation of an informed

² Lasswell, H.D. (1967). The structure and function of communication in society. In Public Opinion and Communication. Berelson, B. & Janowitz, M. (Editors). The Free Press, New York. p. 178-190. p.189.

³ Lippmann, W. (1960). Public Opinion. Macmillan Company, New York. p.131.

⁴ Nimmo, D. & Combs, J.E. (1983). Mediated Political Realities. Longman Inc. New York. p.4.

electorate.

The specific functions the mass media fulfill in a complex society have been described by Harold Lasswell.⁵ He maintains that the primary functions of the media are: socialization, surveillance, and correlation. The latter two functions are the most relevant to this discussion because they refer to the responsibility of relaying messages about important events to the public (Surveillance) and signaling the public about how it should respond to those events (Correlation) via the news media.⁶ Both of these functions are critical to the world of politics. The correlative process highlights the utility of news, not only as a means to inform the public, but as an opportunity to persuade the public.⁷ Taken together, these two functions are critical to the legitimacy and effectiveness of political figures.

It is apparent that politicians require the media to

⁵ Lasswell, 1967.

⁶ Both of these concepts are expounded upon by the following authors: Lazarsfeld, P.F. & Merton, R.K. (1957). Mass communication, popular taste and organized social action. In Mass Culture: The popular arts in America. The Free Press, New York. p.457-473. and Wright, C.R. (1986). Mass Communication: A Sociological Perspective. Random House, New York.

⁷ The correlative process according to Wright includes, "interpretation of the information presented about the environment, prescriptions about what to do about it, and attempts to influence such interpretations, attitudes, and conduct." 1986, p.5.

confirm their importance and to inform the electorate about their activities. Getting their messages and images across to voters is essential to their success. The world of politics is also important to journalists, since reporting political news is one of their central tasks. One might conclude that this interdependence would foster a cooperative relationship. Yet a number of scholars suggest that the relationship is conflictual rather than cooperative.

There are a number of explanations for this paradox. Thompson claims that the two groups are often in conflict because the journalists',

foremost claim is that newsmen are continuously in search of the truth. By implication, those who are the subjects of reporting seek to conceal or obscure at least part of that truth.⁸

Lippman believes the tension results from the politicians' resentment of the media's power to interpret their words and actions. According to Denton and Hahn,

Seldom do politicians speak for themselves. Reporters act as narrators and interpreters assessing the motives or consequences of political actors or events. And political realities are constructed to conform to the demands that seem

⁸ Thompson, K.W. (1985). The Media. University Press of America. New York. p.4.

best satisfied by melodrama.⁹

The journalists' construction of political realities must also conform to the demands of the medium in which they are communicating. The brevity of television news reports, for instance, often causes politicians to think that their policies are not receiving the attention they desire.

The control the media exert over the public agenda is another source of contention between the two parties. Denton and Hahn believe that the mass media have considerable influence on the formulation of the public's agenda; to the extent that it is difficult for politicians to establish a policy agenda without the cooperation of the media.¹⁰ The impact of the media on the determination of what the public "think about" is known as the "agenda-setting" function of the media.¹¹

Sander Vanocur, V.P. in charge of special units for ABC news, has expressed concern over the media's power over the public agenda. He observed,

I think in many ways, probably too many for our own good or for politics, we [the media] really threaten to become the political process itself

⁹ Denton, R.E. & Hahn, O.F. (1986). Presidential Communication: Description and Analysis. Praeger Publishers, New York. p.272.

¹⁰ Denton & Hahn, 1982, p.272.

¹¹ The concept of agenda-setting will be expanded upon in Chapter two.

because we decide by our very presence or by our very absence what is important and what is not.¹²

Vanocur's concern is well founded when one considers how media decisions are made. "Agenda Building" is a term used to describe how specific issues come to take their place on the media's agenda.¹³

Recent accounts of the agenda-building process suggest that news editors are becoming obsessed with the entertainment value of news "stories" to the detriment of hard, factual accounts of the days events. News gathering literature is replete with testimonials and examples of the search for news that is charged with conflict and excitement. Reuven Frank, a former producer of "NBC Nightly News" states:

Every news story should, without any sacrifice of probity or responsibility, display the attributes of fiction, of drama. It should have structure and conflict, problem and denouncement, rising action and falling action, a beginning middle and an end. These are not only the essentials of drama; they

¹² Vanour, S. (1985). The media and the political process. In The Media. Thompson, K.W. (Editor). University Press of America. New York. p.13.

¹³ The agenda-building process is central to this thesis and will be addressed more thoroughly in the literature review in Chapter two. The following reference is an excellent resource in the study of agenda-building. Gandy, O.H. (1982). Beyond Agenda Setting: Information Subsidies and Public Policy. Ablex Publishing Company. New Jersey.

are the essentials of narrative.¹⁴

The impact of this practice on the reporting of public policy, which is often an incremental and dull process, is a serious problem. Denton and Hahn suggest that:

politics becomes an activity of style over substance, image over reality, melodrama over analysis, belief over knowing, awareness over understanding.¹⁵

According to Elly Alboim, Ottawa Bureau Chief for CBC Television News, the search for dramatic, conflictual, political news is prevalent in Canada.¹⁶ He believes that the "test of relevancy", which dictates the inclusion or exclusion of news stories, has changed dramatically in the last fifteen years. The agenda-building process of the media has changed from telling the audience what they "should know" to providing what the audience "want to know". Alboim believes this approach has serious ramifications because what the audience may want to know may be entirely different from what they should know. Thus Canadian journalists face a new challenge; to produce news in a narrative form that reduces

¹⁴ Epstein, E.J. (1973). News From Nowhere. Random House. New York. p.273.

¹⁵ Denton, R.E. & Hahn, D.F. (1986). Presidential Communication: Description and Analysis. Praeger Publishers, New York. p.273.

¹⁶ Alboim, E. (1987). Lecture given at the University of Calgary November 20, 1987. Subsequent references to this lecture will be cited as: Alboim, 1987a.

complexities and personalities and highlights drama and conflict that is also intrinsically important in any sort of objective evaluation.¹⁷

The media's preference for action, conflict, and drama often runs counter to the politician's concept of the issues they wish to discuss and the image they wish to present. Thus the lack of harmony in their relations may result from the conflicting objectives of the media and politicians.

Despite the countless reasons for conflict between the media and politicians, Grossman and Kumar have found that the tension that does exist between the two does not result in overwhelmingly negative coverage for the politician. Grossman and Kumar did a content analysis of presidential reporting from 1953 to 1978, in the New York Times and Time magazine and from 1968 to 1978 on the CBS Evening News.¹⁸ They found that a good portion of coverage was favourable and that reporting followed three phases over the life of an administration: "alliance", "competition" and "detachment".¹⁹ The "alliance" phase refers to coverage of the first months of a new administration when there are favourable stories about the leader and cooperation between the media and the government.

¹⁷ Alboim, 1987a.

¹⁸ Content analysis is a research technique used to analyze the manifest content of communication.

¹⁹ Grossman, M.B. & Kumar, M.J. (1981). Portraying the President : The Whitehouse and the News Media. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore. p.274.

The "competition" phase heralds an end to open cooperation between the two parties and is characterized by a concentration of news about conflict and controversy within the administration. Cooperative relations between politicians and journalists are at a low ebb during this phase. The necessity of interdependence between the media and government overrides the tension that exists between the two parties during the "detachment" phase which produces a formalized, forced cooperation between them.

The three phase model postulated by Grossman and Kumar provides an effective guideline for analyzing the relationship between the media and politicians. However, the Grossman-Kumar model is based on an analysis of presidential coverage. Therefore, a question that emerges is whether the Grossman-Kumar model is relevant for the study of relations between the media and politicians in general and can this apply to Canadian situations. There is also the question of whether Alberta, because of its special history and circumstances, is a unique case. The uniqueness of Alberta is due to the pattern of one party dominance that has characterized its political history. Strong majority governments were sometimes led by a strong, charismatic Premier. Peter Lougheed, Premier of Alberta from 1971 to 1985, is an example of popular, charismatic leadership.

The western roots of Peter Lougheed's family date back to

1883, shortly after Calgary was founded.²⁰ His grandfather, Sir James Alexander Lougheed, was one of Calgary's first lawyers. He became a Senator in 1889. He was knighted in 1916 for his efforts as Acting Minister of Militia during World War One.²¹ Although Edgar Lougheed, Peter Lougheed's father, did not keep the family name in the public eye, their position was firmly entrenched in Calgary society.

Peter Lougheed, on the other hand, compiled an impressive list of personal accomplishments even before he became the first Conservative Premier of Alberta. His leadership qualities were first evident as President of his high school's Student's Union, and he was also President of the Student's Union at the University of Alberta.²² Lougheed distinguished himself as an athlete playing football for the Edmonton Eskimos. After getting his law degree he went on to complete his formal education at Harvard business school.²³ Lougheed went to work for the Mannix Corporation after he finished school and eventually became Vice-President of administration for that organization.²⁴ Gordon Jaremko, covered both Lougheed and the Mannix Corporation for the Calgary Herald.

²⁰ Hustak, A. (1979). Peter Lougheed. McClelland and Stewart Ltd., Toronto. p. 11.

²¹ Hustak, 1979, p.19.

²² Hustak, 1979, p.40.

²³ Hustak, 1979, p.46.

²⁴ Hustak, 1979, p.54.

He believes that Lougheed's experience at Harvard and at Mannix had an important impact on Lougheed's career as Premier because,

As part of his training he went from Harvard Business School where he developed a detached, analytical approach to the Mannix organization, which is the most secretive big business organization.²⁵

The significance of this experience will become obvious during the discussion of Lougheed's approach to media relations which will be discussed later in the thesis.

Perhaps Lougheed's greatest achievement was the rebuilding of the provincial Progressive Conservative (P.C.) party in Alberta. Lougheed became leader of the provincial P.C. party on March 18, 1965.²⁶ At that time the P.C. party according to Lougheed had,

Absolutely nothing, nothing in terms of finances, nothing in terms of organization and the party had nothing in terms of history.²⁷

In fact, the Conservative party had never formed the government in Alberta and had not had a significant representation in the legislature since 1917, when it had

²⁵ Personal Interview, Jan.17, 1990.

²⁶ Hustak, 1979, p.68.

²⁷ Hustak, 1979, p.65.

nineteen MLA's.²⁸

The foundation of Lougheed's plans for re-building the P.C. party revolved around two main elements: build a strong organization at the constituency level and develop an image that would garner support across party lines.²⁹ Lougheed's image building efforts will be the focus of this discussion because the media was instrumental in his strategy.

Image was critical because the Conservative party and the Social Credit (S.C.) party did not differ greatly in their ideological approach to government. Under the leadership of Premier Earnest Manning the S. C. party had distanced itself from the early monetary theories of the S.C. and had concentrated on the provision of sound administrative government.³⁰ Furthermore, to take advantage of the lengthy period the S.C. had been in power the emphasis had to be on vitality and a fresh new approach to government.³¹ However, Don Sellar, a reporter for the Calgary Herald observed that Lougheed had to emphasize the difference between the two parties while at the same time ensuring that the electorate understood that while they were changing government they were

²⁸ Hustak, 1979, p.59.

²⁹ Wood, D. (1985). The Lougheed Legacy. Key Porter Books Ltd. Toronto. p.47.

³⁰ The historical foundation of the S.C. will be expanded upon in Chapter 3.

³¹ Wood, 1985, p.60.

not changing ideology. Sellar believes that,

Lougheed implied that his team could do it better than the team in power, even if they were doing the same thing.³²

Therefore, the message was that Lougheed would do the same thing only better.

Given the importance of image to his success, one of the first tasks Lougheed undertook as leader of the P.C. party was to organize a communications committee to develop media exposure that would present an appealing image of Lougheed and the P.C. party across all media. Although it was within the committee's mandate to develop advertising material, the focus was on how to make effective use of daily news reporting.³³ The media's power to convey credibility is critical to any political newcomer to politics. Kevin Peterson, publisher of the Calgary Herald, contends that,

The media's influence is more than anything else to establish the credibility of the opposition party. I don't think they can make the party govern, but they can make them a realistic alternative...Lougheed was treated as a serious alternative.³⁴

During the 1967 election the communications committee used

³² Personal interview, Feb.20, 1990.

³³ Wood, 1985, p.60.

³⁴ Kevin Peterson, Personal interview, Dec.13,1988.

quotes from newspapers in party brochures to reinforce the perception that Lougheed provided a fresh and sensible alternative to the S.C. party.³⁵

The communications committee had to deal with a number of potential problems with Lougheed's image such as the limited appeal that an urban lawyer might have to rural voters. Furthermore, religion was extremely important to rural voters. Lougheed is an Anglican but is not outspoken about religious matters. According to Brock Hammond, a member of the committee, the strategy was to ignore the issue because rural voters assumed Lougheed was a Christian and believed that he would carry those values into office with him. Another problem was Lougheed's age. The committee was concerned that Lougheed's youth would alienate some voters. Therefore, it was decided that the term "young" would not be used in any material but implied through photographs that gave an impression of youth tempered by maturity. Lougheed's family name, however, would be used to his advantage to promote him as the first "Albertan Born Premier".³⁶ An excerpt from an Edmonton Journal editorial attests to the success of the communications committee's efforts,

Mr. Lougheed himself presents an impressive blend of forward looking confidence with a family name

³⁵ Wood, 1985, p.58.

³⁶ All images to impediments to image were taken from Hustak, p.75.

appealing to old times, and an outlook appealing to the post war wave.³⁷

The communications committee had to deal with another critical issue, Lougheed's television appeal. David Wood, a member of the committee, believes his greatest contribution to Lougheed was his advice to emphasize television to persuade voters.³⁸ Lougheed's first television appearance after he became leader, however, was not a great success. A television sub-committee was struck in response to his performance. Gordon Love offered Lougheed the use of his CFCN studio after hours to practice. Hustak maintains that Lougheed's television training was easy,

He had an intuitive grasp of technology- it was mechanics he had to learn-how to relax in a studio with technicians around, how to shift naturally from camera to camera, how to modulate his voice for the right measure of sincerity, and how to pace his comments to the clock.³⁹

Lougheed's improvement in the use of television was imperative because his arrival on the political scene corresponded with the introduction of television as an important medium of

³⁷ Hustak, 1979, p.70.

³⁸ Wood, D. Personal interview, Oct.18,1988.

³⁹ Hustak, 1979, p.98.

communication in Alberta politics. In fact, the 1967 provincial election, in which Lougheed was elected along with five other conservative MLAs, was touted to be the beginning of the television era in Alberta.⁴⁰ Lougheed demonstrated an impressive understanding of the media subsequent to his victory as leader of the official opposition. He seemed to be acutely aware of the media's hunger for drama and excitement. He fed the media's appetite in a number of ways. According to Don Sellar, shortly after the election Lougheed always travelled with one or two colleagues in order to give him an air of authority.⁴¹ The Conservative party also concentrated their efforts on organizing public meetings during this time. David Wood contends that,

Reporters are addicted to counting heads; a full house tells them something is happening, support is growing, the movement is on its way.⁴²

Wood adds that the organizers assisted this image by booking halls that could not seat the numbers anticipated comfortably, which created an impression of a meeting filled to capacity. These efforts proved to have the desired effect. According to Kevin Peterson,

The reason that we knew Lougheed was a force in 1971 was because a lot of people were coming out to

⁴⁰ Hustak, 1979, p.98.

⁴¹ Sellar, Telephone interview, Feb.20, 1990.

⁴² Wood, 1985, p.65.

meetings.⁴³

The Lougheed team also discovered the effectiveness of question period to assure media attention. Their strategy was to bombard one minister each day with a series of questions to add to the dramatic appeal.⁴⁴

Further recognition of the influence of the media, particularly television, was obvious in the communications committee's allocation of funds during the 1971 election campaign, \$ 80,000 of the \$ 120,000 budget was allocated to television commercials.⁴⁵ The obvious importance of television in the 1971 election may be attributed to a recognition that they were competing in the television age. It also may be due to the fact that Lougheed's opponent, Harry Strom, who had become Premier after Manning retired, was not comfortable with this new medium. In fact, Wood maintains that the August 30 date of the 1971 election was chosen because the S.C. believed television viewing would be diminished at that time of year.⁴⁶

Peter Lougheed's efforts culminated in a stunning victory in the 1971 election. Lougheed had increased the Conservative representation in the legislature from ten to an astounding forty nine members, leaving the S.C. with only twenty five

⁴³ Peterson, personal interview, Dec.13, 1988.

⁴⁴ Hustak, 1979,p.109.

⁴⁵ Wood, 1985, p.75.

⁴⁶ Wood, 1985, p.77.

seats in the house.⁴⁷

The Conservative party is still in power today under the direction of Premier Don Getty. Peter Lougheed was Premier for fifteen years before he retired in 1985. During that time Lougheed's political strength grew in two ways. First, he increased his party's representation in the provincial legislature in all elections subsequent to his first electoral victory. The number of opposition members elected in 1975 was reduced to six, further reduced to five in 1979 and stood at four in his final election victory in 1982.⁴⁸ The Premier's power base was also enhanced by his efforts in strengthening Alberta's position in federal matters. Patrick O'Callaghan, the former publisher of both the Edmonton Journal and Calgary Herald, believes that Lougheed transformed Alberta from an odd man out province, to a province as important as all the others. In doing so, Lougheed had a tremendous impact on provincial rights in Canada.⁴⁹ Lougheed's efforts in the federal arena were due in part to his struggle to firmly establish provincial rights to natural resources during the "oil wars" with the federal government.

Lougheed's tenure as Premier was also remarkable because

⁴⁷ The Conservative representation had increased from six to ten through two byelection victories and two sitting MLAs, one independent and one liberal, joining the Conservative ranks. Wood, 1985, p.69.

⁴⁸ Election results were received from the P.C. party office in Calgary.

⁴⁹ O'Callaghan, P. Telephone Interview, Feb.20, 1990.

his reign did not appear to be tainted by a media crisis as is the case for many political leaders. On the contrary, Roger Epp attributes much of Lougheed's electoral success to the media coverage he received. He states that,

it has become almost commonplace in the case of Alberta to attribute the Lougheed government's electoral success as least partially to an atypical, less-than-adversarial relationship with the provincial media.⁵⁰

Similarly journalist Doug Fetherling describes a "pliable local media ...in a province where the news media enjoy a good relationship with the government".⁵¹ Although journalist Shiela Pratt may not agree that Lougheed received especially supportive media coverage throughout his tenure as Premier, she does believe he had a special quality that made him particularly popular with the electorate. She asserts that,

For years he had captured the imagination of Albertans, there's no doubt about that. He was not the most dynamic in many ways but he had some sort of charisma that people just loved. He was in a very special position. It made Albertans- they still don't examine his record very critically

⁵⁰ Epp, R. (1984). The Lougheed government and the media: News management in the Alberta political environment. Canadian Journal of Communication. 10(2), p.38.

⁵¹ Fetherling, D. (1981). Power Politics. Saturday Night. Feb. p.19-28. p.24.

because they still want to accept what he says as gospel.⁵²

Peter Lougheed does not agree that he was the recipient of overly supportive coverage throughout his tenure as Premier. He states,

I don't think I did have positive relations throughout on three counts. One was when I was very much under the gun involving airline tickets in 1978/1979. Secondly, I was always under a lot of criticism, steadily that I was so called quote, "inaccessible" end quote. Thirdly, I guess I was in the middle of the eye of the hurricane. You feel the criticism and you're sensitive to it, particularly if you think its unfair. In the broader view, the key thing is how do you react to that in a human personal way.⁵³

The issues Lougheed raised to dispute the impression that he received positive coverage while Premier and the personal manner in which he dealt with the media are a major theme in this analysis and will be discussed in a subsequent chapter. However, the impressions expressed above do suggest that the relationship between Premier Lougheed and the media is a unique case and worthy of further study.

A number of research questions emanate from this

⁵² Pratt. Interview, Feb. 4, 1990.

⁵³ Lougheed. Interview, Nov. 27, 1989.

discussion. First, was Lougheed the recipient of predominately positive coverage throughout his tenure as Premier? The perceptions of Epp and Fetherling are not based on empirical evidence. Indeed, a thorough literature review of articles dealing with Peter Lougheed and the media revealed that there is no empirical evidence available to support or discount the view that Peter Lougheed received predominately positive media coverage while he was Premier of Alberta. Second, what accounts for the coverage Lougheed did receive: was it a unique time in Alberta's history? Was it due to unique journalistic traditions in Alberta? Or was it that Peter Lougheed was a unique politician with a special hold on his constituents? Third, does the Grossman-Kumar model extend to a Canadian provincial leaders? Finally, with regard to the process of agenda building, who sets the political agenda in Alberta?

PLAN OF THESIS

The purpose of the thesis is to answer the research questions posed above. In order to answer these questions a content analysis of the newspaper coverage Peter Lougheed received during his first and last term in office was

undertaken.⁵⁴ The content analysis will be used to provide empirical evidence of the general tone of coverage that Lougheed received while Premier. The changes in coverage over time will be used as an indicator of the utility of the Grossman-Kumar model in a Canadian provincial setting. The question of whether Lougheed's coverage was due to a special time in Alberta's history or to his superior abilities as a politician will be gauged by an analysis of two separate time periods: his first and last term in office. The general tone of coverage during the two time periods will be compared to determine if there was a significant change.

The coverage given to Lougheed by the Edmonton Journal and the Calgary Herald will be analyzed from August 30, 1971, the day of the election, to March 27, 1975, the day after the second election victory. Analysis of Lougheed's final term in office will be conducted from November 3, 1982, the day of the election to June 26, 1985, the day Lougheed announced he would be retiring from office.

In addition to the empirical data generated from the content analysis, a number of interviews were conducted to determine how Lougheed approached relations with the media and how the media went about covering the Premier. A number of journalists were asked to share their experiences covering

⁵⁴ This analysis does not include television coverage of Lougheed because the local television stations denied the researcher's request for access to television footage of Lougheed.

Lougheed and a number of key political players, such as the Premier's press secretary, were asked to describe their relations with the press.

The study is significant for a number of reasons. Foremost among these is that a study of this kind has not been done. A great deal of speculation exists about the nature of political reporting in Alberta in general and about Peter Lougheed's term in office in particular. This thesis will be the first attempt to present more rigorous analysis, to test hypotheses and to describe Lougheed's methods for dealing with the press in detail.

The remainder of this thesis will be divided into five chapters. The second chapter will include a detailed description of the Grossman-Kumar study and a literature review of the correlative news process. Chapter three will describe Lougheed's approach to media relations and recount the experiences of the journalists covering Lougheed. Chapter four will provide a historical account of the relations between the press and the provincial government since Alberta attained provincial status in 1905. Chapters five and six will describe the methodology and empirical results of the content analysis. The final chapter will be a discussion of the conclusions and implications that result from the study.

CHAPTER TWO

AGENDA BUILDING

The first chapter introduced the idea that the media perform important functions, one of which is to inform the public about the world of politics. What is reported is of significance because it relays a message to the public about what are the issues of public concern. This process is known as agenda-setting, which is defined as "a process through which the mass media communicates the relative importance of various issues and events to the public".¹

McCombs and Shaw were the first scholars to provide empirical evidence of the relationship between news reporting and public attitudes. Their analysis of a sample of undecided voters during the 1968 Presidential election found an impressive correlation between issues deemed important by undecided voters and the content of the media message.² In a later study McCombs and his colleagues concluded that "audiences learn their topic salience from news media judgements, incorporating a similar set of weight into their

¹ Rogers, E.M. & James, W.D. (1988). Agenda setting research: Where has it been, Where is it going. in Communication Yearbook II. Anderson, J.A. p.555-594 Sage Publication, Beverly Hills.

² McCombs, M.E. & Shaw, D.L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. Public Opinion Quarterly. V36. p.176-187.

personal agendas".³ The importance attributed to items are suggested by their placement and prominence in the media. For example, Behr and Iyengar found that the lead story of a newscast served the primary agenda setting force. These and other studies provide support for Cohen's much quoted assertion that, "the mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about".⁴

A raft of agenda-setting studies followed in the wake of McCombs and Shaw's seminal work.⁵ Many of these studies analyzed the influence of news reports on the public agenda. In one such study Lang and Lang concluded that the media assume a more important role in setting the agenda for items that are removed from personal experience; these issues are described as "high threshold".⁶ The newsworthiness of such issues may not be immediately evident, so they are "framed" by the media or put in context so their relation to the audience

³ McCombs, M.E. & Weaver, D.H. & Spellman, C. (1975). Watergate and the Media. American Politics Quarterly. 3 (4), p. 458-472.

⁴ COHEN, B.C. (1963). The Press and Foreign Policy. Princeton University Press, New Jersey. p.13.

⁵ See the Rogers and Dearing article for an exhaustive review.

⁶ Lang, G.E. & Lang, K. (1981). Politics and Television Re-Viewed. Sage Publications Beverly Hills.

is more apparent.⁷ Lang and Lang also found that some issues on the public's agenda do not emanate from the media frame but are newsworthy by virtue of their proximity to personal experience. For example, a flood in Calgary or a rise in the cost of fuel take their place quite naturally on the agenda. These issues are considered to be "low threshold" issues.⁸ Political news often falls into the high threshold category. As such, it is vulnerable to the media's decisions with regard to its selection and presentation. Consequently, "The media's priorities become our own".⁹ This statement begs the question what are the media's priorities?

This chapter will analyze the agenda-building process from the perspective of the journalist and the politician. The discussion will focus on the journalistic standards that define what is newsworthy and the resources the politicians have at their disposal to influence the media's agenda.

The realization that the media has the power to construct a political world for the public has led researchers such as Gandy to try to,

go beyond agenda setting to determine who sets the

⁷ McCombs, M.E. & Gilbert, S. (1986). News Influences On Our Pictures of the World. In, Perspectives on Media Effects. Bryand, J. & Zillman, D. (Editors). Lawrence Erlbaum Ass.

⁸ Lang & Lang, 1981.

⁹ McCombs, 1962, p.99.

agenda, how and for what purposes is it set, and with what impact on the distribution of power and values in society.¹⁰

Consequently, the field of agenda-setting research has begun to include agenda-building; the process by which issues come to take their place on the media agenda. McCombs and Gilbert cite the annual State of the Union address by the President of the United States as an example of the agenda building process.¹¹ The same could be said of the Canadian equivalent, the Speech From the Throne, in which the Canadian government sets out its political agenda at the opening of parliament. The government also sets the agenda by releasing policy statements to the media, and by holding press conferences or giving interviews to journalists. These examples illustrate the critical reciprocal nature of the agenda building process. By pressing its political agenda the government influences the media's agenda. However, the media may also effect the political agenda by drawing attention to issues the government did not plan to make public. Black encapsulates this reciprocal quality by crediting the press with a dual political role. First, it is a channel of

¹⁰ Gandy, O.H. (1982). Beyond Agenda Setting: Information Subsidies and Public Policy. Ablex Publishing Co. New Jersey. p.7.

¹¹ McCombs & Gilbert, 1986, p.24.

political communication relaying the government's message. In addition it plays an active role in influencing political concerns and decisions by emphasizing some issues over others and criticizing policies.¹²

At the crux of the agenda building process are the gatekeepers of the news. The gatekeepers are the individuals who decide what information will become part of the political and media agenda. Media executives such as publishers and editors, in addition to the journalists themselves, are generally perceived to be the media gatekeepers. Their decisions are guided by the journalistic traditions of objectivity and newsworthiness.¹³ Although their influence is critical, politicians and government officials also act as gatekeepers. Political sources have the power to influence the choices available to media gatekeepers because they control access to the information that constitutes political news. According to Gandy,

Because information is at the heart of individual and collective decision making, control of information implies control over decision

¹² Lang and Lang's analysis of Watergate as a demonstration of agenda building provides an excellent example of this dual role at work.

¹³ A thorough analysis of the criteria of newsworthiness will be detailed later in this discussion

making.¹⁴

Therefore, political players themselves, as sources of political information, influence the media's agenda-building process.

Gandy believes that media gatekeepers, in meeting the organizational demands of the news organization, are often dependent upon political gatekeepers for news. Likewise, political sources are dependent on the gatekeepers of the media to build a public agenda that reflects their own interests and priorities. Thus both parties are dependent upon the decisions of the other. This interdependence results in a relationship that is characterized by periods of symbiosis, when the respective agendas are consistent with each other and conflict when the agendas do not coincide. The agenda-building process is further complicated by the fact that issues compete for attention in a fight where low threshold issues have an advantage.

Agenda building is a complex process. Both the media and political gatekeepers have considerable power to control the public agenda. However the potential power of each gatekeeper is curbed by their dependence upon the other. The goals and objectives that guide the decisions of each of the gatekeepers are not built upon the same foundation, consequently, their

¹⁴ Gandy, 1982, p.8.

decisions may be at variance with each other. The following analysis of the journalistic traditions that guide the media gatekeepers and the resources at the disposal of the political leaders will demonstrate the inevitable tension that results from this relationship.

MEDIA GATEKEEPERS

Much of the literature regarding the criteria for newsworthiness suggests that decisions are based on an implicit understanding of what constitutes news. To determine what constitutes news, one must be cognizant of the function of news. Harold Lasswell believed that the primary function of news was surveillance of the environment. Consequently, "News is about disruptions in the normal current of events".¹⁵ Within this framework an essential quality of news is that it be "new". The demand for immediacy has a profound impact on the production of news. Media organizations are structured to maximize efficiency in news selection and presentation. Consequently, both print and electronic news media approach gate-keeping decisions in a routinized manner.

A great deal of what constitutes the news of the day is

¹⁵ Golding, P. & Elliott, P. (1979). Making the News. Longman Publishers, London. p.120.

dependent upon the medium through which it is transmitted. The primary difference between television and print is that television is a medium for the "transmission of experience", and newspapers are more conducive to the transmission of "information".¹⁶ Therefore, the gatekeepers of television emphasize the experiential attributes of news such as visuals, action, personalities and drama. The need for powerful visual images is critical to television decision makers. Epstein states that,

at any given time, images-especially emotional ones, which are presumed to have the broadest possible recognition are used to illustrate news events.¹⁷

Television is perceived to have more impact than newspapers because of its visual capacity and the almost universal accessibility of the medium.¹⁸ Throughout this discussion it will become apparent that newspapers are also an important medium for political news.

The unique attributes of television may actually limit its utility as an informative device. For example, most

¹⁶ Epstein, 1981, p.128.

¹⁷ Epstein, 1981, p.128.

¹⁸ Henry, W.H. (1981). News as Entertainment: The Search for Dramatic Unity. In, What's News. Abel, E. (Editor). Institute for Contemporary Studies, San Francisco. P.133-159.

nightly news programs are a half hour long and include news, sports and weather; which leaves time for only a few, brief news items. The need for brevity leads television to avoid lengthy, complicated issues.¹⁹ If television cannot ignore a complex story it will be broken down into a number of brief stories that follow the lead item to maintain the rapid pace of television.²⁰ Newspapers, on the other hand, have a much larger news whole which can accommodate a larger number of stories of greater length. Consequently, newspapers have more flexibility in news selection than television does. For this reason, Gans considers television journalism as nothing more than a "headline service".²¹ By contrast, newspapers are believed to play more of a role in agenda building because they can develop a story over a period of time and provide more background and analysis.²² Thus, newspapers are an excellent medium to utilize for the study of the agenda-building process.

Henry contends that television will always choose to

¹⁹ Gans, H. (1979). Deciding Whats News: A study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time. Vintage Books, New York. p.161.

²⁰ Henry, 1981.

²¹ Gans, (1979). p.158.

²² McCombs, 1977, p.97.

cover events rather than a trend or idea.²³ Events are favoured because they can be presented in discrete, definitive packages. Also, by focusing on an event, the journalist is viewed as peripheral to the story and is not seen as shaping the news.²⁴ The presence of the journalist is not as obvious in newspaper articles so they can be more flexible in this regard. Television's event-driven approach has a serious drawback because it results in an over reliance on staged media events. However, because of their predictability media events are also popular with newspapers. The importance of predictability to both television and newspapers cannot be underestimated. The realities of the deadline and the allocation of personnel make it more likely that journalists will cover an event that is guaranteed to be newsworthy.²⁵

The selection of television news items are further restrained by the need to choose subjects that will appeal to a large heterogeneous audience. Newspapers may include stories that interest only a small segment of their readership. According to Reuvin Frank of NBC,

²³ Henry, 1981.

²⁴ Henry, 1981, p.137.

²⁵ Journalists Volume 2 provides a good discussion of the frustration expressed by journalists about covering the predictable. Fletcher, F. (1981). The Journalists. Royal Commission on Newspapers, Volume II. Research Publications, Ottawa.

A newspaper...can easily afford to print an item of conceivable interest to only a small percentage of its readers. A television news program must be put together with the assumption that each item will be of some interest to everyone that watches. Every time a newspaper includes a feature which will attract a specialized group, it can assume it is adding a bit to its circulation. To the degree a television news program includes an item of this sort...it must assume its audience will diminish.²⁶

Although television may have a more limited scope of selection, both television and newspapers share important similarities about what they consider newsworthy. To some degree these similarities emanate from constraints both media share. Time, for example, is a great equalizer among media. The news is a product that has to be produced every day, and therefore journalists work under a constant deadline. Out of necessity reporters often cover the stories that are accessible and fulfil the need for credible sources and newsworthy content. A reliance on accessible stories often leads to a dependence on official government sources and pre-packaged news. Bennet, Gressett and Halton contend that,

The news network of "rationalized" media

²⁶ Epstein, E.J. (1967). Between Fact and Fiction: The Problem of Journalism. Vintage Books, New York. p.40.

organization operates most efficiently when fed by the high volume of professionally produced ready-to-report news matter that is generated by governments and their support systems of social institutions.²⁷

Thus the pressure of the deadline make it difficult to pursue investigative journalism.

Anthony Westell maintains that much of the government's significant activities go unreported and what is reported is done badly.²⁸ At the same time, many journalists believe that the media executive's perception of the audience is too limited. Accordingly, there appears to be a general feeling among journalists that they have an obligation to go beyond merely giving the audience what it wants.²⁹ Geoffrey Stevens, the former managing editor of The Globe and Mail, has written that,

You don't have to write down to people; you don't have to reduce complex issues to the most

²⁷ Bennet, W.L. & Gressett, L.A. & Halton, W. Repairing the news: A case study of the news paradigm. Journal of Communications. Spring, p.50-68. p.50.

²⁸ Westell, A. (1976). Reporting the nation's business. in Journalism Communication and the Law. Adams, C.S. (Editor). Prentice Hall, Ontario. p.55

²⁹ Fletcher, 1981.

simplistic level in order to sell newspapers.³⁰

The need to appear credible mitigates against a complete absence of substantive coverage. A story that may be considered dull will still be selected if it is important. Golding and Elliott believe that importance is defined by size and proximity.³¹ Size is conceived of as the number or type of people involved, such that large numbers or important people such as political figures are given high priority. It is generally understood that well known, high profile people are almost always guaranteed coverage. Grossman and Kumar found that political leaders, such as the President, are always news. Golding and Elliott found that,

Elites are covered to the extent that their activities are accessible and to the extent that these activities match other news values.³²

The news media, television in particular, often deal with the necessity of including important but dull stories by presenting them within an entertainment framework. An emphasis on entertainment most often results in stressing drama. According to William Henry,

Every story ought to have a dramatic unity, a clear

³⁰ Fletcher, 1981, p.57.

³¹ Golding & Elliott, 1979, p.119.

³² Grossman & Kumar, 1981, p.122.

line of conflict, with definable antagonists and a tangible prize at stake.³³

Alboim believes this approach influences Canadian political reporting by emphasizing dramatic, conflictual stories. Bill Fox, who was Director of Communications for Prime Minister Mulroney also recognizes a unique style of political writing and equates it to "the political equivalent of 'People' magazine".³⁴

The entertainment value of news is best satisfied by telling a story. Gans maintains that,

The most basic format consideration, which is shared by all news media, is that news becomes suitable only after it is transformed into a story.³⁵

Presenting news as a story is thought to attract and maintain an audience. The dramatic framework, when applied to complex issues, results in them being personalized and reduced to the actions of individuals.³⁶ Todd Gitlin contends that,

From the media point of view, news consists of events which can be recognized and interpreted as

³³ Henry, 1981, p.145.

³⁴ Media File.

³⁵ Gans, 1979, p.161.

³⁶ Golding & Elliott, 1979.

drama; and for the most part, news is what is made by individuals who are certifiably newsworthy...In the mass mediated version of reality, organizations, bureaucracies, movements -in fact, all larger and more enduring social formations -are reduced to personalities.³⁷

This approach also leads to concentrated coverage of the leader of a government or a particular political party.

This discussion suggests that the criteria imposed by the media's gatekeepers not only dictates what will be selected to compose the news of the day but also how events will be interpreted and presented to the public. Political news is especially susceptible to creative presentation because it is often reflects of an important but dull and slow moving process. The presence of an official opposition aids in the production of dramatic and conflictual news. Elly Alboim articulates the problem that is inherent in such an approach to media gate-keeping,

Given the need to reduce complexities, personalities, and given the need to find inherent conflict and inherent drama, the need to tell a narrative and given the need to assemble a show, you [the journalist] start jumbling up the elements

³⁷ Gitlin, T. 1980. The Whole World is Watching. University of California Press, Berkeley, p.146.

journalistically to give the thing life.³⁸

The next section will demonstrate that politicians can capitalize on the requirements of the media to ensure that they control the public's political agenda.

POLITICAL GATEKEEPERS

The preceding discussion explained what criteria the media employ to guide their gate-keeping decisions. It will become apparent in this section that politicians are also formidable gate-keepers. The point will be made that politicians, as a primary source of news, have considerable power to set the agenda for the media.

Political leaders- Prime Ministers or Premiers- have an instant advantage in the world of news-making because of their inherent newsworthiness; their position virtually guarantees them media attention. Most importantly, political leaders control access to themselves and to the information that makes news. Access may be their most potent weapon. Access to the leader, which is coveted by the media, may be used as a bargaining tool or as a reward. Interviews may be granted to supportive journalists and denied to hostile journalists, which may discourage journalists from consistently filing

³⁸ Alboim, 1988.

negative reports. Granting an interview with the leader also allows the government to set the rules. According to Taras, there is a tacit understanding among journalists that getting an exclusive interview requires a favourable story.³⁹ Furthermore, television interviews may be done "to time", to preclude selective editing by the news organization. In the case of print, interviews may be granted providing the entire text of the interview is reported.⁴⁰ Fletcher also highlights the value of the leader's ability to demand airtime to speak to the people directly. Prime Minister Trudeau relied on this approach a great deal when his relations with the press were at a low ebb. Lougheed also addressed Albertans in the same manner during his discussions about oil with Trudeau. Thus, by managing access to the leader the power of media decision makers can be diffused.

In general, both federal and provincial governments have centralized the control of information, and they now have staffs whose sole purpose is to handle media relations.⁴¹ A government has a number of advantages in dealing with the media. By exploiting secrecy the government can cripple the

³⁹ Taras, D. & Pal, L. A. (1988). Prime Ministers and Premiers. Prentice Hall Canada Inc. Scarborough, Ontario. p.38.

⁴⁰ Taras, 1988, p.41.

⁴¹ Fletcher, 1981, p.90.

media. By denying the media access to information or the ability to confirm facts the government can control the agenda. The media are subordinated further by a "might mentality" which leads journalists to cover even the most contrived story for fear of missing something exceptional.

Although the potential influence of politicians on the media's agenda is formidable, leaders are forced to work within an environment controlled by the media. Therefore, knowledge of the media's agenda is an essential ingredient in the political recipe of control. Paletz and Entman maintain that,

if a political actor maximizes the match of his interests with those of the media he will enjoy maximally favourable coverage"⁴²

This suggests that politicians are at an advantage if they work within the "frame" created by the media.

The politician must be aware of the media's penchant for drama, conflict and visuals. Herein lies the inevitable ebb and flow of conflict and symbiosis that characterizes the relationship between the political newsmakers and journalists. As stated earlier, the relationship between the media and politicians is often referred to as adversarial. Although, there is an inevitable tension, their relationship also has a

⁴² Paletz, D. & Entman, R.M. (1981). Media, Power, Politics. The Free Press, New York. p.72.

strong element of cooperation. Gans views political sources as part of the journalistic team.⁴³ The government source will practically write the story they want reported, but at the same time they will attempt to close off avenues to the story they do not want covered. Given the pressures of the deadline this is a potent means of control. Westell states that,

While journalists may complain for the record about managed news and manipulation, they could hardly exist without it.⁴⁴

As a part of the journalistic team, political sources are aware that their message must be relayed in a newsworthy package. Boorstin coined the term "pseudo-event" to describe news that is generated by the government for the purpose of being reported. Such events have the advantage of being prescheduled so the media can anticipate their occurrence. They also include news releases which supply enough information to be replicated without the need for further verification.⁴⁵ These events become so orchestrated that the participants can make news simply by departing from the script. The lack of spontaneity serves the purpose of both

⁴³ Gans, (1979), p.270.

⁴⁴ Westell, 1980, p.65.

⁴⁵ Taras, 1988, p.40.

nature of news conferences has been discussed by Westell,

It is only when a politician is on the defensive because damaging information is already public and journalist already know or suspect the answers that the press conference is likely to be a source of news.⁵⁰

Press conferences are not without risk; whenever the media are present there is potential for losing control of the agenda. It is not uncommon to plant questions with cooperative journalists to offset this probability. Press conferences are also an efficient means of satisfying a number of journalists' requests at one time.

The scrum, a spontaneous news conference that is initiated by the media, demonstrates the dangers of being questioned by a group of reporters without the advantages of a controlled environment. The politician is much more likely to make an error in responding to questions being asked in rapid succession. Michael Gratton, a former press secretary to Prime Minister Mulroney, maintained that in such situations the leader looked like a cornered animal rather than a leader who was in control.⁵¹

The advantages of news conferences highlight the

⁵⁰ Westell, 1980.

⁵¹ Gratton, M. (1987). "So, What Are The Boys Saying". Paper Jacks Ltd. Toronto.

importance of timing and control. As stated earlier, the leaders have control over information; and with the advantage of timing they can release that information when it is politically advantageous to do so. Lewis described various ways timing can be used for political advantage.⁵² First, announcements of marginal newsworthiness should be made on slow news days, such as the weekend, to ensure greater coverage. This is particularly important for newspaper coverage since readership is usually higher for weekend editions. Important announcements are usually made early in the day. In general, anything that occurs after 4:00 in the afternoon must be of considerable importance to be covered. Accordingly, controversial announcements should be made late in the day to preclude the media from obtaining opposing views or engaging in indepth analysis. Lewis suggests that politicians may choose to release information to inexperienced journalists who are less likely to grasp the implications of the statement. Fletcher, proposed that "good" information may be released to the media to deflect attention from news that is potentially damaging.⁵³

While political leaders can control the release of information they must be keenly aware of the journalist's need

⁵² Lewis, C.D. (1984). Reporting for TV. Columbia University Press, New York.

⁵³ Fletcher, 1981.

for a continuous diet of news. If serious policy information is lacking from the government the vacuum will be filled by the opposition or interest groups unfriendly to government policy or by the search for sensationalism and trivia. Reporters must fill those empty pages. According to Trueman, "it is the trivial mindedness rather than bloody-mindedness on the part of the media that thoughtful politicians fear most".⁵⁴ For example, Joe Clark came under harsh personal scrutiny during his world tour. Taras argues that the lack of substantive news on that trip resulted in trivial news, such as lost luggage and Clark's physical clumsiness, becoming the lead story.

Information may also be leaked to a journalist. Leaks have the dual advantage of testing public opinion and assuring at least two occasions for coverage: when news of a prospective policy or political move is leaked, and when it is formally announced.⁵⁵ Leaders may also influence editorials and commentaries through selective leaks to friendly journalists.⁵⁶

If not used judiciously, manipulative techniques may backfire. Journalists do not like being manipulated and will

⁵⁴ Trueman, P. (1980). Smoke and Mirrors. McClelland and Stewart, Toronto. p.151.

⁵⁵ Taras, 1988.

⁵⁶ Fletcher, 1981, p.9

retaliate when they feel they have been. According to Fletcher, the media reacted strongly to overt manipulation by the Liberal party during the 1974 campaign. Throughout that election, access to Trudeau was carefully guarded and complex policy statements were released late in the day to preclude analysis by journalists.⁵⁷ The media retaliated during the 1979 campaign by forming a "Truth Squad" composed of seasoned journalists who critically analyzed the motive behind all of Trudeau's appearances and announcements.⁵⁸

The above example illustrates that the media are not merely passive conduits for government public relations efforts. Politicians are at the mercy of the media's insatiable hunger for drama and conflict. According to Paletz and Entman, "the media cannot deal effectively with structural complexity but love a colourful fight between personalities".⁵⁹ Canada's parliamentary system provides ample opportunity for such exchanges. Fletcher believes that conflict is institutionalized by the presence of an official opposition and by the media's tendency to conform to the

⁵⁷ Fletcher, 1981, p.292.

⁵⁸ Fletcher, F. (1981). Playing the game: The mass media and the 1979 campaign. In Canada At The Polls, 1979 and 1980: A study of General Elections. Penniman, H.R. (Editor). American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington.

⁵⁹ Paletz & Entman, 1981, p.76.

parliamentary convention of granting time to the opposing view.⁶⁰ Therefore, the opposition provide the media with the conflict they desire and "question period" supplies the drama. Westell believes that "question period" is the perfect media event because,

Public personalities come into conflict over current controversies, providing in one neat package the basic ingredients for a good news story.⁶¹

The availability of such colourful exchanges obviously diminishes the leaders ability to speak unchallenged.

A leader's message is coloured further by journalistic analysis. Both newspapers and television engage in some form of analysis in order to clarify the implications of an issue or event. However, newspapers may have an advantage over television because more space is available in editorials and columns. Analysis may also work to undermine political initiatives by focusing on political motives of politicians.⁶² In general, instant analysis is more likely to be favourable if the issue is significant.⁶³ The

⁶⁰ Fletcher, 1981.

⁶¹ Westell, 1976, p.63.

⁶² Paletz & Entman, 1981, p.69.

⁶³ Paletz & Entman, 1981, p.69.

favourability of the analysis is also influenced by the size of the opposition. Paletz and Entman contend that journalists are more bold in their analysis when bolstered by a significant opposition.⁶⁴

The resources of the political leaders do not immunize them to negative coverage or to a media crisis that results from a complete loss of control over the agenda. When political leaders are undergoing critical coverage their ability to defend themselves is undermined by the fact that they are defending themselves in the same medium that criticized them. According to Gans, "their defensive reactions are never as credible as the initial bad news".⁶⁵ Thus an offensive approach to communications strategy is more effective than a defensive strategy.

The parliamentary system and the news media's agenda mitigate against the government maintaining exclusive control over the public agenda. This is illustrated by the media crises almost all provincial and national political leaders experience. However, leaders can and do fight back when they find themselves in crisis. According to Lorimer and McNulty,

The power of the pen is not insignificant but if government engages the press in a battle for

⁶⁴ Paletz & Entman, 1981, p.69.

⁶⁵ Gans, 1979, p.260.

supremacy, the power of words, including ridicule, embarrassment, and access to audience, pales in comparison to the arsenal of the government.⁶⁶

Theoretically the government can express its displeasure in a number of powerful ways. They can deny access to the offending journalist or organization. The leader can try to effectively silence a critic by complaining to their superior which can jeopardize their career. The government may apply economic pressure on an organization by threatening their advertising revenues.⁶⁷ The government is one of the largest media advertisers and withdrawal of that income could have devastating effects.⁶⁸ If the situation warrants it, the government may retaliate by launching an investigation or seeking other legal remedies.⁶⁹ The leaders may also appeal to the electorate with complaints of media ineptitude and bias.

However, such an antagonistic environment does not serve the interests of either the media or the government. Consequently, a combative atmosphere is most often temporary. Grossman and Kumar undertook an extensive content analysis of

⁶⁶ Lorimer, R. & McNulty, J. (1987). Mass Communication in Canada. McClelland & Stewart, Toronto. p.79.

⁶⁷ Gans, 1979, p.260.

⁶⁸ Lorimer & McNulty, 1979, p.79.

⁶⁹ Gans, 1979.

Presidential news coverage in the New York Times and Time magazine from 1953 to 1978. They also studied coverage on the CBS Evening News from 1968 to 1978. The results of their analyses demonstrate the important symbiotic quality of the relationship between the media and the government. Their results illustrate that although conflict is an important aspect of political coverage, a good portion of the coverage was favourable. Also, they found political coverage followed three phases: "alliance", "competition", and "detachment".⁷⁰

ALLIANCE

The "alliance" phase refers to coverage of the first months of a new government. This phase is characterized by favourable stories about the leader and cooperation between the media and the government.

The positive coverage the leader enjoys is the result of a number of factors. First, journalists may capitalize on the rapport they develop with the leader during the election campaign, which is usually a time when the leader is particularly cordial to the media.⁷¹ Second, journalists are interested in stories that will help the public get to know

⁷⁰ Grossman & Kumar, 1981.

⁷¹ Grossman & Kumar, 1981, p.276.

the leader as a personality, a policy maker, and his vision of the future. Stories of such a personal nature are invariably friendly.⁷² Third, the leader has not initiated any policies at this time so there is little to criticize. Since the government have no track record, their "rhetoric is presented as news".⁷³ Finally, the alliance period is a time when both the media and the new government have a great deal to gain by cooperating with each other. The media needs to report personality stories, because these stories are what the public wants, and to develop a network of sources to rely on later in the political term. Similarly, the leader wants to ingratiate her or himself with influential journalists and media executives in the hope that good relations will prove to be fruitful later on. The alliance period provides the government with a critical opportunity to establish an agenda at a time when their policies are likely to be reported on favourably by the press.

COMPETITION

The relative serenity of the "alliance" period ends with the introduction of the conflict and criticism that

⁷² Grossman & Kumar, 1981, p.276.

⁷³ Grossman & Kumar, 1981, p.277.

characterizes the "competition" phase. At this time reporters become interested in controversial policies and scandals within the government. This phase may be entered into more quickly in Canada because the Canadian system of government institutionalizes conflict and criticism through the official opposition. Not surprisingly, the government and the media's agendas may clash at this point and the leader may endure a media crisis, where the leader has lost control of the agenda.

Grossman and Kumar describe a number of ways the government can react to regain the agenda during a media crisis. Most of the news management techniques discussed in the preceding section can be applied for this purpose. In general, the government exploits the needs of the media to regain control. Closely regulating contact between journalists and government officials is one such device. This can be achieved by establishing a specific department to deal with media inquiries, or less subtly by "keeping tabs on who spoke to reporters" in an effort to control leaks.⁷⁴ Another technique Grossman and Kumar refer to is "ingratiation". Ingratiation is an attempt to manipulate coverage by rewarding cooperative journalists with access to the leader. It also includes dealing with hostile reporters by feeding them good

⁷⁴ Grossman & Kumar, 1981, p.281.

information in an effort to win them over.⁷⁵ Politicians may also "court the elite", be it influential journalists or media executives, to effect coverage. In extreme cases the government may react in the opposite way and attempt to discredit the offending journalist or organization.⁷⁶ Journalists obviously resent the government's attempts to manipulate their craft; however, retaliation by the media is constrained by their dependence on the government for information.⁷⁷ The realization of the benefit both the government and the media enjoy from cooperating with one another leads to the final phase of coverage.

DETACHMENT

The war-like atmosphere of the competition stage does not continue indefinitely. The authors maintain that,

The two sides are locked into a close and cooperative relationship by their mutual needs and one of these is the need to exploit each other.⁷⁸

This mutual dependence becomes apparent during the "detachment" phase. At this time relations between the

⁷⁵ Grossman & Kumar, 1981, p.287.

⁷⁶ Grossman & Kumar, 1981, p.288.

⁷⁷ Grossman & Kumar, 1981.

⁷⁸ Grossman & Kumar, 1981. p.297.

"detachment" phase. At this time relations between the government and the media become more formalized and structured, consequently symbiosis between the two becomes more evident. It is interesting to note that this phase develops earliest for governments that have little concern for rallying popular support for their initiatives.⁷⁹

The detachment phase is characterized by formalized interactions between the media and the government. The leader's schedule will be tightly controlled so that he or she will appear in settings that shed him or her in the most favourable light. Not surprisingly, controlled exchanges such as press conferences and pre-planned media events are favoured at this time.

Grossman and Kumar believe that journalists are held captive to some degree by the will of politicians. The only alternative the journalist's have is to utilize the independent government sources they have developed throughout the government's tenure.

This analysis of the agenda-building process of journalism and politicians builds an important foundation from which the relationship between Peter Lougheed and the Alberta media can be examined. Knowledge of the media's agenda-building process provides the government with an opportunity

⁷⁹ Grossman & Kumar, 1981, p.295.

take between the media and the government takes place within a cyclical pattern of cooperation and conflict between the two parties. A number of important questions emanate from this discussion. First, who set the agenda in Alberta? Second, to what extent does the coverage Premier Lougheed enjoyed fit the cycle of conflict and symbiosis explained by Grossman and Kumar's model? If conflict was not predominant during Lougheed's tenure as Premier what accounts for this anomaly? Was it due to Alberta's special journalistic traditions? Was it explained by a unique time in the history of Alberta? Or was Lougheed's approach to media relations responsible for positive coverage?

The next chapter will examine the way Premier Lougheed approached media relations and how that approach influenced the agenda-building process in Alberta.

CHAPTER THREE

PETER LOUGHEED AND THE MEDIA

An examination of Peter Lougheed's approach to media relations and political gate-keeping suggests that he had a very good understanding of the needs of the media-gatekeepers. Judy Wish, assistant to Joe Hutton, Lougheed's Press Secretary, maintains that Lougheed understood the importance of the media, "he knew the media in those days and how to work it to his best advantage".¹ Both of Lougheed's press secretaries, Joe Hutton and Ron Liepart, worked in television before they began to work for the Premier. According to Ron Liepart,

I always felt I was hired because I had an understanding of the media and could be a liaison with the government, as opposed to a buffer.²

Hutton's media experience was similarly useful to Lougheed. According to Lee Richardson, Lougheed's executive secretary,

Joe Hutton was a news director, like him or not he had a nose for news. What plays, what doesn't play, what sells, what doesn't sell. What's going

¹ Interview, March 4, 1989. Subsequent citations will be identified as: Wish.

² Interview, March 4, 1990. Subsequent citations will be identified as: Liepart.

to be a one day story and what's going to die.³

Therefore, the media experience of Lougheed's press secretaries endowed them with an understanding of the needs of the media gate-keepers. Discussions with Calgary Herald and Edmonton Journal reporters suggest that they had a keen awareness of the resources at the government's disposal.

Peter Lougheed maintains that politician's are in an uncomfortable position when they try to communicate with the public via the media,

I think the important part is that the person that is in the Parliamentary system, the Premier or the Prime Minister, you have to be thin-skinned enough to be sensitive to the public. But not so thin-skinned that every media jibe really hurts.⁴

Lougheed believes that if you are too sensitive to media criticism you may overreact to critical coverage which can lead to a siege mentality. The Premier admits that in the past he had fallen prey to such a mentality.

It stemmed out of a mistake we made back in 1974 and 1975 when we were new. We would go to these First Ministers Conferences in Ottawa. We were the "Energy Province", we were the producers and we were under the gun. We were under attack and we

³ Interview, Feb. 8, 1990. Subsequent citations will be identified as: Richardson.

⁴ Interview, Nov. 27, 1989. Subsequent citations will be identified as: Lougheed.

thought we better not mix with the press because something will leak out or be misinterpreted. As a result of that we gave an impression of a siege mentality, which some of the reporters picked up and validly picked up. We changed that and by the time we got to '79, '80, '81 we were having parties with the press and drinking with them. We changed it, but initially we started by being too inward. We learned our lesson because we were wrong.⁵

Don Sellar, a Calgary Herald reporter, covered Lougheed from 1967 to 1972. He agrees that the Premier was quite concerned about his coverage in those early years. According to Sellar,

Lougheed was sensitive about anything you wrote about him and if he didn't like a story you wrote you generally heard about it, if not from him directly, certainly from people around him.⁶

Although Lougheed remained sensitive about coverage throughout his tenure in office, he was never so sensitive to media criticism that he allowed the media to influence the government's agenda. Control of the agenda was critical to Lougheed,

We had a theme in our government and we were so

⁵ Lougheed Interview.

⁶ Interview, Feb. 20, 1990. Subsequent citations will be identified as: Sellar.

determined that the media will not set our agenda. We were very successful, but we frustrated a lot of the media because they couldn't get us to do that...The media would say this should be the priorities the government has in the next session of the legislature-pontifications from the Edmonton Journal editorial board. I wouldn't pay any attention to that, we would set our own priorities and our own time table. It was just a determined view, that's not to say there aren't some things that come up you have to deal with. But we would deal with it and the way we would deal with it was we wouldn't let them push us into a different time table, particularly on what's important. We would get that from our party, our MLA's, and our contacts. But that's hard to do. We had to be stubborn and determined to do it. You don't want to get stubborn and say you're not going to do that because the media says we should, I don't mean that. But you have to decide what your game plan is and what your program is and then you can read the media.⁷

It was the unanimous impression of all the government officials and journalists interviewed that the government

⁷ Lougheed.

controlled the agenda while Peter Lougheed was Premier.⁸

The success of Lougheed's efforts to control the government's agenda may be due to the tight control Lougheed had over the release of government information. Not surprisingly, the absolute control over information dissemination was at the heart of the journalist's criticism's of Lougheed's approach to media relations. For example, Edmonton Journal reporter George Oak, maintains that the atmosphere of friendly cooperation between the government and the media that characterized the early years of the Conservative government,

soon soured because he [Lougheed] ran one of the most secretive governments in Canada. You couldn't get any more information out of them except what he wished to release.⁹

Peter Lougheed took steps to control the flow of information almost immediately after taking power. Don Sellar recalls,

You could camp right outside the Premier's door when Manning and Strom were around. But under Lougheed it wasn't very long before he closed off that whole corridor. His secretary out front acted as a gate-keeper. That was the end of listening

⁸ Some journalists felt control of the agenda wavered during Lougheed's final years as Premier. The circumstances of this situation will be expanded upon later in the thesis.

⁹ Interview, Feb. 28, 1990. Subsequent citations will be identified as: Oak

for the sounds of Cabinet Ministers yelling at each other throughout the day.¹⁰

Bill Sass, a reporter for the Edmonton Journal maintained that in an effort to control the flow of government Lougheed exerted tight control over his cabinet ministers. According to Sass,

He [Lougheed] controlled the flow of information, he controlled the ministers to the point that when a federal budget is read we would literally run and spread out with ten reporters and try to grab individual ministers within minutes of that budget, because ten minutes later they would all tell you the same thing.¹¹

One of the first acts of the government was to institutionalize the dissemination of government information by expanding the Public Affairs Bureau.¹² The Public Affairs Bureau (PAB) is responsible for government communications. Members of the PAB were dispersed throughout various government departments and were responsible for disseminating government information about each department. The PAB has a wire service known as the Alberta Communications Network, which is connected to all news operations in the province to

¹⁰ Sellar.

¹¹ Interview, March 4, 1990. Subsequent citations will be identified as: Sass.

¹² Epp, 1984, p.42.

assist in the expedient release of information. Information is usually dispersed in the form of audio-visual clips for the electronic media or press releases, which provide basic information about an issue or program. Some of the smaller weekly newspapers utilize this information virtually unchanged. The major news outlets however alter the information to suit their needs.¹³ The PAB filtered information to the media making available information that the government wanted to make public, information that generally shed it in a positive light.

Calgary Herald reporter, Geoff White, contends that Lougheed's government's penchant for secrecy often resulted in obstruction and reduced the flow of news in the province. Journalists often found it difficult to attain even the most mundane information about how a particular program operated.¹⁴ When Lougheed did decide to make information public he took great care in doing so. Major government announcements were carefully planned. According to Lee Richardson, all proposed policies were first beaten to death in caucus so there was not much left to argue about by the time the policy was presented in the legislature. Richardson also said,

Lougheed planned ahead and that way we worked in

¹³ All information regarding the PAB was acquired through interviews with PAB employees.

¹⁴ Interview, Feb. 7, 1990. Subsequent citations will be identified as: White.

all potential variables. We covered all the bases and anticipated where opposition is going to be so there aren't the conflicts. When there was the inevitable conflict there was opportunity to reason a reply to that difficulty.¹⁵

Richardson believes it is critical to be prepared to respond to criticisms promptly, because politicians appear to have something to hide when they delay response to media queries. Loughheed was very careful in responding to the media. There were a number of considerations Loughheed took into account when composing his responses to the media. First, Loughheed maintained that he respected the necessity of journalists to ask questions, however, he did not believe he was obliged to respond to all questions. Loughheed asserts,

The key thing is that they [the journalists] respect you. I wouldn't feel obliged to tell them, they knew perfectly well what I should be telling them and what I shouldn't. When they ask you a question that you really shouldn't answer and then you do answer, they don't respect that. He admires that I'm not dumb enough to give him an answer.¹⁶

Loughheed also believed that in responding to the media you never lie or exaggerate, because the media keep good records

¹⁵ Interview, Feb.8, 1990. Subsequent citations will be identified as: Richardson.

¹⁶ Loughheed.

and could verify what you said. Well-kept records also precluded Lougheed from promising things he could not produce. He explains,

Remember, they also keep good records. So don't say I'll tell you next month, they'll be there and you better be ready. Say I'm not sure when I can give you an answer on that.¹⁷

Joe Hutton added another insight about Lougheed's method of responding to the media, particularly when making an important announcement. Hutton asserts that it is critical to supply the media with as much background information as possible at the time of the announcement. Consequently, all government announcements were accompanied by a media package that included all pertinent background information about the policy. Hutton believed additional information was imperative because, "When there is no supplemental information is when the problems start because they start interpreting what it means".¹⁸ Edmonton Journal reporter, Duncan Thorne, made an interesting observation regarding message content. Thorne found that Lougheed rarely made radical changes. Rather, he would gradually shift government policy over a period of time. Thorne asserts,

No politician likes being accused of reversing himself. So what you do is gradually lead things

¹⁷ Lougheed.

¹⁸ Hutton.

around so people aren't aware there's a reversal taking place.¹⁹

Consequently, examination of the nuances of Lougheed's message become very important. The development of a communication strategy was not the sole responsibility of the Press Secretary, usually about four or five people were involved, including cabinet ministers.²⁰ However, consultation did not stop with government officials, professionals in private industry and even senior media people were consulted to formulate a consensus about the optimal way to communicate a major initiative. Liepart described some of the factors that would be considered in developing a communication strategy,

You take into account not necessarily the criticism but where you would get the most amount of exposure, be it good or bad...The things that would be taken into consideration would be such things as timing, whether other announcements were going on at the same time, where to make it and how, these kinds of things.²¹

Once the strategy had been formulated it was a fairly simple matter to initiate the plan of action. Because,

There weren't a lot of people stealing your headlines in those days because opposition was

¹⁹ Thorne.

²⁰ Liepart.

²¹ Liepart.

virtually non-existent.²²

One way to ensure significant coverage was to have the Premier personally make the announcement. Journalists believed Lougheed was good copy. Lougheed was good copy not only because he was Premier. He was newsworthy because of the kind of Premier he was. Sheila Pratt, a reporter for both the Calgary Herald and the Edmonton Journal at different times in her career, maintains that,

He was good copy partly because everyone in the province hung on what he said and wanted to hear what he said. Because what Lougheed spoke was probably going to be exactly what happened.²³

The fact that Lougheed was considered to be of such news value made access to him even more coveted. Therefore, access became a potent political resource to control the agenda. The decision to become involved in an issue was ultimately left to the discretion of the Premier himself, "When you read about me in 1979 or 1982 , you were reading about me on the issues I picked".²⁴ Sheila Pratt, suggests that Lougheed made these decisions wisely,

He [Lougheed] knew how to use the press. I don't mean that negatively...He knew when it was best for

²² Wish.

²³ Interview, Feb. 4, 1990. Subsequent citations will be identified as: Pratt.

²⁴ Lougheed.

him to talk and when it was best to make himself available and when there was an issue that he couldn't win by getting involved in so he just wouldn't get involved.²⁵

Lougheed maintains that he chose the issues he spoke on based on the magnitude of the issue,

If there was a serious social problem I would get into that. If it's an issue like energy, I would have to get into that or something involving basic agriculture.²⁶

Ron Liepart explained why Lougheed did not speak on many social issues, although he does qualify this by stating,

It was always underplayed how much involvement he [Lougheed] did have in announcing programs that related to social issues, those type of things. In most social type issues you had a particular minister that was carrying it so he would not want to take away that minister's thunder. A lot of the national issues involved a Premier's Conference or a meeting with the Prime Minister and those would naturally fall into his category.²⁷

The fact that Lougheed did not concentrate his efforts on

²⁵ Pratt.

²⁶ Lougheed.

²⁷ Liepart.

becoming directly involved in social issues was significant because the government tended to be criticized by the media more on domestic issues rather than federal issues or energy concerns. The majority of the journalists interviewed believed that the newspapers were on side with the government on fundamental matters such as federal/provincial relations.

Premier Lougheed has been criticized for being inaccessible to the media. Joe Hutton reacted to this criticism by stating that, "Journalist's pleas for more access to Lougheed was due (sic) to their own selfish self-interests".²⁸ He did not believe it would have been helpful to grant the media any more access to the Premier than they received. Lougheed agrees with Hutton,

I never felt that [inaccessibility] hurt me that much. They [the media] would bitch like hell about it. But as critical as they might have been that I was inaccessible, if you couldn't get me at a drop of a hat, you always could get a minister.²⁹

Although Ron Liepart maintained that there were no set guidelines to determine who gained access to the Premier, it was essential to approach the decision making process in a logical manner since the requests always outnumbered the opportunities to meet with journalists. Consequently,

You would have to judge, certainly those who

²⁸ Hutton.

²⁹ Lougheed.

covered a wide variety would probably get preference over someone who had a narrow focus. For example, Canadian Press, which goes to all newspapers across Canada would probably get preferential treatment to get an individual interview over someone who worked for a small daily newspaper. Certainly, someone from Alberta would receive preferential treatment over someone outside of Alberta. It was a judgement call.³⁰

Judy Wish contends that access depended on timing and the issue,

Of course you manipulated it [access], if you wanted to get a story in the national paper you called the Globe and Mail. It would go through peaks and valleys depending upon the issue you were dealing with. Sometimes you would go underground for a while if you wanted an issue to ride out.³¹

Ron Liepart was emphatic that the government did not use access to Lougheed to reward or punish journalists,

That's a myth that exists. I think in some cases the Premier would specifically request to see someone who had possibly misconstrued a thought or a position of the government so that he could have

³⁰ Liepart.

³¹ Wish.

the opportunity to try and present it properly. But beyond that I couldn't say there was favouritism played. Presumably the media wouldn't like that either. I would think that the media would want to feel as though they were fairly unbiased in their coverage.³²

However, Ken Colby's experience covering Lougheed during his first years in office contradicts Liepart's interpretation about how access was used. Colby asserts that "Manipulation of the media really was that simple, friends and enemies, access or not."³³ Colby believed that he was considered to be the enemy because he worked for CBC. For example, Colby worked on a story on the oil industry for three weeks and was denied access the entire time. He dealt with this by going around the government and talking to people in the oil industry. The resulting story apparently satisfied Lougheed because Colby was given access after that.³⁴ Gordon Jaremko, a journalist for the Calgary Herald, agreed that it was not unusual for new reporters that requested access to the Premier "to be checked out" to see where they were coming from.³⁵ Judy Wish, however, had no qualms about new journalists.

³² Liepart.

³³ Colby.

³⁴ Colby.

³⁵ Interview, Jan.17, 1990. Subsequent citations will be identified as: Jaremko.

According to Wish, "You could almost tell them what to write."³⁶

A majority of the journalists interviewed agreed that Lougheed was not as accessible as they would have liked, however, they did concede that it was generally expected that a political leader, be it a Prime Minister or a Premier, would not be very accessible. Geoff White offered a unique perspective on Lougheed's approach to accessibility,

There were times when he [Lougheed] was almost completely inaccessible for days or weeks at a time. He would use the press, if he didn't see any reason to present a particular point of view at a particular time he didn't see any point in stopping to answer questions. I think he generally thought if he stopped and was open in answering questions and following the journalist's line of questioning and dealt with topics they presented that would sort of create a kind of background noise to the general message he wanted to get across. Essentially, he would have press conferences or do scrums when he wanted to present a position.³⁷

Lougheed appeared to control access to himself not only as a means to control the dissemination of information but to draw special attention to what he did say.

³⁶ Wish.

³⁷ White.

Timing the release of information at advantageous times was another device the Lougheed government utilized a great deal. For example, Kathy Kerr observed,

If they [the government] had an Order in Council that was particularly hot, they often released it late, late in the day after the ministers had left and [there was] literally no one in the department who would be able to answer any of your questions.³⁸

Bill Sass also noted that late night sessions in the legislature were often used to discuss potentially contentious issues,

We tried not to let the sessions go, we always had someone there. Every once in a while something would happen like the hospital insurance plan having major changes...Once when they made major changes to medical health insurance there was a minor speech made by the health minister at a night sitting of the legislature when there were only two reporters present.³⁹

The government tried to minimize the power of the media by not giving them time or notice to follow up the initial story.

Another subtle device Lougheed used to control his

³⁸ Kerr. Orders in Council refer to changes in legislation or government appointments.

³⁹ Sass.

message was that he was difficult to quote. Kerr noted, Lougheed was really hard to quote because he never spoke in complete grammatical sentences. You spent all your time putting in ellipses.⁴⁰

Kerr believed that Lougheed knew what he was doing. She recalled an occasion where Lougheed spoke succinctly and grammatically correct to a television reporter and said ``there's your forty second clip''.⁴¹ Kevin Peterson also found Lougheed difficult to quote. Peterson believed Lougheed did that to control what medium used the information. For example, Peterson described an occasion when Lougheed gave an answer that would work for the press but was impossible to use by the electronic media because he simultaneously tapped a pencil on the table and fumbled through the sentences.⁴²

Lougheed also made efforts to cultivate cooperative relations with some journalists, but he made special efforts with the editorial boards of newspapers. Jeremko observed that,

Another tactic used all the time to deal with journalists; you give them an off-the-record conversation, which can't be quoted, but is very much on-the-record in the sense that it forms the journalist's attitudes. What they are trying to do

⁴⁰ Kerr.

⁴¹ Kerr.

⁴² Peterson. CBC documentary: Lougheed and the Media.

is tell you how to think.⁴³

Fellow Calgary Herald reporter, Geoff White, noted that Lougheed preferred to have off-the-record discussions with the editorial boards. White believed that although editorials do not swing broad public opinion they are read by opinion leaders in the community. Therefore, the opinions expressed in editorials become part of the general discourse within the community. White described how Lougheed used editorial boards,

Quite often if the government was developing a complex policy position he wouldn't indicate it to the front line legislative reporter. He would arrange a meeting with the editorial board of the Edmonton Journal and he would outline it there. There was a kind of psychological tactic there, he would have these meetings and the people who were in on them and knew they were not for attribution felt privileged to receive this inside information and quite often after these meetings the editorials would start to come out basically expressing the Lougheed position on current energy negotiations with Ottawa and were generally supportive. In that way he would begin a consensus among opinion makers in the province.⁴⁴

⁴³ Jaremko.

⁴⁴ White

White maintained that these editorial board meetings would frustrate the efforts of the front line journalists. He cited as an example the 1979 energy talks with the Clark government. White had tried for weeks to determine what the Alberta government's position was, then one day it appeared as a front page editorial in the Edmonton Journal.⁴⁵

Judy Wish believed that Lougheed was very concerned about editorial opinion. Lougheed admits that he was overly sensitive to editorials in his first years as Premier. However, that changed after Lougheed commissioned a poll to determine who read editorials and found that not many people did. In fact, Lougheed admitted that he did not read a single editorial during the 1982 election campaign because he had a plan that he knew would work and did not want to be swayed by what he saw as negative editorials.

Lougheed and his former Press Secretaries insist that all members of the media were treated equally. Lougheed claims that,

If the word gets around that a journalist is getting an inside track then they get ostracized from the others, so you have got to be pretty even handed, even if it comes to someone you don't like or don't trust.⁴⁶

Although Joe Hutton echoed Lougheed's sentiments he did

⁴⁵ White.

⁴⁶ Lougheed.

concede that there were some journalists that he would "bend over backwards for because they were fair and honest" and others he would not be as willing to assist.⁴⁷ To the credit of Lougheed and his Press Secretaries, the majority of the journalists interviewed agreed that they generally were treated equally. However, a number of journalists did mention that a female television reporter who was known for asking "soft" questions did seem to receive favourable treatment from the government.

The Lougheed government also tried to maintain orderliness. Joe Hutton asserts that he never attempted to control what the media said but he did seek an orderly, controlled atmosphere for the Premier to say it in.⁴⁸ For this reason, news conferences were the preferred forum for making announcements. Peter Lougheed explained this preference,

I could do much better at news conferences because I was more in control...In a news conference the person being interviewed is in a much bigger advantage. He's usually sitting down. He's under a controlled environment. His Press Secretary is acknowledging various people to speak to him. He's in control. He's able to concentrate on a question and an answer, he can finish that answer before

⁴⁷ Hutton.

⁴⁸ Hutton.

he's interrupted and then go on to the next question. The mistakes that I made and I see often made, I made in a scrum because a question will come out of your left ear and your not psychologically set for it and it throws you off balance. So Alvei said to people like my successor, try to minimize the scrums, if you find you've got to answer, go and have a news conference with a sit down environment.⁴⁹

In chapter two the utility of "pseudo-events" such as press conferences was discussed. It was suggested that a subtle function of news conferences was the image it can create of a well informed leader who is in control. Press conferences held by Lougheed were organized to take advantage of this image making opportunity. The Premier was always briefed about possible questions that could be asked.⁵⁰ In fact, Hutton went so far as to suggest questions to journalists, although there was never any agreements made in a "you owe me" fashion.⁵¹

News conferences were always held in the Cabinet Room in Edmonton or the Press Room in the Premier's office in Calgary.⁵² Before the Premier entered the room the

⁴⁹ Lougheed.

⁵⁰ Hutton.

⁵¹ Hutton.

⁵² Hutton.

journalists were briefed about the ground rules by the Press Secretary. The ground rules were essentially that the media must behave in an orderly fashion by raising their hand and waiting to be acknowledged by the Press Secretary.⁵³ Lougheed would usually begin the conference with a prepared statement, which served the dual purpose of setting the agenda and decreasing the amount of time remaining for questions. The experiences of a number of the journalists interviewed suggest that Lougheed was a master at controlling the agenda. For example, Geoff White found that,

Questions were often a kind of charade because he [Lougheed] often wouldn't answer the question directly. In answering the question he would always revert to his original theme. He repeated over and over again throughout the press conference the one or two or three things he wanted people to hear. He saw us [the media] as a conduit for his message, he brushed aside the critical, scrutinizing role that we had to play; and did it quite effectively. He would have a cooperative manner but glide over the question asked, to the answer he wanted to give.⁵⁴

Kathy Kerr also found that Lougheed did not diverge from the message he wanted to communicate in his press conferences,

⁵³ Hutton.

⁵⁴ White.

We could hammer away at him for forty minutes and he never would let down his guard and let you know anything else.⁵⁵

Consequently, press conferences were not an avenue for tough probing questions. Sheila Pratt maintains,

We [the media] always asked the tough questions but we didn't always get good answers or the issue could never get carried very far.⁵⁶

Pratt recalled an occasion when she was obliged to ask Lougheed a tough question and did not get very far with his response. The question was about a senior government official that was under investigation,

I knew he [Lougheed] was going to be really angry about this, because this is the kind of thing that really angered him. When I asked him he rushed passed me and said, "I hope you can sleep tonight". What bothered me was he thought that wasn't a reasonable question to ask.⁵⁷

While Lougheed would ignore the tough questions and express his discontent at being asked the type of question that was asked by Sheila Pratt, he would be very complimentary to reporters who asked the questions he wanted to answer. Ken

⁵⁵ Kerr. Interview, Jan.17, 1990. Subsequent citations will be identified as: Kerr.

⁵⁶ Pratt.

⁵⁷ Pratt.

Colby maintained that press conferences in Alberta during the 1970's were not like the intense, hard edged affairs in Ottawa,

Lougheed stroked the media. Lougheed would be effusive in responding if asked a question he wanted to answer. His response would scream for a hard follow-up and the journalist wouldn't. If the journalist looked like he was going to ask a follow-up, Lougheed would move on to someone else before you could.⁵⁸

Lougheed was at a further advantage in press conferences because of his penchant for holding press conferences at eight o'clock in the morning. According to Calgary Herald reporter Kathy Kerr,

He loved 8:00 AM press conferences and then he would disappear into his office for the rest of the day; and reporters don't like to get up at 7:00 AM.⁵⁹

However, the advantage of Lougheed being a "morning person" while most journalists were not sometimes backfired. Kerr pointed out that an early morning press conference could be a strategic error because it gave journalists the rest of the day to search out opposing viewpoints.

⁵⁸ Colby.

⁵⁹ Interview, Jan.17, 1990. Subsequent citations will be identified as: Kerr.

In addition to news conferences Lougheed also held occasional "availability sessions". Ron Liepart explained the necessity to have availability sessions in addition to news conferences,

At times we would hold a general news conference which we refer to as a media availability session in which there was no planned announcement but we felt it was time that the Premier was made available to answer general questions so we couldn't be criticized about not being available.⁶⁰

Thus, availability sessions differed from news conferences in that Lougheed did not have a set agenda to discuss with the media, rather it was used a device to satisfy a number of journalist's requests at once.

Availability sessions may also have assisted Lougheed in avoiding scrums. His aversion to scrums was shared by some members of the media. For example, Kathy Kerr contends that,

Scrums are terrible journalism because you never get the real story out of them. But it's a great way for a cabinet minister to just drop a bomb and run. Run into his office and be totally unavailable for the rest of the day. No one in the department would talk about it, so you've got this one statement. If it's a big story you have no choice but to run it even though you don't know all

⁶⁰ Liepart.

the circumstances involved.⁶¹

Kerr noted that Lougheed rarely floated trial balloons in this manner, however,

Ministers would throw something out, make big headlines for a week. Then it would disappear and reappear totally modified.⁶²

Therefore, scrums are risky for the politician and the reporter. The politician is at risk of revealing more than they intended and the reporter is at risk of falling prey to a "trial balloon".

While press conferences were open to journalists from all media, personal interviews with the Premier allowed for more control over a specific medium. When given a choice Lougheed preferred television. More specifically, he favoured a television program he did periodically known as "Conversation With the Premier". According to Lougheed,

I did a program called "Conversation With the Premier" on television. That was the best vehicle I had because it was me talking to you in the living room. Nobody could feather me the way a reporter could do in an interview and distort me. I was talking to you. So I consider the television

⁶¹ Kerr.

⁶² Kerr.

by far the most effective communication.⁶³

Don Sellar contends that Lougheed preferred controlled television interviews because he could avoid having his message filtered and interpreted by reporters. George Oak agreed with this contention,

They hate to have their message filtered or interpreted. What they liked best is television. They like to directly present their message to the people. They do not like to see analysis of their motive or their moves in print. If they can't control it they dislike it. To Lougheed control is everything, including the media and his own government.⁶⁴

Although Lougheed appeared to prefer television he did not ignore print. A number of the journalists interviewed believed that Lougheed was reasonably accessible for interviews, agreeing to do on average about two or three a year. Newspaper interviews were granted without ground rules or a tacit understanding that the interview would result in a positive article.⁶⁵ According to Ron Liepart ground rules were not necessary for interviews because "Lougheed could take

⁶³ Lougheed.

⁶⁴ Oak.

⁶⁵ All the journalists interviewed were agreed on this point.

care of himself".⁶⁶ Duncan Thorne, a reporter for the Edmonton Journal, recalled an example of how Lougheed would control the direction an interview would take,

I remember one case where Don Braid and I were interviewing Lougheed at the Journal. Whenever we asked any question he didn't like he would begin shuffling his papers, as if he was about to go. You'd have to come in quickly with a very neutral question and he'd calm down. It was an interesting tactic to keep you from asking anything too objectionable.⁶⁷

Fellow journalist George Oak agreed that Lougheed was able to take care of himself during interviews,

You would get an interview with him and he would tell you one thing. When I was with Southam news he would want to get a message out to the eastern newspapers so he would have you in to get out that message. And then he was bored with the rest of the interview because he wasn't going to tell you anything else.⁶⁸

Lougheed simply would not release more information than he wanted, despite the efforts of journalists.

Television interviews, on the other hand, were subject to

⁶⁶ Liepart.

⁶⁷ Thorne.

⁶⁸ Oak.

ground rules. Judy Wish explained that CTV journalist Adrian Clarkson edited an interview Lougheed did with her in such a way that the result was unflattering to the Premier.⁶⁹ Consequently, Joe Hutton decided that,

Television interviews were done live, so they couldn't be edited and they wouldn't be manipulated by journalists editing the interview in a biased manner to support their bias.⁷⁰

This action once again took control away from journalists and maximized control by the government.

Speeches were another means for Lougheed to communicate to the electorate. Although journalists were often present when Lougheed made speeches to various groups they were not always allowed to question him afterward. Liepart explains this tactic in the following way,

In some cases, if the Premier was making a particular speech and was trying to get a message across, he would not be available after the speech because he really wanted the message from the speech to be the one that was covered as opposed to some comment that would be made afterwards and picked up and highlighted.⁷¹

Thus Lougheed sought to diffuse the power of the media by

⁶⁹ Wish.

⁷⁰ Hutton.

⁷¹ Liepart.

controlling the release of information and presenting his message in manner that would result in as little interference by the media as possible.

Lougheed believed the media treated him fairly on most issues, however, in some respects he felt he was treated unfairly, Lougheed contends that,

We thought we were unfairly treated because of our big majority and that we couldn't get the facts out. For example, we would present a budget and we'd read it in the paper. What you would read was the opposition and all the negative comment but you'd have to go to page B19 for the highlights of the Alberta government budget. I never thought that they were doing their job of communicating.⁷²

Lougheed did not rate the Alberta Press Gallery highly,

There are some very able people, but the biggest problem is the constant turnover. I have to rate them relatively weak because the turnover was too rapid...Almost half of them [Journalists] would change every year, at the end of three years there would be only two of them still there. I was dealing with uninformed reporters with very little background. Towards the end of it all they saw was this huge government below them as though we'd been there for ever. Of course I remembered when we'd

⁷² Lougheed.

been in opposition with six members. But from their perspective, looking down on us we were nothing but big government.⁷³

The rapid turn-over in the legislative gallery is not unique to Alberta. Frederick Fletcher had noted that a high rate of turn over in press galleries is common place in the provinces and results in the press having a short "collective memory". Lougheed believed that the short collective memory of the Alberta press gallery resulted in an "under-dog mentality" among the media which led to journalist's viewing themselves as the opposition.⁷⁴ Bill Sass agreed that Lougheed's overwhelming majority in the legislature may have made things more difficult for Lougheed,

For a long time, it seemed like forever, we had the six man opposition, it created a sort of special atmosphere. Lougheed may have done better with the press with a bigger opposition. We would have been less focused on what they were doing, letting the opposition do more of the work. But we weren't doing it for political gain so our work was a little more straight forwardly critical not slanted critical.⁷⁵

That is to say, journalists would examine a particular policy

⁷³ Lougheed.

⁷⁴ Lougheed.

⁷⁵ Sass.

not from a particular political bias but simply to get both sides of the story.

Lougheed recognized that as a result of his government's unique electoral position he would be carefully scrutinized by the media. As a consequence, Lougheed maintained that, "You don't get upset with what you think is unfair to the same degree. Then you say to yourself, I have to communicate better."⁷⁶ Ron Liepart offered some insight into the process of communicating better,

First of all we didn't ever believe you relied only on the media to communicate your message. That was the role of the MLA, ministers, and the Premier himself in town hall meetings and speaking engagements...In some cases you used other means, it may have meant a direct mail campaign, advertising, or a brochure approach.⁷⁷

Therefore, the government was able to counter what it saw as the media's underdog mentality by utilizing the resources the government had at its disposal to ensure its message got through unfiltered by the media.

Lougheed's criticism of the rapid turnover in the Alberta Press Gallery highlights Lougheed's appreciation for well informed journalists. Although the majority of journalists interviewed noted that Lougheed generally avoided tough

⁷⁶ Lougheed.

⁷⁷ Liepart.

questions, Bill Sass found that at times Lougheed would respond to difficult questions if they were well researched, he states,

One thing Lougheed appreciated was reporters that did their homework and had a working knowledge of what they were asking about- if they even had the answer before they asked the question. He appreciated good questions, he didn't mind answering ones that were tough but based on solid background.⁷⁸

Thus, Lougheed did not balk at all difficult or awkward questions if he felt they were based on fact and not on a desire to create a dramatic piece.

It was difficult to contact journalists that covered Lougheed during his first term as Premier since the majority of reporters are no longer with the Herald or the Journal or lived in Alberta. Of the journalists that were interviewed, the general impression was of a relationship characterized by respectful distance. According to Don Sellar, "He [Lougheed] was cordial, but you knew he was always very careful around us".⁷⁹ Judy Wish worked closely with the media during the early years and found that many of the journalists were in awe of Lougheed: "They were wolves at the door before you got them

⁷⁸ Sass.

⁷⁹ Sellar.

in and then they were little lambs".⁸⁰ Edmonton Journal reporter, George Oak, agreed that the press gallery may not have been very aggressive during Lougheed's first term in office,

Journalism in the province was extremely unsophisticated when he came to power in 1971. They were so happy to see a new face after 35 years. I think they suspended their critical faculties for about ten years until the recession came in '81 and then things started to change, they started to be a little critical.⁸¹

It appears that the willingness of the journalists to criticize Lougheed toward his last term in office strained the relationship between the media and the Premier. The majority of the journalists that covered Lougheed during his last term in office maintain that relations were not friendly or cooperative during those years. Bill Sass described the relationship in the following manner,

The relationship ranged from aloof to fairly hostile, although it was mainly aloof. He [Lougheed] didn't particularly like to talk to us.⁸²

Thus, Lougheed's relationship with the media seemed to sour

⁸⁰ Wish.

⁸¹ Oak.

⁸² Sass.

over his tenure as Premier.

The change in the journalist's attitude appears to be due to a number of factors. In part it was a reaction to the frustration of covering a government that had been so secretive for so many years. Duncan Thorne observed that,

During the time I was covering him, his popularity among journalists certainly dropped. He was a very secretive fellow, he kept reporters well at bay. I think after a while that rubbed reporters the wrong way.⁸³

Tense relations may also have been exacerbated by the changing times in Alberta. As George Oak alluded to, the recession brought with it new challenges for Lougheed. According to Sheila Pratt,

Its the old thing when the media smells blood they [politicians] become more vulnerable to criticism. After '82, part of the reason the stories changed was because the issues had changed a lot. In his [Lougheed] first term he was riding high and was "Champion of the West", representing Alberta's interests on the national stage, fighting over the constitution and fighting against the National Energy Program (NEP). All of those issues which united everybody to the external enemy. After '82 a lot of those issues were gone. The NEP was being

⁸³ Thorne.

dismantled. Alberta was heading into a recession. Shortly after the '82 election the economy went on a real downturn, unemployment soared. So inevitably the coverage is going to become more critical because the problems suddenly become all in his backyard.⁸⁴

Another factor that effected the relationship between Lougheed and the media was that the media had a record on which to judge him; a record of government policy and a record of media manipulation. According to Sass, journalists were learning from past experience,

In any government there is an evolution in the relationship. People become more familiar with issues, including the journalists themselves. Its harder to put one over on you. I remember the 1979 election they had a billion dollar giveaway to municipalities and they were banging the drum on that, 800 million of that was going right back to government, so they didn't give away a thing.⁸⁵

Duncan Thorne has described the importance of carrying an institutional memory of Lougheed's methods and policies,

For instance, there would be an endless flow of press releases and it wouldn't be that they were untruthful, it's just that they would leave out

⁸⁴ Pratt.

⁸⁵ Sass.

great amounts of crucial information which would give a completely different side to it. They would, for instance, put out a release that gave the sense of a new program and you would find out the money was already made available under a seemingly different name. The government would be constantly re-announcing terrific programs.⁸⁶

After years of dealing with Lougheed some journalists developed a keen sense of how the gallery was being manipulated.

The manipulative tactics that the government utilized to control coverage caused tension between the media and the Premier. All of the journalists interviewed were aware that the government attempted to manipulate them. Generally the reporters viewed the existence of manipulative tactics as a challenge rather than a serious problem. For example, Gordon Jaremko believed that, "There's nothing evil about it, it's part of the business. But I was always aware of it."⁸⁷ Perhaps the journalists' acceptance of a certain amount of manipulation by the government is due to the potential for an even better story if the manipulative tactic backfired. According to Kathy Kerr,

Quite often it backfired because it's a signal to a journalist. Even if you can't get it the next day,

⁸⁶ Thorne.

⁸⁷ Jaremko.

which is when some of the electronic media drop out of it, usually there's enough bodies in print, especially in large papers like the Herald and the Journal that you can really squirrel away at it and you get harder hitting stories sometimes. So it can backfire.⁸⁸

Lougheed appeared to concur with Kerr. He believes that journalists can identify manipulative techniques, "They backfire almost always".⁸⁹ Obvious media events such as photo opportunities are an example of manipulative efforts that may fail. Thorne maintains that,

You recognize when a story is a non-story. You might just write a few paragraphs so you know you've done it.⁹⁰

Photo opportunities were rarely used by Lougheed. However, newspapers have an advantage over the electronic media in combatting manipulative techniques used by the government. This advantage is primarily due to print journalists operating under less stringent deadline pressures than the electronic media. Bill Sass believes that print journalists often have more time to do investigative work:

Most journalists are generally pretty fast. About 70 percent of the news is fairly routine, you can

⁸⁸ Kerr.

⁸⁹ Lougheed.

⁹⁰ Thorne.

bang out a pretty good story in an hour and a half. That gives you a lot of time. We also had a large bureau so we could share the routine work. It gave us a chance to look at other things. Every day we had one guy whose basic responsibility was to go down and work at the library to make sure they didn't sneak anything by us. There's a certain luxury of time. We look at papers, television doesn't look at papers very long. We also had a larger staff. We had a little more luxury, but they had the ultimate luxury of having us do the work, see it in the paper in the morning and presenting it to the whole city a half hour after the paper comes out. In CBC you almost heard the sounds of the paper rattle in the morning.⁹¹

As Sass suggests the press often uncover stories embarrassing to the government by reading public documents. According to George Oak,

One of the best ways to get a good story is to go through the public accounts book and look at all the anomalies and discrepancies to direct your questions to.⁹²

Despite Lougheed's efforts to ensure supportive coverage in the media or perhaps because of Lougheed's efforts,

⁹¹ Sass.

⁹² Oak.

journalists did produce critical coverage of Lougheed's activities. However, reporters found themselves in a peculiar position, it seemed that the Alberta public was not prepared to read critical stories about their Premier. George Oak maintained that "People in Alberta generally believe the politician rather than the reporter".⁹³ Lougheed may have been responsible for this situation himself. Ron Liepart believed it was because the public trusted Lougheed,

Trust is the absolute key thing. Flamboyance, good speaking ability, all those other things, throw them out the window if the person on the end who you're attempting to get the message through to does not trust you it means nothing.⁹⁴

Trust is imperative, but Sheila Pratt had another view of why the public suspected criticism of Premier Lougheed.

There was a special culture in Alberta along with that, he sort of built up and promoted, it was sort of like his election slogan: "Doers and Knockers". You're for him or you're against him. That becomes a very big factor in how the public perceives the media reporting and the validity of reporting what you call good news or bad news stories for them. That's a really significant background to how he and the media interacted. The knockers were people

⁹³ Oak.

⁹⁴ Liepart.

who disagreed with them, so the whole idea of political debate and dissent was not really legitimized...It was almost a kind of, I don't want to overstate this, but it was almost a loyalty test. That's an interesting political cultural background for any public debate. The opposition doesn't have the legitimacy it might have in another jurisdiction therefore negative stories would be seen to be against Alberta.⁹⁵

The airline ticket scandal that Lougheed endured is a good example of how the public were resistant to criticism of their Premier. The ticket incident involved Lougheed receiving free airline tickets. When it was determined that this gift was inappropriate Lougheed took out a personal loan to cover the cost of all the airline tickets he had received. Duncan Thorne described what it was like for a journalist to cover that story,

There was a sense if you pushed an issue rather far the readers just didn't like it. I think particularly of the airline tickets case. It was a lousy story for him...The general sentiment of the public was, why are you going after Peter Lougheed, he is our hero sort of thing. I think at the end of his reign that "sacred cow" had disappeared and people were getting fed up with him. He was

⁹⁵ Pratt.

getting a lot of heat and he knew it.⁹⁶

Although Lougheed admits he went through a tough time with the press as a result of the scandal, he did learn a good lesson as a result. Lougheed asserts that Kevin Peterson told him that he handled the situation well because once he found himself in a difficult situation he presented the whole story immediately, so the media only got one story and were unable to drag it out over a period of days.⁹⁷

George Oak believed that efforts to criticize Lougheed were further frustrated because of support for Lougheed among journalists at the Edmonton Journal.

At the Edmonton Journal there was a lot of what I call "lififers" on the desk who were Conservative by nature and they would try and bury these stories and play them down if they could get away with it. It wasn't publishers orders from on high, it was an endemic feeling among some people in the newspaper. There were a lot of older people on the desk that always wanted to play it safe because the history of the paper up until Patrick O'Callaghan was a very safe, dull Tory newspaper. It was still Tory when O'Callaghan came but he wanted to stir up controversy.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Thorne.

⁹⁷ Lougheed.

⁹⁸ Oak.

Duncan Thorne agreed with his colleague that the prominence a critical story received depended more upon who was on the desk than on the policy of the newspaper.⁹⁹

Lougheed's reaction to critical stories varied depending upon the article itself and the paper in which it appeared. Sass shed some light on what would determine reaction to a critical article,

If you were right or at least making an argument that was plausible then the impact was negligible. They wouldn't comment on it, you might even gain some stature. But if you were wrong, they made sure you knew about it.¹⁰⁰

A number of journalists agreed that if they felt you had misconstrued the government's position you were informed, if not by Lougheed himself, then certainly by one of his staff. Gordon Jaremko contends that Lougheed was rather proficient at lecturing you if he took exception to something you wrote. Apparently you knew he was displeased when he spoke to you from behind his desk, friendlier discussions often took place on the couch in his office.¹⁰¹ Reactions to negative articles could be much more severe than a discussion in the Premier's office. Duncan Thorne remembers being "frozen out"

⁹⁹ Thorne. People "on the desk" refer to staff who edit the copy after the journalist has submitted it.

¹⁰⁰ Sass.

¹⁰¹ Jaremko.

for a time after he wrote a critical article about Lougheed not releasing information about a trip he was taking to San Francisco. Thorne states that as a result of that article,

I was totally frozen out, he wouldn't look at me.

I think he did sort of answer my question but the iciness was incredible. He decided that I wasn't worth cultivating any further.¹⁰²

As discussed in chapter two, being "frozen out" can have serious repercussions for the journalist because the government can make it very difficult for them to produce their stories.

George Oak was also the recipient of Lougheed's scorn. He maintained that Lougheed was always polite and straightforward with him personally. However, as a result of his negative articles a whispering campaign began, suggesting that Oak was an eastern Canadian. When Oak made it clear that he was from the west it was suggested that he had been corrupted by working in the east. Negative reactions would also include government officials ridiculing stories and picking out small technical errors in articles.¹⁰³ Oak claims that the provincial government went so far as to pull advertisements from the Edmonton Journal in retaliation for the negative coverage they had been receiving. However, the government denied such action and it was difficult to prove.

¹⁰² Thorne.

¹⁰³ Oak.

It was the general perception of a majority of the reporters interviewed that the publisher usually distanced themselves from the copy produced by front line reporters. O'Callaghan agreed that it was inappropriate for a publisher to tell a reporter how to write a story.¹⁰⁴ However, O'Callaghan did concede that publishers of newspapers are not without influence. Publishers wield their influence through the allocation of resources, setting editorial policy and writing columns themselves.¹⁰⁵ O'Callaghan observed that his predecessor at the Edmonton Journal may have been overly cautious and liked to see himself as part of the establishment. O'Callaghan, on the other hand, did not see himself as part of the establishment. Rather, he viewed himself as an adversary with the role of a watchdog.¹⁰⁶ In fact, O'Callaghan declared the Edmonton Journal as the official opposition to the government. O'Callaghan wrote to Lougheed after the 1979 provincial election stating that he did not support monopolistic governments and in his view the Alberta government was as close to a monopoly as it was going to get.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, O'Callaghan increased Edmonton Journal representation in the gallery to seven. Bill Sass who worked for the Journal at that time, described how

¹⁰⁴ O'Callaghan

¹⁰⁵ O'Callaghan.

¹⁰⁶ O'Callaghan.

¹⁰⁷ O'Callaghan.

O'Callaghan's proclamation influenced the media's approach to covering the government.

They [the government] were a little more wary of the Edmonton Journal journalists. But then again we were a little more aggressive. We had the largest bureau there. For the most part not even the most minor press release would go by without some scrutiny.¹⁰⁸

Geoff White suggested that the publisher at the Herald, before O'Callaghan, was more involved with administration than with newspaper content. He left the Editor in Chief responsible for the content of the newspaper.¹⁰⁹

ANALYSIS

The Grossman-Kumar model is a useful framework to put the results of the media relations section into context. Since Premier Lougheed was viewed as a welcome change in leadership after thirty five years of Social Credit government, a lengthy period of alliance between the media and the government would not have been surprising. However, journalist's accounts of covering Lougheed suggest that the Premier entered into an extended period of detachment shortly after he took office. Premier Lougheed's tight control over the dissemination of

¹⁰⁸ Sass.

¹⁰⁹ White.

information and his preference for controlled, infrequent exchanges with the press provide evidence of a highly formalized relationship. The strength of Lougheed's majority government in the legislature may be responsible for the structured nature of media relations. Grossman and Kumar suggest that detachment may occur more quickly in governments that have little concern for rallying public support for their policies.

Although the detachment phase best describes the relations between Lougheed and the Alberta media, a period of conflict was also evident from the accounts of journalists that covered him in his last term as Premier. The combination of an economic downturn in Alberta and a more aggressive press gallery appear to have resulted in a period of conflict during Lougheed's final term as Premier.

The examination of journalist's accounts and accounts of government officials suggest that press relations in Alberta did follow a similar pattern to the Grossman-Kumar model. However, the sequence of the three periods was different from that articulated by Grossman and Kumar: alliance, detachment and conflict. Grossman and Kumar describe a cycle that begins with alliance and ends with detachment, with conflict characterizing the middle phase of the cycle. Lougheed's government appeared to move quickly from a brief period of alliance to an extended period of detachment and to have ended with a period of conflict. Lougheed's unique electoral

position may account for the anomalous pattern in Alberta. However, another possible explanation may be the presence of a unique journalistic tradition in Alberta. The next chapter will present a historical analysis of political reporting in Alberta to further examine this possibility. The historical analysis will be followed by the presentation of the content analysis of newspaper coverage received by Premier Lougheed during his first and last term in office. This empirical analysis will shed further light on the utility of the Grossman-Kumar model and the nature of Peter Lougheed's relationship with the press.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESS COVERAGE IN ALBERTA

Alberta's unique political setting presents serious questions and challenges to the news media. Although different parties have governed at different times, the politics of Alberta have been characterized by one party dominance with a weak opposition divided among different political parties. The government was generally led by a strong leader who enjoyed considerable electoral support. Given the relative absence of an effective opposition, the press is faced with the question of whether it should take upon itself the responsibility of being the primary critic of the government, or be supportive of a government that is so popular with their readers. To some degree the question can be reduced to how the Premier is to be covered, since the Premier is the symbol and pinnacle of authority in the government.

One can argue that there are three basic factors that determined how Lougheed was covered. First, the general pattern of government-press relations in Alberta. More specifically, does one-party dominance create a compliant or critical press? I will argue that there has been a history of sharp confrontation between the media and politicians in Alberta. Second, press coverage of Lougheed may have been determined by the special circumstances of the times. Indeed

the 1970's were a time of unprecedented growth but also of intense confrontation between Alberta and Ottawa. Third, Lougheed may have been an especially gifted and attractive politician who had a unique hold over the press. Each of these factors must be considered. Chapter three focused on Lougheed's techniques and relationship with the press. This chapter will describe the history of political press coverage in Alberta and the nature of the times in which Lougheed governed.

An examination of the history of relations between the government in power and the press suggests that despite the strong electoral support enjoyed by governments, the Premiers were often subject to critical coverage in the press. There are a number of reasons for this. First alliances between newspapers and political parties were clearly evident throughout much of Alberta's history. The Edmonton Journal and Calgary Herald have traditionally supported the Conservative party. Conservative leanings can be traced to their founders and continued after they were purchased by the Southam chain. The Edmonton Bulletin and the Calgary Albertan were Liberal papers. The Albertan, later became the official voice of the Social Credit government. Only the Edmonton Journal and Calgary Herald are in existence today, in fact the Calgary Herald has the distinction of being the oldest newspaper in Alberta. The Bulletin was purchased by the Journal in 1950 and the Albertan ceased production in 1980 and

was replaced by the Calgary Sun.¹ There are also a number of weekly newspapers in operation in Alberta. The weeklies have tended to concentrate on local issues and were not as politically influential.² The major dailies will be the focus of attention in this study.

The close ties between the major dailies and political parties in the early part of Alberta's history were readily apparent. For example, Frank Oliver, editor and publisher of the Edmonton Bulletin was Minister of the Interior in Prime Minister Laurier's cabinet from 1905 to 1911. W.A. Buchanan, founder and editor of the Lethbridge Herald was an MLA in A.C. Rutherford's government and was elected to Ottawa as a Liberal member of parliament for Medicine Hat. W.M. Davidson, editor of the Albertan, was a Liberal MLA in 1917. However, ownership and political affiliation did not always coincide. For example, two prominent Conservatives, Senator Lougheed and R.B. Bennett were in the curious position of lending financial support to the Albertan, a Liberal paper.³ Apparently they had purchased a 49 percent interest in the paper in the hope of eventually gaining control of the

¹ Steele, C.F. (1961). Prairie editor: The life and times of Buchanan of Lethbridge. Ryerson Press, Toronto. p.37.

² Scratch, J.R. (1967). The Editorial Reaction of the Alberta Press to the Bennet Government: 1930-1935. Department of History, University of Alberta Thesis. pg.9

³ Bruce, C. (1968). News and the Southams. Macmillan Company of Canada, Toronto.

paper. Control did not materialize leaving them in a politically uncomfortable position.⁴

POLITICS AND MEDIA IN ALBERTA

There have been four eras of political control since Alberta's first election in 1905. The Liberal party was in power from 1905 to 1921, followed by: the United Farmers of Alberta (U.F.A.), from 1921-1935; the Social Credit party, from 1935-1971; and the Progressive Conservative party, from 1971 to the present. An examination of the relationship between each of these governments and the press will provide an overview of both political history and media development in Alberta.

THE LIBERAL PARTY ERA

The first provincial election was held November 9, 1905. The Liberal party was a natural choice to govern since its federal counterpart was in a position to distribute federal patronage to the province.⁵ Alberta's first election was described by L.G. Thomas as a,

campaign of promises and personalities; the staple

⁴ Bruce, 1968.

⁵ Flanagan, T. (1973). Stability and change in Alberta provincial elections. Alberta Historical Review. 21(4).p.2

of provincial elections, scandals and complaints of ministerial incompetence were lacking.⁶

The personalities involved were R.B. Bennett, leader of the Conservative party, who would eventually become the Prime Minister of Canada and A.C. Rutherford, Alberta's first Premier. Alberta's first election was won by negative campaigning. The Liberal's concentrated their campaign efforts on personal attacks on Bennett. This strategy was effective because of Bennett's association with the unpopular Canadian Pacific Railway (C.P.R.) and because, "Few men in Canadian public life have been more admired or more disliked than Bennett".⁷ The effectiveness of the negative campaign was born out by the size of the Liberal's victory; they won twenty three of the twenty five seats in the legislature.⁸ A pattern of one party dominance had begun.

The Calgary Albertan and Edmonton Bulletin were supportive of the Liberal party. However, the significance of the railways to the province transcended traditional lines of support. For example, the Calgary Herald, a Conservative paper, argued that the railroad issue was important enough to warrant support for the Liberal government's efforts in developing a provincial Department of Railways. In fact

⁶ Thomas, L.G. (1959). The Liberal Party. University of Toronto Press, Toronto. p.23.

⁷ Thomas, 1959, p.28.

⁸ Thomas, 1959, p.28.

Premier Rutherford in making his proposal seemed to be responding to a series of articles on the railroad that appeared in the Herald.⁹

The periodic support the Liberal government received from the Calgary Herald did not please the Conservative party. Their dissatisfaction grew to the point where they threatened to create a new paper of their own. The Conservative party wanted the Herald to employ Conservative editorial writers and have party leaders dictate editorial policy. The Southams, who owned the paper, favoured such a plan. J.H. Woods, vice president and managing director of the Herald however was strongly opposed to Conservative politicians dictating the policy of the Herald.¹⁰ Woods eventually reached an agreement with the president of the Conservative party association to forgo creation of new paper in return for more positive attention to Conservative policies by the Herald. The association reciprocated by using their organization to boost the Herald's circulation.¹¹

Editorial support for the Liberal government ceased when the Herald uncovered the Alberta and Great Waterways Scandal of 1910.¹² The scandal involved the sale of bonds for

⁹ Bruce, C. (1968). News and the Southams. Macmillan Co. of Canada. Toronto.

¹⁰ Bruce, 1968, p.121.

¹¹ Bruce, 1968, p.123.

¹² Bruce. 1968.

railway construction. It was rumoured that members of the Liberal party were profiting from the sale of these bonds. An inquiry into the dealings of the G.W.R.C. concluded that the "government could no longer be regarded as enjoying the trust of the province."¹³ Premier Rutherford resigned and Arthur L. Sifton became Premier. Sifton remained as Premier until he resigned in 1917 and was replaced by Charles Stewart.

Long and Quo credit the "Alberta and Great Waterways Railway scandal of 1910" with the eventual decline of the Liberal government.¹⁴ Long and Quo contend that the publicity given to the scandal led to a lasting suspicion of political parties by Albertans. One can argue that this scepticism paved the way for the nontraditional governments such as the U.F.A. and the Social Credit government.¹⁵

The Liberal government's relationship with the press established two early traditions of political journalism in Alberta. First, the daily newspapers were divided along party lines based upon ownership. Second as a consequence of that partisanship there was a belief on the part of the political parties that they should have the power to dictate political coverage. However, the power struggle between the Calgary Herald and the Conservative party demonstrated that the

¹³ Thomas, 1959, p. 87.

¹⁴ Thomas, 1959, p. 87.

¹⁵ Long, J.A. & Quo, F. (1972). Alberta: One Party Dominance. in Canadian Provincial Politics. Robin, M. (Editor). Prentice Hall, Ontario. p.3.

newspapers were prepared to resist such obtrusive measures in order to maintain their journalistic integrity. The coverage of the Liberal government also demonstrated that the dailies were willing to be critical of government activities despite the Liberal's healthy majority in the legislature. Indeed the railway scandal engendered among journalists and the public a sceptical attitude towards government.

The United Farmers Of Alberta (U.F.A.) movement grew between the 1910 scandal and the recession that followed World War One. The U.F.A. was a coalition of farmers that organized to pressure the government to address their concerns. The movement was not established with the intention of becoming a formal political party or forming a government. However, during this difficult period,

The U.F.A. had come to be the most powerful single factor in provincial affairs and there was increasing evidence that it would not indefinitely remain satisfied with indirect action.¹⁶

The Calgary Herald and the Edmonton Journal originally supported the efforts of the U.F.A., since a substantial portion of their readership were farmers. In fact, these dailies were responsible for aiding efforts by the U.F.A. to develop the Alberta Wheat Pool.¹⁷

The U.F.A. became an official political entity in

¹⁶ Thomas, 1959, p.193.

¹⁷ Bruce, 1968.

January, 1909. They defeated the Liberal government on July 19, 1921 and Herbert Greenfield became Premier. The U.F.A. won 39 of the 53 seats, the Liberals retained fourteen.¹⁸

UNITED FARMERS OF ALBERTA

The election victory of the U.F.A. created immediate problems for the government.¹⁹ The overwhelming representation of farmers in the new government made it impossible to govern on the basis of representative occupational groups which was their original intent. Consequently, the U.F.A. was forced to govern in a more traditional cabinet form. Attorney General John Edward Brownlee proved instrumental in dealing with disgruntled U.F.A. members and replaced Greenfield as Premier in 1925.

The nontraditional nature of the U.F.A. precluded the government from benefitting from the support of newspapers that had already established partisan affiliations. Conservative papers such as the Calgary Herald and the Edmonton Journal were vehemently opposed to the U.F.A. becoming a formal political party. Much of their criticisms were directed at Henry Wise Wood and his theory of group government. According to Rolph, group government,

¹⁸ Bruce, 1968.

¹⁹ Betke, C.F. (1979). The United Farmers of Alberta. in Society and Politics in Alberta. Caldarola, C. (Editor). Methuen, Pub. Toronto. p.16.

is based on the desire for a non-exploitive democracy based on functional representation of occupational groups.²⁰

The Herald likened this approach to a Soviet style government. The Journal held a similar view of the U.F.A. but its criticisms were not as blunt.²¹

Coverage of the U.F.A. was also influenced by the economic troubles the newspapers were experiencing during the depression. Editors and publishers sought to maintain their readership and advertising revenues by diverting their audience's attention away from their bleak economic situation.²² They did so by simplifying issues and sensationalizing events. The Bulletin already had a reputation for sensational coverage, such as reporting detailed accounts of a Cabinet Minister's divorce proceedings.²³ Although the Edmonton Journal was in direct competition with the Bulletin it tried not to succumb to sensationalism in the interest of boosting readership. However a scandal involving the Premier in a seduction trial proved to be irresistible. The story was given up to four pages of coverage each day. The accounts were "fit for a

²⁰ Roplh, W.K. (1950). Henry Wise Wood of Alberta. University of Toronto Press, p.85.

²¹ Bruce, 1968.

²² Bourdreau, J.A. (1975). Alberta, Aberhart, and Social Credit. Holt Rinehart and Winston. Toronto.

²³ Bruce, 1968, p.218.

twelve year old to read" while making the events clear to adults.²⁴ Thus, the political damage of the seduction suit against Premier Brownlee was exacerbated by newspaper accounts of the trial. The government reacted to this style of reportage by introducing two new bills; an amendment to the libel and slander act, and a bill to regulate reports of civil suits.²⁵ The seduction scandal coupled with the inability of the government to deal effectively with the economic problems of the time led to a sweeping victory for the Social Credit party in 1935.²⁶

The treatment of the U.F.A. government by the press demonstrates a number of important points about the journalistic traditions in Alberta. First, it showed that there was a continued willingness on the part of journalists to criticize a popular government. The U.F.A. was at an even greater disadvantage than its Liberal predecessor since it had no established roots of support in any of the existing newspapers. Second, the coverage of government scandals continued but this time the attacks were more personal, focusing attention on the private lives of the Premier and his cabinet. This type of sensational reporting may have been partly a response to the economic difficulties the newspapers were experiencing during the depression. Finally, the

²⁴ Boudreau, p.11.

²⁵ Bruce, 1968, p.218.

²⁶ Betke, 1979, p.28.

government's displeasure with the media resulted in legislation limiting the freedom of the press in Alberta. Strong reactions to negative reporting would continue under the Social Credit government.

SOCIAL CREDIT, RADIO AND THE PRESS ACT

The Social Credit (S.C.) party swept into power August 23, 1935 securing 56 of the 63 legislative seats. William Aberhart, an influential religious figure became the new Premier of Alberta. Aberhart's appearance in Alberta's politics is significant for a number of reasons. First, Aberhart was primarily responsible for the creation of the Social Credit party and its eventual ascension to power. The manner in which he achieved political power is significant to this thesis. Aberhart introduced a new political weapon to Alberta; radio. Aberhart took advantage of the technological innovations of the time and began using the new medium as a persuasive tool long before he entered politics. Aberhart was able to project his powerful personality through radio and win a wide political following.²⁷ He began broadcasting his Bible Institute over CFCN radio in 1925.²⁸ Taking advantage

²⁷ Elliot, D.R. & Miller, I. (1987). Bible Bill: A Biography of William Aberhart. Reidmore Books, Edmonton. p.73.

²⁸ Bruce, 1968.

of his radio popularity and his audience Aberhart mixed religion with a political message. His ability to combine the teachings of the S.C. party with religion was particularly effective in Alberta because of it's "wide spread predilection for prophetic religion".²⁹ Albertans were receptive to Social Credit ideals; especially its plan to reform the monetary system because of falling grain prices and the economic depression.³⁰

The S.C. doctrine that Aberhart preached in his radio programs was based on Major Clifford Hugh Douglas' "A plus B theorem". Douglas argued that the cost of production exceeded the consumptive powers of the individual which resulted in "great poverty in the midst of plenty".³¹ Douglas' solution to this imbalance was that,

the government should distribute social dividends, based on the amount of national resources and their potential productive power, to every member of society regardless of his or her relationship to production.³²

Aberhart's application of this theory to Alberta's problems

²⁹ MacPherson, 1962, p.148.

³⁰ MacPherson, 1962.

³¹ Caldarola, C. (1979). The Social Credit in Alberta, 1935-1971. In, Society and Politics in Alberta. Caldarola, C. (Editor). Methuen Publishers, Toronto. p.33.

³² Caldarola, 1979, p.34.

resulted in a promise of a twenty five dollar monthly credit to all citizens of Alberta.³³ The appeal of such a promise during the depression is obvious.

The province's newspapers uniformly condemned Social Credit teachings. They were suspicious of Aberhart's mixture of religion and politics. Consequently, radio was critical in Aberhart's gaining acceptance for his ideals. Radio allowed Aberhart to reach over the heads of the newspapers that opposed him. The major dailies continued to be extremely critical of the Social Credit throughout its first election campaign. The Calgary Herald was a critic of the S.C. movement and Aberhart personally. Aberhart reacted to the continual criticism he received from the Calgary Herald by announcing the cancellation of his subscription during his weekly broadcast and encouraging his followers to do the same.³⁴ According to Fred Kennedy, a reporter for the Calgary Herald, the ploy backfired; Aberhart's request resulted in the loss of only ten subscriptions and an increase of at least fifty in daily street sales.³⁵ The Herald continued the drama by publishing letters to the editor that were both in favour and opposed to the Social Credit.³⁶ The

³³ MacPherson, 1962, p. 149.

³⁴ Bruce, 1968.

³⁵ Kennedy, F. (1975). Alberta Was My Beat: Memoirs of a Western Reporter. The Albertan, Alberta. p.212.

³⁶ Kennedy, 1975.

Herald also engaged Stewart Cameron, a political cartoonist, to poke fun at Aberhart depicting him as "bullying, egotistical, unreasonable, and stupid".³⁷

The Albertan, while supporting the Liberals in the election of 1935, was the least critical of all the dailies.³⁸ It is interesting to note that the Albertan was in direct competition with the Herald in the Calgary market, one can speculate that the Albertan may have wanted to capitalize on Aberhart's popularity in the hope of attracting readers who took offense at the Herald's attacks.

The impressive electoral victory of the Social Credit created immediate problems for the Edmonton Journal and Calgary Herald, which had been merciless in attacking Social Credit throughout the 1935 campaign. Although government hostility to the press was not a new phenomena in Alberta, the strong convictions of Social Credit supporters caused the papers to fear serious repercussions as a result of their attacks on Aberhart. This realization led the newspapers to begin to report impartially; discussing government performance in a manner that would not offend the Social Credit readers. This approach appears to have been effective since readership was maintained even as the government remained dissatisfied with coverage.³⁹

³⁷ Elliot & Miller, 1987, p.240.

³⁸ Bruce, 1968.

³⁹ Bruce, 1968.

Each of the major dailies made concessions to the Premier in an effort to foster friendlier relations with him. John Irmie, the publisher of the Edmonton Journal, allowed Aberhart to file his own front page stories from Ottawa on the Dominion-Provincial conference.⁴⁰ The Calgary Herald found one reporter, Fred Kennedy, who was on good enough terms with the Premier to get an interview. Kennedy became their principal political reporter throughout Aberhart's premiership. Their relationship was a tumultuous one, however, and resulted in not a few screaming matches between the two men. Kennedy's practise of using unhappy MLAs as sources for his stories was a particular irritant to Aberhart. Disgruntled MLAs would leak information to Kennedy out of anger or in return for favourable coverage.⁴¹ These leaks were subsequently plugged when members of the government were warned of serious sanctions for cooperating with the press.⁴²

During Aberhart's first days in office he attempted to court the media by granting interviews and holding daily press conferences. Kennedy found that the press conferences were not newsworthy and stopped attending them.⁴³ The Premier soon realized that cooperation did not assure positive coverage so he began to deny access to the press. Aberhart

⁴⁰ Bruce, 1968, p.297.

⁴¹ Kennedy, 1975, p.227.

⁴² Kennedy, 1975, p.227.

⁴³ Kennedy, 1975, p.232.

also began to use the press as a scapegoat for the difficulties he experienced implementing his policies. The press had been quick to pounce on the government's failures: the absence of the promised twenty five dollar credit and the defeats in the Alberta Supreme Court of the "Debt Adjustment Act" and the "Reduction and Settlement of Land Debts Act".⁴⁴

Relations between the Social Credit government and the press were further complicated by the purchase of the Albertan and the radio station CJCJ by the Social Credit party. These acquisitions were made in January, 1936 through an arrangement where stock would be bought by Social Credit supporters.⁴⁵ The Albertan was vulnerable to a takeover because it had been in the worst financial position of all the major dailies during this period. From 1932-1935 it was subsidized by the Calgary Herald to keep the morning Albertan from competing directly with the afternoon Herald.⁴⁶ Thus, the Albertan became the official voice of the government published under the masthead, "A publically owned newspaper supporting Social Credit principles".⁴⁷

Relations between the government and the media continued to be strained throughout Aberhart's first term in office. By 1936 the Premier began to threaten the media with the

⁴⁴ Caldoralo, 1979, p.41.

⁴⁵ Bruce, 1968.

⁴⁶ Boudreau, 19 , p.9.

⁴⁷ Bruce, 1968.

prospect of licensing as a means of control. Once again he used his radio broadcasts as a device to gain support for his plan to license the press.⁴⁸ The confrontational atmosphere led the dailies to publish even harsher attacks against the government. The Calgary Herald ran front page editorials attacking government policy.⁴⁹ Kennedy believed his hotel room had been entered in his absence. The press gallery believed their phones were being tapped, and after that reporter's kept their notes and documents under lock and key.⁵⁰

On September 30, 1937 the Social Credit government introduced a bill conferring on the Minister of Trade and Industry wide powers of registration and licensing through the Trade and Business Act.⁵¹ The act aimed directly at the press was entitled an "Act to Ensure the Publication of Accurate Information".⁵² A memo circulated to the Social Credit caucus in March, 1936 makes the intentions of the act very clear. It states,

It is absolutely important that the newspapers be put "under the unchallengeable control of the province" [sic] and we suggest that the only way

⁴⁸ Bruce, 1968.

⁴⁹ Kennedy, 1975.

⁵⁰ Kennedy, 1975, p.291.

⁵¹ Bruce, 1968.

⁵² Kennedy, 1975, p.138.

that this can be done is by having all newspapers or magazines in the province duly licensed.⁵³

The provisions of the Press Act were the following: a Social Credit Board was to be responsible for newspaper space; the chairman of the board would control what was said about the government by requiring publishers to print full statements explaining Social Credit policies, and publishers were required to reveal the name and address of all sources and editorials were to be signed by the author. Failure to follow these requirements would result in license suspension and offending reporters would not be allowed to continue to work. The government was also given special privileges under the libel and slander act so that all articles the government ordered published would be exempt from prosecution.⁵⁴

The Press Bill brought harsh criticism from the press. The press denounced the bill declaring "that the measure would turn newspapers into instruments of Social Credit propaganda".⁵⁵ A group of newspapermen including John Irmie of the Edmonton Journal organized to seek legal action to fight the bill. The Albertan, the official paper of the government, reacted by declaring its independence from the government and Bell regained control of the paper.⁵⁶ The

⁵³ Steele, 1961, p. 139.

⁵⁴ Steele, 1961.

⁵⁵ Kennedy, 1975, p. 239.

⁵⁶ Boudreau, p. 239.

Lieutenant-Governor refused to sign the bill requiring that a decision about the bill's legality be made by the Supreme Court of Canada.⁵⁷ The bill was eventually deemed ultra vires by the Supreme Court on March 4, 1937.⁵⁸ The Edmonton Journal was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for its successful efforts in fighting for freedom of the press in Alberta.

The battle against the press bill may be considered the climax of the hostility between Premier Aberhart and the press. But the war-like atmosphere that characterized Aberhart's relations with the press ended only with his death in 1943.

Aberhart's successor, Premier Manning, relations with the media were less volatile than his predecessor. He was an intensely private man and made rare public appearances. Manning continued the Sunday bible broadcasts, but under his leadership attention was focused less on the original doctrine of Social Credit and more on the provision of good administrative government.⁵⁹ This approach satisfied the electorate as the Social Credit continued to enjoy electoral success until to 1971. Barr maintains that key to success was the belief that Social Credit provided honest government.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Steele.1961.

⁵⁸ Steele, 1961.

⁵⁹ Caldorala, 1979, p.44.

⁶⁰ Barr, J. (1974). The Dynasty: The Rise And Fall of Social Credit in Alberta. McClelland & Stewart Ltd., Toronto. p.215

The years of modernity that characterized the latter portion of the Social Credit's rule ultimately led to their decline. By 1966, 69 percent of the population were city dwellers. According to Barr,

A whole generation of newcomers-young people and immigrants-presented Social Credit with an increasingly impassive and unresponsive audience. These strange faces were not angry with Social Credit, merely bored with it. Many of them resented Manning's strong, almost aristocratic leadership and the Social Credit's old-fashioned style.⁶¹

Manning retired on September 27, 1968 and was succeeded by Harry Strom. It was a golden opportunity to send a message to the electorate that the Social Credit government was going through a period of rejuvenation. Barr argues that Strom did not seize the opportunity for change and Peter Lougheed took advantage of that. To further complicate matters Strom appeared to be uncomfortable with the new medium that was becoming such a powerful instrument in politics; television. Strom was a quiet, friendly man but for some reason these likeable traits did not transfer well to the television screen. Rather than appearing warm and friendly, he was

⁶¹ Barr, 1974, p.163.

perceived on television as "cold, frowning,...unsure".⁶² In contrast, Peter Lougheed appeared youthful and vigorous and was compared to John F. Kennedy. Strom appeared as old and tired as his government. It was time for a change; in 1971 Peter Lougheed's election slogan said "Now" was the time. The spectacular victory of the Progressive Conservative party in 1971 suggest that Lougheed had effectively capitalized on the public's desire for change.

A UNIQUE TIME IN ALBERTA

Any discussion of Lougheed's ascendancy to power and his success as Premier would be incomplete without observing that Lougheed's political fortunes were influenced by his entrance into politics at a special time in Alberta's history. The timing of Lougheed's entrance into politics was fortuitous for two reasons. First, the social structure of Alberta was undergoing a dramatic change from a primarily rural, and religiously devout population to one that was increasingly urban and secular. Also, shortly after Lougheed became Premier the oil boom and the protracted disputes with the federal government that ensued, afforded him an opportunity to solidify his electoral support and his image as a defender and champion of Alberta's rights. The significance of image to Lougheed's victory in 1971 was discussed in the previous

⁶² Barr, 1974,p.229

chapter. However the success of Lougheed's image was due in some measure to the changes that took place in Alberta prior to Lougheed's entrance on the political scene. The growth and influence of mass media may have altered expectations about the leadership traits that were attractive to the electorate.⁶³ Palmer and Palmer maintain that,

It was impossible for Strom to compete as a television personality with a "big city" lawyer, because rural people had learned through the mass media to expect leaders who are articulate and dynamic.⁶⁴

Although the sheer length of the Social Credit reign may have readied Alberta for a change in government, a number of social and economic developments were also altering the political map of Alberta. According to Palmer and Palmer,

The conservative slogan "Its time for a change" was successful not only because Social Credit had been in power for so long, but because Albertan society had changed.⁶⁵

The massive growth of the urban population and the increased secularization that urbanization brought with it was a

⁶³ Palmer, H. & Palmer, T. (1976). The 1971 election and the fall of social credit in Alberta. Prairie Forum. 1(2), p.126.

⁶⁴ Palmer & Palmer, (1976), p.126.

⁶⁵ Palmer & Palmer, 1976, p.123.

disadvantage to the Social Credit government.⁶⁶ Alberta's population grew from 1,600,000 in 1971 to 2,400,000 in 1987. Calgary and Edmonton were the focus of much of the growth.⁶⁷

There was a growth in general affluence and fortunes were made in the oil industry. There was also an introduction of new voters into the electorate through immigration and because of the lowered voting age of 18. Furthermore, voter turn-out increased from 63 percent in 1967 to 74 percent in 1971, which suggests that previously uncommitted voters were also becoming active. Elton and Goddard determined that 26 percent of the 1971 voters had not voted in the previous provincial election. Thus, Lougheed was able to mobilize a significant portion of the electorate that did not have a strong attachment to the Social Credit party. It is the consensus of a number of scholars that the results of the 1971 provincial election did not reflect a substantial realignment of the electorate; rather it reflected social and economic changes.⁶⁸ The control of Alberta's natural resources, namely oil, became an extremely important issue early in Lougheed's term as Premier.

⁶⁶ Flanagan, T. (1973). Stability and change in Alberta provincial election. Alberta Historical Review. 21(4), p.6-7. and Long, J.A. & Quo, F. (1972). One party dominance. Canadian Provincial Politics. Robin, M. (Editor). Prentice Hall, Ontario. p.1-27.

⁶⁷ Palmer, H. (1989). Work in progress.

⁶⁸ Long, J.A. & Quo, F.Q. (1978). Alberta: Politics of consensus. in Canadian Provincial Politics: The Party Systems of Ten Provinces. Robin, M. (Editor). Prentice-Hall of Canada Ltd., Ontario. —

The oil boom that resulted from the decision by the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) to reduce oil production in 1973 allowed oil to become an issue of unprecedented importance to Alberta. Howard Palmer states,

Because the meteoric rise of Alberta's economic fortunes were not matched by a similar rise in political clout, many Albertans were left with a humiliating sense of the discrepancy between their growing financial power and their political importance.⁶⁹

The OAPEC decision and the resulting struggle for control of pricing and revenue with the federal government set the stage for an energy battle with the federal government that would last through much of Lougheed's tenure as Premier.

The significance of the energy battle between Alberta and Ottawa should not be underestimated. Lougheed's biographers, David Wood and Allan Hustak, attribute some part of Lougheed's electoral success to his strong defence of Alberta's interests in the subsequent battles. Wood maintains that the early phase of the energy wars had an important psychological effect on Albertans. He contends that for decades Alberta had no leverage in federal-provincial matters and now suddenly it had an important resource and it wanted to make the most of it.⁷⁰

The energy battle presented a unique opportunity for

⁶⁹ Palmer, 1989, p.10.

⁷⁰ Wood, 1985, p.145.

Lougheed to solidify and expand the support he had garnered in the 1971 election. It also afforded him the opportunity to be seen as the "Protector of Alberta". Elton and Goddard present a convincing argument that the 1971 election was a deviation by a rather small section of the 1967 electorate, not a substantial realignment of partisan sympathies. Their analysis of voting behaviour during the 1975 provincial election suggests that a realignment occurred at that time. They believed that this fundamental shift resulted from a combination of the personality and image of Peter Lougheed and the PC party's positioning itself as the defender of Alberta.⁷¹ Thus, the energy wars between the provincial and federal government gave Lougheed the opportunity to capitalize on new feelings of confidence and assertiveness in Alberta.

The Alberta media were an important ally during the oil debate and were instrumental in casting Lougheed as the "Defender of Alberta". The heated battles between Premier Lougheed and Prime Minister Trudeau were particularly amenable to the media since it contained all the essential elements of a good news story. According to Taras and Gottlieb-Taras, news items should be clear-cut and involve conflict, be easily condensed, emphasize individual actors, be readily labelled,

⁷¹ Elton, D.K. & Goddard, A.M. (1979). The Conservative takeover 1971-. in Society and politics in Alberta. Caldarola, C. (Editor). Methuen Publishing, Toronto. p.49-70. p.67.

and contain new facts or angles.⁷² The energy wars satisfied all of these requirements. The elements of drama were particularly well served since the conflict was easily divided between two opposing camps and more importantly the action revolved around Premier Lougheed and Prime Minister Trudeau. As such, Lougheed was virtually guaranteed prominent media coverage during the series of oil conflicts over policy that took place throughout his years in office. More importantly, he received supportive coverage on fundamental federal-provincial issues.⁷³ Thus, during the oil wars the media-government relationship was symbiotic rather than adversarial since the goals of the media, to get a good story, and the government, to be presented in a positive light, were symbiotic. Lougheed was able to benefit from championing a popular cause and through the media he was assured that the public was aware of his actions on their behalf. The net effect of this special time in Alberta history is summarized by Palmer,

In the "either you are for us or against us" mentality which characterized the constitutional energy confrontation with Ottawa, Lougheed drew on

⁷² Taras, D. & Taras, D.G. (). The Canadian media, domestic interest groups and Middle East reporting: The effects of structural bias. p.4

⁷³ Epp, R. (1984). The Lougheed government and the media: News management in the Alberta political environment. Canadian Journal of Communication. 10(2), p.37-65. p.50.

Albertans' sense of pride, their historical regional grievances and their economic self interest to bring about the psychological merging of the interests of Lougheed, the Conservative Party, the oil industry and Albertans.⁷⁴

Therefore, the energy battle with the federal government provided Lougheed with a unique opportunity to solidify his electoral strength and assure positive coverage from the Alberta media. However, the oil battle may not be the only reason that Lougheed received positive coverage from the Alberta media. Media support of a strong majority government may also be representative of a unique journalistic tradition in Alberta. A historical analysis of the relationship between the media and previous majority governments can shed some light on whether Lougheed's experiences were consistent with a particular journalistic pattern embedded in the Alberta experience.

Lougheed's electoral victory in 1971 and the subsequent dominance of the Progressive Conservative government throughout the remainder of his Premiership was consistent with the history of one party dominance that had been established in Alberta. This analysis of the relationship between the government and journalists in the past suggests that another constant in Alberta's political history was a willingness, on the part of daily newspapers within the

⁷⁴ Palmer, 1989, p.12.

province, to criticize governments that were popular with their readers. The fact that Lougheed's electoral fortunes were consistent with the past suggest that his media fortunes may also follow a pre-established pattern. The media tradition up to the time Lougheed took power appears to have been based upon an adversarial relationship between the government and journalists. The extent to which this observation may be applicable to Lougheed's experience is tempered by the nontraditional nature of the parties that governed Alberta since 1921. The UFA and the Social Credit parties were unable to take advantage of the partisan roots of the daily newspapers; as mentioned earlier, the Calgary Herald and the Edmonton Journal were known as Conservative papers in the past. Since Lougheed was the first leader since Premier Rutherford who was in a position to take advantage of the potential benefits of coverage by newspapers that were known to have a partisan ties, he may have altered the adversarial relationship that appears to have characterized his predecessor's relationship with the press. However, the prolonged absence of such traditional parties may have weakened the newspaper's partisan ties. Thus, it is difficult to suggest what Lougheed's experiences with the press would have been without the aid of empirical data describing the type of coverage Lougheed received in newspapers. Consequently, the remainder of this thesis will focus on a content analysis of the newspaper coverage Lougheed received

in the Calgary Herald and the Edmonton Journal during his first and last term in office. This analysis will determine if Lougheed did receive predominately positive coverage during his tenure as Premier.

The empirical data gleaned from the content analysis, coupled with the information presented in chapter three and this chapter, will be used to answer the questions posed in the introduction of this study: What type of newspaper coverage did Premier Lougheed receive? What accounts for this coverage? Was it due to unique journalistic traditions in Alberta, a unique time in Alberta's history, or was Lougheed a unique politician? Does the Grossman-Kumar model extend to Canadian provincial leaders? Finally, who sets the political agenda in Alberta?

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY

This study analyzed the newspaper coverage Peter Lougheed received during his first and last term as Premier of Alberta. The analysis sought to answer the four research questions posed in chapter one. First, was Lougheed the recipient of predominately positive coverage throughout the two terms under observation? Second, to what degree are conflict and symbiosis, as described by Grossman and Kumar, evident in Albertan political reporting? Third, who sets the political agenda in Alberta, the provincial government or the media? Finally, what accounts for the coverage Lougheed received: a unique time in Alberta's history? Unique journalistic traditions in Alberta? Or was it that Peter Lougheed was a unique politician with a special hold on his constituents?

METHOD

The newspaper coverage Peter Lougheed received during his first and last term as Premier of Alberta was the subject of a content analysis. According to Berelson and Lazarsfeld, Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description

of the manifest content of communication.¹

The requirement that content analysis be objective and systematic ensures that the process can be replicated.² Objectivity is ensured through explicit definitions of each variable so all coders base their decisions on the same understanding.³ Systematic procedures ensure that the sample is compiled in a clearly defined manner that can be replicated.⁴ Quantification ascribes a numerical value to the occurrence of the variables under analysis.⁵ Finally, manifest refers to the analysis of the "visible surface content".⁶ All of the essential elements of content analysis, as described above, were strictly adhered to in the development of the code book and compilation of the sample for this study. Moreover, the coders were subjected to rigorous training to satisfy the necessity of objectivity. The coding rule book that was used by coders to guide their decisions is

¹ Berelson, B. & Lazarsfeld, P. (1948). The Analysis of Communication Content. University of Chicago & Columbia University, New York & Chicago. p.5.

² Krippendorff, K. (1980). Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology. Sage Publications, Beverly Hills. p.21.

³ Wimmer, R.D. & Dominick, J.R. (1983). Mass Media Research. Wadsworth Publishing Company, California. p.138.

⁴ Wimmer & Dominick, 1983, p.138.

⁵ Berelson, B. (1952). Content Analysis In Communication Research. Hafner Publishing Co. New York. p.17.

⁶ Babbie, 1983. p.279.

presented in Appendix 1.

SAMPLE

The Calgary Herald and the Edmonton Journal were analyzed. These papers were chosen for a number of reasons. First, these papers are the major dailies for the two largest urban centres in the province. These papers also have similarities that allow for a comparative analysis. The historical traditions of both newspapers are discussed in chapter four. Furthermore, both papers are dailies with impressive circulations. The average daily circulation for the Calgary Herald and Edmonton Journal are 147,857 and 153,428 respectively.⁷ Both newspapers are represented in the Alberta Press Gallery. The Edmonton Journal has the largest representation in the Gallery maintaining a staff of four journalists and a columnist. Fletcher maintains that the dominant bureau is usually influential in setting the agenda for other media organizations and the government.⁸

The Calgary Herald, with three journalists assigned to the Legislature, has the second largest newspaper representation in the legislative press gallery. As one of the major dailies in the province it too plays a critical role

⁷ Quotes from the circulation department of both papers as of March 13, 1989

⁸ Fletcher, 1981, p.54.

in setting the tone for reporting the government's activities.⁹

Analysis of Lougheed's first term in office encompassed the period from August 31, 1971, the day after his first election victory to March 27, 1975, the day after his second successful election. The analysis of Lougheed's last term in office spanned the period from November 3, 1982, the day after the election to June 27, 1985, the day after Lougheed announced his retirement. All four years of each term were analyzed to demonstrate changes in coverage that occurred within each term and across respective terms. Such an approach should demonstrate whether the phases described by Grossman and Kumar were evident in the coverage that Peter Lougheed received.¹⁰ By examining the two different time periods a fuller picture of Lougheed's relations with the press will emerge. For example, Grossman and Kumar suggest that in its first term a government benefits from an extended alliance phase, whereas a returning government receives an abbreviated period of alliance.¹¹

It is widely believed that television had a profound impact on Peter Lougheed's political career. The emphasis on newspapers in this study does not diminish the importance of

⁹ Fletcher, 1981, p.57.

¹⁰ See Chapter Two for a description of the "alliance", "competition" and "detachment" phases.

¹¹ Grossman & Kumar, 1981, p.275.

television to Lougheed personally or to political reporting in Alberta. Unfortunately, requests for television footage of Lougheed were denied by Calgary's three local television stations. CFCN and CBC have a strict policy of denying video requests made by the public. CFAC does not store tape for longer than a year. Consequently, analysis of the television coverage Lougheed received as Premier is impossible.

However, newspapers are worthy of study for a number of important reasons. Westell believes that the press is the best conduit for disseminating political messages due to the larger news hole which allows for more detail and analysis.¹² Furthermore, newspapers perform an important agenda building function by initiating issues through background and analysis.¹³ Newspapers play a particularly important role in Alberta. Doug Fetherling maintains that "In Alberta it is print that matters, not the electronic media", because of its influential readership.¹⁴ Lougheed appears to have recognized this since he often made attempts to sway the editorial boards of newspapers. Judy Wish, assistant to Lougheed's press secretary, maintained that Lougheed was more concerned with the coverage he received in newspapers than on television, because the television message was transitory,

¹² Westell. 1980.

¹³ McCombs, 1977, p.97. and Shaw, (1977), p.23.

¹⁴ Fetherling, D. (1981). Power Politics. Saturday Night. Feb., p.19-28.

while the written word became part of the public record and could be read and reread.¹⁵

VARIABLES

A code book was developed to address the hypotheses posed in chapter one.¹⁶ Two variables were developed to determine if Lougheed received predominately positive newspaper coverage. The tone of the article and tone of reporter were examined and classified as positive, negative, mixed or neutral. The tone of the article refers to the general impression the coder is left with after reading the article. An article would be classified as positive if it were a complimentary story that had supportive statements regarding Lougheed personally or to a policy or decision that was associated with him. A negative article referred to a story that was critical of Lougheed personally or to a policy or decision that was directly associated with him. A mixed tone refers to an article that had both positive and negative statements attached to Lougheed's actions. Such stories do not leave the coder with an overwhelmingly positive or negative impression. Newspaper articles could also be coded as neutral if they were primarily fact based and informational. These general categories were also applied to

¹⁵ Wish, J. (1989). Personal Interview.

¹⁶ The codebook is reproduced in Appendix two.

the tone of reporting. In this instance the coders analyzed the way in which the reporter presented the facts. For example, if the article dealt with an opposition MLA criticizing Lougheed, the tone of the article was coded as critical or negative. However, if the reporter presented the facts in a manner that discredited the critical source it was coded as a positive tone of reporting.

A number of variables were analyzed to determine the extent to which conflict and symbiosis are evident in newspaper accounts about Lougheed. First, the date of the article was used to trace changes in coverage over time, both within and across terms. The tone of the article and tone of reporting were also used as a means to identify conflict and symbiosis. An abundance of positive articles with supportive tones are indicative of an alliance phase characterized by a symbiotic relationship between Lougheed and the media. On the other hand, a proliferation of negative articles and critical tones suggest a combative phase characterized by conflict between the press and Lougheed. A concentration of neutral stories may be indicative of a period of detachment, but a concrete conclusion cannot be made from this data.

Other variables that illuminate the phases of media relations include: sources cited in the article, all sources that were critical of Lougheed, and an examination of the manner in which Lougheed addressed the media.¹⁷ During

¹⁷ See code book in appendix.

periods of cooperation between the media and Lougheed, a reliance on official government sources of news was expected. Grossman and Kumar describe the period of alliance as a time when governments are more available to speak to the media directly. Furthermore, they maintain that during times of conflict the leader may be less likely to be made available as a source of information. One would also expect Lougheed to be more accessible to the media and deal with them directly through interviews, news conferences, or scrums. On the other hand, during periods of hostility one would anticipate less direct interaction between the two and a reliance on indirect sources of information such as government spokesperson rather than Lougheed or his Cabinet Ministers. Furthermore, less direct interaction by Lougheed personally would be expected and demonstrated through a reliance on statements Lougheed made in the legislature or excerpts from speeches to various organizations. An increase in critical sources beyond the regular citations of opposition members would also suggest a period of conflict between Lougheed and the press. An increase in the instance of reporters and experts as sources of criticism may also be expected during periods of conflict. Certainly an increase in expert sources indicates an intensified effort by the press to criticize Lougheed. Journalists generally prefer to use outside sources to criticize leaders so they can appear objective.¹⁸

¹⁸ Grossman & Kumar, 1981.

The question of who sets the political agenda in Alberta was also examined through a number of variables. For example, the manner in which Lougheed dealt with the media and an examination of the sources cited in the article are indicative of who has control. A reliance on official government sources and interactions with the press that were initiated by Lougheed can indicate that the government has succeeded to some degree in controlling the political agenda. An examination of the type of news story prevalent during a particular period of time is also suggestive of who sets the agenda. A concentration of hard news stories, which present the facts with little background, may favour government control because such stories result from the journalist reacting to the actions of the government. Of course, this is true as long as the actions of the government are not being called into question. Articles that are less concerned with recapitulating the facts and are more concerned with analyzing the facts provide an opportunity for the media to influence public opinion. The types of articles that fall into this category are: feature articles, background and analysis, editorials and writing by columnists.

The placement of an article has important implications for agenda building and agenda setting. What the media regards as important is signified by the placement of the article within the newspaper. This occurs in descending order, with front page stories taking precedence over articles

on the front page of inside sections and stories found on the inside pages of the paper.

The topic of the news story is critical to any analysis of agenda building and agenda setting because it indicates what the important issues of the day are. A series of potential topics were listed in the code book. These included:

Personal Stories: Articles about Lougheed's personal life, family, career, and retirement.

National Energy: Articles about the oil and gas industries that involve national policies or the positions on energy issues of national figures such as the Prime Minister or another federal representative.

Alberta Energy: Articles about oil and gas that are about Alberta's policies and developments including pronouncements by provincial government representatives. Syncrude is an example.

Internal Workings of the Progressive Conservative Government: Articles that are concerned with the inner workings of the Lougheed government. For example, appointments, or scandals involving members of the Conservative government.

General Legislative Proceedings: Articles that deal with Lougheed's statements or responses in the legislature, question period for example.

Federal Provincial Relations: Articles concerned with statements, policies, or actions vis a vis Ottawa.

Finance: Articles that deal with the allotment of government funds. For example, the budget, or spending of the Heritage fund.

Economy: Articles that refer to the general state of Alberta's economy such as the boom/bust cycle or economic diversification or with economic policy.

International Relations: Articles describing Lougheed's interaction with international figures or references to international forces and developments

Other story topics include: Education, Transportation, Labour, Social Services, Agriculture, Constitutional Issues, Native Affairs and Provincial Elections.

A number of variables were used to determine what accounted for the coverage Lougheed received. Of particular importance is the "Newspaper" variable itself. This variable indicates whether coverage was idiosyncratic to a particular

newspaper or could be found in both newspapers being examined, which may suggest a wider pattern of coverage.

PROCEDURE

The sample of newspaper articles was compiled in two phases. The population of newspaper articles for both phases were stories that focused specifically on the actions of Peter Lougheed. As a general rule, 50 percent of the article had to refer directly to Lougheed. Consequently, stories that referred to the "Lougheed government" in general, but did not deal with Lougheed specifically were not included in the sample. This criterion was applied because the focus of this analysis is the newspaper coverage Peter Lougheed received throughout his first and last term in office, not the coverage the Progressive Conservative party received.

Lougheed's first term as Premier was not indexed by the Canadian News Index. Consequently, the Calgary Herald and the Edmonton Journal were scanned for articles that reported on Lougheed's activities. Every second story was included to compose a systematic sample of articles for Lougheed's first term in office.

The articles from Lougheed's last term in office are a census of the articles that were identified with the aid of a newspaper index. Edmonton Journal articles were identified by their in-house Info-Key News Retrieval System. Calgary Herald

articles were identified by the Canadian News Index under the headings, "Peter Lougheed" in the personal name index and under "Alberta" in the subject index.

The coding was done in two parts. Lougheed's first term as Premier was coded by the researcher and three independent coders. The article was the unit of analysis. The coders were trained and subjected to three inter-coder reliability tests at the beginning, middle and end of coding.¹⁹ The same procedure was followed for the second phase of coding. Two of the original independent coders were replaced by trained coders who were tested for inter-coder reliability in the same manner. The data set of both phases of the study were analyzed by the SPSS-X computer program, using frequencies and cross-tabulation at a significance level of .05.

¹⁹ Intercoder reliability for each coefficient for each variable or just degrees of agreement.

CHAPTER SIX

RESULTS

This chapter will provide a summary of the results of the content analysis of 1137 newspaper articles reported in the Calgary Herald and Edmonton Journal for the years 1971 to 1975 and 1982-1985. The first time period is a random sample, composed of every second article being included in the sample. The second period is composed of a census, every article in the population was included. As stated in the previous chapter, the analysis was undertaken to answer the following research questions: Did Premier Lougheed receive predominately positive coverage throughout his first and last term in office? To what degree are conflict and symbiosis, as described by Grossman and Kumar, evident in political reporting in Alberta? Who sets the public agenda in Alberta, the provincial government or the media?

CODER RELIABILITY

As mentioned in Chapter Five the newspaper articles were coded by four trained researchers. Two of the four researchers coded both terms, and two researchers were replaced to code the second time period. All of the researchers underwent rigorous training with the coding

instrument to assure a consensus on all coding decisions. Any dissenting decisions were discussed until a consensus was achieved.

The reliability of the coding was tested with a recognized test of reliability.

$$\frac{4}{M}$$

$$N1 + N2 + N3 + N4 = R$$

M refers to the number of coding decisions the researchers agreed upon. N1 to N4 reflect the total number of coding decisions made by the four researchers¹. Three tests of reliability were completed by the researchers for each time period. The average of the three tests for the two terms were 95 percent and 96 percent respectively, which are well within the acceptable limits.²

RESULTS

The results of the data analysis suggest that although both newspapers had similar trends within each time period, the magnitude of the trend differed. The first term was composed of 315 articles from the Calgary Herald and 227 from the Edmonton Journal. The Edmonton Journal population for the second time period was composed of 416 articles and the

¹ Babbie, E. (1983). The Practice of Social Research. Wadsworth Publishing Company. California. p.154.

² Babbie, 1983).

Calgary Herald had 179 articles. The difference between the number of articles in the second time period may be due to the different Index systems used to compile the population. Edmonton Journal articles were gathered from an in-house system that may have been more thorough than the Canadian Newspaper Index that was used to gather the Herald's sample. The Journal's in-house index system was used because the paper is not included in the Canadian Newspaper Index. Thus comparisons between these two papers are made with caution.

The analysis of the pictures that accompanied Lougheed articles did not yield significant results. The analysis of these photographs suggest that although the Calgary Herald used pictures more often than the Edmonton Journal, both papers did not include pictures often. Only 21.9 percent of Calgary Herald articles and 13.7 percent of the Edmonton Journal included pictures in the first term. The percentage of articles with pictures decreased in the final term under analysis to 18.4 percent in the Herald and 10.3 percent in the Journal. Almost all of the photographs had an informal pose and a positive tone.

TONE OF COVERAGE

The tone of each article was analyzed to address the question of whether or not Lougheed received predominately positive coverage during his first and last term in office.

(Figure 2) which had four articles out of ten positive articles. Both papers had significantly less negative articles, only 15 percent in the Edmonton Journal and 18.4 percent for the Calgary Herald.

Tone by Term
Edmonton Journal

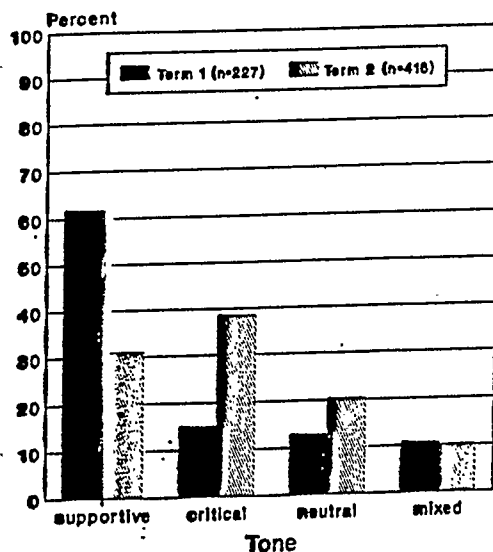


Figure 1

Tone by Term
Calgary Herald

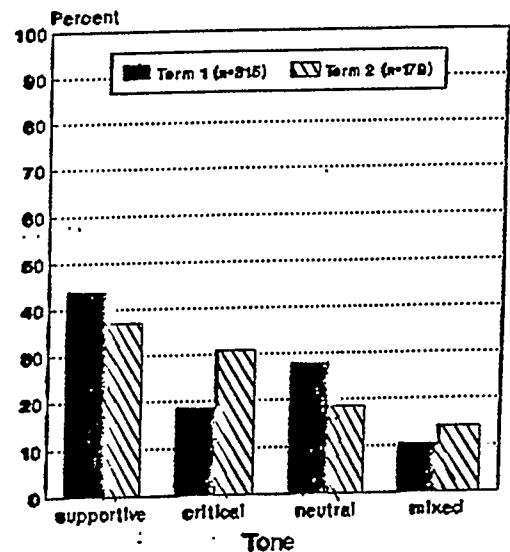


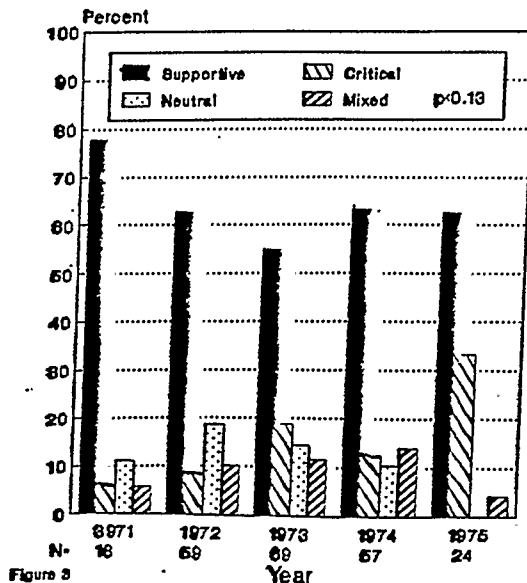
Figure 2

The analysis of Lougheed's last term in office found a narrower gap between positive and negative articles. In the case of the Edmonton Journal the number of negative articles actually exceeded the number of positive ones. Supportive coverage from the Edmonton Journal dropped from 61.7 percent in the first term to 31.0 percent in the last term. At the same time, critical coverage increased from 15.0 percent in the first term to 38.5 percent in the last term. The tone of coverage remained relatively consistent in the Calgary Herald. It began as generally supportive, 43.8 percent of the articles

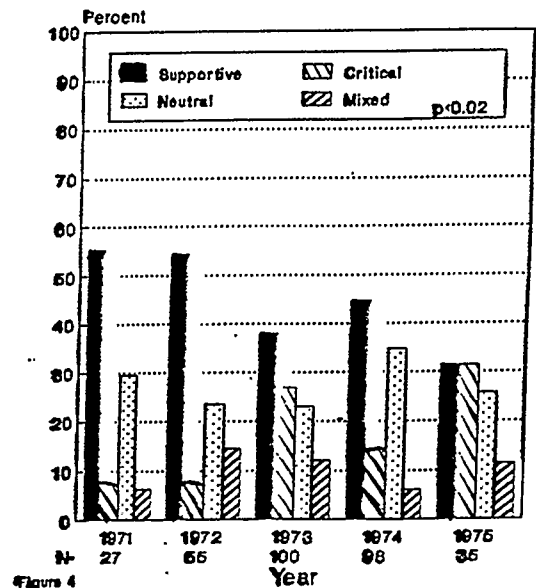
were positive in the first term which dropped to 36.9 percent in the final term. Critical coverage, on the other hand, increased from 18.4 percent in the first term to 30.7 percent in the final term. Thus both papers demonstrated a significant increase in negative coverage in Lougheed's last term as Premier.

A cross tabulation was done to determine if the tone of coverage changed over time. Figures three through six present a breakdown of the tone of coverage by year. The results of the first term displayed in figures three and four indicate that the percentage of positive articles was highest during the first year of the first term.

Tone by Year: Term 1
Edmonton Journal



Tone by Year: Term 1
Calgary Herald



This pattern may be indicative of the "alliance" period noted

This pattern may be indicative of the "alliance" period noted by Grossman and Kumar. However, it may also be due to the small number of articles coded for that year. The election was held November 2, so the sample does not comprise the full twelve months of 1971. Accordingly, the dominance of positive articles may be overstated. One would however still expect a predominance of positive articles during the first year in office because the leader is being covered fresh from an electoral victory and has not had enough time to establish policies that can be criticized. Although the number of positive stories remain impressive during the four year term, there is an incremental but progressive decrease in the percentage of positive stories over the remaining three years of the term. A dramatic increase in the number of negative articles occurred during 1973. At this time the percentage of negative articles rose to 18.8 percent in the Edmonton Journal and to 27.0 percent in the Calgary Herald. Grossman and Kumar anticipate such a decrease in positive coverage because the government now has a record that can be criticized. The increase in negative articles may also indicate a period of conflict between the media and Lougheed. This change of tone was especially evident in the Calgary Herald where there was a 20.0 percent increase in negative articles between 1972 and

1973. The Edmonton Journal also had an increase but only by 10 percent. Positive coverage increased in both papers during 1974. The percentage of negative articles reached the highest point ever in the final year of the first term, increasing to 33.3 percent in the Edmonton Journal and 31.4 percent in the Herald. This increase in negative reporting may be attributed to the intensified scrutiny of Lougheed's performance that took place prior to the impending provincial election. The Journal still had twice as many positive as negative articles in 1975. In contrast, the Herald had an equal amount of positive and negative articles during 1975. The difference between the two papers with regard to the percentage of positive articles may be accounted for by a high proportion, 25.7 percent, of neutral articles evident in the Herald's coverage. The increase in neutral coverage may indicate the onset of the "detachment" phase in the Herald's relations with Premier Lougheed.

In sum, Premier Lougheed received predominately positive coverage during his first term in office. This finding is tempered by the fact that the percentage of negative articles increased over time in both the Edmonton Journal and the Calgary Herald. The percentage of positive articles appearing in the Edmonton Journal remained significantly higher than the negative articles. The number of negative articles in the Calgary Herald was equal to the number of positive articles during the final year of Lougheed's first term as Premier.

first term in office.

Tone by Year: Term 2 Edmonton Journal

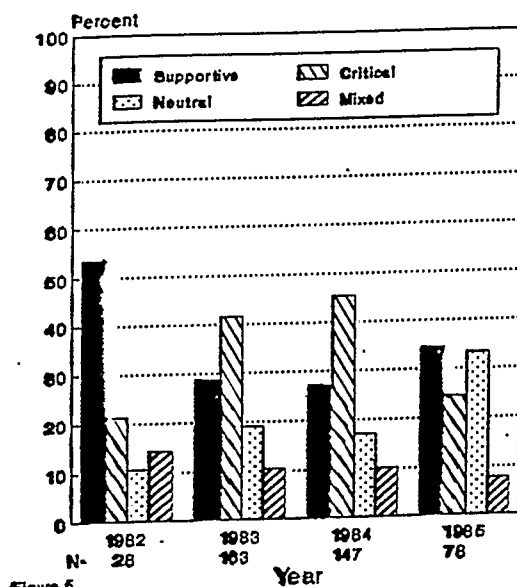


Figure 5

Tone by Year: Term 2 Calgary Herald

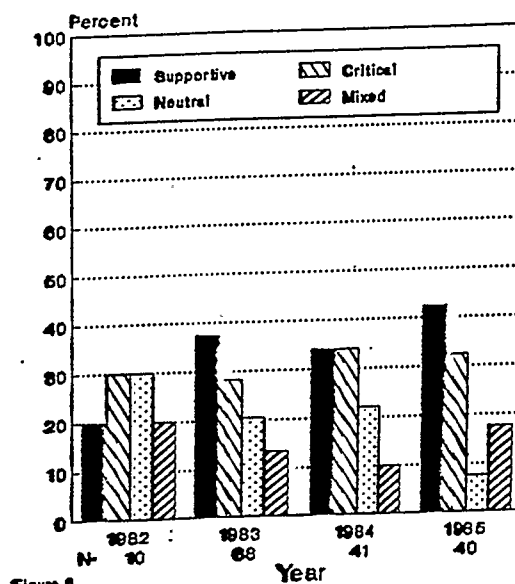


Figure 6

In terms of the Calgary Herald's coverage Lougheed does not appear to have benefited from an alliance phase during the first year of his last term. The percentage of critical articles exceeded the number of positive articles by 10 percent during that year. The Edmonton Journal did appear to grant an alliance period since over half the articles in the first year were supportive. However, the Journal did demonstrate a marked increase in the percentage of negative articles during the first year of the last term, 21.4 percent were deemed negative compared to only 3.6 percent during the

first year were supportive. However, the Journal did demonstrate a marked increase in the percentage of negative articles during the first year of the last term, 21.4 percent were deemed negative compared to only 3.6 percent during the first year of Lougheed's first term.

The number of critical articles in the Edmonton Journal continued to climb into the middle of the term. The breakdown between negative and positive articles in the Herald was more equitable. For example, Lougheed was just as likely to receive positive as negative coverage in the Herald during 1984. There was a reduction in the percentage of negative articles and a corresponding increase in positive articles in the final year of Lougheed's last year as Premier in both papers. The Journal reduced the negative percentage of articles by 20 percent to 24.4 percent. The percentage of positive articles underwent a moderate increase from 27.2 percent in 1984 to 34.6 percent in 1985. An interesting finding is that neutral articles peaked in the final year of the Journal's coverage to 33.3 percent, almost equal to the number of positive articles.

The Herald's coverage of Lougheed's final year in office was characterized by an increase in positive articles. The percentage of negative articles underwent a negligible change decreasing by only two percent. The percentage of neutral Calgary Herald articles averaged about 20.0 percent throughout the final term, but dropped to less than 10.0 percent in 1985.

year of Lougheed's first term in office. The results of this study suggest that Lougheed did receive predominately positive coverage during his first term as Premier. However, Premier Lougheed did not receive predominately positive coverage in either the Calgary Herald or the Edmonton Journal during his last term in office.

Tone of Reporting

The tone of reporting was also assessed. Tone of reporting referred to the way in which the facts of the article were presented by the journalist.

**Tone of Reporting by Term
Edmonton Journal**

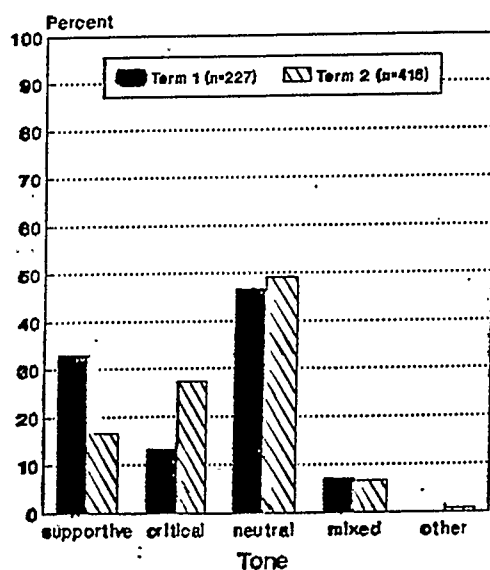


Figure 7

**Tone of Reporting by Term
Calgary Herald**

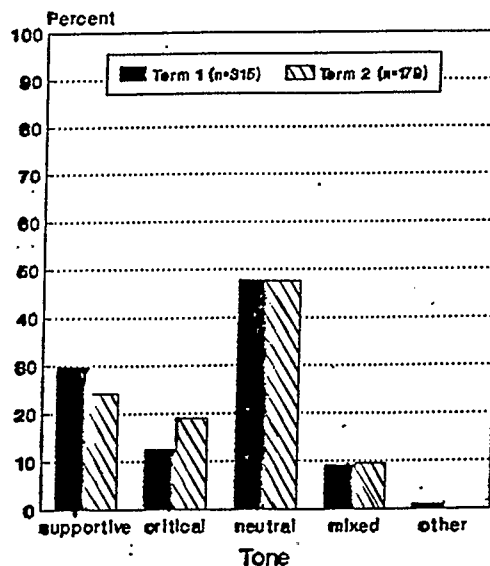


Figure 8

Figures 7 and 8 graphically depict the tone of reporting by term. During both terms the tone of the journalists were

Figures 7 and 8 graphically depict the tone of reporting by term. During both terms the tone of the journalists were similar in both papers. The majority of articles, slightly less than half, were neutral and about one third were positive. The majority of articles in both papers during the second time period were also neutral but the percentage of supportive and critical articles varied. The Herald's tone of reporting tended to be more favourable (24%) than the Journal's (16.6%). In contrast, the Edmonton Journal was more critical (27.2%) than the Herald (19.0%). The results of the analysis of the tone of reporting indicate that the tone of reporting was predominately neutral during both Lougheed terms being studied. The abundance of neutral tones is not surprising since it is the journalist's role to report events objectively. However, the fluctuation in positive and negative tones suggest there is some room for the journalist's impressions to be communicated and may be indicative of the relations between the reporters and Lougheed.

Interaction With the Press

The results of the statistical analysis of how Lougheed interacted with the media are displayed in tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 1

160

Tone by Type of Interaction with the Press Edmonton Journal Term 1									
Tone	Interaction								
	News	Conference	Interview	Quote Legislature	Quote Television	Speech Excerpt	Scrum	Unspecified	Other
N=	19		22	46	8	36	5	37	11
Supportive:	89.5		77.3	47.8	62.5	83.3	60.0	67.6	72.7
Critical :			4.5	10.9	25.0		20.0	10.8	
Neutral :			13.6	23.9		13.9		5.4	18.2
Mixed :	10.5		4.5	17.4	12.5	2.8	20.0	16.2	9.1
Total%	10.3		12.0	25.0	4.3	19.6	2.7	20.1	6.0
P<= .05	0.0		0.3	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.8	0.3	0.5

Tone by Type of Interaction with the Press Calgary Herald Term 1									
Tone	Interaction								
	News	Conference	Interview	Quote Legislature	Quote Television	Speech Excerpt	Scrum	Unspecified	Other
N=	37		26	61	5	54	10	53	18
Supportive:	62.2		57.7	31.1	20.0	61.1	60.0	37.7	61.1
Critical :			7.7	13.1	20.0	7.4	20.0	22.6	11.1
Neutral :	32.4		26.9	41.0	40.0	22.2	10.0	34.0	27.8
Mixed :	5.4		7.7	14.8	20.0	9.3	10.0	5.7	
Total%	14.0		9.8	23.1	1.9	20.5	3.8	20.0	6.8
P<= .05	0.01		0.36	0.02	0.70	0.02	0.62	0.34	0.28

Tables one and two present a cross tabulation of the tone of articles by the type of interaction with the press during the first time period analyzed. A cursory examination of these tables suggest that Lougheed received positive coverage in situations where he controlled the agenda. Quotes from the legislature were the most common means of citing Lougheed and account for 25 percent of the Journal's quotes and 23.1 percent of the Herald's. This is not surprising since legislative reporters are responsible for covering legislative proceedings. This finding could also be indicative of the popularity of question period. Excerpts from speeches were another popular source accounting for 19.6 percent of Edmonton Journal citations and 20.5 percent of the Calgary Herald's. Direct contact between Lougheed and the media was rare. When he did meet with the press he appeared to favour structured encounters such as interviews and news conferences.

Herald's. Direct contact between Lougheed and the media was rare. When he did meet with the press he appeared to favour structured encounters such as interviews and news conferences. Participation in scrums were extremely rare, less than 5 percent of coverage in both papers. This observation is made with caution because it was not always apparent how quotes were attained. Therefore, the results of this study may underestimate the percentage of scrums that Lougheed participated in.

Lougheed's penchant for indirect contact during his first term appears to have been an effective approach to media relations. Indeed excerpts from speeches led to supportive coverage in the Edmonton Journal 83.3 percent of the time, and 61.1 percent in the Herald. Direct exchanges also led to supportive coverage. News conferences were covered favourably by both newspapers, but more so by the Edmonton Journal in which 89.5 percent of news conferences led to supportive coverage, whereas this was the case 62.2 percent of the time in the Herald. This trend was true of interviews as well, 77.3 percent of the interviews granted to the Journal resulted in positive coverage and 57.7 percent of Herald interviews received the same treatment.

Tables 3 and 4 present Lougheed's interactions with the press during his last term as Premier.

TABLE 3

Tone by Type of Interaction With the Press									
Edmonton Journal									
Term 2									
Tone	Interaction								
	News	Conference	Interview	Legislature	Quote	Quote	Speech	Excerpt	Scrum
					Television				Unspecified
N=	30		23	44	13	39	7	107	19
Supportive	63.3		47.8	20.5		46.2	14.3	29.9	36.8
Critical	13.3		17.4	47.7		46.2	25.6	28.6	31.6
Neutral	10.0		17.4	13.6		38.5	23.1	28.6	21.1
Mixed	13.3		17.4	18.2		15.4	5.1	28.6	10.3
Total%	10.6		8.2	15.6		4.6	13.8	2.5	37.9
P<= .05									

TABLE 4

Tone by Type of Interaction With the Press									
Calgary Herald									
Term 2									
Tone	Interaction								
	News	Conference	Interview	Legislature	Quote	Quote	Speech	Excerpt	Scrum
					Television				Unspecified
N=	11		13	17	5	12	4	27	8
Supportive	36.4		61.5	17.6		40.0	75.0		33.3
Critical	45.5		7.7	58.8		20.0	16.7	100.0	22.2
Neutral	9.1		15.4			20.0			33.3
Mixed	9.1		15.4	23.5		20.0	8.3		11.1
Total%	11.3		13.4	17.5		5.2	12.4	4.1	27.8
P<= .05									

Lougheed appears to have maintained a preference for indirect contact with the media during his last term as Premier. The data presented in Tables 3 and 4 suggest that quotes from the legislature and speech excerpts remained the most common sources, 15.6 percent and 13.8 percent respectively for the Edmonton Journal, and 17.5 percent and 12.4 percent for the Calgary Herald. Speech excerpts also continued to yield an abundance of supportive articles, almost half of the time for the Edmonton Journal and three quarters for the Calgary Herald. Conversely, quotes from the legislature resulted in critical articles about half of the time in both papers. This finding is a significant deviation from Lougheed's first term in office when the same forum led to a proliferation of

positive articles.

The Premier granted slightly fewer interviews to reporters from the Edmonton Journal (8.2%), and slightly more to those from the Calgary Herald (13.4%) during his last term as Premier. This is a reversal of the trend in the first term, in which 12 percent of the Journal's interactions were based on interviews as opposed to 9.8 percent of the Herald's reporting. Interviews during the last term often produced positive articles, 47.8 percent for the Journal and 61.5 percent for the Herald. The fact that Lougheed increased the number of interviews with the Herald may be due to the unsupportive coverage he received from news conferences from that paper. News conferences covered by the Calgary Herald resulted in critical articles almost 50 percent of the time. Conversely, news conferences resulted in favourable coverage by the Journal 60 percent of the time. Realizing that there was a problem, Lougheed may have granted the Herald more interviews to counter the unsupportive coverage he received from their reporting of news conferences. Once again Lougheed rarely participated in scrums, less than 5 percent for both papers.

Sources

An examination of the sources of information in newspaper articles may be a useful indicator of conflict and symbiosis.

During periods characterized by symbiosis one would expect a reliance upon the leader himself or official government spokes people as sources of information.

Tables 5 and 6 list the sources by tone for the first term.

TABLE 5

Tone by Source Edmonton Journal Term 1**									
Tone	Source								
	Lougheed	Press Secretary	Conservative MLA	Government Spokesman	Federal Spokesman	Opposition Member	Unspecified	Other	
N=	160	2	29	17	21	49	13	39	
Supportive:	67.5	100.0	62.1	41.2	28.6	40.8	38.5	61.5	
Critical	6.9		6.9	17.6	23.8	34.7	30.8	15.4	
Neutral	13.8		17.2	23.5	14.3	14.3	15.4	5.1	
Mixed	11.9		13.8	17.6	33.3	10.2	15.4	17.9	
Total%	48.5	0.6	8.8	5.2	6.4	14.8	3.9	11.8	
P<= .05	0.00	0.74	0.51	0.28	0.00	0.00	0.28	0.20	

**Totals do not add up to one hundred percent
because this table provides only mention values.

TABLE 6

Tone by Source Calgary Herald Term 1**									
Tone	Source								
	Lougheed	Press Secretary	Conservative MLA	Government Spokesman	Federal Spokesman	Opposition Member	Unspecified	Other	
N=	229	4	46	14	26	65	21	58	
Supportive:	45.9	75.0	37.0	28.6	34.6	23.1	33.3	36.2	
Critical	11.4	-	13.0	35.7	23.1	35.4	23.8	25.9	
Neutral	32.8	25.0	30.4	35.7	30.8	26.2	19.0	27.6	
Mixed	10.0	-	19.6	-	11.5	15.4	23.8	10.3	
Total%	49.5	0.9	9.9	3.0	5.6	14.0	4.5	12.5	
P<= .05	0.00	0.56	0.10	0.17	0.79	0.00	0.13	0.38	

**Totals do not add up to one hundred percent
because this table provides only mention values.

The results suggest Lougheed was the most frequently cited source during his first term as Premier, with slightly less than half the citations attributed to him. Articles that quoted Lougheed as a source were most often coded as positive, 67.5 percent of Journal articles and 45.9 percent of Herald stories.

Tables 5 and 6 also indicate that official government sources were just as likely to be used as sources as opposition members. This result was attained by combining the total percentage of references to Press Secretaries, Conservative MLAs, and government spokespeople cited in each paper. This combined category is important because it reflects the government's advantage in getting its perception of the issues to the public. Government sources were quoted about 14.0 percent of the time in both papers which is roughly equivalent to the total of opposition sources. Furthermore, articles utilizing Lougheed or official government sources led to positive articles about half the time. In general, all sources other than Lougheed resulted in critical articles more often in the Herald than the Journal. For example, articles

Journal, only 17.6 percent of government source articles were negative and 41.2 percent were positive.

Tables 7 and 8 display the sources for the second time period under analysis.

TABLE 7

Tone by Source Edmonton Journal Term 2**								
Tone	Source							
	Lougheed	Press Secretary	Conservative: MLA	Government Spokesman	Federal Spokesman	Opposition: Member	Unspecified:	Other
N=	262	29	56	43	27	76	8	113
Supportive:	34.7	17.2	28.6	32.6	48.1	9.2	12.5	30.1
Critical	31.7	48.3	44.6	41.9	18.5	57.9	62.5	46.9
Neutral	21.0	34.5	19.6	11.6	25.9	10.5	25.0	15.9
Mixed	12.6		7.1	14.0	7.4	22.4	-	7.1
TotalX	42.7	4.7	9.7	7.0	1.4	12.4	1.3	18.4
P<= .05								

**Totals do not add up to one hundred percent
because this table provides only mention values.

TABLE 8

Tone by Source Calgary Herald Term 2**								
Tone	Source							
	Lougheed	Press Secretary	Conservative: MLA	Government Spokesman	Federal Spokesman	Opposition: Member	Unspecified:	Other
N=	90	6	23	13	8	32	7	46
Supportive:	41.1	-	26.1	7.7	50.0	12.5	28.6	34.8
Critical	30.0	33.3	39.1	38.5	-	56.3	42.9	34.8
Neutral	16.7	50.0	21.7	38.5	37.5	6.3	14.3	21.7
Mixed	12.2	16.7	13.0	15.4	12.5	25.0	14.3	8.7
TotalX	40.0	2.7	10.2	5.8	3.6	14.2	3.1	20.4
P<= .05								

**Totals do not add up to one hundred percent
because this table provides only mention values.

The Premier remained the most frequently cited source in both papers. Although Lougheed was quoted most often he was quoted slightly less than he was during his first term as Premier. Lougheed was cited five out of ten times during the first term and was quoted closer to four out of ten times in his second term. The reduction in Lougheed as a source is accompanied by

Premier. Lougheed was cited five out of ten times during the first term and was quoted closer to four out of ten times in his second term. The reduction in using Lougheed as a source is accompanied by a corresponding increase in citations of government sources. The combined total of government source categories increased to about 20.0 percent in both papers; whereas the total was closer to 14.0 percent in the first term. Of further interest is the fact that government sources appear most often in critical articles. This finding suggests that Lougheed relied upon his officials to speak for him on unpopular matters. This contention is born out by the finding that the articles that Lougheed was quoted in were often positive, 34.7 percent, of the Edmonton Journal and 41.1 percent of the Calgary Herald's articles. However, the percentage of negative articles that Lougheed was cited in increased dramatically during his last term in office to 31.7 percent from 6.9 percent in the Journal and 30.0 percent from 11.4 percent for the Herald. A final observation with regard to sources is that the total percentage of citations by opposition members remained constant across the two terms under analysis. This finding is not surprising since the size of the opposition actually decreased from Lougheed's first term as Premier to his last. However, almost six out of ten articles that cited opposition sources resulted in negative articles, double the percentage during the first term.

The concentration of Lougheed citations in both terms

the population of articles. The population of newspaper articles focused on the actions of Peter Lougheed. As a general rule, 50 percent of the articles had to refer directly to Lougheed. Consequently, it is not surprising that Lougheed was cited as a source about half the time during both terms. Therefore, the selection criterion of this study may have masked an important indicator of conflict, Lougheed's strategy of avoiding the media. However, the slight reduction in citations by Lougheed in his last term as Premier and the corresponding increase in the citations of government officials in critical articles may suggest that a period of conflict did exist during Lougheed's final term. The dramatic increase in the number of critical articles during the Premier's last term adds further credence to this argument.

Sources of Criticism

The sources of critical statements during the two time periods under analysis are displayed in tables 9 through 12.

TABLE 9

Tone by Source Of Criticism						
Edmonton Journal						
Term 1**						
Tone	Source of Criticism					
	Opposition	Expert	Federal	Not		
	Member	Source	Reporter	Spokesman	Mentioned	Other
N=	37	5	26	7	3	17
Supportive:	35.1	40.0	19.2	14.3	33.3	29.4
Critical :	40.5	20.0	38.5	57.1	33.3	35.3
Neutral :	5.4					5.9
Mixed :	18.9	40.0	42.3	28.6	33.3	29.4
Total%	38.9	5.3	27.4	7.4	3.2	17.9
P<= .05	0.00	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00

**Totals do not add up to one hundred percent
because this table provides only mention values.

TABLE 10

Tone by Source Of Criticism						
Calgary Herald						
Term 1**						
Tone	Source of Criticism					
	Opposition	Expert		Federal	Not	
	Member	Source	Reporter	Spokesman	Mentioned	Other
N=	48	6	44	7	6	21
Supportive:	20.8	16.7	13.6	28.6	16.7	28.6
Critical	43.8	33.3	50.0	14.3	33.3	47.6
Neutral	16.7		2.3	28.6	33.3	19.0
Mixed	18.8	50.0	34.1	28.6	16.7	4.8
TotalX	36.4	4.5	33.3	5.3	4.5	15.9
P<= .05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.42	0.55	0.01

TABLE 11

Tone by Source Of Criticism						
Edmonton Journal						
Term 2**						
Tone	Source of Criticism					
	Opposition	Expert		Federal	Not	
	Member	Source	Reporter	Spokesman	Mentioned	Other
N=	67	16	95	2	3	36
Supportive:	6.0	18.8	4.2		33.3	
Critical	64.2	75.0	81.1	100.0		94.4
Neutral	6.0				66.7	
Mixed	23.9	6.3	10.5			5.6
TotalX	30.6	7.3	43.4	0.9	1.4	16.4
P<= .05						

TABLE 12

Tone by Source Of Criticism						
Calgary Herald						
Term 2**						
Tone	Source of Criticism					
	Opposition	Expert		Federal	Not	
	Member	Source	Reporter	Spokesman	Mentioned	Other
N=	32	4	28	1	1	13
Supportive:	9.4		7.1			7.7
Critical	59.4	50.0	64.3		100.0	92.3
Neutral	6.3		3.6			
Mixed	25.0	50.0	25.0	100.0		
TotalX	40.5	5.1	35.4	1.3	1.3	16.5
P<= .05						

**Totals do not add up to one hundred percent
because this table provides only mention values.

The most frequently cited source of criticism during both terms and in both papers are opposition members and journalists. Not surprisingly, the opposition member category was significantly related to negative articles during both terms. This was true in approximately four out of ten articles during the first term and in six out of ten during the last term. The two papers differed in the relationship between reporters as the source of criticism and the tone of the articles during Lougheed's first term as Premier. Critical comments by journalists resulted in negative articles in the Calgary Herald half the time and a mixed tone a little over a third of the time. Critical statements by Edmonton Journal reporters led to mixed articles (42.3 %) slightly more often than negative articles (38.5%). The high proportion of mixed stories that result from the critical comments of journalists may be an attempt by journalists to provide a balanced account of the issue in the absence of a significant official opposition. Critical comments by journalists led to predominately more critical articles than mixed articles in Lougheed's last term as Premier. Critical statements by reporters led to negative articles 81.1 percent of the time in the Journal and 64.3 percent in the Herald and led to mixed articles 10.5 percent and 25.0 percent respectively. Expert sources were cited infrequently by both papers in both terms. The lack of expert sources suggests that journalists prefer easily accessible critics such as opposition members, but due

to the pressures of deadline will become the critics.

Who Sets The Agenda

The type of article published is another indicator of agenda setting. Grossman and Kumar found that 80.0 percent of the stories they analyzed fell into the "news" category, the remaining 20 percent were divided among feature articles, editorials, columns, and news analysis.³ This finding is duplicated in the present study, 85 percent of Edmonton Journal articles and 70 percent of Calgary Herald articles were classified as hard news stories. The same was true of the second time period, about seven out of ten articles were hard news. Both newspapers demonstrate an increase in the number of columns in the final term. Editorials, on the other hand, remained relatively constant across terms, accounting for approximately 10 percent of articles. The percentage of columns rose from 1.3 percent to 13.0 percent in the Edmonton Journal and increased from 8.6 to 21.2 percent in the Calgary Herald. These results are more illuminating when the type of article is cross tabulated by the tone of the article, as shown in Tables 13 and 14.

³ Grossman & Kumar, 1981, p.266.

TABLE 13

TYPE BY TONE
EDMONTON JOURNAL

TYPE	TONE							
	SUPPORTIVE		CRITICAL		NEUTRAL		MIXED	
	TERM1	TERM2	TERM1	TERM2	TERM1	TERM2	TERM1	TERM2
N =	194	288	14	41	16	29	3	54
HARD NEWS	60.3	30.9	13.9	31.9	14.9	26.4	10.8	10.8
FEATURE	57.1	36.6	28.6	41.5	-	12.2	14.3	9.8
EDITORIAL	75.0	24.1	18.8	72.4	-	-	6.3	2.4
COLUMN	100.0	29.6	-	51.9	-	7.4	-	11.1
P <= .05	0.04							

TABLE 14

TYPE BY TONE
CALGARY HERALD

TYPE	TONE							
	SUPPORTIVE		CRITICAL		NEUTRAL		MIXED	
	TERM1	TERM2	TERM1	TERM2	TERM1	TERM2	TERM1	TERM2
N =	220	121	24	9	42	11	27	38
HARD NEWS	41.4	36.4	15.9	28.9	35.0	21.5	7.7	13.2
FEATURE	50.0	44.4	25.0	33.3	12.5	11.1	12.5	11.1
EDITORIAL	45.2	18.2	31.0	45.5	7.1	9.1	16.7	27.3
COLUMN	55.6	42.1	14.8	31.6	11.1	13.2	18.5	13.2
P <= .05	0.01							

Tables 13 and 14 suggest that supportive coverage dominated all article types during the first term under analysis. The results of the second time period are more equitable across the classification of articles. The most dramatic change from the first term to the second term is the impressive increase in the percentage of critical columns which increased from 0 to 51.9 percent in the Edmonton Journal and from 14.8 to 31.6 percent in the Calgary Herald.

The placement of articles within the newspaper has an important impact on agenda setting. A basic tenet of agenda setting theory is the contention that what the media deem as important is implied by placement, and the public mirror this agenda through what they think about. The media denote

importance by the placement of a story in the newspaper or the broadcast. Tables 15 and 16 provide an analysis of placement by tone of the article.

TABLE 15

Tone by Placement Edmonton Journal Term 1				
Tone	Placement			
	Front Page	Front Page Inside Section	Inside Page	Editorial Page
N=	76	2	125	24
Supportive:	71.1	100.0	53.6	70.8
Critical :	13.2		15.2	20.8
Neutral :	6.6		19.2	
Mixed :	9.2		12.0	8.3
Total%	33.5	0.9	55.1	10.6
P<= .05	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10

TABLE 16

Tone by Placement Calgary Herald Term 1				
Tone	Placement			
	Front Page	Front Page Inside Section	Inside Page	Editorial Page
N=	88	17	136	74
Supportive:	47.7	58.8	36.0	50.0
Critical :	12.5	11.8	19.9	24.3
Neutral :	33.0	23.5	35.3	8.1
Mixed :	6.8	5.9	8.8	17.6
Total%	27.9	54.0	43.2	23.5
P<= .05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Tables 15 and 16 indicate that Lougheed stories were concentrated on the inside pages, 43.2 percent in the Calgary Herald and 55.1 percent in the Edmonton Journal. Front page stories accounted for about 3 out 10 articles in each paper. There was a significant difference between the two papers in

Herald and 55.1 percent in the Edmonton Journal. Front page stories accounted for about 3 out 10 articles in each paper. There was a significant difference between the two papers in placement on the front page of the inside section. The Edmonton Journal had less than 10.0 percent of its articles located in this area. In stark contrast, the Herald had 54.0 percent of its articles located on the front page of the inside section. The discrepancy between the two papers may indicate a difference in how newspapers distribute articles according to sections. It may also be a reflection of a practical problem in identifying location. Some articles were identified by the initials "FPIS", others were identified by a B1. Consequently, the inconsistency in identification may account for this discrepancy.

Further examination of these tables suggest that Lougheed received supportive coverage throughout all sections of both the newspapers studied in both papers. Most importantly, 71.1 percent of front page stories in the Edmonton Journal were positive during Lougheed's first term. The Herald's front pages also had a healthy representation of supportive articles with 47.7 percent coded as positive. Thus, issues deemed important by the media were given sympathetic coverage the majority of the time.

Tables 17 and 18 demonstrate that during Lougheed's last term supportive coverage was not found throughout all sections of the two newspapers.

TABLE 17

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Tone by Placement Edmonton Journal Term 2				
Tone	Placement			
	Front Page	Front Page Inside Section	Inside Page	Editorial Page
N=	69	67	218	62
Supportive:	31.9	25.4	31.2	35.5
Critical	36.2	43.3	33.0	54.8
Neutral	21.7	20.9	25.2	1.6
Mixed	10.1	10.4	10.6	8.1
Total%	16.6	16.1	52.4	14.9
P<= .05				

TABLE 18

Tone by Placement Calgary Herald Term 2				
Tone	Placement			
	Front Page	Front Page Inside Section	Inside Page	Editorial Page
N=	27	14	100	38
Supportive:	37.0	35.7	37.0	36.8
Critical	22.2	28.6	29.0	42.1
Neutral	22.2	28.6	20.0	7.9
Mixed	18.5	7.1	14.0	13.2
Total%	15.1	7.8	55.9	21.2
P<= .05				

The data presented in tables 17 and 18 demonstrate that articles were once again concentrated in the inside pages of the newspaper. However, unlike Lougheed's first term in office, positive coverage did not abound in all sections of the papers. The results in table 17 and 18 suggest that critical articles were prevalent in all sections of both papers. The editorial section had the highest percentage of critical articles, over 50 percent in the Journal and a little over 40 percent in the Herald.

Tables 19 and 20 display the results of a cross tabulation of story topic by placement within the newspaper and tone.

and tone.

TABLE 19

Topic by Placement and Tone Edmonton Journal Term 1										
TOPIC	PLACEMENT					TONE				
	N	FP	FPIS	IP	EDPG	+	-	0	+/-	
Personal Story	5	20.0		60.0	20.0	80.0		20.0		
National Energy	60	41.7		50.0	8.3	58.3	11.7	10.0	20.0	
Alberta Energy	36	38.9		58.3	2.8	58.3	22.2	11.1	8.3	
Fed-Provincial Relations	22	36.4		54.5	9.1	68.2	13.6	9.1	9.1	
Domestic	24	37.5	4.2	54.2	4.2	70.8	16.7	4.2	8.3	
Internal P.C.	10	50.0		40.0	10.0	60.0	20.0	20.0		
Legislative Proceedings	12	33.3		33.3	33.3	41.7	33.3	8.3	8.3	
Finance	8	37.5		50.0	12.5	62.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	
International Affairs	11	9.1		90.9		54.5		45.5		
Election	14	28.6		50.0	21.4	92.9	7.1			
Economy	11	9.1		72.7	18.2	63.6		27.3	9.1	
Other	14	7.1	7.1	64.3	21.4	42.9	28.6	21.4	7.1	

TABLE 20

Topic by Placement and Tone Calgary Herald Term 1										
TOPIC	PLACEMENT					TONE				
	N	FP	FPIS	IP	EDPG	+	-	0	+/-	
Personal Story	6	33.3	16.7	50.0		50.0	16.7	33.3		
National Energy	61	42.6	1.6	36.1	19.7	41.0	21.3	29.5	8.2	
Alberta Energy	61	24.6	4.9	42.6	27.9	44.3	19.7	29.5	6.6	
Fed-Provincial Relations	42	28.6	4.8	40.5	26.2	54.8	11.9	26.2	7.1	
LOCAL	27	33.3	3.7	48.1	14.8	40.7	22.2	25.9	11.1	
Internal P.C.	35	17.1	8.6	40.0	34.3	40.0	22.9	20.0	17.1	
Legislative Proceedings	14	7.1		64.3	28.6	35.7	21.4	14.3	28.6	
Finance	6	16.7	16.7	16.7	50.0	50.0	16.7	33.3		
International Affairs	6	16.7	16.7	66.1		16.1	16.3	50.9	16.7	
Election	20	25.0	15.0	50.0	10.0	50.0	15.0	25.0	10.0	
Economy	11	18.2		72.7	9.1	54.5	9.1	27.3	9.1	
Other	26	30.8	3.8	34.6	30.8	38.5	15.4	34.6	11.5	

A cursory examination of these tables suggest both the Calgary Herald and the Edmonton Journal had the same top news stories during both terms. This finding is not surprising since Grossman and Kumar found a similar pattern across media in their study.⁴

The top three stories of the first term for both papers were National Energy, Alberta Energy, and Federal-Provincial relations. National Energy stories were number one in both frequency and placement. National Energy articles were found on the front page about four out of 10 times. Of special interest is the finding that national energy stories were coded most often as supportive in 41.0 percent of Calgary Herald articles and 58.3 percent of those in the Edmonton Journal. Thus, Lougheed received predominately positive coverage on the top news story of his first term. This is significant because Lougheed was presented favourably on issues the media deemed important. The remaining two topics, Alberta Energy and Federal-Provincial, relations were top stories in terms of frequency but were found predominately on the inside pages of the paper. The tone of coverage for both issues was positive approximately half the time.

The relative infrequency of personal stories during the first term, no more than six stories in each paper, is surprising. Grossman and Kumar found that personal stories were popular during the first term because the public wanted

⁴ Grossman & Kumar, 1981. p.255.

to get to know their new President. Furthermore, it was found that such articles guaranteed positive coverage.⁵ Although the newspapers did not follow this pattern in terms of frequency they were consistent with regard to tone of coverage. Personal stories were coded as supportive 8 out of 10 times in the Journal and five out of 10 times in the Herald. Finally, the results suggest that Lougheed did not speak on local issues very often. The local category is a compilation of the following issues: Education, Labour, Social Services, Agriculture, Constitutional Issues, and Native Affairs. These issues were collapsed because the individual numbers were too small to draw any conclusions. When Lougheed did speak on these issues they were not given prominent placement and were found on the inside pages of the newspaper. The tone of coverage tended to be predominately positive, 40.7 percent of the Calgary Herald and 70.8 percent of the Edmonton Journal articles.

Tables 21 and 22 display the results of topic by placement and tone for Lougheed's final term as Premier.

⁵ Grossman & Kumar, 1981, p.270.

TABLE 21

Topic by Placement and Tone Edmonton Journal Term 2										
TOPIC	PLACEMENT					Tone				
	N	FP	FPIS	IP	EDPG	+	-	0	+/-	
Personal Story	48	12.5	22.9	43.8	20.8	34.2	14.6	16.7	14.6	
National Energy	28	17.9	21.4	57.1	3.6	32.1	28.6	28.6	10.7	
Alberta Energy	27	11.1	14.8	70.4	3.7	40.7	18.5	25.9	14.8	
Fed-Provincial Relations	23	17.4	13.0	52.2	17.4	47.8	17.4	34.8		
Local	30	13.3	26.7	56.7	3.3	33.3	43.3	10.3	13.3	
Internal P.C.	89	25.8	19.1	33.7	21.3	12.4	64.0	13.5	10.1	
Legislative Proceedings	9	44.4	11.1	33.3	11.1	11.1	55.6	11.1	22.2	
Finance	20	20.0	15.0	50.0	15.0	20.0	65.0	5.0	10.0	
International Affairs	23	4.3		91.3	4.3	39.1	8.7	52.2		
Election	17	35.3		29.4	35.3	47.1	11.8	35.3	5.9	
Economy	43	11.6	4.7	69.8	14.0	25.6	37.2	18.6	18.6	
Other	59	6.8	20.3	57.6	15.3	30.5	47.5	18.6	3.4	

TABLE 22

Topic by Placement and Tone Calgary Herald Term 2										
TOPIC	PLACEMENT					TONE				
	N	FP	FPIS	IP	EDPG	+	-	0	+/-	
Personal Story	35	11.4	5.7	60.0	22.9	65.7	2.9	20.0	11.4	
National Energy	10	30.0	30.0	30.0	10.0	70.0		30.0		
Alberta Energy	3			100.0		33.3			66.7	
Fed-Provincial Relations	14	14.3		64.3	21.4	42.9	7.1	35.7	14.3	
Local	12	8.3		75.0	16.7	8.3	58.3	8.3	25.0	
Internal P.C.	35	17.1	8.6	48.6	25.7	11.4	51.1	17.1	14.3	
Legislative Proceedings	1	100.0					100.0			
Finance	12	8.3	8.3	58.3	25.0	25.0	58.3		16.7	
International Affairs	14		14.3	71.4	14.3	35.7	14.3	42.9	7.1	
Election	7	14.3	14.3	28.6	42.9	28.6	57.1	14.3		
Economy	21	14.3	9.5	57.1	19.0	38.1	38.1	4.8	19.0	
Other	15	33.3		46.7	20.0	40.0	26.7	20.0	13.3	

Once again, the top three stories: internal workings of the Progressive Conservatives, personal stories, and economy, were the same in both papers. The topic of internal workings of the provincial P.C. party was the number one story. These stories were found about four out of ten times on the inside pages, however, a significant number were also present on the front page and editorial section. The tone of this issue is of special interest because over half of the articles were coded as critical and only a little over 10 percent were positive. Thus, the top story of Lougheed's last term received consistent negative coverage. This negative emphasis may have been balanced out by the positive coverage on personal stories, which was the number two story during his last term. The dramatic increase in the number of personal stories may be accounted for by a number of articles devoted to speculation that Lougheed would run for the federal leadership race held in 1983 and later similar speculation about his retirement. Although these stories did not receive prominent coverage, they were positive in well over half the instances. The economy, the third top story, was found on the inside page almost 6 out of 10 times. In this instance, slightly less than 40 percent were negative.

Further examination of tables 21 and 22 demonstrate that the top three stories of the first term decreased in frequency but remained strongly supportive in tone. The local category remained relatively infrequent in the last term, unlike the

first term, the majority of local articles were negative 53.3 percent of the Calgary Herald and 43.3 percent of the Edmonton Journal.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION

The examination of Peter Lougheed and the media sought to answer a number of questions. The analysis began with the premise that Lougheed appeared to receive supportive coverage throughout his tenure as Premier. This assumption emanated from a review of the literature that dealt with Lougheed's relations with the media. However, none of this literature had actually analyzed the content of media reports to determine if this impression was supported by empirical data. This content analysis sought to fill that research void.

It is important to note, that given the difference in the composition of the samples for each term, one cannot provide formal validation of the model. The tone of newspaper articles in the Edmonton Journal and the Calgary Herald were analyzed and categorized as supportive, critical/unsupportive, neutral, and mixed. The results of this analysis suggest that the predominant tone of articles varied by term. It appears that the contention that Lougheed received supportive coverage may have been true during his first term in office. The results of the content analysis demonstrate that 61.7 percent of the Edmonton Journal and 43.8 percent of Calgary Herald articles were supportive. The results also demonstrated an incremental increase in the percentage of negative articles

during the first term. However, positive articles still dominated.

The tone of coverage Lougheed received from newspapers appeared to undergo a dramatic change during his last term as Premier. Supportive coverage from the Edmonton Journal dropped to 36.9 percent and the percentage of critical articles increased to 30.7 percent. A similar pattern occurred in the Calgary Herald. Supportive coverage decreased to 31.0 percent and the percentage of critical coverage grew to 38.5 percent of the articles.

The results of this examination into the tone of coverage Lougheed received from the Edmonton Journal and the Calgary Herald begs the question, what accounts for the coverage Premier Lougheed received? Three possible explanations were proposed in chapter one; Was it due to unique journalistic traditions in Alberta? Was it due to a unique time in Alberta's history? Or, was Lougheed a unique politician with a special hold on his constituents?

The review of Alberta's journalistic traditions in chapter four demonstrated that provincial governments in the past were subjected to critical coverage despite strong electoral support. Furthermore, relations between the government and the media were often "icy", particularly during William Aberhart's tenure as Premier. Therefore, it appears that Alberta's media have been critical of provincial government policies and the activities of the Premier.

Consequently, the critical coverage Lougheed received in his last term as Premier could be expected given the established media traditions in Alberta. However, this tradition of critical coverage does not explain Lougheed's coverage during his first term as Premier.

The generally supportive coverage Lougheed received during his first term may be better explained by the unique time in Alberta's history. The energy battles between Alberta and Ottawa that took place during Lougheed's first term as premier may have solidified Lougheed's support with the electorate. The energy battle provided Lougheed with a unique opportunity to solidify his support from the electorate, and to prolong the period of "symbiosis" between the media and the government that often occurs during the early part of a new government's term. It was suggested in Chapter Four that the energy battle between Prime Minister Trudeau and Premier Lougheed satisfied all the requirements of a good news story given the drama and the strong personalities involved. The results of the content analysis provide appear to support for this argument: National Energy, Alberta Energy, and Federal-Provincial relations were the top three stories in both the Edmonton Journal and the Calgary Herald. More importantly, Lougheed received predominantly positive coverage in all these topic areas. His role as the "Defender of Alberta" may also be supported by the data. The highest proportion of positive coverage and the lowest percentage of negative stories was

found in the Federal-Provincial relations category. Thus, the positive coverage Lougheed received during his first term as Premier may have been due to the unique time in Alberta's history.

Journalists from both the Edmonton Journal and the Calgary Herald concede that Lougheed received supportive coverage from the papers on fundamental issues involving energy and relations with the federal government. Kathy Kerr of the Calgary Herald attributed this in part to news judgement, readers were more interested in how their Premier felt about national issues than other leaders. Furthermore, Kerr believed, "They love those stories because the small guy in Alberta is up against the heavyweights in central Canada."¹ It also became evident through the interviews with reporters that the public was not prepared to accept criticism of their Premier when the economy was booming in Alberta. It was the impression of the journalists interviewed that the electorate was not interested in a critical analysis of the Premier's activities because they were pleased with the economic climate at that time.

The importance of the well being of the economy and the Premier's ability to focus on problems that involved the federal government is also pertinent to an explanation of the change in the tone of coverage that appeared to occur in Lougheed's last term as Premier. By 1982 the booming Albertan

¹ Kerr.

economy was going bust and Alberta was heading into an economic recession. The economic hard times that resulted may have provided more opportunities for critical stories about Premier Lougheed and his government. The empirical data gleaned from the content analysis may support this contention. Stories about the economy were the third most frequent topic reported in the last term studied and resulted in negative coverage almost 40 percent of the time in both papers. Edmonton Journal reporter George Oak believes that the electorate became more politicized during the recession.² Thus difficult times may also have prepared the electorate to be more open to criticism of their Premier.

The results of the content analysis may suggest that the economic downturn did not provide the only avenue for negative coverage. The number one story of the 1982-1985 term was the internal operations of the Progressive Conservative government itself. Furthermore, over half of these stories were deemed negative and only a little over 10 percent were positive. This finding is surprising because Lougheed had been credited with running one of the most secretive governments in Canada which should preclude such an emphasis on the operations of the government rather than the issues it was elected to address. Since Lougheed's openness with the media did not appear to undergo a radical transformation the credit for this change in focus may be attributed to the journalists

² Oak.

themselves. It was suggested in chapter three that newspaper journalists, particularly Edmonton Journal reporters, were encouraged to become more investigative in covering the activities of Premier Lougheed and his government. This investigative approach was assisted further by the fact that Lougheed had not altered his approach to media relations or use of manipulative tactics significantly throughout his Premiership. Consequently the journalists knew where to look for information, and the warning signals that there was more to a story than the government was presenting. For example, the journalists came to view the timing of an announcement as a warning signal since contentious announcements tended to be made late in the day. According to the journalists interviewed for this study the emphasis on the operations of the government itself was the result of a perception by the media that the leadership of the P.C. party was about to change. Consequently, journalists began to pay more attention to the dynamics within the party to get some indication of potential leadership contenders and the allegiances that were developing within caucus. According to Bill Sass, at times of change "cracks in the amour" are more likely to appear and these cracks appear to have resulted in a proliferation of negative stories.

Thus, the analysis of the tone of coverage Premier Lougheed received in his first and last term as Premier of Alberta appear to be more of a reflection of the times rather

than Lougheed's personal abilities or unique journalistic traditions in Alberta.

Although the tone of coverage Lougheed received may not have been a direct result of his uniqueness as a politician, he was a very effective politician in many ways, particularly in regard to how he controlled the agenda-building process in Alberta. It was the unanimous consensus of Peter Lougheed, government officials and the journalists interviewed that Lougheed controlled the agenda in Alberta. His aptitude for controlling the agenda appears to be a result of how he approached communicating through the media. The cornerstone of his approach was tight control over the dissemination of information. Duncan Thorne, a reporter for the Edmonton Journal described this strategy as, "Putting blinkers on the media by depriving them of information".³ Lougheed centralized the flow of information in a number of ways, such as expanding the Public Affairs Bureau which served to institutionalize the flow of information out of the government. Lougheed also practised a technique known as "avoidance" throughout his tenure as Premier. Grossman and Kumar describe avoidance as a means by which the leader meets with the media in "highly structured and controlled situations".⁴ Grossman and Kumar maintain that avoidance is most characteristic of the "detachment" phase of media

³ Thorne.

⁴ Grossman and Kumar, 1981, p.295.

relations. Detachment involves formalized media relations that are intended to maximize exposure and minimize the risk.⁵ The overwhelming electoral victories Lougheed enjoyed as Premier may account for the detached quality of relations with the media. Grossman and Kumar contend that the detachment phase will occur more quickly in administrations that have little concern with the need to attain mass support for their policies.⁶

The results of the content analysis and the interviews conducted with Lougheed and journalists suggest that the Premier did prefer structured interactions with the media such as news conferences or interviews, and forums in which the media was forced to simply report what he said. The results of the content analysis suggest that quotes from the legislature and speech excerpts accounted for most of the Lougheed citations in both terms analyzed. Although, the preponderance of quotes from the legislature may be expected since political reporters are responsible to report what transpires in the legislature, this forum in Alberta may have had unique advantages for Lougheed. For instance, the minimal presence of an official opposition may have made the legislature a relatively safe arena to speak to the public. Furthermore, Calgary Herald reporter, Gordon Jaremko, noted that the legislature was an effective forum for Lougheed

⁵ Grossman & Kumar, 1981, p.295.

⁶ Grossman & Kumar, 1981, p.295.

because he was surrounded by his "cheering squad", members of the cabinet and Conservative MLAs.⁷ Speeches were also an effective medium to hold the media captive. Lougheed infrequently entertained questions from the media after he made a speech so the message of the speech could not be diffused by the journalist's queries.

The relative infrequency of direct contact with the media, and the dependence on forums in which the Premier could not be questioned, suggest that the government had more influence in setting the political agenda than the media. Furthermore, an examination of the sources cited in newspaper articles may indicate a distinct advantage for the government. The results of the content analysis of sources found that Lougheed was the most frequently cited source, followed by other government spokespeople. The pattern of citations from government spokespeople in the final term is of special interest. The results appear to indicate a distinct increase in citations of government officials and a slight decrease in the percentage of articles that cited Lougheed. Moreover, government spokespeople were cited more often in critical articles than positive articles. This finding is significant because Lougheed admitted in an interview that he spoke only on issues of his choosing. This contention was supported by journalists who asserted that Lougheed never said more to the press than he wanted to. Given the control Lougheed had over

⁷ Jaremko.

his exposure to the press, this finding may suggest that the decrease in citations from Lougheed was indicative of a deliberate strategy that others deliver bad news.

Unfortunately the finding discussed above illuminates a possible limitation of the content analysis. The results of the content analysis demonstrate that Lougheed was the most frequently cited source in both terms. The concentration of Lougheed citations may erroneously imply an openness between Lougheed and the media. However, this result is more likely to be an artifact of the selection criterion for the population of articles examined. The population of newspaper articles focused on the actions of Premier Lougheed. As a rule, 50 percent of the article had to refer directly to Lougheed. Consequently, it is not surprising that Lougheed was cited as a source about half the time in both terms analyzed. Therefore, the selection criterion of this study may have masked an important indicator of conflict, Lougheed's strategy of avoiding the media. A possible solution to this problem in future studies would be to account for all government stories, continue to analyze only the stories that dealt primarily with the Premier and then determine the percentage of political stories that satisfied the selection criterion. This percentage could be compared with the two terms analyzed to determine if there were less stories about Lougheed specifically during a term characterized by a preponderance of negative articles. However, the slight

reduction in citations by Lougheed in his last term as Premier and the corresponding increase in the citations of government officials in critical articles may suggest that a period of conflict did exist during Lougheed's final term.

Although it was the general impression of the people interviewed that Lougheed controlled the agenda, the results of the content analysis of Lougheed's last term as Premier may suggest the opposite. As stated earlier the top story in this term was the internal operations of the P.C. party, also the majority of these articles were negative. The fact the government itself became the story rather than issues, and the preponderance of negative articles, suggest that control of the agenda had slipped away from Lougheed to the media. Wayne Kondro, a reporter for the Calgary Herald, believes that if the media control the agenda it is a reflection of a deficiency of the government rather than the power of the media.⁸ The publisher of the Calgary Herald, Kevin Peterson, concurs with this position, he believes that if the government does not present an agenda the media will because, "Its often the case of who has the strongest message at the time."⁹ It was the impression of a number of the journalists interviewed that Lougheed did not advance an aggressive agenda in his final term as Premier because he was preparing to retire. Thus, the lack of a strong agenda put forth by the government

⁸ Kondro. Interview, Jan.7, 1990.

⁹ Peterson.

may have made Lougheed vulnerable to the loss of control he appeared to have experienced.

Another indication of a weakened grasp on the agenda may be indicated by differences in the type of articles published during Lougheed's last term in office. Specifically, there appeared to be a sharp increase in the percentage of columns in the 1982-85 time period from 1.3 percent in the Edmonton Journal to 13.0 percent; and from 8.6 percent in the Calgary Herald to 21.2 percent. This is significant because Lougheed had less control over the message of columns, where journalists are given the opportunity to comment on the actions of the Premier, than he did in hard news items where the journalists had to quote what Lougheed said. Of further significance is the fact that a substantial number of the columns were negative, 51.9 percent of Edmonton Journal columns and 31.6 percent of the columns that appeared in the Calgary Herald. It was the belief of Patrick O'Callaghan, who was publisher of both papers at different times of Lougheed's tenure that the increase in columns were a result of a perceived desire of the readers to have more analysis in the paper.¹⁰

The apparent loss of control over the political agenda during Lougheed's last term as Premier may also shed some light in the existence of conflict and symbiosis between the media and the government of Alberta. The Grossman-Kumar model

¹⁰ O'Callaghan.

has been described as a useful tool to identify periods of conflict and symbiosis in media relations. These researchers found that the first year of an administration resulted in the highest percentage of positive articles and the lowest percentage of negative stories.¹¹ Subsequent years are characterized by an increase in negative stories peaking in the final year of the term. Thus, Grossman and Kumar expect a consistent pattern of favourable coverage tempered by an increase in negative articles. This pattern changes slightly in the second consecutive term when the President enjoys an abbreviated "alliance" phase.

The results of the analysis of Loughheed's first term in office appear to be consistent with the Grossman and Kumar model. A pattern of predominately positive coverage tempered by an increase in negative coverage was suggested by the data. However, this pattern did not appear to persist into Loughheed's last term in office. In the Journal there was an abundance of positive stories, over 50 percent and a relatively low number of negative stories, 20 percent during Loughheed's last term. The Herald, on the other hand, appeared to have forgone the alliance phase, as indicated by the relatively high percentage of negative and neutral stories, about 30 percent each, while only 20 percent of the articles were supportive. However, the Herald did appear to conform to the pattern anticipated by Grossman and Kumar for the

¹¹ Grossman & Kumar, 1981, p.261.

remainder of the term since the percentage of positive articles was slightly greater than the percentage of negative articles in the remaining years of the term. The results from the Edmonton Journal suggest that it did not follow this pattern, the percentage of negative articles exceeded positive articles in all but the final year of the term.

The anomalies demonstrated in both papers may be attributed to the sheer length of time Lougheed governed. Calgary Herald reporter, Kathy Kerr accounted for the absence of the alliance phase by maintaining that the final term was just a continuation of previous terms, nothing had changed to warrant a period of alliance. The fact that the Herald was less critical than the Journal for the remainder of the term is more difficult to account for, but George Oak suggested that Calgary's readership tends to be more Conservative than the Journal's readership.¹² Therefore, the Calgary Herald may have been less critical than the Edmonton Journal in deference to its more Conservative readership. The abundance of negative articles in the Journal's coverage of the last term may have been a result of the Journal's self-proclaimed role as the unofficial opposition of the government, this led to an increase in the number of staff assigned to the press gallery and an atmosphere that encouraged investigative journalism.

The tone of reporting was used as another indication of

¹² Oak.

the cycle of conflict and symbiosis anticipated by the Grossman-Kumar model. The analysis of tone of reporting was based upon the premise that in times of symbiosis if the journalist did report in a manner other than neutral it would more likely be in a positive tone. Alternately, during times of conflict a negative tone would be expected when a tone other than neutral was expressed.

The results of the statistical analysis suggest an extended period of symbiosis during Lougheed's first term as Premier. As anticipated, the majority of articles in both newspapers were reported with a neutral tone. However, when a tone other than neutral was apparent it was more likely to be positive in both papers. The highest percentage of articles with a negative tone of reporting were found during the final year of the term. This finding may have been due to the fact that 1975 was an election year so journalists may have been more inclined to express an opinion and criticize the government.

To the degree that the tone of reporting is indicative of the presence of conflict and symbiosis, the results of the analysis suggest that symbiosis was predominate in the first term studied, as indicated by the preponderance of positive tones of reporting. This pattern appeared to change in the last term, when the percentage of negative tones of reporting increased in both papers, suggesting a period of conflict. This conclusion is made tentatively however since the results

are based on a small number of articles due to the neutral tone of the majority of the articles.¹³

The source of critical statements was taken to be another indication of conflict and symbiosis. The results of the content analysis suggest that critical sources did not vary considerably between the two time periods analyzed. In both terms the opposition members and journalists were the primary sources of criticism. A high percentage of critical quotes by opposition members is expected because the opposition's primary function is to criticize the government. The concentration of journalists as the source of criticism was surprising. Grossman and Kumar found that journalists prefer to "pluck critical words from others mouths".¹⁴ In light of their findings one would expect expert sources to fill the void left by the existence of a minimal formal opposition in Alberta. The lack of expert opinion may be a result of practical deadline pressures imposed on journalists. It may also be attributed to the fact that in many cases it was the journalist that discovered the problem. In their interviews a number of journalists explained that they were able to

¹³ The predominance of a neutral tone of reporting continued in both papers in the last term analyzed. The balance of articles that had a tone of reporting other than neutral in the Edmonton Journal were more likely to be negative than positive. The Calgary Herald had a more equitable breakdown between positive and negative tone of reporting. However, the percentage of articles with a negative tone of reporting was higher than it was during Lougheed's first term.

¹⁴ Grossman & Kumar, 1981, p.277.

identify efforts by the government to massage the message due to their experience with attempts to manipulate them in the past. An example cited earlier was the government's penchant for reannouncing the same program at different times. This being the case, the journalist would be the most likely source to identify and comment on the discrepancy. Thus, journalists may have been such a major source of critical statements simply because they were often the source that uncovered the problem.

Calgary Herald reporter, Geoff White, added some further insight about the lack of expert sources of criticism. He tended to rely upon people who were directly influenced by an announcement for reaction rather than seeking expert opinions from academics or others.

Evidence of the ebb and flow of conflict and symbiosis as predicted by Grossman and Kumar may be inferred from the examination of the changes in the tone of articles, the tone of reporting and the sources of criticism in each article. The results of the content analysis suggest that conflict and symbiosis were evident in Lougheed's relations with the media.

Limitations of the Study

There are weaknesses inherent in any research and this analysis of Peter Lougheed and the media is no exception.

Attempts were made to be as thorough as possible to account for all the possible variables that may have accounted for Lougheed's relations with the media and the newspaper coverage that resulted. However, no study can be completely exhaustive, indeed, it is often the inadequacy of current research that leads to subsequent studies. This analysis sought to fill a research void for empirical data that was lacking in previous accounts of Premier Lougheed and the media. This analysis filled that void partially; unfortunately, the limitations of this analysis preclude it from completely filling the void. This study concentrated on the coverage Lougheed received in newspapers. Television, a powerful medium for political news and of critical importance to Lougheed's rise to power was unavailable to be studied. A subsequent examination of the television coverage Lougheed received to compare and contrast with the current findings would be insightful, and would provide a more complete picture of the media attention the Premier received. Furthermore, this analysis did not examine Lougheed's entire tenure as Premier. Although the examination of his first and last term in office was instructive, a future analysis of the time period not studied, 1976-1981, would be useful to determine the exact point in time that Lougheed's fortunes changed from being predominately supported by the press to being unsupportive.

Although the personal interviews with the journalists

that covered Lougheed in the time periods studied were invaluable, they also highlight a practical constraint of the study. The interviews with journalists could not be exhaustive due to the obvious limitations of time and access. This shortcoming is most evident in the interviews with reporters that covered Lougheed during the 1971-1975 time period. These journalists were difficult to contact because the majority had moved on to other newspapers in other provinces. Even when they were located they expressed some concern in answering some of the questions since the events in question had taken place up to 15 years earlier.

Summary of Findings

The combination of the content analysis of newspaper coverage coupled with the interviews permit a number of conclusions to be drawn with a certain amount of confidence. First, this study provided empirical evidence about the tone of coverage Premier Lougheed received from the Edmonton Journal and the Calgary Herald during his first and last term as Premier of Alberta. Briefly, the tone of coverage varied by term; it was predominately positive in the first term and primarily negative during the last term. The change of tone in reporting that occurred between the two terms suggests that events at specific times in history can influence how a leader will be received. This observation may appear to be self

evident, but it is significant when one considers that Premier Lougheed demonstrated a thorough awareness of the resources at the government's disposal to control the agenda-building process, resources that he used quite effectively. The mood of the times may be more important than media-management techniques. That is to say, the positive coverage Lougheed received in his first term may have been due to the fortunate economic fortunes of the province at that time. Lougheed's initial success may also be attributed to a naive media who were unfamiliar with the manipulative tactics the government would utilize to control the agenda building process. Accordingly, the negative coverage that predominated in the final term may have been due in part to the economic downturn Alberta experienced, and to the media having learned to identify attempts to manipulate the message.

The historical analysis and the results of the content analysis suggest that Alberta journalists are not uniquely soft on majority governments. They are willing to criticize the government despite the apparent popularity of the government with their readers.

Finally, the results of the content analysis suggest that the model put forth by the Grossman and Kumar study of Presidential coverage may be applicable to a Canadian Premier. However, this conclusion is made tentatively since the pattern of the phases was found to be slightly different in Lougheed's last term as Premier.

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APPENDIX 1

CODING RULES

1. Lougheed must be the principal focus of all articles coded. As a general rule, about 50 percent of the story should be directly related to Lougheed. Stories that refer to the Lougheed administration but not specifically to Peter Lougheed should not be coded. However, code all stories and make a notation if unsure of the articles inclusion.
2. The newspaper article is the unit of analysis, therefore, a separate code sheet must be used for each article coded.
3. Please circle the number that identifies the correct response.
4. If the "other" category is chosen, please write in the specific information on the code sheet next to the question.
5. Indicate the date of the article by year, month and day. For example, March 26, 1972 would be coded as 72 03 26.
6. The "Dateline" refers to the city that the story originated from.
7. **Hard News:** Reports the facts with little background information. Usually the article is set apart from other stories by its "timeliness".

Feature Article: Falls under the heading "soft news". Such articles are often general interest stories rather than hard news items. For example, stories about Lougheed's family or his general leadership style would fall into this category.

Editorial: Usually unsigned columns, often these are labelled as editorials.

Column: An opinion piece that is usually labelled as a column. They often include the name and picture of the author.

Background/Analysis: Gives indepth information by recounting past events or providing analysis of the news item. These articles are occasionally labelled as "Analysis" in the newspaper.

8. **Reporter Identification:** If a reporter and a news

service are cited, code the reporters name as the source.

Source: The source always refers to a human source. If an important document or poll is referred to in this regard indicate it on writing on the code sheet.

Spokesperson: A "government spokesperson" refers to anyone employed by the provincial government that is not an MLA or a Cabinet Minister.

9. Personal Story: Refers to a story about Lougheed's personal life, career moves, retirement, and so on.

National Energy: Articles about the oil and gas industries that involve national policies or the positions on energy issues put forth by national figures such as the Prime Minister or another Federal representative.

Alberta Energy: Articles about oil and gas that refer to Alberta's policies and developments including pronouncements by provincial government representatives. Syncrude is an example.

Internal Operations of the Progressive Conservative: Articles that are concerned with the inner workings of the Lougheed government. For example, appointments or scandals involving members of the Conservative government.

Federal/Provincial Relations: Articles concerned with statements, policies, or actions vis a vis Ottawa.

Finance: Articles that deal with the allotment of government funds. For example, the budget or spending of the Heritage Fund.

International Affairs: Refers to stories of Lougheed meeting with international figures or groups in Alberta or a foreign country. However, stories that deal with the organizational aspects of a trip, such as cost, should be coded under the Internal Operations category.

Economy: Articles that refer to the general state of Alberta's economy. Such as the boom/bust cycle, unemployment, economic diversification or economic policy.

10. Tone of Article: Refers to the general impression the coder is left with upon completion of their first reading.

Positive: Refers to a complimentary story. One that has positive or supportive statements directed to Lougheed personally or to a policy or decision that is directly associated with Lougheed.

Negative: Refers to a story that is critical of Lougheed personally or to a policy or decision that is directly associated with him.

Mixed: Refers to a story that has both positive and negative statements directed to Lougheed personally or to a policy or decision directly related to him. Such stories do not leave an overall positive or negative impression.

Neutral: Refers to hard news articles that are primarily informational.

NOTE: These categories are applicable to **Tone of Reporting**. In this instance, analyze the way in which the reporter has presented the facts. For example, if an article dealt with an opposition MLA criticizing Lougheed the tone of the article would be coded as critical. However, if the reporter presented the facts in a manner that discredited the critical source, it would be coded as a positive tone of reporting.

11. PICTURES

Informal Pose: Refers to pictures that do not appear to be posed, rather, those photographed are caught in a candid position.

Formal Pose: Refers to pictures that have been staged for the benefit of the photographer.

File Photo: Refer to a professionally photographed image of Lougheed, usually of his head and shoulders.

Personal Photo: Refer to pictures that demonstrate a private view of Lougheed. For example, a picture of Lougheed with his wife or family or Lougheed involved in a leisure activity (Lougheed off the job).

12. The tone of the picture refers to the subjective impression of the coder upon viewing the photograph.

Positive: A picture that is either physically flattering or captures Lougheed in some kind of affirmative action. Pictures that may be included in this category are: Lougheed smiling, looking assertive, concerned, or a picture that is taken from a direct position rather than

from an angle.

Negative: A picture that is not physically flattering or captures Lougheed in a negative position. Pictures that may be included in this category are: Lougheed looking angry, arrogant, out-of-control, or where his face is distorted in some way, his eyes closed or mouth open. Photos taken from an unflattering angle such as one above Lougheed may also be included in this category.

Neutral: A picture that does not incite a positive or negative reaction.

13. Please note in writing ny personal information about Lougheed that is mentioned in the article. For example, mention of Lougheed being ill.
14. A "scrum" refers to an impromptu exchange with reporters, it often takes place outside the Legislature.
15. Please note in writing any reference to Lougheed being secretive.
16. Please note in writing any interesting points, such as reference to a scandal involving someone in the government.

APPENDIX 2

CODE SHEET

_ _ _ ID

1. NEWSPAPER
 (1) Calgary Herald
 (2) Edmonton Journal
2. DATE, Please indicate the Year, Month and Day.

Year Month Day

3. PLACEMENT
 (1) Front Page
 (2) Front Page Inside Section
 (3) Inside Page
 (4) Editorial Page
 (5) Other
4. TYPE OF NEWS STORY
 (1) Hard News
 (2) Feature Article
 (3) Editorial
 (4) Column
 (5) Background/Analysis
 (6) Other
5. REPORTER
- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| (1) Bell Bob | (23) Gold William |
| (2) Bennett Paul | (24) Pratt Sheila |
| (3) Jaremko Gordon | (25) Truckey Don |
| (4) Lindbland John | (26) White Geoff |
| (5) Lynch Charles | (27) O'Callaghan P. |
| (6) McDonald Terri | (28) Kondro Wayne |
| (7) Midgley Harry | (29) Braid Don |
| (8) Peterson Kevin | (30) Oak George |
| (9) Petitt Terri | (31) Cohen Cheryl |
| (10) Sellar Don | (32) Vlieg Janet |
| (11) Tierny Ben | (33) Sibly Robert |
| (12) Wire Service | (34) Thorne Duncan |
| Please Indicate | |
| (13) Edmonton Bureau | (35) Mayer Allan |
| (14) Not Mentioned | (36) Pederson Rick |
| (15) Other, list. | (37) Sadava Mike |

6. DATELINE
 (1) Edmonton
 (2) Calgary

- (3) International
- (5) Not Mentioned
- (6) Other, indicate
- (7) Ottawa

7. TOPIC OF ARTICLE

- (1) Personal Story
- (2) National Energy
- (3) Albert Energy
- (4) Federal/Provincial Relations
- (5) Education
- (6) Transportation
- (7) Labour
- (8) Social Services
- (9) Agriculture
- (10) Constitutional Issues
- (11) Internal operations of P.C.
- (12) General Legislative Proceedings
- (13) Finance
- (14) International Affairs
- (15) Native Affairs
- (16) Provincial Election
- (17) Economy
- (18) Other, indicate.

8. TONE OF ARTICLE

- (1) Supportive
- (2) Critical/Unsupportive
- (3) Neutral
- (4) Mixed

9. TONE OF REPORTING

- (1) Supportive
- (2) Critical/Unsupportive
- (3) Neutral
- (4) Mixed

10. IF THERE ARE ANY CRITICISMS OF LOUGHEED IN THE ARTICLE PLEASE INDICATE WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE REMARKS.

- (1) Not applicable
- (2) Opposition Member/s
- (3) Expert Source
- (4) Reporter
- (5) Federal Spokesperson/s
- (6) Not Mentioned
- (7) Other, indicator

11. SOURCES CITED IN ARTICLE, CODE THE FIRST 3 ONLY.

- (1) Lougheed
- (2) Press Secretary
- (3) Conservative MLA/s
- (4) Federal Government Spokesperson/s

- (5) Opposition Member/s
- (6) Source Unspecified
- (7) No Source
- (8) Other, indicate

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12. IF LOUGHEED WAS THE SOURCE , IN WHAT MANNER DID HE ADDRESS THE PUBLIC.

- (1) Lougheed not the spokesperson
- (2) News Conference
- (3) Interview
- (4) Quote From Legislature
- (5) Quote From Television Appearance
- (6) Unspecified
- (7) Speech Excerpt
- (8) Scrum
- (9) Other, indicate

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13. WAS THERE A PICTURE OF LOUGHEED ACCOMPANYING THE ARTICLE?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

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14. TYPE OF PICTURE

- (1) No Picture
- (2) Informal Pose
- (3) Formal Pose
- (4) File Photo
- (5) Personal Photo

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15. TONE OF PICTURE

- (1) No Picture
- (2) Positive
- (3) Negative
- (4) Neutral

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