THE PRODUCTION OF POLITICAL TELEVISION IN BRITAIN

A Thesis Submitted
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Michael Tracey

1975
I must first of all thank all those 'communicators' who were kind enough to talk to me about their work. I entered this research with a good deal of pessimism as to the likely success in obtaining the necessary access. I can only say that I was not everywhere with great kindness and patience. I should like also to thank the Centre for Mass Communication Research for providing the comfortable facilities within which this thesis could be prepared and written. In particular I must thank Heather Brown, Said Nightingale and Anna Howse for typing the final manuscript. I wish also to express my gratitude to Dr. Richard Dembo for help in the early stages of the thesis and my friends and colleagues, Dave Morrison, Phil Harris and Dennis Hewitt for many periods of stimulating conversation. My supervisor, Peter Golding, needs to be singled out for special praise. His many comments and always perceptive insights into barely legible drafts made smoother a difficult path, and his confidence that it was actually possible to complete the work at all was a great stimulant. To these I extend my heartfelt thanks. Much of the credit for whatever virtues the work might have is theirs, the flaws are, alas, my own.

C.H.C.R.

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SECTION ONE

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL THEORY
CHAPTER ONE

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS
POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND POLITICAL TELEVISION

The use of broadcasting as a means of transmitting political messages has long both troubled and excited politicians. Concern over the amount of time to be allocated to the discussion of politics, to news about affairs in Westminster, to the type of material to be transmitted and the amount and type of coverage of elections, goes back to the very infancy of broadcasting, though the coverage of the political affairs was until relatively recently somewhat circumscribed.

This is clearly a long way from conditions today where politicians crave for the attention of the media (particularly television), where a good deal of broadcast time is given over to political affairs and where it is not unreasonable to argue that the whole style of politics is very much influenced by the presence of the camera and the microphone. The pervasive nature of political broadcasting can be seen in the following figures:

Table 1. Estimated audiences for selected radio series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Bulletins</th>
<th>1000's</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 a.m. Radio Four</td>
<td>4000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 p.m. Radio Four</td>
<td>3500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 p.m. Radio Four</td>
<td>1250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Affairs</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Today - Radio Four (8.10 a.m. Monday - Friday)</td>
<td>2500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Own Correspondent - Radio Four (9.05 a.m. Saturday)</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter From America - Radio Four (9.15 a.m. Sunday)</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis - Radio Four (9.15 p.m. Friday)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Estimated audiences for selected television series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Bulletins</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News at Ten (ITV)</td>
<td>9500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Main News (9 p.m. BBC)</td>
<td>9500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The News (5.50 p.m. BBC 1)</td>
<td>9000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The News (5.50 p.m. ITV)</td>
<td>6000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsroom (7.30 p.m. BBC2)</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These are all programmes whose content is firmly rooted in the political process, and thus the list tends to exclude programmes that only occasionally deal with political material. One is left with the impression that the broadcasting diet of large sections of the population consists of substantial chunks of political matter. The problems that are involved in deciding the actual significance of all this in the formation of attitudes and behaviour are, of course, difficult and contentious areas of discussion that lie beyond the focus of this thesis. It is sufficient here to point out that a substantial amount of political information is made available to the viewing and listening audience. It is clear that broadcasting in general, and television in particular, have emerged as key elements of what is described as the 'process of political communication'. But just what do we mean when we talk of political communication, and how much do we know about the broadcasting aspects of it?

Lord Windlesham described political communication as:

"... the deliberate passing of a political message by a sender to a receiver with the intention of making the receiver behave in a way that he might not otherwise have done. This definition contains three components: a political message; the method of passing or distributing the political message; and an intention to make the receiver respond in a particular way." (Windlesham, 1966, 17).

Utilising this definition and attaching it to Oakeshott's definition of politics as the activity of attending to the general arrangements of a set of people, a political message in the context of national politics becomes one concerning the arrangements of the State. (Windlesham, 1966, 17-18). The purposive criteria which Windlesham includes within his definition do
not fit the ideology, and some of the reality, of the broadcast media, but
nevertheless the core of his definition that political communication is the
transmission of a message, from X to Y, concerning the arrangements of the
State, seems reasonably adequate.

Two recent students of the political process in Britain discussed the
role of information in the process of change and the way that channels for
the transmission of that information relate to political activity among the
electorate:

"Political activity must depend in large part upon the flow of
political information. New information sets in motion the
processes by which individual attitudes are formed and modified.
Exchanges of information alter the political outlook of the
family and other small social groups. The information about
politics reaching the public through the mass media changes the
support accorded to the parties and their leaders." (Butler and

If it is possible to assert that the flow of information is an integral
feature of political change - "... in the short term, marked changes are
scarcely imaginable except in response to some information flow..."
(Butler and Stokes, 1969, 215) - then the channels through which that flow
takes place take on a good deal of importance.

Before delineating those channels, however, it is important to point
out that the notions underpinning the process of political communication are
integral parts of the concepts of a liberal democracy - the social and
political arrangements that are deemed to characterize British politics in
the 20th century. The idea of individuals communicating with each other,
settling the affairs of society through rational discussion and decision, is
perhaps somewhat divorced from the political realities of recent years, and
yet it is a view which still characterizes much of the discussion about
political communication; witness the words of Lord Windlesham:

"The distinguishing feature of democratic politics is the
dialogue between the governing and the governed, each
attempting to influence and persuade the other."
(Windlesham, 1966, 9).
and where that discussion has recognized that the model of liberal democracy no longer fits the reality of 20th century political life the 're-establishment' of some level of meaningful interpersonal communication through the creation of an 'adequate' communications system is postulated as the solution for the restoration of the democratic process — for example, Anthony Smith, a prominent writer on the mass media, wrote recently:

"One of the characteristics of the mass society of which radio and television have become the principal structuring machinery is the sense of powerlessness, the feeling on the part of the individual that there no longer exists any part of the overpowering mechanism of society in which he can intervene. Broadcasting, however, is a source of power; it is visible and it can be made, in certain ways, available to all. It may prove to be a last resource of power which the individual can use before the sense of total helplessness engulfs mass society. It can be a means by which the articulate can reconnect themselves to the stream of active consciousness and a means by which the inarticulate, if truly served by the community of broadcasters, can see their experience actually being made to carry weight."

(Smith, 1973, 285).

It was clearly recognized that in an industrial society the classic model of public discourse could not apply. Yet the structure of power in the society was still to be one where the governors were ultimately responsible to the governed. Clearly in such a situation the information that the latter had about the former, and the sources from which that information was obtained, became significant. The channels for the provision of this essential information became necessary components of the democratic process, and:

"This channel of communication was the press, which could report and interpret the business of the Government to the public, behaving in a neutral way ..." (Seymour-Ure, 1968, 18).

Gradually the press became not just the transmitter of the information, but also the translator of that information, the definer of 'truth' for the audience-electorate:

"... The Press did more than enable the electorate to hold the Government responsible; it held the Government responsible itself, safeguarding the people against corruption, incompetence and despotism. It too then was the Public's representative, elected in the sense that people chose to
read it; and it too therefore became 'responsible' to its readers for fulfilling the function it set itself up to perform." (Seymour-Ure, 1969, 19).

Such a theory of the press doesn't bear too much similarity to 'reality', but it does I think, provide some of the latent significances of the political communications process, the implicit assumption that it is the essential key linking those who govern and those who are governed, a unifying web for the democratic process.

Of what exactly, is one talking when referring to the process of 'political communication'? Of what is the process constituted? It consists, broadly speaking of channels for the transmission of messages from political actors to their political audience. One can perhaps best distinguish between channels whose sole function is the act of communication - for example, the broadcast media, the press, publishers, advertising agencies - and those institutions who have a variety of functions one of which is political communications, for example, political parties, interest groups, governmental agencies. There are then within the channel of political communication not one but many streams each seeking to transmit information to broadly the same audience, each having varying degrees of success.

Is it possible to begin to delineate one 'channel' of communication as being more important than another in absolute terms of the number of people reached and in terms of the influence exerted? In terms of actual importance probably not, in terms of assumed importance most certainly yes. Focussing on what they believe to be the two main sources of political information - personal conversation and the mass media - Butler and Stokes (1969, 218) state that the "electorate itself sees the mass media as a more important means of following politics.", and in their survey only 12% in 1964 and 14% in 1966 said that they did not follow the campaign from either television, newspapers or radio. Television has the largest audience of the three and in the 1964 and 1966 elections 25% of the population over
the age of five watched each of the nightly party broadcasts and even more saw the specially extended daily news bulletin (Butler and Stokes, 1969, 219). While nearly as many people say that they follow politics in the press as on television – 66% in 1964 and 59% in 1966 – when asked to evaluate their relative uses of press and television, television was much preferred: in 1964, 64% of those who followed the campaign at all said they relied more on television, and 28% said they relied more on the Press (Butler and Stokes, 1969, 219).

Radio was much less important with only 23% in 1964 and 20% in 1966 saying that they followed the campaign on radio, and of those who followed the campaign by any medium only 7% reported that they relied on radio most. The increasing percentage of homes with television is shown in Table 2 and the various findings about the relative importance of the different sources of political information are brought together in Table 3.¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Political Information</th>
<th>Per cent following politics/campaign by given medium or channel</th>
<th>Per cent saying given medium or channel most important 1964</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summer 1963</td>
<td>Autumn 1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't follow campaign/politics</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹. See Footnote 1 - p7.
Clearly there are many problems with findings of this nature - not least of which is the difficulty of establishing the discrete effects of particular processes in a general situation:

"A great deal of common information flows out to the mass British electorate through media which are heavily overlapping and which are describing political issues and events that they have seldom done anything to shape."

(Butler and Stokes, 1969, 214).

Many writers would argue that the media do indeed define issues, and that because more people spend more time watching television and place more faith in the veracity of 'the pictures of the world' that television provides that medium is the most significant definer of issues. Not defining issues in the tradition of the fourth estate, however, but rather providing limited and partial views of reality that result from the technological and ideological structures that underpin the process of image formation.

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1. These figures are in line with more recent figures taken from a survey carried out by the C.M.C.R., Leicester, in the last three months of 1972.

Table A. News: Sources, Credibility

Q: I am interested in how you get to know what's going on in this country and the world today. Where do you usually get most of your information from about this?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>50.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends, Relatives</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others, don't know</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q: If you get different or conflicting accounts of the same story from the newspapers, the radio and television, which would you be most likely to believe?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>65.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Future of Broadcasting, CMGR, 1973)


Hartmann, P., and Husband, C. (1973)
writers have pointed to the way that the very presence of the medium in the political process, alters that process. (Seymour-Ure, 1974). Another problem is that the data gathered usually originates from work done during the course of elections when from the broadcast media's point of view they are really at their most circumscribed, bound as they are by the limitations of the parties' requirements and the electoral laws. It may well be that political communication is more significant during the period between elections when the messages communicated by the various channels are less tangible, more discreet, rather than in the partisan atmosphere of the election.

These are all important questions, all firmly rooted in what is known as the study of 'media effects'. What has become clear, however, is that television now occupies centre stage in the world of political communications simply in the sense that it is defined as occupying centre stage by politicians and public alike. But what does the process of political communication 'look like'? Figure 1 is an adapted version of a schema developed by Jay Blumler from a basic model presented by Westley and MacLean (1957) - (see following page).

Now we can say several things about this schema:

1. we are aware of the essential components of the process;
2. we are aware of the fact that there are a whole series of limitations on the efficacy of the 'messages';
3. we know that it is not just a question of uni-directional flow, that 'feedback' is an important part of the process;
4. we know that in many ways the model is something of a fiction in the sense that the structures of power and decision making within society are such as to not require the assent of the electorate except on

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FIGURE 1

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AS PROCESS: A MODEL

ADVOCATES  CHANNEL ROLES  RECEPTORS

A ——> C ——> B

A ——> C ——> B

A ——> C ——> B

B/cast media
Press
Publishing
'PR' firms

POLITICAL ACTORS  MEDIA MEN CONCERNED WITH POLITICAL MATERIAL  ELECTORATE

The messages are received within a particular context that alters, reduces or eradicates the intended meaning.

C is receiving messages from A and passes them on to B. In implementing the role C "acts as an agent of B selecting the abstractions of (messages) suited to B’s needs, transforming them into symbols shared with B, and then transmitting them by some medium to B." There is also feedback as to the level of satisfaction B has with the messages.

This is obviously limited in that C often acts more as an agent of A than an agent of B - and in fact is very often, in the case of the broadcast media, required to be so legally.

(Source: Blumler 1970)
Routinised occasions e.g. elections. Communication within the political elite, on a private basis, may be far more significant than communication between the elite and the electorate.¹

5. Of the three main components - A, C, B - we know a good deal about A - the internal structuring of the institutions concerned, the background and beliefs of their members, the decision making procedures, the declared intentions of their personnel.² We know a good deal about B - the composition, structure, beliefs of those receiving the political messages, the types of political behaviour they engage in and the relationship between that and the messages. We know next to nothing about the primary components of C, the broadcast media. It is a remarkable fact that there has only been one systematic study of the internal functioning of the medium of political television in Britain. (Blumler, 1969). Why this should be so is examined below, but if you look at one of the leading books or collections of papers on mass communicators, Halmos' *Sociology of Mass Media Communicators* (1969) out of 14 papers presented there are only 3 based on systematic study of mass communicators in their organizational context, only 2 out of the 3 are based on work in British media, and one of those is only part of a work the full text of which has never been published. (Burns, 1963).

The one remaining work is Blumler (1969). There are, of course, books and articles by people who have worked as political broadcasters that draw heavily on their actual experience, and there are the various biographies and autobiographies of media personnel - but these are really the stuff upon which more systematic research should build, and cannot, by definition, fulfill the criteria of sociological work.

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1. See Windlesham (1966), op cit, Chapt. 4 and 5, for an interesting case study.

2. A useful review of the literature on political organizations and political actors is contained in, Bowse and Hughes (1972).
The organizational channels through which the messages from A to B flow tend to be treated as either 'neutral' and 'value' free.

"... tv is no more than one of the mechanical devices regularly used to distribute political information to a mass audience ... if tv cannot easily be distinguished from other media by an investigation of the nature of the process, this is because the central process is that of political communication: a continuous flow of political information not essentially altered by the peculiarities of the channel selected for the transmission of messages." (Windlesham, 1966, 223).

or channels that may indeed be value-laden but whose process can adequately be defined through analysis of its product: for example the increasingly prominent notion that news organizations select, interpret, and present items in accordance with a pattern ordained by their organizational, social and cultural setting. Quite how they do this, who does it and why they do it - if indeed they do it - is often left more to the imagination than to any systematic study of organizational procedures.¹

This lack of knowledge of the institutions that comprise the 'channels' of political communication should not surprise us. It reflects a general position in our understanding of the mass communication process.

The Problem

One of the key features of the broadcasting media in this, and indeed any other society is their visibility. The percentages of homes in the advanced industrial societies actually possessing at least one television set has reached what is to all intents and purposes, saturation point. (Emmett, 1972, 197). The television screen is an obvious part of our environment. We are told by various polls that television is by far and away the most popular pastime in the country, that nearly half the population devotes most of its leisure time viewing television. (Emmett, 1972, 200; SMC, 1973, 13). The fact of wide scale and intensive exposure to broadcast material has led many people to infer that because it is visible and

¹. This is perhaps not quite so true of the situation in the US where the idea of the 'gatekeeper' studies has been more frequently utilized, though the number of institutional studies is still pathetically small.
all too present in our lives it therefore has a dominant role to play in
the formation of our attitudes and behaviour. However, as Halloran and
Croll (1971) have stated:

"Television may be an all pervasive medium, it may dominate
the climate of the mass produced symbolic environment and it
may through its provision of messages and images, make possible
more shared perspectives and common assumptions than ever
before. But provision and availability is one thing, interpreta-
tion, use and end product is another. The nature of the
relationship between the two is an empirical question and even
at the level of latent meanings, implicit definitions and
basic assumptions it is both dubious and dangerous to infer
"effect" from content without taking into account a wide range
of other variables."

Given the acknowledged reservations by media sociologists about the
perspectives employed in their research, it is still true to say that
research into the mass media has been largely dominated by the assumption
of the media's persuasive and influential power. In discussing this
point, Halloran (1969, 8) stated that:

"... The early development of both mass media and research
into mass media coincided with the emergence of an image
of mass society which was to influence research and think-
ing about the media for many years."

This, together with the view that behaviour could be explained in terms of
instinct and 'human nature', combined with the apparent success of prop-
agenda campaigns in the war of 1914-1918, tended to reduce communications
theory to a mechanistic S-R theory. It is true to say, then, that while
man's knowledge of his psychological processes becomes more and more soph-
isticated, mass communications theory was, and is still, dominated by the
implicit conception of 'persuasion' - Halloran (1969, 9) again:

"They (i.e. some researchers) are basically concerned with
effects and it might be more appropriate to refer to devel-
opments in 'models of the persuasion process' rather than to
developments in mass communications research."

The bulk of this effects research has involved a short-term, stimulus-
response, direct effects approach, and even though innumerable studies and
the expenditure of large amounts of research funds has produced little in
the way of conclusive evidence of the alleged impact of the broadcast media
on the lives of the population, the work on 'effects' still predominates
in mass communication research.
Basically, the reason for this is that the type of questions that have been asked about the media and society by people working in this area, have been, broadly speaking, the same. Why this should be so is not particularly difficult to understand.

Four factors have determined the type of research that has been carried out in the sociology of mass communications, and thus, why institutional research has been relatively neglected:

1. The nature of public attitudes and concern.
2. The attitudes of academic researchers.
3. The kind of funding made available for research.
4. The attitudes of media controllers.

The four are obviously closely linked, with public concern generating research funds for X rather than Y, and the interest of the academic researcher being more likely to focus on X than Y, for both academic and mercenary reasons. While it is not the aim of this chapter to deal with the sociology of mass communications research in Britain it is illuminating to examine these four factors more closely since this tends to throw some light both on general attitudes towards media research and towards the media institutions themselves, and begins to delineate the origin of widespread 'explanations' of media processes.

Public Attitudes and Concern

It is probably fair to say that there is a latent discussion of 'the mass media and society' among quite significant sections of the population that manifests itself from time to time in response to particular events. Such events are usually of the kind where in a court case the defendants, several youths, say that they only beat up an old tramp 'because we saw it

1. An extensive analysis along the lines presented here is to be found in Paulkner (1974), especially Ch. 1.
on A Clockwork Orange*, or where a particularly daring play or film is
being shown on the television or at the cinema. A casual link is seen
between exposure to media material and anti-social behaviour or generally
meaningless social behaviour. Two examples will suffice to highlight the
point:

"Peter Thompson, chairman of the planning committee of Lord
Longford's Festival of Light, confesses in a book published
today that between October 1964 and February 1965, he drive
around at night shooting at more than 100 cars and houses with
a telescopic rifle . . During this period he had become fas­
cinated by horror films, especially an old version of 'Dr
Jekyll and Mr Hyde' which he saw several times a week because
'I felt I too was living a public life and a private life'.
He was also fascinated by Hammer horror films, and by the
television series 'Dr Who' which he found 'extremely alarming'."  
(Guardian, 10.1.72)

and

"... there appears to be a consensus of opinion among
educated people that certain types of programmes, because
of their stereotyped themes and characterizations present
a narrow, one-sided and unrealistic view of life. Into this
category would fall most panel games, variety shows, standard
family serials and the formula Westerns. By contrast "better"
programmes are deemed to be all forms of information pro­
grames (provided, of course, the information is well presented
with a vocabulary well suited to the level of its audience
and with an avoidance of the patronizing or cathedral tone
that afflicts many of these programmes. Too many inform­
ation programmes fail because they are poor programmes."

news, news commentaries, descriptions of the lives of the
people in other countries, animal and nature programmes and
good plays (these might even be in a Western setting). It
will be seen that the term "better" is taken in a very wide
sense including all but the very stereotyped programmes which
are the standard diet of most channels at peak times. "Better"
programmes share one characteristic; they all extend either
emotionally or intellectually, the child's view of the world

As one writer recently stated this position "is basically a very simple
one, but also one that is extremely difficult to attack. It is simple because
it relies on common sense, rather than scientifically or at least system­
atically collected data." (Faulkner, 1974). It is a vision of a world
infested with the plague of television - a recent poster, obtained at the
National Viewers and Listeners Association annual conference in Birmingham
in February 1974, reads "You can't immunise your family against the
permissive disease." It is a world in which television has become something
of an electronic jew, a figure on which to heap one's resentment for worldly problems.

\textbf{Academic Attitudes to Media Research}

The general effect of this public concern has been to structure the types of concern for which academics have addressed themselves and, perhaps more significantly, the kinds of question that are asked. Klapper (1963, 517), has written of this:

"Mass communication research has, I believe, been too frequently and too long focussed on determining whether some particular effect does or does not occur. This is probably in large part a reflection of the verbalized concerns and desires of the public at large, which has typically formulated its queries in such terms as 'Do' depictions of crime and violence produce juvenile delinquency? Yes or No?' or 'Do mass media abuse tastes? Yes or No, and if No do they raise taste, Yes or No?' Mass communications research has found few clear cut yes or no answers to such questions, although it has asserted, over and over, that mass communication is rarely, if ever, the prime mover, and instead intends to reinforce existing predispositions of its audience members. This honest reply has led the public to accuse us of being at best inconclusive and at worst evasive."

Brown (1970, 41-2), agrees with Klapper, and suggests that the social pressures on researchers via public opinion are of fundamental importance in considering the history of communication research:

"... the media have always been in the public eye, so that there has been a constant interplay between popular opinion about their performance and more considered intellectual assessments. Very little social scientific research conducted within universities, of course, can really be seen as 'pure' research, in the sense of it being conducted without any reference at all to the current concerns and problems of the larger society, and media research has certainly been at least as sensitive as most fields to pressures of this kind."

An important aspect here is the attitude of the early 'fathers' of media research, notably Paul Lazarsfeld, who were not particularly interested in media institutions research, since that kind of research did not readily lend itself to quantification. He could not, he states in a recent interview, be bothered to overcome the funding and access difficulties, and could not really conceive of an appropriate methodology for institutional
research - and Lazarsfeld's main interest was methodology. He did feel that such studies should be done, and was a fervent advocate of institutional studies so long as he wasn't the one doing the study. For example, in his evidence to the Kefauver Commission (Kefauver, 1955), he clearly states that such work should be done, a feeling he re-expressed in his postscript to Steiner (1963)¹; interestingly enough he stated recently that the only worthwhile work on television was Jay Blumler's production study. There was never any tradition of institutional work because the individuals who dominated mass communications research in the gestation period did not, feel any particular inclination to do that kind of work.

Funding

The intermingling of inclination and structural position was underpinned by the kind of funds made available by the various bodies that support research.

Funds tend to be made available either by the media organizations themselves - in which case the research is geared to assessing audience size and needs, the efficacy of messages etc., or by various other organizations, such as government agencies, foundations, etc. Money from this source tends to be for research premised on the notion of effects and merely seeks to gauge the possible forms of efficient message transmission, or is geared to providing funds to allay popular anxieties. From both sources research tends to be short term and atheoretical, being used for 'immediate' and 'practical' ends. As Faulkner states:

"Neither the lay public nor the media organizations appear to be concerned with research aimed at discovering long term gradual...

¹. The taped interview between Morrison and Lazarsfeld took place in New York on 15th June 1973. In another taped interview Berelson argues that of the leading figures in the development of mass communications research - Lewin, Lazarsfeld, Hovland and Lasswell - Lazarsfeld was the only one who potentially could have come to grips with the problem of institutional studies, and Schramm in an article in PQ 23 1959 argues that Lazarsfeld was the only one interested in media sociology and he just wasn't interested in institutional studies.
effects of exposure to consistently repeated behaviour patterns and values in the mass media. They are not concerned with the research aimed at discovering the theoretical and abstract bases which can eventually lead to explanation of how and why some individuals show gross reactions to certain content, whilst the vast majority are apparently unaffected." (1974, 12).

The attention, then, of government agencies, advertising agencies and the public alike is focussed totally on the idea of effects, seeking evidence of the short term impact of particular messages. This has influenced research in two ways: it has led to a concentration on effects of, in our example, political messages, and has dictated the kinds of 'effects' to be considered i.e. short-term changes in political attitudes and behaviour; it has also made difficult the analysis of the communications as process.

**Attitude of Media Controllers**

It would be an understatement to say that researchers have not always found it particularly easy to gain access to media organisations. In point of fact it has proved immensely difficult to gain the necessary access with the result that institutional research has proven even more neglected than would be the case allowing for the three factors already outlined. Institutional research cannot be done if (a) there is no money to do it, (b) the controllers refuse to allow the researcher in to carry out research. The difficulties were made very apparent by the Director-General of the BBC, Charles Curren, in an international seminar on researcher-communicator co-operation, who declared:

"... the BBC is in the programme-making business and it overriding concern must always be with those who make programmes and those who watch and listen to them. We reject the idea that we should contribute financially to research because it is not part of our proper function to redistribute public money in this particular way. We have no right to pick the pocket of the viewer to find out what is in his head. But we accept that there should be further studies and we also accept that the relationship between the BBC and the researchers should be positive and constructive. We accept, too, that we have a commitment to help, provided co-operation does not hinder our programme services in doing their primary task. Research must always be subservient to programmes ... my own professional commitment must come first." (Curren, 1971, 58).

The main problems were summarized by Michael Gurevitch at the same
He saw four main areas which he diplomatically described as:

"... a number of basic differences in the outlooks, orientation, and expectations of the broadcaster and the researcher (which) impinge on their relationship and on the possibilities of smooth co-operation between them." (Gurevitch, 1970, 159-160).

These were:
1. the goals and objectives of research.
2. the selection of the problems to be studied, and the scope and definition of those problems.
3. research procedures and methodology.
4. research findings and recommendations.

My own research efforts to gain access met with the following kind of response from a Programme Controller of one of the ITV companies:

"We have given some consideration to your application to visit our News Department, and although there was considerable sympathy for your request the consensus of opinion was that the information gained from the exercise would not be worth the effort involved, especially as our News and Current Affairs Department ... is an extremely busy one."

The fear of the researcher interfering with the process of production is just too great for the media controllers to take the risk of allowing an unknown quantity into their midst. Very often, having met the researcher, the mood changes radically.

To Summarize

The attribution, by public groups, of an immense importance to the television institutions is at the heart of debate about the mass media. Given the fact that such debate tends to structure the funding made available for particular types of research rather than others - that funding has a unique capacity to direct the research interests of social scientists (Morrison, 1974) - it becomes relatively easy to understand how research interest is channelled into directions compatible with the concerns of various opinion groups, and is ipso facto diverted from areas and directions that otherwise might have been pursued.

This then, very briefly, is the historical context for the development, or rather non-development, of research into the individuals and institutions
responsible for producing the mass mediated messages and images which are alleged to have such impact. Discussing the lop-sided nature of mass communications research, James Halloran states:

"The shifts in emphasis from individual psychological variables to the surrounding socio-cultural processes, from questions about effects to questions about uses or functions, from intervening variables as blockages to intervening variables as facilitation, from conversion to activation and from direct change to influence by definition, reinforcement and sanctioning, may all mark important advances in our thinking, but they are advances in relation to effects and persuasion and not in relation to mass communication as social institutions ... the vestiges and traces of S-R theory are still with us. When this is seen together with the fact that media research has often stemmed from administrative or service requirements, as well as from areas of social concern, that media practitioners, particularly at the higher levels, have not always welcomed the researcher, that given the nature of certain aspects of mass media production some producers are almost bound to develop a hostile defensive attitude towards research, and that relevant sociological contributions (e.g., organization theory) have only recently become available - the emphasis on effects and persuasion and the comparative neglect of the mass communicator and the production process become easier to understand." (Halloran, 1969, 9-10).

The view presented here by Halloran of the lack of understanding of the other side, the institutional side - of the mass communication process is now widely acknowledged to be the case. McQuail (1972, 14) states:

"The sociology (and social psychology) of mass communications has in the past owed much to the need to solve practical communication problems and to contribute to issues of believed social importance. A good part of the accumulated findings of research, the kinds of techniques used, the direction of past orientations, some elements of theory, have all been strongly influenced by the need to count and classify audiences, measure and predict effects, design effective persuasive or informational mass communications, placate anxious parents, educators and other guardians of morality."

Historically, then there are quite specific reasons why there have been few studies of the processes by which 'products' emerge from the institutions of the mass media.

There have of course been a number of studies of the history and development of the mass media industries (Schramm, 1960; Petersen, 1965; Murdock and Golding, 1974). There have also been a number of studies of the communicator in his organizational environment (White, 1950; Breed, 1955;
Oieber 1956; 1964). There have also more recently been some interesting observational studies (notably Blumler, 1969; Elliott, 1972; Cantor, 1972; Epstein, 1973), and in fact, one might argue that a leading characteristic of these works, apart from their academic merits, is that they ever appeared. They are somewhat unique in the overall tradition of mass communications research. The limitations of the situation have, however, taken their toll in that findings have tended to be either fragmented, atheoretical, ahistorical or all three. This does perhaps reflect the limitations imposed on research of this kind rather than any failing on the part of the person conducting the research. Halborn (1969, 6) states:

"The problem is not so much that there is a lack of studies but ... that the studies have been confined, on the whole, to the lower level of mass media operation."

A position that was echoed in Denis McQuail's observation that the discussion of communication organizations:

"Has focused on a fairly narrow area of enquiry where some evidence is available. Clearly there is a need both for a systematic exploration of the effects of variations in structural context on the work of communicators and also for studies of the external, political, economic and social pressures in the mass communication organization ... and the tradition of enquiry has remained an empirical one and theory available is of a fragmentary and ad hoc kind." (1969, 67).

What is clearly needed then when confronting the processes by which media material is made available is to build the research into a coherent body of theory so that one's findings do not hang alone but rather offer the distinct possibility of generalizable conclusions.

It would be wrong to create the impression that mass communication research has avoided altogether the institutional aspects of the process, and indeed while the actual activity of media research may have devoted much of its time to investigations of the effects of output media, the need to place the communications organisations and the communicator in their wider social setting has been central to the various models of the communications process that sociologists have devised. Wilbur Schramm (1960), George Gerbner (1956),
Westley and Maclean (1957), Riley and Riley (1959), De Fleur (1966), have all developed elaborate models of the processes of mass communications, one of whose features has been an attempt to integrate the communicator and his organization into the model. At the level of model building there has been a recognition as indicated by Jeremy Tunstall's point that:

"a more organization-oriented view of the media in general seems essential if we are not to perpetuate the predominant view in which the media messages sometimes appears to be reaching the audience members eyes and ears as if from heaven above or (in some perspectives) hell below."


Rooted in social systems analysis and functional analysis a central feature of these theoretical formulations has been the placing of the communicator and his organization within their particular contexts within the processes of mass media production actually take place. That there has been little empirical validation of the actual meaning of these contexts - how the various influences of the wider society, the organization, the production setting, professional and personal ideologies actually relate to decision making and how they interact to structure and direct programme production - is an unfortunate outcome of the practical and theoretical difficulties of research in this area.

The lack of readily available information on media institutions combined with the pervasive belief in the significance of the media in our daily lives has underpinned the development of the three dominant models of the mass communications process:

1. mass society theory
2. the process as a form of interpersonal communication
3. a flow model

The dominance of particularly the mass society model has tended to obscure the 'real' situation within the media organizations. The concepts of the elite-mass relationship and the purposive manipulatory role of the media in this has led to various explanations of the processes of production within the media organizations rooted more in a priori assumptions than in any meaningful analysis of information gathered from within the organizations
themselves. The mystification at the heart of much of the discussion of the processes of mass communication, and particular at the level of organisational 'analysis' was and is really the starting point of the work of this thesis.

The Problem Mystified

I have argued that much of the background to the discussion of the role of the mass media in society has been provided by varying levels of public concern about the effects of mass mediated material on the life and personalities of the individual members of society. A comprehensive summary of the principal types of concern was contained recently in a report on the whole question of broadcasting in society and possible future developments (SMC, 1973, 66). The main areas of concern and criticism as identified by the report were that the broadcast media:

1. too often offend against accepted standards of manners and morals.
2. are too weighted in favour of entertainment.
3. trivialise and oversimplify complicated events.
4. distort facts and misrepresent opinion.
5. overemphasise the visual aspects of stories and therefore tend to distort a story's perspectives.
6. through a cumulative process tend to promote false values and glamourise anti-social ones.
7. by taking up much of an individual's leisure time, tend to deflect people from more creative employment.
8. produce cynicism and scepticism.

Within this list three principal categories stand out: questions of taste; misrepresentation and distortion; the social effects. The significant point for the sociologist is that discussion of the areas of concern almost always involves an imputation of process - a manifest or latent statement about the means by which media content is actually produced. The newspaper
clippings are full of such statements, and few people now do not possess
some notion of the 'power' of the media and the way that power is exercised
by communicators. As previously argued the sheer volume of media exposure
is seen as argument enough for the imputations. Underpinning this knowledge
of the quantity of viewing and suppositions about the overall effect is,
an implicit conception of the flow model of mass communications. People
would seem to have an intuitive 'understanding' of Lasswell's formulation of
the flow model,1 which is not to say, of course, that they are familiar with
his work. Inextricably linked with the notion that media messages 'flow'
along particular channels is the idea that at points along the channel
'gatekeepers' are in place who determine what will and will not pass.
Loosely translated the 'gatekeepers' become, in the popular mind, significant
individuals with the power to structure and control the process of image
formation within the culture - the informational or secondary environment
becomes a composite of the symbolic meaning systems provided for the
population at large by the communicator-elites, and thus one can begin to
understand the attitudinal and behavioural tendencies of the population in
terms of their media-rooted environment.

Unfortunately, what this line of analysis has failed to take into
account is the fact that the descriptions of 'flow' and 'gatekeeper' were at
best only shorthand for what are in effect complex organisational, social and
cultural situations. Misused, extracted from context and history, they
apparently become the key to an understanding of media processes, when in
fact they are an erroneous description of the processes of production
masquerading as insight.

The implicit notion of gatekeeper has come then, to figure prominently

   Society", in, Schramm (1960). This particular formulation is one of
   those that remain elusive as to their actual origin. The concept of
   the flow model was in fact first formulated in 1936 in a series of
   seminars organised by the Rockefeller Foundation in New York. It was
   first published in 1948 and has been reprinted many times since then.
in the descriptions offered by critics of 'why it is that television is as it is.' It receives its most frequent and simplistic usage in the assertions of people on the left of the political spectrum that the communicators responsible for programme output are right wing, and by those on the right of the spectrum that communicators are left wing, (Murdock, 1968).

Press clippings are full of such pieces as:

"Conservative MP Harold Soref, chairman of the ultra-right wing Monday Club's African Committee and instant television pundit, has lodged a complaint with the BBC over their playing of the Strawbs' (record) 'Power of the Union' ... 'The lyrics are obviously a serenade to the trouble makers. This song is typical of the subversive propaganda put out by the EBU. If the song is taken seriously, its coverage can only do damage. It misrepresents unions and its tone could lead to industrial troubles."

and

"All television broadcasting in this country (and in others) has its sphere of operation determined by the State. It may be imposed directly (i.e. the Television Act and the Charter) or indirectly (by manipulated public opinion). The State owns the television franchise. This is the central fact of a political analysis of television because the primal political function of television must then be to obscure the nature of class society." (Freepror/FCC, 1971).

The interesting feature of the explanations offered by those political opposites in their basic similarity - their mirror-like agreement on the basis process.

The media are powerful and are manipulated towards particular ends by the elites that control the broadcasting organizations. The establishment of a formulized institution dealing with communications of all types involves the expenditure of large amounts of technical and financial resources e.g. radio, television, publishing, printing. They necessarily cater for a mass audience and as a result those who control the media are often seen as the formers and manipulators of mass opinion, since for most people the media are the main source of social information. Elites, the scenario continues, control the media and therefore control the information that flows from them.

in such a way as to conform with their own elite interests. The passivity of the masses is sustained through supplying them with a diet of diversionary pulp. The media thus becomes the means by which in a 'massified' society, that 'massification' is sustained. The model of a media dominated society is very much a central feature of the concept of 'mass society' where individuals are more or less 'atomised' and where the "attention of primary social relationships, under the impact of industrialisation, has left the population lacking in a firm sense of individual or group identity and in which, due to the cracking of the 'cake of custom', men lack traditional standards and become available and amenable to manipulation and persuasion." (Dowse and Hughes, 1972, 266). Through this process of massification, it is argued, man is either laid open to totalitarian domination or, slightly less of a nemesis but equally unfortunate, has his cultural standards gradually eroded as a larger and larger audience is catered for by the mass media.

Two threads are discernible in this line of argument:

1. assumptions about the 'effect' of the media on society: and, in reply to this line of thought, that the bulk of the evidence both in the area of mass communications research and in work on the structures of social relationships in industrial society, denies almost all the assumptions of the mass society thesis. This however, is not our primary concern here, the second thread is;

2. assumptions about the processes by which media organisations produce their products.

This underlying theme of distortion by an unrepresentative elite is characteristic of the whole debate about broadcasting in western society. Perhaps the most famous exposition, now somewhat ironic, of the kind of explanation one has in mind, was that by Spiro Agnew in November 1969:

"... there is a concentration of power (in the broadcasting organisations) in the hands of a tiny and closed fraternity of privileged men, elected by no one and employing a monopoly socialised and licensed by the government ... (news is) determined by a handful of men responsible only to their corporate
employers and is filtered through a handful of communicators who admit to their own set of biases."

The presentation of this view of media processes, whether it be by particular politicians, by moral crusaders or by another member of the large number of aggrieved causes in our society, has been one aspect of the mystification that has occurred. Another, and in my view somewhat more disturbing factor in the mystification has been the failure of social theorists to develop anything like adequate explanations of media institutions and the processes of production. In a recent paper Enzensberger describes the failure of the 'new left' to develop an adequate "theory of the media", and the increasingly bankrupt dependance on the notion of manipulation. He goes on to describe how the

"... New left of the 1960's has reduced the development of the media to a single concept - that of manipulation. This concept was originally extremely useful for heuristic purposes and has made possible a great many individual analytical investigations, but now it threatens to degenerate into a mere slogan which conceals more than it is able to illuminate, and therefore itself requires analysis. The manipulation thesis ... serves to exculpate oneself. To cast the enemy in the role of the devil is to conceal the weakness and lack of perspective in one's own agitation. If the latter leads to self-isolation instead of mobilising the masses, then its failure is attributed holus bolus to the overwhelming power of the media." (1972, 101)

The assumed power to manipulate and control are seen as important factors in the ability of ruling classes to rule and maintain their hegemony. I want to deal in depth with one particular presentation of a radical critique of the processes of mass communication within advanced industrial societies, that presented by Ralph Miliband (1973) in his book The State in Capitalist Society. Discussing the processes by which the State legitimates its power, he looks at the role the mass media play in this process. Arguing that the formal structures of the State in advanced capitalist society render the media a good deal of autonomy, and that one can readily discover profoundly anti-establishment and controversial material, he seeks to place this 'reality' within the 'real' context:
"The importance and value of this freedom and opportunity of expression is not to be underestimated. Yet the notion of pluralist diversity and competitive equilibrium is, here as in every other field, rather superficial and misleading. For the agencies of communication and notably the mass media are in reality, and the expression of dissenting views notwithstanding, a crucial element in the legitimation of capitalist society. Freedom of expression is not thereby rendered meaningless. But that freedom has to be set in the real economic and political context of these societies; and in that context the free expression of ideas and opinions which are helpful to the prevailing system of power and privilege ... the mass media in advanced capitalist societies are mainly intended to perform a highly 'functional' role; they ... are both the expression of a system of domination, and a means of reinforcing it."

(1973, 197-9).

Media output is, then, structured by the dominant logic of discourse within the society and this serves to maintain and reinforce that logic. The prime mover in this is the State - its needs and beliefs - and thus the internal processes of media organisations become subordinate to, and dependent on, the State structure. The actual mechanics of that subordination "is determined by the influences which weigh most heavily upon them": all work in the same conservative and conformist direction." (1973, 203).

These influences he lists as:

1. **The ownership and control of the media institutions, within which the dominant individuals are "men whose ideological dispositions run from soundly conservative to utterly reactionary" - an example of whom is Axel Springer. The fact that they are the dominant individuals means that they can dominate those directly responsible for the production of the media material.**

2. **The power of advertisers.** The dominance of public relations by capitalist interests can be used "to 'soften up' the appropriate mass media, notably the press, which further contributes to the representation of the business case in the best possible light."

3. **Pressure from the "government and various other parts of the state system generally."** This is achieved through a process of 'news management', 'pressures and blandishments' and 'threats'.

4. The general ideological disposition of media personnel - "These 'cultural workmen' are unlikely to be greatly troubled by the limitations and constrictions imposed upon the mass media by the prevailing economic and political system, because their ideological and political makeup does not normally bring them up against these limitations." (1973, 211).

Miliband's position is that the media are system maintaining and thus shore up the power of the ruling class within the society, and what is more they are specifically intended to do so. The position he adopts begs a whole series of questions: where is the empirical underpinning for the various assertions - how for example does he know the ideological make-up of media personnel? What evidence does he draw on to support the system maintaining thesis? How does one begin to detect and analyse the 'real' as opposed to 'declared' interests of individuals? His explanations have such a looseness and overly inclusive feel about them that one is left demanding further evidence. He tends to move around in a fairly ad hoc manner, choosing examples to fit his case. It is a little unsatisfactory to discuss the effects of ownership and control by only talking about Axel Springer. To use an analogy only partly facetious, it is somewhat like discussing the state of world football by discussing the merits and situation of Crewe Alexandra - it's not totally erroneous, but can one really begin to generalise from it? His selection of evidence is not adequately wedded to a distinct theoretical framework from which a set of criteria for the selection of evidence can be established.

What one is really criticising in works such as this is the unfortunate tendency to 'read into' media processes with little or no evidence to support the assertions, and the static nature of the 'model' implicit in their arguments. The consequence has been an overly simplistic view of media processes - with an analysis centred round the core concepts of conspiracy,
manipulation, and control. In particular instances the tendency has led to
downright factual errors. One recent example, occurring in a paper of
considerable sophistication, was Stuart Hall's description of the events
surrounding *Yesterday's Men* as an example of how "on a series of specific
occasions ... the broadcasters have correctly asserted the editorial inde­
pendence against clear political pressure." (Hall, 1972, 97-8). In fact,
when you begin to look closely at the events surrounding that programme, the
reactions of senior BBC personnel to the pressure from the Labour Party and
the subsequent effect on what is and is not permissible in current affairs
television, the programme becomes an example par excellence of televisions
ultimate subordination to the state. Another quite remarkable example of
the straight factual error occurred in the recent report by the Social
Morality Council (1973, 62), which stated:

> "In practice the independence of the broadcasting auth­
> orities has been dem­erated in times of serious conflict.
> The BBC was for example able to hold to a policy uncon­
> genial to the Government during the General Strike in
> 1926 ..." 2

The inaccuracy of such a statement defies comprehension, but in effect only
represents a rather bizarre example of a general trend. There are then two
main threads to my discussion here. One is that theoretical weakness and an
insubstantial empirical base have created a situation where the debate about
the media is rooted in what is at best only a partial explanation of the
phenomena under discussion. The other thread is that the process of 'reading
into' the situation leads to errors in the clarity and accuracy of the
arguments. The positions adopted are not only overly simplistic and deter­
minist, but also unnecessarily static; are there, for example, no differ­
ences in the relationship of the State to different parts of the media, and do
not those relationships vary over time? If so in what particular historical
context will the processes change? What is required is the elaboration of a
theoretical framework from which general proposition can be delineated that

1. My own evidence concerning the programme draws upon informa­
tion gathered in interviews with those involved, see Ch. 6.

2. See Ch. 6 where I discuss the whole question of the BBC and the
General Strike.
lend themselves to the gathering and analysis of the data.

The starting point of my thesis is a denial of the central propositions of this position, that media output, particularly in the field of political broadcasting, can be 'explained' in terms of the overt political inclinations of communicators and of the ability of particular non-media groups to manipulate and control those inclinations, which is at best only a partial explanation. My point is that overdependence on such explanations has done much to inhibit our understanding of media processes, has resulted in the mystification of a complex social process.

First and foremost, this thesis is about providing an accurate, analytic and comprehensive account of production within one section of the broadcast media, political television. Wherever possible it makes use of evidence drawn from the actual production setting to or from those directly involved in the production of programmes. To tap the internal dynamic of the production setting the question is posed of 'what factors determine or influence what will and will not be made available as programme material?'; utilizing a framework for analysis, drawn from the sociology of culture and political sociology that seeks to establish the particular contexts of production, their nature, origin and role.

The first and most straightforward reasons for focussing on political TV is rather idiosyncratic - a personal interest in the political process. Political television in general is of interest to the political scientist in so far as it does provide the single most important source of political information for the audience (Butler and Stokes, 1969, 220). Being aware of the high levels of exposure the parties within the political system now more than ever define the coverage they receive as significant and increasingly gear their activity to the needs of the media. It is often argued now that

1. Defined as those programmes whose content and aim is involved, if only obliquely, the policy making process within Britain today whether at the national, regional and local level.
the presence of television has changed the whole nature of elections, though it would perhaps be more accurate to say that television has affected the form of elections not necessarily the content.

Political television is also one of the more controversial areas of broadcasting, again something resting on the assumed importance of television in influencing the decisions people make about politics. For this reason then it is worth studying the internal mechanisms of media organizations in order to test the truth or falsity of the assertions made with regard to programme production.

At a higher level of abstraction still, it is hoped that an analysis of the generation and utilization of ideas by individuals working within organizations geared to the purveyance of what are essentially intellectual processes - i.e. news and current affairs departments - will facilitate some understanding of the central problems of sociology, namely the origin of knowledge in society, and in particular the relationship between the individual-within-society and those ideas-within-society that provide his understanding of the social process. In what way for example are the criteria employed for decision-making within the production setting articulated to wider organizational and social meaning systems? How does this fit with other criteria for decision making which may be rooted in technocratic, financial editorial and institutional structures. Does the interaction change over time as well as within time - and in relation to what does it change? What is the nature of the relationship between the production, the organization, the wider social power structures and the ideologies (meaning systems) characteristic of the society?

Clearly one could discuss the overall goals of broadcasting and the types of broadcasting structures that might be 'best for society', but as our knowledge stands at present such proposals are predicated on an understanding of media processes that simply does not exist.
The Research

Taking its lead from Philip Elliott's work and acknowledging his point that:

"A phenomenological approach to social research, keeping in sight the dialectic between idea and reality and the over-arching social importance of abstract institutions and groups seems to offer a way of approaching 'social-cultural' wholes from the bottom up." (Elliott, 1972, 10).

the work will initially involve an analysis of various theoretical propositions concerning modes of production, from which will be derived a model of production in political broadcasting that seeks to situate production within its various contexts. If one acknowledges the proposition that programme material is manufactured - that what is seen on the screen is the result of selection, interpretation and presentation of a wide range of available material, that it is patterned, one must look at the way that process of selection, interpretation and presentation is related to the internal arrangements - be they structural, economic or technical - and the way they relate to wider social processes and culturally available 'frames of reference', definitions, and meaning systems.

No single research method was adopted during the course of this research - not, one might add, for any particularly theoretical reason, but rather because of the exigencies of the situation. The initial aim had indeed been to do a participant observation study, along the lines of Elliott's work, in a programme production that fitted my definition of political television. This would clearly have been within either a news or current affairs department of either the BBC or ITV. This was not in the end possible, simply because no-one at that time was willing to grant the necessary access - a problem for this kind of work, as I have already indicated. The alternative to watching producers actually working was to talk to them about their work and hope that that would in the end produce a degree of access which, combined with the interview material would provide insight into the situation
of programme production. This is in fact what happened.

Three main methods, or sources of information, were in fact employed during the course of the study: these were -

1. interviews with producers of 'political television';
2. observation of several programme productions;
3. archival work - analysis of the vast amounts of material held in the BBC archives.

The Interviews

A sample of two weeks programmes that fitted the initial definition of political television was taken from the Radio Times and TV Times. The 'producers' of the particular programmes were contacted and interviews requested. The titles of those listed varied, but all are here referred to as producer (see Appendix 1 for a full list of programmes and titles). Having established a listing of all the programmes and those responsible a standard letter was sent requesting an interview (see Appendix 2). The total number of programmes included on the list was 47. As on some programmes the responsibility was shared by more than one producer the total number of possible interviews was 52. Of these 39 interviews were carried out. In addition, a number of other interviews were carried out with presenters, executives and radio

1 There was also a rather good 'pedigree' to this type of research, Muriel Cantor and Tom Burns both having completed research on media institutions utilising material gathered in interviews.

2 The two weeks were 2.12.72 - 8.12.72; 13.1.73 - 19.1.73. Sample is perhaps inappropriate in that the programmes represented in these two weeks comprised the main output for the whole year. For the original rationale behind the two week sample, see Halloran and Croll (1971).

3 Those individuals with direct responsibility for the programme through their ability to allocate the resources made available to them, decide on subject matter, etc. The title varies between programmes.
producers. The interviews were when possible taped and then transcribed, the mean length being 1 hour 10 minutes. One of the interviewees objected to taping, and so notes were taken, and on the one occasion when even note taking was not possible, notes were taken immediately after the interview. After several of the interviews an opportunity was available to talk informally with the interviewees, and often, when this took place in the bar, to talk to various other broadcasters. While there are often difficulties with the information gathered in such an informal setting, not the least of which is the difficulty of retention, I did feel that often some of the information gathered in this more informal setting was as useful as the taped material, and definitely provided a useful opportunity to test the consistency of responses to generally establish a 'feel' for the situation of the producer, to develop new ideas and confirm established notions. It was particularly interesting to listen to fairly animated conversations between the producer and his colleague, always goaded by the presence of the researcher from the Leicester Centre which had something of an infamous reputation. In all cases I endeavoured to take notes as soon as possible after the session.

The interviews were structured in the sense that the same basic interview schedule was used for each interview (see Appendix 3), though the questions were open-ended, the interviewee being allowed to develop his own line of thought if he or she so wished.

There are clearly many difficulties involved in using material gathered in formal interviews, but the interesting feature as one does more and more is the way in which general themes and ideas begin to emerge; hints of possible lines of analysis, leads to follow up, confirmation of one's own suppositions and explanations, denial of other ideas that one holds, all begin to develop out of the material that is accumulated. In summing up the methodology behind this part of the work, I can do no better than quote Ivor Crewe (1974, 43), who in discussing 'new approaches' to the study of
elites, declared:

"elites need to be interviewed. The best way of finding out about people is talking to them. It cannot guarantee to secure the truth, especially from people well practised in the arts of discretion, but it is surely superior to any alternative way of discovering what they believe and do."

(Participant) Observation

During the course of the interviews several producers asked if I would like to spend some time with their programme 'to see what it's really like'. Periods of observation were thus spent in the newsrooms of the regional BBC and ITV, and in the current affairs department of the BBC. The period of observation in ITV fortunately coincided with the General Election, a prime time to study the functioning of political television and the sorts of ideas that structure the coverage of political affairs. (See Chapt. 6 for an account of this period.)

The method of participant observation is, as Elliott observes, really a combination of several methods 'in embryo'. Much of the time was spent just observing and listening, noting activities, conversations, decisions and the like. There were innumerable short 'interviews', questions that became lengthy talks, questions that were answered with a good deal of brevity, information that was offered unsolicited but that was most welcome - a series of sources that gradually begin to add up to a reasonable accurate picture of what is 'really happening'. The observation was invaluable in adding the flesh to the skeleton constructed from the interview material - introducing new elements in need of scrutiny and close consideration. For example, I never really understood or appreciated the role of the film editor in programme-making until I actually spent time in the cutting room. I never understood the relationship between a programme's day-to-day activity, the immediate perspective of the editor-of-the-day or the programme organiser, and the wider perspective applied by the news editor until I actually saw it happening on a day-to-day basis. Two separate, but inextricably linked, levels of decision making were clearly evident, whereas initially I had
formulated a notion of the news editor being responsible for general policy and all day-to-day decisions.

An Historical Perspective

As a background to the research I initially thought it would be useful to describe the historical background to the present situation of political broadcasting. It rapidly became clear that not only was a historical narrative a useful backdrop to the central arguments, the analysis and understanding of those historical materials was a critical step toward the intended analysis of the connections between the process of production and the wider social and political context.

I have, therefore, looked at the general development but have also focussed on particular periods and events in order to try and tap, and adequately explain, the connections between an institution - particularly the ideas generated within that institution - and the society within which it exists: the four central events are The BBC and the General Strike, 1926; the Rise and Fall of Hugh Carleton Greene; the Yesterdays Men Incident; the coverage by ATV of the 1974 (February) General Election.

Organisation of the Thesis

The study focuses on an analysis of the interaction between the immediate setting of programme production and overarching institutional and cultural structures, and is divided into three main sections:

1. Political Communication and Social Theory

   In this section are examined the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the research. Through an analysis of the relevant literature in the area of media sociology and the sociology of culture, an attempt is made to conceptualise the overall perspective of the work.
2. The Formal Context of Political Television

This section provides a straightforward account of the formal features of the legal rulings, convention and agreements which apply to political television. Two areas are seen as crucial: rulings which relate to a number of areas but also have consequences for political television, and those which relate directly to political television.

3. A Study of Programme Production

This section provides the core of the work, and will for the purposes of handling the data and for analytic clarity, be treated at two different levels of 'causality', i.e., factors which have a relationship with the decision making within the programme.

One level is the factors arising from the day-to-day programme and institutional arrangements - whether these be decision making on the day, financial or technical considerations, organizational requirements, etc. The other level involves factors arising from the wider social, political and cultural context of the programme production. To indicate how I see this duality being treated and ultimately integrated into the general analysis, it may be useful to borrow the image of the 'snake in the tunnel' employed to describe the financial policy developed by the EEC - the snake can move freely, but only within the limits of the tunnel. So with the programme production, one is looking at the way the 'snake' of the day-to-day production - which one can treat as a distinct entity - moves and functions within the limits provided by the 'tunnel' of the wider institutional and social context. This is of course merely a useful description of what are ultimately interrelated processes. The tunnel and the snakes' position within it are not static - the one can affect the other, the shape and size of the tunnel alters, the freedom to move is greater at one moment than it is at the next, the shape of the tunnel and the snakes' ability to move within it are not uniform.
The twin aims of this section then are to deal with the everyday influences on, and determinants of, production in political television, and also to look at some of the more fundamental determinants and particularly to look at the manner in which the society that the production functions within informs and directs the style, content, and direction of the television production, and indeed the way in which the process is reversed and the television production has an impact, of whatever sort on the society and institutions with which it comes into contact.

Clearly the treatment of the process at the two levels is for the sole purpose of heuristic clarity, and interaction between the two levels is of paramount importance. To use a simple but pertinent example: financial and manpower resources will be shown to have a role to play in the kinds of programme material made available, both reflect the internal priorities in the allocation of resources and as such form part of the 'snake'. However, they also ultimately reflect the general health finance of the organization, which is intimately related to the economic climate of the country, and are therefore integrated into the structure of the 'tunnel'. At the same time, they may begin to work on those structures: if, for example, a particular piece of news broadcasting or current affairs broadcasting is deemed to be having a degree of social importance, or begins to attract large audiences, new decisions may be instigated with either increase the budget, or, more cynically, have it reduced - in either case the ordering of priorities within the wider context becomes affected by the programme output. Similarly definitions of programme content will be related to both internal definitions of programme content and to wider social definitions of, for example, what is important and significant within the political sphere.

Analysis of particular concepts, such as that of 'the audience' can serve to integrate the different levels - definitions of 'what our audience wants' do play an important part in decision making about programmes, but there are particular audiences to which the communicator addressed himself,
audiences that tend to parallel the power structure within the organization and the society.
CHAPTER TWO

THE RESEARCH LITERATURE: A REVIEW AND ANALYSIS
Two central themes have characterized the literature on media institutions and their processes - often more implicitly than explicitly. These are a) views of the institutional restraints on media productions - drawing in particular upon aspects of organization theory, and decision making theory, such work seeks to answer the question 'why is this media product as it is?' by detailing the requirements of the institutions within which the production actually takes place; b) the other important line of analysis looks on the media product as a 'cultural form' and thus presents the study of media institutions as a problem in the sociology of knowledge. These are only analytically distinct areas of study, and are both often included or at least implied in the research literature. It does suggest though two dominant lines of analysis: (1) the structure of decisions within the media institutions; (2) the culture of media institutions and media personnel, and how they relate to what Parkin (1972) has usefully described as socially available 'meaning systems'.

Subsumed within this rather broad bracket are a series of descriptions of media institutions: the concept of 'gatekeeper' - tinged as it is with functionalism in one school of thought, elite conspiracy in another; the notion of the creative individual operating in the organizational setting (a popular description among media professionals); a phenomenological description of the media process, a school of thought which is becoming prominent in the United States; a great deal of the work on media institutions has been concerned to delve into the relationship between the communicator and his audience, employing the concept of reference groups and developing the concept of transactional analysis. Other descriptions are rooted in no particular theoretical formulation, but rather consist of detailed - often journalistic - accounts of particular programmes or careers. There is finally a line of analysis which argues that media organizations are part of the institutions of a ruling class or elite and that therefore media processes must be interpreted as the mechanisms by which the ideology of that class/elite (the distinction is made in light of the Millsian vs.
Marxist argument (Mills, 1967) is encoded, transmitted and made
dominant.

Thus one of the two central themes has concerned itself with the
inhibitions placed on production by the institutional and social order.
The sorts of questions asked are of the order "who is the controller(s),
who is being controlled, how are they controlled, why, with what effect?".
It is then a world of determinations, a heavily structured process whereby
the end product results from something other than the simple transmission
of a 'pure' message. There is much induced 'noise' in the system. The only
soo to a concept of autonomous action (i.e. the communicator acting as
communicator with something he wishes to say rather than the communicator as
'organization man', 'commercial man', 'political tool' doing and saying what
others wish) is in terms of controls being relaxed, or of the broadcaster
routinizing the operational and ideological precepts of his situation thus
neutralizing the controls. As we shall see a total understanding of the
television process may require more than just a description of the control
mechanisms which impinge upon the production, important though they may be.

The question which is always posed when people talk about the effects of
mass media is, in one version or another, 'what is the relationship between
media output and social consciousness?' One or two writers, have been
enticed by the possibility of reversing the statement and of posing the
question: "What is the relationship between social consciousness and media
output?" That is to what extent is the intellectual/cognitive domain of the
mass communicators world inhabited by particular 'meaning systems' (Parkin,
1972) or what Stuart Hall has provocatively called the 'mode of reality of
the state' (Hall, 1972).

It has been observed previously (Lang, 1968; Halloran et al, 1970;
Hall, 1972) that news practices incorporate a whole series of beliefs, a
frame of mind, within which the news content is rooted. The work of this
thesis is only partly involved with news programmes since the scope of
'political television' is somewhat ubiquitous and spans the whole departmental structure of television. (In any research of the nature undertaken here one is of course dealing with both politics and television - the content of news, current affairs etc. - and the politics of television, i.e. the attitudes and effect of the political system on television.) Various writers have described the particular values possessed by communicators, going on to explain the final product as consisting of the fruits of that value structure. We will need to examine then the whole question of the structure of beliefs within broadcasting: is there a coherent value structure within broadcasting (as various interviews in the Bakewell-Garmham (1970) book suggest)? If so what are its main components, if not, what are the counterposing value structures? What role, if any, do belief structures play? Do they change over time and in relation to what do they change? This chapter will look then at the literature on media institutions from these two perspectives; what we can term, the institutional and cultural determinants of television material.

STUDIES OF MEDIA PRODUCTION

Institutional Determinants 1: the Internal Dimension

This is a study of production within television, and within that broad ambit, a study of one type of television, political. In looking for the beginnings of systematic research in this area we are in effect searching for the "missing evidence" of media sociology (Kline, 1972, p.23). If the empirical mass communications research was delayed for a number of years after the emergence of the mass media as a significant cultural form (Brown, 1970), the study of media institutions, and the processes operating within them, was even more delayed, not really getting under way until the 1950's.

The first and probably single most important concept to emerge in the pursuit of a theoretical account of media institutions was that of the
gatekeeper, personified in White's now legendary Mr Gates (White, 1950).

Referring to the conceptual underpinnings Gieber (1964) pointed to Kurt Lewin's notions of the social channel and field theories (Lewin, 1951), Merton et al's discussion of role behaviour within reference groups (1948) and Westley and MacLeans model for communications research. The concept of the gatekeeper originates in the attempt to focus on the first part of the basic communication model:

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communicator -------- message -------- receiver
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It has been criticised from many different perspectives (Tunstall, 1970), but nevertheless still provides the dominant 'paradigm' for the study and explanation of media institutions:

"... the examination of the press must start where the news begins - within the institutions of the press, within the walls of the newsroom or any other place where a newsmen gets and writes his story." (Gieber, 1964).

Despite the misgivings about the original formulation of this concept, there is a sense in which it is probably true to say that almost all institutional research has involved variations on this basic theme.

White's first use of the concept (White, 1950) focussed on the way that certain messages ('news') were selected or rejected:

"It is only when we study the reasons given by Mr G. for rejecting the nine-tenths of the wire-copy that we begin to understand how highly subjective, how highly reliant upon value judgements based on the gatekeepers own set of experiences, attitudes and expectations, the communication of news really is."

In a recent review of the area it was argued that this perspective was unnecessarily narrow and that the concept should include "all forms of information control that may arise in decisions about message encoding, such as selection, shaping, display, timing, withholding, or repetition of entire messages or message components" (Donohue, et al., 1972, l43). These authors seek to root their analysis of 'gatekeeping' within the process of information control implied within the concept of gatekeeping being one form of system maintenance. Thus the rhetoric of the l4th Estate is viewed as a description of "feedback control".
Effectively what the early gatekeeper studies did was to imply the various 'contexts' within which the communicator operated. Gradually a picture of the newsroom was pieced together which has led to a refashioning (in academic eyes at least) of the notion of the autonomous 'news process' serving the needs and interests of the people. If the whole process was the transmission of messages along a series of links in a communication chain, then it was further noted that among those who have the ability to say whether a message shall be received and re-transmitted, in the same form or a different one - 'the gatekeeper' - some are manifestly more important than others, and the wire editor was singled out as influential among influentials, 'gatekeeper among gatekeepers.'

The conceptual application of the notion of selection-rejection at particular points in the communication process is to be found initially in Schramm's first edition of Mass Communications, (1949) "no aspect of communication is so impressive as the number of choices and discards which have to be made between the formation of the symbol in the mind of the communicator, and the appearance of a related symbol in the mind of the receiver." This was referred to by White in his famous exploratory study, but the theoretical inheritance was provided by Kurt Lewin's channel theory mentioned above. Lewin working in the context of World War Two was interested in the patterns of food buying among housewives. Focussing on the overall process in which food moves from its origin to the family table, he argued that the movement is facilitated by movement through particular 'channels' 'step by step' but that it "does not move by its own impetus. Entering or not entering a

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1. Much of the research has been carried out at the local community level on relatively small news operations. It has been argued (Donohue et al 1972) that the less complex the system within which the media institution is functioning, the more likely is the newspaper to be in tune with the community consensus and the local power structure. It may be of course that some of the emphasis on local media derives from their easy accessibility to research. This would seem to be particularly true in the context of the many journalism schools in the United States.
channel and moving from one section of a channel is effected by a 'gatekeeper'" (Levin, 1943). Crucially though Lewin argued the need to examine the general process within which the specific process is occurring, to determine just who, and where, the gatekeepers are.

Bass (1969) and Golding (1970) have argued that while mass communication researchers saw the possibilities of Lewin's concepts - particularly emphasising his statement that they hold "not only for food channels, but also for the travelling of a news item through certain communication channels in a group ..." (Lewin, op cit, p187) - their development by White (1950) and subsequent theorists failed to consider the "group" nature of the process, and delineated the 'gates' and their 'keepers' without the "first diagnostic task (which) is that of finding the actual gatekeeper. This requires essentially a sociological analysis and must be carried out before one knows whose psychology has to be studied ..." (Lewin, 1943). The result of this inadequate transferral of Lewin's channel theory was to create an oversimplistic view of the communication process and one which focussed on the wrong gates. Bass distinguishes between 'news gatherers' and 'news processors' the former being the significant gates, but leaves himself open to the criticism that by failing to consider the mediated nature of the input to the news gatherers - that what he takes as raw news is actually highly processed - he himself is operationalizing a severely truncated version of channel theory. Golding pointing to the same inadequacies describes the need to delineate the whole 'environment' in which news originates and is processed. "The lack of awareness of the external environment of the media has been a major limitation on its (the concept of gatekeeping) use." (Galding, 1970).

In his study of 16 daily newspaper telegraph editors Gieber (1956)

1. The British edition was 1952.
observed that "the average desk man is caught in a straight jacket of mechanical details, with the press association playing a major role as a selector of news" (Gieber, 1956). He was conscious that following on from White's work the newsman was seen as operating within a framework provided by the policies and ethos of the particular news organization within which he worked. Attitudes to superiors, perception of the audience, the tradition of the newspaper were given a nodding recognition as factors to be considered, but only as factors of a secondary nature. Primary importance he attributed to the need to produce copy - to fill the 'news hole'. And while he shows that the personality of the telegraph editor varied and that executive control of the staff varied between papers, in each case the central fact of the telegraph editor's life is the news wire, from which he selects 'mechanically'. Though the telegraph editor did hold political views these were neutralized by the mechanical process by which items were selected.

Others have put forward a similar type of argument, i.e. that the wire editor constitutes an 'open gateway'. Cutlipp (1956) argued that news is determined by the wire service. In a similar vein Breed (1955) has argued that there is a process of standardization which is created by an 'arterial process', i.e. a dependence on particular news leaders fashions a similarity of layout, biographical style and content. The process of one (small) newspaper referring to the news content of another (larger) paper, plus a reliance on the wire services 'budget', the use of clippings and material from other newspapers etc., all serves to amplify a 'common understanding' of 'news' and to create a 'standard' appearance to news content. Judd (1961) has observed a similar process in his study of papers in California. By placing an emphasis on the technical operations of the news process, detailing the role of the wire services and the use of other newspapers as news sources, these studies serve the useful function of directing our attention to what we can perhaps call the physical components of news. It also leads to the interesting and potential important observation, that the processes which people have seen as a threat to the operation of a 'free press'
may not be caused in the manner that was often conceived, i.e. domination by '
press barons', one particular class etc. Rather the grey similarity across
the face of the news product stems from the similar production employed by
different news outlets, and the cycle of dependence which links them
(Nixon and Ward, 1961). 'Bias' from the mechanics rather than the politics
of the press is a recurrent theme in the literature and one to which one has
to constantly return.

Nevertheless there are objections to these works. In so far as 'gate-
keeper' studies look for the processes of selection and rejection, they do
not rest easily with the concept. Having identified the 'open gate' nature
of the telegraph editor, the importance of the wire or particular newspapers
like the New York Times and the Washington Post the focus of any 'gatekeeper'
study should move to these sources. At the same time the wire editor is but
one part of the whole news operation and is himself structured within a
whole series of organizational and cultural contexts. Nevertheless in
directing our attention away from the implicitly conspiratorial version of
the gatekeepers role to the processual logic of the news operation, such
work laid the basis for later analysis.

The social construction of news takes place within institutions that
possess their own goals and needs. Inevitably research has detected the
interaction between the social purpose of the news process and the private
purpose of the owners and controllers.

Breed (1955) carried out 'intensive interviews' with some 120 newsmen
working on papers ranging from 10,000 in circulation to 100,000 daily, in
the north eastern part of the USA. Pointing out that interference by senior
executives and the publisher is frowned upon, that the reporter tends to be
more liberal than his publisher, and that for a publisher to tell a
reporter what to write is taboo. Breed posed the question: "how is policy
maintained despite the fact that it contravenes journalistic norms, that
staffers often disagree with it and executives can't legitimately demand
that it be followed?" The solution Breed sees as operating in a kind of two-step interaction between the "staffer" and his superiors. Over the period of his early journalistic career the reporter gradually learns the dimensions and meanings of his employer's policies - he is in effect going through a process of adult socialization.

Seelman (1971) has noted that the process may take place before the journalist arrives in the newsroom. Studying the operations of a black newspaper in Chicago, operating in the atmosphere of the 1960's American civil rights movement, the black journalist was integrated into the central news values of the paper - blackness - before he actually joined the paper. Clearly there are many unique aspects to the situation covered in this study, but it does pose certain questions about the whole process of pre-socialization in 'ordinary' papers. Having perceived the central concerns of his employers, having, if you like, identified the officially sanctioned belief structure, the journalist is held in check by a series of mechanisms so that even though he may feel an inclination to 'buck' policy he will tend to be held in check by the possibility of sanctions, a general feeling of obligation and esteem for his superiors, his career ambitions, the lack of a protective group structure, the pleasant nature of his occupation, combined with the rush of a 2½ hour copy cycle which makes independence of action and thought difficult to sustain (Breed, 1955). Findings of this nature led to the conclusion by various writers that because of the operation of these processes the media tended to support existing social mores and values, to favour elite groups within the community and generally to underpin the status quo (Breed, 1958; Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1948; Gerbner, 1961, 1964; Klapper, 1946). It emerged that:

"The reporter's major concern was with the "climate" of the newsroom; they recognized themselves as employed of a news-gathering bureaucracy in which reward came from their editors and colleagues ... the fate of the local news story is not determined by the needs of the audience or even by the values of the symbols it contains. The news story is controlled by

1. See Becker (1970) on this.
the frame of reference created by the bureaucratic structure of which the communicator is a member." (Gieber, 1964).

The commitment to the needs of the bureaucracy did not flow however from the dominance of the publishing organization's hierarchy, but rather was integral to the very nature of the process by which news was produced:

"There is an 'action' element in the present subject - the practical democratic need for a 'free and responsible' press to inform citizens about current issues. Much of the criticism of the press stems from the slanting induced by the bias of the publishers policy. This criticism is often directed at flagrant cases such as the Hearst press, the Chicago Tribune and NY tabloids, but also applies in lesser degree to the more conventional press. The description of mechanisms of policy maintenance may suggest why this criticism is often fruitless, at least in the short run sense." (Breed, 1955, 181).

The implications of this line of analysis were clear and important, and were reaffirmed by Breed's later work in which he employed a method of content analyzing what was selected out of local media rather than what was put in. As perhaps one might have anticipated the higher echelons within the local community structure were 'protected' by the local press that tended to omit or bury items which might jeopardize the sociocultural structure and man's faith in it, "There is silent recognition among members of the community that facts and ideas which are disturbing to the accepted system of illusions are not to be verbalized ...", the community creed providing an essential framework within which the local press operates (Breed, 1958). Janowitz, (1967), describes a situation where the local community press he studies served to emphasize a number of common values and involved discussion of conflicting values. Clearly such arguments are important and provide insights into the interaction between communal power structures and the press. There are, however, certain problems apart from the difficulties of reverse content analysis. The study is flawed as are all such content analyses by the logical difficulties of constructing a description of the process by which a product is created from a 'reading' of the components of that product. It actually tells us nothing of process, and leaves open the whole question, for example, of the potential difficulties of
dissonance within the communications operation - if White is correct that
the "newspaper editor sees to it (even though he may never be consciously
aware of it) that the community shall hear as a fact only those events which
the newsman, as the representative of his culture believes to be true..."
(White, 1950), then by what process does he resolve the implied contra­
dictions between the more unpalatable pieces of 'truth' and the needs of the
local hierarchy? The problems and potential pit falls of post hoc reason­
ing are great, explanations deriving from direct analysis of internal
operations rather than external manifestations proving more fruitful. The
various studies detailed here also tend to deal with small town, local papers,
rather than the national broadcast media which, in terms of the provision
of an informational environment for the audience, appear to be - from what
we know of consumption patterns - far more important; than the local press.

Donohue, Tichenor and Olien (1972) have argued that local media through
a closer integration within and identification with the local community are
more likely to emphasize consensus and harmony within the community than are
the media in more complex social systems (cf. also Olien et al, 1958). As
we shall see, however, the linkage of the media institutions to particular
interests at the national level is an important finding of recent work in that
area, and while the bulk of the evidence implies that, within the overall
complex of the American media system, the institutional drive is provided
by an essentially economic logic, there are sufficient inconsistencies to
demand explanation - Donohue et al (1972) points to the tv networks' pursuit of such issues as 'The Selling of the Pentagon' and the Pentagon

Papers.\(^2\) In a sense it is the presence of these 'anomalies' which provide

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1. cf. Greenberg and Tannenbaum (1962) who showed that in an experimental
situation subjects placed under cognitive stress, by being induced to
write what they could not accept, were less productive and produced less
readable material. See also Bettinghaus and Preston (1964) on this.

2. In the British context one might point to such apparent inconsistencies
as the Sunday Times' full bloodied assault on Distillers, and in the more
political sphere, the presence of an apparently 'radical' programme in
commercial system, i.e. World in Action, and the refusal of the BBC to
cancel the Question of Ulster.
the most interesting and potentially most rewarding areas for analysis.
There is a tendency, and an understandable one in the context of the
pursuit of a clear-cut theory of the media, to treat the programmes as
'accidents' or 'freaks'. Yet it is clear that any description of the
processes by which media products are created will have to include an
equation of the abnormal as much as the normal. It is quite possible that
analysis of so-called anomalies will lead to an understanding of more
'normal' features and will do much to establish more adequate theoretical
description of the mass communications process than currently exists.
Whatever the conclusion no doubt it will serve to affirm the observation by
Oscar Wilde that 'truth is rarely pure, and never simple'.

That local publishers do have an important part to play was shown by
Donohue (1967) who examined the coverage of the Medicare issue by 17
newspapers in Kentucky and concluded that the attitude of the publisher was
the important force in amount, direction and display of messages. Two
other variables which he tested as possible predictors of gatekeeper
behaviour - the publishers' perception of community opinion and community
conditions themselves - did not prove to be important as "significant forces
in the news channel". He did conclude, however, "it is possible that there
are important uninvestigated forces in the news channel".

Similarly Bowers (1967) found some evidence of publisher interference.
In a study of the managing editors of 613 daily evening newspapers who
queried the extent to which publishers control content either directly or
indirectly, he found that publishers were more likely to be influencing
output of local news (11% were said to be actively involved in determining
content) than foreign news (where 3% were said to be active). He also
found that they were more likely to intervene on issues which were 'local'
geographically, on one's that were related to newspaper revenues, where they
saw the issues as personal concerns, and if they were the proprietor of
low circulation newspapers. They were also more likely to interfere with
the treatment of material rather than its use or non-use. Thus the more localized the paper the more direct was the system of control. Presumably the point here is not that there is somehow a causal link between an emphasis on local affairs and the process of intervention, rather that the papers where this state of affairs existed are typically small, with short chains of command, more personalized ownership, and were thus more likely to be prone to a process of intervention.

A recent application of the gatekeeper concept (Warner, 1970) looked at the process in the three main television networks in the United States. His argument was essentially that because of the compression of form in television news specials, editing and news gathering requirements are imposed and this effectively means that the process of TV news is subject to much greater control than is the case with newspapers. The number of decision makers who actually control the whole of network news output numbers, according to Warner, only about 50 people in toto, of whom three - the executive producers of the three networks - constitute the 'power elite'. The basic similarity between the output of the three stations is accounted for by the tendency of each elite to watch what the other elites are doing, and for each to read a common news source the New York Times. ¹ Seeking to analyse the criteria for evaluating 'news' Warner merely observes that "Criteria used in news selection are largely subjective", which disappointingly leaves us where we were 20 years ago with Mr Gates. It leaves in abeyance the central question which is the social origins of that subjectivity. Gatekeeping has one feels the virtue that in focussing on the activities of particular individuals who are deemed crucial (and it would be nonsense to suggest that some individuals within the news organization are not crucial - indeed the whole approach of this thesis has rested very much on the premiss that one can identify key individuals in the production of television

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¹ The process is a lot more complicated than this as indicated by Epstein (1973).
programme), it forces us to move within the black box of the media institution and provides the heuristic base upon which to build. At the same time though it lays one open to the danger of only treating the individual communicator and interpreting the whole process as one of autonomous decision devoid of any institutional setting. This is, however, a flaw in the methodologist and not the methodology.

Judd (1961) in his account of *The Record* in 'Delton' California argued that general policy is set by the publisher in consultation with the editor and business manager. "News practices are determined by the news and city editor, either jointly or individually and they both seem to favour controversy and conflict, especially in local politics." This of course contrasts with earlier studies in which the dispositions were seen to be towards consensus and not conflict. Within this context the reporters are oriented almost totally to the "papers perception of its news universe and of audience demand" as reflected in the person of the city editor. They are so oriented to the news values of the city editor that Judd describes them as "passive gatekeepers" responding only to the editor's conceptions of the good, dramatic story, "A story may be only half a truth or a whole truth half told but if it looks good it is good enough to get past the Record gate". Because of their sole orientation to the foibles and needs of immediate superiors, and "their lack of responsiveness to any audience other than their boss, their sources and each other", their work ignores the context and subtle gradations of human action leaving the final product "ingenious and entertaining but not informative or instructive". Strong words, but it does point once more the the differential importance of particular gatekeepers, and the significance of institutional control.

Walter Gieber adopted the notion of channel flow for his study of 'Mr Civitas', gatekeeper of the 'Westcity World', a west coast paper in the U.S. Describing the components of Civitas' judgements as 'news psychology', "The purpose of the study was the delineation of the factors which form
his 'news psychology' and determine his selection" (Gieber, 1961). He
detects several principal factors structuring the selection process - mecha­
nical, bureaucratic and personal values. In a later paper (Gieber, 1964) he
sought to develop further the notion of the city editor being the focal point
of a series of forces generated within and without the news organization.
The city editor as the key section of the news channel operates within a
force field composed of three main forces: Boundary (space, time, available
news flow etc.); Social (influence of the news gathering bureaucracy); and
Personal (perceptions of audience dislikes and likes etc.). Through the
application of field theory he wishes to locate and analyse the individual
and the group, encompassing all the variables operative at that time. He
expressly plays down the notion that one or two individuals are the whole
story of news production, arguing that newspapers are no longer places where
one individual can stamp his authority on the output. Thus in his
theoretical and empirical account of the situation of Mr Civitas, in an
overtly 'gatekeeper' study, he moves the study of the news process further
along the road to some sort of conceptual adequacy. Placing Mr Gates or
Mr Civitas in his overall context, pointing a finger at the world 'out
dothere' and emphasizing its importance for what Mr G. or Mr C.'s clearly a
step in the right direction. Gieber also looked outside the immediate setting
of the newsroom, detailing the relationship between the reporter and his
sources (Gieber, 1961; Gieber and Johnson, 1961). Exploring the relation­
ships between reporters and politicians in 'Factoria', California, Gieber
and Johnson conclude that through the operation of formal and informal
communications networks combined with a general agreement between the two
groups on basic values regarding government, the reporters have effectively
been integrated within the governmental process. In a paper in 1963 Gieber
looked at source-reporter relationships in the field of educational policy,
and found a duality within the reporters' attitudes. The hypothesis was that
any analysis of the attitudes of politicians and reporters towards news
coverage of the public school system would display a polarity. His data did
not show the assumed polarity, leading him to conclude that:

"The variations in behaviour of the newsmen are caused by responses to two, differing and often conflicting, sets of values. The values belonging to the private role emphasize the positive contribution of education to society. The values attached to the newsroom seem to emphasize the conflictual, or negative, value of news." (Gieber, 1963).

This is a crucial point in the sense that it is increasingly apparent that the news process is not only a function of the decision context but also of a value context, and that newsmen draw upon value-systems derived from the process of socialization within the news organization, but also utilize the residue of their whole cultural experience. Gieber has thus gone beyond the previous limitations of gatekeeper studies, effectively establishing the principle that there are a multitude of gates, some of which extend beyond the physical setting of the newsroom.

That significant decision points - and that is essentially what 'gates' are - exist in the British media is beyond dispute. What is within the realm of dispute is just where those points actually are, and how significant they are. It is unfortunate that some of the applications were limited in scope, and focussed on 'gates' which were manifestly not the most important. Gatekeeper studies are still arguing their pertinence to the description of the media process, when the time is overdue to accept this and to begin to fill in the wider picture of the flow process. There are many different 'gatekeepers' within any communications organization, each operating within a whole series of contexts (or what Gieber called 'vectors').

The gatekeeper studies drew our attention to the communications system operating within the media institutions as well as between them and the audience. They pointed to processes that operated on the whole process by which information is created and made available for dissemination. Perhaps more than anything they pointed to the particularities of organizational control, and various studies have taken up this theme and have considered the communication process from perspective of the internal operations of the bureaucracies within which it happens, and it is to these that I now turn.
Several works have specifically addressed themselves to the problem of analysing media institutions by developing concepts drawn from organization theory.

A frequent and rather obvious observation by many writers in the field is that the television programme or the newspaper etc. emerges from an organization. The implication is that each organization - either as an individual process or as an administrative unit - will be directed by its own purpose and goals, and that all is subordinate to that. Much interest was raised initially by the ways in which film making was heavily influenced by the organization within which it occurred. Hierarchical in nature, the systems of control which operate within the organization are viewed as central to any understanding of what the final, for example, film product is like (Jarvie, 1970; Dunne, 1970; Ross, 1962). How important then is the wider organizational purpose in influencing the making of television programmes in general and political television in particular? The question can be rephrased to include the persistent theme in the literature, 'which way do decisions flow in the organisation, to what extent does the programme maker act autonomously?'

Such a question raises an interesting point about the dominant theoretical perspectives of the sociological analysis of production within media institutions. The dominant explanation of programme making (particularly news processes) views the process in terms of the way in which the 'product' is structured and controlled by an organization. Certainly the position adopted by this thesis is one in which attention is drawn to a number of factors which together, constitute "frameworks" within which production occurs, one of which is 'the organization'.

In saying this it is not intended to reproduce the tendency in many discussions of organizations to reify the systemic nature of the broadcasting organisation, to attribute animate qualities to what are in effect inanimate objects. One has to recognise that in discussing the structural
determinations on production, the incorporation of programme values and standards within broader organizational 'values', 'goals', 'needs', etc., one is actually talking about the values, goals and needs of senior personnel and not of some organism superordinate to them. The description 'organization' is essentially a form of shorthand too often misused. At the same time as focussing on the relationship between senior and junior personnel in the broadcasting organization, it also is necessary to consider the more voluntaristic aspects of programme making, the particular ends pursued by those who are responsible for making programmes and the ways in which these ends may conflict or blend with those deriving from higher levels in the organization. It is particularly interesting within the context of the British media system to consider the considerably reified position of the BBC, which is often held to have a persona that transcends the particularities of the individual characters of its employees; how often has one heard reference to 'Aunty BBC'?

Clearly the operation of both influences from above in the form of determination of policy, the laying down of certain standards and norms etc., and the operation of the individual motivations of the programme maker can be viewed as interlinked processes whose interaction forms a central feature of production. The two are often presented as alternatives between which a theory must choose. For example, the two following conclusions drawn from the work of Blumler (1969) and Halloran et al (1970) offer opposed conclusions. Discussing the situation he observed during the election of 1966 Blumler argues:-

"It was evident from the outset ... that many producers did not regard themselves merely as executants of ... official policies. They shared what may be described as a set of policy objectives of their own." (Blumler, 1969, 80).

while a similar type of work, an analysis of the newscoverage of a demonstration, concluded:

"News is what newsmen say it is, not because they are uniquely qualified to recognise it but because they have developed techniques for working with it which are suited to the requirements of the newsgathering occupation, the
organization within which they work and the market which they serve."
(Halloran et al., 1970, 17).

In his account of the coverage by GAO of the 1966 General Election,
Blumler (1969) gives passing mention to the various 'rules' that underpin
electoral broadcasting, but chooses, as the fruits of his period of observa-
tion, to describe how the 'producers' attitudes' influenced the formul-
ation of policy. He makes the quite valid point, for example, that
discussion of the Common Market issue was largely a result of the producers
deciding that it ought to be discussed and their success in 'smoking out'
the parties to make them discuss it. He speaks of producers eager to assault
the boundaries of convention, constantly pushing back the parameters of the
permissible. The process of production he acknowledges to be a complex
intermeshing of many factors - official policies, organizational arrangements,
financial, technical, human resources, the producers own strategies for
covering election issues and, he concludes:

"... current affairs output is not rigidly governed by an
unalterable set of fixed conditions. Much of the
end product seems to be determined by a number of variable
factors that are not usually perceptible to viewers or
other outsiders." (Blumler, 1969, 111).

He is then challenging a dominant model in the / of media institutions in
which policy, it is argued, flows down from the controllers to those directly
responsible for making programmes, in producing a paper or whatever. The
individual communicator is, then, seen as a passive respondent to a multiple
of pressures. Not so, says Blumler. In a recent review of Seymour-Ure (1974),
Blumler addressed the problem of the relationship between the media institutions
and the political institutions. Writing about the theoretical aspects of the
book, he declares that it could:

"... be faulted only for its failure to take full account of
an important line of analysis that repeatedly emerges from
the case studies (in the book). This concerns the relation-
ship of traditional political institutions - government and
party - to mass media institutions. The thrust of much of
Seymour-Ure's evidence suggests that media institutions are
growing in comparison with such political institutions.
For example, parliamentary debate is in danger of being
by-passed by studio interviews and discussions on tv ... And the flowering of more vigorous news and current affairs
programming in broadcasting since 1959 has weakened the control of politicians over the definitions of election issues." (Blumler, 1974, 78d).

Buried within Blumler's perceptions of the 1966 election coverage is an important point relating to the whole question of the organizational restraints on programme making. In an organizational world in which human action is a complex interplay of individual autonomy and structural constraint, there is an increasing tendency for programme makers to operate free of restraints. There is a sense then in which Blumler is challenging a theoretical orthodoxy of academic discussion about media institutions, but supporting an orthodoxy implied within the ideology of the 4th Estate. The one says that control flows down the hierarchy and that this is the central feature influencing the product, the other views the journalist as a free agent of the fourth estate. Processes of control and socialization are hinted at but it is notable, particularly in Blumler, that it is the producer's own strategies and perspectives which are focussed on, and it is these which become centrally important in the framework for 'explaining' production.

The point that organizational control might not be as significant a feature of the media process is discussed by Sigelman (1973). Sigelman begins his analysis by observing that there is much public comment on media bias but little systematic uncovering of the organizational mechanisms of bias. Studying two politically divergent newspapers he noted a potentially paradoxical situation: how could journalists steeped in the 'mythology' of their trade function within a system of overt political bias which they themselves said was a result of the imposition of the publisher's policy line from above. Here apparently was a clear disjuncture between the position of

1. "In their periodic introspections American newspapermen reveal a morally conditioned public regardingness, a self imposed obligation to watch over the public's business." (Sigelman, 1973, 133). This he sees as one version of what Selznick (1957) has described as the 'institutional myth' an effort to "state in language of uplift and idealism what is distinctive about the aims and methods of the enterprise." (Sigelman, 1973, 133). He therefore sees the canons of journalism as one such institutional myth.
the allegedly objective reporter and the reality of his role. He sought an answer to this in the work and propositions of Simon (1957) who argued that the employers gain influence by establishing in the employees mind "attitudes, habits and a state of mind which lead him to reach that decision which is advantageous to the organization" and by "imposing on the operative employee decisions reached elsewhere in the organization". (Simon, 1957, quoted in Sigelman, p136). In theory, then, attitudes should move from top to bottom via a process of "attitude promotion" (involving selective recruitment of personnel and socialisation of personnel into organisational norms) and the exercise of "organisational control".

When he came to gather and analyse his data there was a marked absence of selective recruitment and socialisation and therefore a singly ineffective process of attitude formation. The explanation offered is that through a process of self-selection (i.e. 'conservative' reporters go to 'conservative' papers, and so on) there is from the very first day an intellectual accommodation between employer and employee which effectively negates the need for the promotion of particular attitudes. At the same time such a process allows the 'institutional mythology' to remain intact. There is, however, as Sigelman points out, the remaining problem of 'organisational control':

"Beyond being assured that employees are in basic attitudinal accord with organisational policies, the leaders of organizations must sometimes take direct steps to insure that employees perform according to policy norms." (Sigelman, 1973, p140-141).

- but such an imposition would immediately clash with the professional emphasis on autonomy;

"Previous analysts of the organizational context of news reporting have examined the means by which reporters avoid such imposition." (Sigelman, 1973, p146).

The implication of conflict inherent here Sigelman regards as dubious, and points to a "new generation of organization theorists and researchers" who have begun to question the assumption of conflict between professional
and organization. His data, he is arguing, indicates that the professional reporter/organization relationship is one of conflict avoidance and that the reporter's perception of his role is sufficiently narrow and technical for him not to feel that his functional autonomy is jeopardized. The control mechanisms - financial, personal, technological, blue-pencilling etc. - are loose and informal enough not to overtly conflict with the professional status of the reporter, but sufficient to allow the newspapers hierarchy to exert meaningful control over the reportorial performance.

In the final analysis there is a harmony of interest between the newsmen and their employers which leads to the conclusion that if newspapers have overt political leanings it is not because owners ride roughshod over the political inclinations and principles of reporters, not because of any conflict-ridden, conspiratorial situation, but because there exists a state of 'co-operation and shared satisfactions'. Recruitment, socialization and working arrangements are all geared to the generation of a position of compatibility.

It is an observation of the existence of mutuality and shared beliefs which is so interesting about this work of Sigelman. It clearly develops a perspective which throws important light on the processes operating within media institutions. Its strength is not that is is a unique observation - clearly it is not that - rather that it is a particularly well worked out set of conclusions, findings that began in an analysis of organizational processes and ended in implying the significance of cognitive processes.

Gelles (1972) also approached the question of media bias from the perspective of the role of organizational processes rather than from a notion that it is the explicit political predispositions of communicators which are responsible for any bias that exists. Describing the popular notion that

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1. He points to Hall (1967) as an example of this emerging trend.
'bias' in the media is produced by the overt political proclivities of communicators as the 'Agnew Theory'. Gelles concurs with Agnew that the news media are biased but argues that this is related to structural factors rather than conscious intent. Establishing the premise that 'news' has no independent existence he observes that the news programme is put together in such a way as to fit certain criteria - length of stories, whether they have film and sound, or just sound/film, whether they are a lead story, a 'middle' story or an 'end' story, whether they are local or national in scope, how much information they contain etc. Mixing the various criteria together he emerges with a typology of stories ranging from the item which has film and information (and is therefore almost certain to be used) to the item which has no film and no information (and is therefore almost certain not to be used). In reproducing events the processes by which the coverage is structured effectively imply a partial version of the event, and in trying to emphasize that they are being objective (by balancing etc.) they add another discussion of distortion by implying that the world is neatly divided:

"As a result of this striving for objectively distortion is created by presenting the world as being half-pro, half-con; half male, half female; half young, half old; half Republican, half Democrat." (Gelles, 1972).

There are several problems with this particular work - notably a rather strange accusation that there is too much emphasis in the local news programme studied on local affairs - but nevertheless it does point to an understanding of the way in which the final product is structured within a series of routines. As in Sigelman it points to the limited and partial view of the world presented by the media as a product not of conspiratorial intent but rather as being produced by a series of organizational processes. There is not here the same emphasis on the particular processes of organizational control - rather the organizational setting is heavily implicit. The routines that operate do

1. On 13 November 1969 Vice President Agnew made a bitter attack on the "little group of men" who control and distort the news media. The full text of the speech is available in Keeley (1971).
so in a way which satisfies the ultimate goal of the organization, the
transmission of 'good' 'attractive' television and thus the attraction of
an audience. A feeling of the importance of the requirements of the medium
rather than explicit organizational control is evident.

The operation of particular routines, and their consequence for the
material produced is an important theme in two works that have focussed on
particular political events, Lang and Lang (1968) and Halloran, Elliott and

Halloran and his associates observed that when covering an anti-Vietnam
War demonstration both the press (popular and quality) and the broadcast
media focussed on the event's violent rather than pacific aspects. It is,
of course, one of the cliches of discussion of the media that they tend to
focus on the violent, the extreme, the bizarre etc. Why this should be so
is complex and a question the book sought to answer. In the actual
production of news about the demonstration one could see, so the authors
argue, an interplay of two factors: a) ideas about the probable course of
events and possible newsworthy elements within it; b) the actual news
material gathered on the day, the final form of which is determined by the
newsmen's prior assessment of the event as news. Through analysis of their
case study the authors arrive at a lengthy description of the processes and
factors operating on the news media. Events and happenings, the
authors argue, are the basic units of news, meetings as they do the constant
need for fresh material; the widely held belief in objectivity and impartiality
engenders a concentration on events and an avoidance of speculative stories,
a process which is amplified among newspapers in particular by the avoidance
of possibly (reader) alienating material; and a watchful eye on what the
other media are doing creates a circle in which 'known' stories are covered
and common definition employed. Gradually a common pattern of expectations
and interpretations was established and the image of the event as presented
by the media related to the way the news angles were selected and developed
in the press during the pre-demonstration build up period, and taken up eventually by television. The authors conclude that the process by which news is selected and presented,

"... is not simply a function of conscious attitudes and deliberate policies. It springs from an underlying frame of mind which itself is related to occupational and institutional arrangements. The selection and presentation of news is not likely to change until that frame of mind is changed." (Halloran, et al, 1970, p318).

The observation by the authors of the 'Demonstration' book that the media tend to focus on particular aspects of events was also noted by Hall in his work on the press coverage of student sit ins. The process, however, he describes in terms of a paradigmatic simplification and crystallization of a complex situation in simple, stereotypical terms (Hall, 1971), a process which itself relates to the ideology and rhetoric of a society which raises 'consensus' and the 'national interest' to superordinate status over all other collective social interests.

Earlier work by the Langs in the United States (Lang and Lang, 1968) - who in a sense provided Halloran et al (1970) with the intellectual perspectives for their own work - echoes and reinforces these trains of thought. In studying MacArthur Day in Chicago and the 1952 nominating conventions the Langs show how initial conceptions about the nature of the event held by newsmen came to dominate the way in which the event was covered, and those initial conceptions were strongly influenced by perceptions of the medium's nature, about the expectations of viewers and the kind of material which would hold their interest and attention.

To briefly summarize the point this work is making: there is a difference between what "actually happened" in an event and the media's representation of "what happened" and this partiality is established by particular or inferential structures held by the communicator. The predispositions predispositions/are in turn derivatives of the organizational milieux, the method of operations, and the general practices of the work situation. That is they are internally derived.
The work outlined here provides a useful base upon which to build, though the persistent focus on news departments represents an unfortunate neglect of other important areas of the media. News departments have peculiarities and purposes quite distinct from, for example, other forms of television, which naturally enough, leads one to ask whether or not the descriptions offered of news departments apply to other production settings. There are also obvious limitations in the works in terms of their overall perspective and their methodologies. The processes described have the virtue of being internally coherent and consistent, bound by a logic that derives from the work process. Little or no consideration is given to the significance of the overall decision making context within which news operations develop - there is if you like a limited view of the structure of the news process. Why this should be so is relatively easy to explain - the field work involved was very limited and so it would be natural to focus on the more obvious and simple aspects of the process, i.e. the newsmen relate to, and follow, other news media, newsman have inarticulated news values etc, etc. The long term development of news values, the full dimension of the belief structures of which news values consists, the role for example of the Editor Television News in the BBC, none of these were adequately explored and nor could they be given the short period in which the field work was carried out. There is a skeleton of an explanation, what we really need is the flesh. There is also something of a logical problem in these works. If the description is that newsmen when constructing their own version of events employ the past treatment of similar events by other news media i.e. when covering October '68 in London they look to demos in Paris or Chicago, or rely on the currently available orthodoxy in the media, there is a danger that we are implying a closed system or a process of infinite regress, i.e. from where do the original definitions arrive, what or who is the prime mover. It is a similar kind of problem to that found in the gatekeeper studies referred to earlier where for example a telegraph editor uses the wire service to make his choices of news for him. There we have said something about the wire editor but not very much about the news
process or the actual origination of news, for that we must go to the wire service. A description of a cycle of news dependence is a rather shallow and flimsy description of the news process. A recent work by Epstein (1973) in the United States on news programming involved a good deal more observational field work and interviewing with media personnel than the Halloran book, a fact which is reflected in the more substantial offering.

Epstein’s conclusion is essentially the same as the works already cited i.e. 'news' is limited by the operation of internal organizational processes. He began by asking a question central to the sociology of organizations and sought to answer it by gathering data from the television networks' news organizations. The question he posed is "how far are the directions taken by the organization determined by internal needs?" The answer he comes up with is that the immediate organizational purpose (in this case the making of television news) is strongly influenced by the wider economic purpose of the television network which is essentially one of staying in business. Network news, Epstein argues, is shaped by a series of external realities (government regulation and economic considerations being the most notable ones); a series of internal procedures for filtering and evaluating information and making decisions that reflect that external reality; and the selection of newsmen and producers "who hold, or accept, values that are consistent with organizational needs" (Epstein, ibid, p43). These wider processes are mediated through "four critical demands (which) structure the scope and form of network news": 1. the budget (always at a minimum level and never adequate) 2. the maintenance of the networks 'audience flow' (it is assumed by the network executives that news programmes can never attract large audiences, but efforts have to be made to ensure that they don't lose audiences); 3. the news must at all times appear as a "national" news service so that it will satisfy affiliates; 4. the government regulations. Each of these four demands entails a series of decisions, each a logical follow-on from the initial demand-decision. For example, the demand to sustain 'audience flow' leads to an emphasis on 'visual stories', the use of familiar images, a focus on conflict (always
good for pulling in an audience), a general emphasis on action rather than
talking heads, the presentation of stories in a fictive form, with a beginning
a middle and an end. Epstein's overall conclusions about news portrayal by
television is broadly similar to the other authors cited and are worth
quoting at length:

"The main finding of this study is that the pictures of society that are shown on television as national news are largely - though not entirely - performed and shaped by organizational considerations. To maintain themselves in a competitive world, the networks impose a set of prior restraints, rules and conditions on the operations of their news divisions. Budgets are set for the production of news, time is scheduled for its presentation, and general policies are laid down concerning its content. To satisfy these requirements - and keep their jobs - news executives and producers formulate procedures, systems and policies intended to reduce the uncertainties of news to manageable proportions. The timing, length, content and cost of news thereby becomes predictable.

Since all the networks are in essentially the same business and compete for the same or similar advertisers, affiliates and audiences, under a single set of ground rules laid down by the government, the news product at each network is shaped by very similar requisites. The basic contours of network news can thus be at least partly explained in terms of the demands which the news organizations must meet in order to continue operating without crises or intervention from network executives." (Epstein, 1973, p258-9).

Network news in the United States is, then, encased within three structures:-

1. an economic
2. a political
3. a televisual.

The world 'out there' is refracted through these structures and becomes a
unique but distorted version of the 'true' picture. Epstein provides detail
and theoretical sophistication, a breadth of understanding and a clarity of
the interaction between the news process and the real world which is
refreshing when placed against the sparseness and simplicity of much of the
literature.¹ The main regret is that once again the analysis deals with news

¹ Compare Epstein with Small (1970), especially the description of the
coverage of Vietnam. The former is explanation, the latter largely self-
satisfied rhetoric.
and leaves untouched other forms of tv.

It is perhaps for this reason that one welcomes Muriel Cantor’s research on the television producer working in Hollywood. Cantor (1971, 1972) interviewed a number of producers working in Hollywood on various types of television programmes. She also spent periods of observation in the studios and sought to establish how producers

"select the content of their shows, how they perceive this selection as controlled and constrained by the various features of the television industry and film production, and how their personal values and reference groups relate to their selection of content." (Cantor, 1971, pix Preface).

Analysing the education, training, ambitions and aspirations of her sample of producers she detects three 'types': the film-maker, the writer-producer, the old-line producer, and seeks to explain their selection of material by analysis of their response to and interaction with significant others. Three reference groups are identified: craft ("aesthetic referees"), controllers of the medium ("network chiefs"), the viewing audience. The implication of her perspective is that the individual-creator (producer), with his own particular values and ideas, operates within and often conflicts with a structural position with its own values and ideas. While producers respond differentially to the various reference groups in their social world, in every case the primary fact of life was the need for an accommodation to the attitude of the Network, "The people who work in film television understand and in most cases generally accept network power and control" (Cantor, 1972). The Network is the primary audience. Aesthetic values, the viewing audience, personal values, all constitute secondary audiences. The creative process is bound by the motives and orientations of the master, the network, itself responding to a whole series of audiences (political, advertising, regulatory, etc.)

Baldwin and Lewis (1972) in their study of the making of television programmes with a heavily violent content pointed to the importance of the Network's assessment of audience taste, and to their concern with the possible
political implications of offending all, or part of, that audience,

"The character of television programmes is determined by the three networks' notions of what will appeal to large numbers of people, sell products or services for advertisers and not just jeopardize the valuable licence or the good will of affiliates by creating a negative audience response." (Baldwin and Lewis, p29).

The process is remarkably fickle, changing, barometer like, in response to perceptions of the public and political mood, from social concern stories, to violent westerns, to sci-fi, to pop music stories - wave after wave of product emerges to suit the Network idea of what will sell. Commercial and social criteria becomes vital in influencing particular, relatively short lived, genres.

Golding (1973) in his study of the "making of another television series" details in a similar fashion the significance of economic and organizational structures for the programme maker. The study was conducted at Granada Television, one of the independent commercial stations serving the NW part of England. The particular programme in question involved a panel of 100 'ordinary' viewers who were allowed to state their opinions and generally discuss the television fayre presented by broadcasting organizations. The origins of the programme, he argues, are rooted in the long tradition at Granada which posits the need for 'public interest broadcasting'. At the same time the programme was also partly a response to 'outside' demands for more public control of television. Thus as Golding observes the programme's 'format and ethos' of internal derivation (i.e. the Granada tradition) and the subject matter was of external origin (i.e. the debate about broadcasting). Having been born in this manner the programme and its producers were presented with three main goals; economic, the need to sustain a viewing audience and to obtain Network (i.e. nationwide) showing; professional, the desire to make 'good' television; organizational, the need to sustain an overall successful television company and to fit individual production into the "overall strategy which will obviously control the costing, personnel policy, and general treatment of any single production." What Golring suggests is that the professional and
organizational goals, amplifying as they were the wider economic goal, 'swamped' the original intention of the programme makers. The programme was concerned within an organizational structure which itself was encased within political and economic structures which provided the ultimate purpose and direction.

Each of these works while pointing in similar directions possess varying degrees of detail - Baldwin and Lewis mainly employing interview material, as does Cantor, Golding using data somewhat limited but nevertheless interesting, drawn from interview and observation.

Elliott (1972) in his case study of the making of a television series on the 'Nature of Prejudice' used data drawn from a lengthy period of observation. His declared aim was to employ a framework of analysis drawn from a fusion of elements of the sociology of organization and the sociology of art.¹ Such a theoretical premise rests on the observation that 'television' is partly a technical process, partly a 'creative' process - the emergence of ideas is from within a technosstructure. What Elliott seeks to establish the "communicator" (substitute "artist") in a series of social and cultural contexts and to detail the consequences of those contexts for what appears on the screen as a finished programme. Definitions of formal roles, distinctions between "mechanistic" and "organic" systems of management,² discussion of the social contexts - culture, medium, organization - and the different rewards and resources utilised, the implications of the Marxist theory of art - all these are the blocks upon which Elliott seeks to build his explanation.

The substance of the work is a detailed catalogue of processes and

1. Much of the theoretical background to this work was carried out in a series of papers prepared with Chaney: Elliott and Chaney, 1967, 1968, a version of which is contained in Chaney (1972, chapter 8).
details of programme making. Programmes, he argues, emerge from a series of 'chains' each implying enforced limitations on programme making. Three types of chains are identified: subject, presentation and contact. For example, the subject chain includes all those mechanisms which generate, but ultimately bind, the subject matter/programmes - an important one being in the programmes studied by Elliott, the producers own beliefs about prejudice - themselves rooted in his personal reading and experience. In this sense then ideas for programmes don't emerge in any rational manner but rather through the accumulation of personal contacts and experiences, the whole process being highly subjective, "To be selected material must usually meet the producer's expectations." (Elliott, 1972, p59). Material from the Black Power movement was not included because it failed to meet the producer's expectations that their utterances would be the 'other side of the penny' i.e. that they would be as prejudiced as white racialists.

In the context of this particular programme series, then, a number of factors were operating. There was the subjective process by which decisions were made about the subject matter and the limited range of sources who were to be 'allowed' to contribute. There was a dependence on a particular style of presentation, i.e. largely studio based discussion, because the budget did not run to the use of a lot of films. Elliott also describes a dependence on the usual criteria of visual attractiveness and articulacy for participants, balance, representation, through the person of the chairman, of a common sense position, and an emphasis in what film there was, of the more striking shots, "The film sequence was intended to attract the viewers' attention, so (the producer) instructed the film editor to pick out scenes of action and violence that would make an arresting sequence." (Elliott, 1972, p72).

All these factors tended to limit the possible discussion of prejudice and, when placed in the context of overall television output "limit the number of views of the world available in society." (Elliott, 1972, p62):

"The co-operative and collaborative enterprise of production and the need to use outside sources and intermediaries make it difficult to adapt a definition of a problem varying widely from
the common beliefs in society shared by all those involved in the process. Rather it seems likely that there will be an unavoidable tendency to follow such beliefs. Similarly, the way in which the three contact mechanisms generate particular types of programme content and the general stress placed on personal relationships seems to have the latent consequences that programme content will develop within frameworks of meaning widely shared and available, which form the most important part of a distinctively media culture." (Elliott, 1972, p62).

Once again, then, we see a description of the internal operations, and consequences of those operations for programme making. It is a description of a not wholly closed system, but one characterized by a dominant universe of discourse, a body of shared beliefs, which only permits 'likeminded men' into its cloistered walls. It is this internal reality which, in the description offered here, eventually swamped the initial intent of the programme makers:

"There is an important tendency for television to be a reflective medium, sampling the range of conventional wisdom available in society on any topic and then relaying it back to society in programme form." (Elliott, 1972, p61).

Elliott's work led him to question the dominant model of communication in which information is seen to flow from a production unit to the audience which then feeds back its response to that information. Elliott sees the process as quite different, as one in which the communicator is a link or a broker between the society-as-source and the source-as-audience for the product arising from this source. The tendency therefore, is for a recycling of conventional wisdom to the extent that the description 'communication' no longer applies and indeed becomes paradoxical:

"It may seem paradoxical to argue that the dominant means of communication in society is tending more and more to be controlled and operated by people who have nothing to say, or if they have cannot use the media to say it. It does suggest, however, that the mass media illustrate the contradictions rather than the conspiracies of capitalist society." (Elliott, 1972, p166).

Harsh words and one which no doubt caused consternation among sections of the broadcasting elite. There are, however, several problems with Elliott's work. Despite the original intent and the somewhat radical conclusion there is ultimately a failure to 'situate' the process of programme production in its wider social and political context. This wider sphere is hinted at,
implied but never confronted. Grace Wyndham suggested in a review of Elliott's book that his position within the production setting combined with a general non-understanding of the overall setting of the programme could not possibly generate the right kind of information. ¹ Elliott, she would argue, has failed to see the wood for the trees - Goldie's desire to emphasise the broad sweep of 'club' activities, and the consequences of her own not inconsiderable role in the history of broadcasting is understandable and contains more than a grain of truth. The problem is of course that the participant observer unless he were to spend a great deal of time and have unlimited access to all aspects of the production will find it difficult to obtain this information. Clearly what we require is research with the conceptual sophistication of Elliott, but also embodying the experiences and stores of knowledge possessed by Goldie and just as clearly we are not going to get such a person. The problem then is one of scope and methodology. Elliott is aware of this but was bound by the initial conception of providing an account of the making of one particular television programme. Thus constituted he provided some important insights for the sociology of organization aspects of his study, but few for the sociology of culture aspects.

There is a problem also at the theoretical level with what might be termed "Elliott's paradox" that mass communication may no longer be described as communication if this is defined as 'the transfer of ordered meaning'. The model proposed, in opposition to conventional descriptions, is one of society-as-source and society-as-audience with the communicator acting as 'broker' - the whole process being looked into 'conventional' modes of reality. Such a model, however, ignores certain questions about the structure of power and influence within 'the society as source', the implicit and explicit restrictions on access, the differential potential for influence, the overtly political structures that surround broadcasting. There

¹. A review by Grace Wyndham Goldie (1972) of Elliott.
is also not one but a multiple of 'audiences' for television, again reflecting patterns of power and influence. In some sense, as we have seen in works cited earlier, there are quite explicit audiences, 'significant others' who provide the principal points of reference for programme makers. It is not that Elliott fails to mention these - "Television selects those who will be presented according to the structure of power, authority and knowledge existing in society." (Elliott, 1972, p105). What he fails to do is to provide detailed explanation of them. At the same time the transmission of 'conventional' views of the world may have an important role to play in the legitimation of a political and social order.

It is this "external reality" which most of the literature described here largely ignores. Of course media sociology must deal with internal processes, though it is perhaps important to reaffirm a comment of Elliott and Chaney. "The phenomena we are interested in is an organization's product and not, as is usual, the structure itself." (1967, p6). Any understanding of the product will depend on not only detailing the internal, organization rooted processes, but also a description of the external forces which shape and influence programme making.

Institutional Determinants 2: External Power and Internal Process

In the introduction chapter it was argued that the operation of external forces or decision-making and operations within the production process was often asserted but rarely shown. That descriptions of the influence of political and economic elites were filled more with rhetoric than empirically based argument does not obviate the possibility that the external political and economic realities are of significance for the production process. In fact it would be ludicrously short-sighted to suggest that they are not important at some point, and in some way. What we need to know is at what points and in what ways.

Several writers have discussed wider dimensions of the television process detailing in particular the impact of the state elite on the broadcasting
elite. Much of the material is journalistic in nature bothering little with
the explicit construction and testing of hypotheses, or the problem of the
nature of evidence. Nevertheless indicators have been established from these
works and much useful evidence has emerged.

Smith (1973) draws on various secondary sources plus his own experience
in the BBC to argue a case about the relationship between the broadcaster and
the State. In Britain Smith argues broadcasting is tightly controlled:

"Unlike the cinema, the theatre and the record industry, the
content-control of broadcasting is ultimately in the same hands
of those which control the physical means of distributing the
message. In public corporation or private enterprise the
licence ultimately depends upon government, which owns the
initial wavelength, policies the message and presents the
broadcasting institution, therefore, with a kind of perma-

nent emergency." (Smith, 1973, p56).

We have, in the words of Gerald Beadle, "two state-owned networks."¹ The
central equation at the heart of this is that 'the masses are malleable,
broadcasting if allowed, possesses the capacity to influence them, therefore
broadcasting must be controlled'. Thus broadcasting is constantly
threatened, constantly being scrutinized, constantly the butt of powerful
systems of control "... periods of scrutiny have a considerably sobering
effect on all the internal decision making over programmes." (Smith, 1973,
p58). Twelve periods of scrutiny are identified by Smith - 'external decision
making' which potentially threatened the "vital interests" of broadcasting.

Coupled with the periodic rows and controversies, from the General Strike
and Vernon Bartlett's controversial broadcast on the League of Nations in
February 1932, up to more recent rows over satire and Yesterday's Men. "The
entire history of broadcasting is a history of these crises..." (Smith, 1973,
p59), "the central dialogue in the life of broadcasting is a dialogue with
the state". Smith's message is further detailed in a paper he presented at
a symposium on broadcasting in Manchester in 1972. Broadcasting organizations,
he states, "have their own vital needs, not to obey a single government, but

¹ Quoted in Smith (1973), p57.
to survive a succession of governments. They accumulate responses to their struggle for survival. The pressures which are exerted within the institutions of broadcasting directly on the broadcasters are ... closely related to the pressures exerted from the outside on that organization". He continues,

"My central contention is that the external needs of the broadcasting organisation become internalised in the minds of the producers and reporters inside, as well as the controllers and senior officials ... The office politics of such a body is the translation into day to day terms of the larger survival struggle of the whole institution."

(Smith, 1972, p141).

Through the process of 'referral upwards' - Smith declares in a tone of surprise "... the BBC works more or less exactly as it says it does ..." (Smith, 1973, p142) - and from success or rebuff in departmental meetings the individual producer gradually 'learns', comes to understand, the mood of the organization, which reflects the external 'politics' of the organizations standing in society. The process of learning becomes imperceptible, and so while editorial decisions appear as autonomous actions, in 'reality' they follow the transmission of a series of pressures from outside the organization, through the organizational hierarchy to the individual producer.

This is of course, a familiar description, and one that has received a good deal of airing in the studies already cited. His work, however, operates at a level of abstraction, implying experience and evidence (Smith was after all a very senior producer in the BBC) but rarely detailing specific information on the processes he describes. Because of this he fails to show how the "office politics" reflect "the larger survival struggle", and why one should not just regard them as an example of the internal politics of any organization. More adequate in the sense that they employ the same 'theory' as Smith, but rooted in detailed evidence are two papers by Kumar (1974) and Donnellan (1972).

Drawing on his own work as a documentary producer in the BBC, Donnellan argues, somewhat persuasively, that while there have always been pressures operating on the producer of programmes, the type of pressure has changed
drastically. In the decades of broadcasting prior to the 1960's pressures were toward "social and intellectual conformity", so that one became 'a BBC man', by understanding the organizational mood, of what was right and proper, and of what was not appropriate material to broadcast. Decision making was personal and relatively informal, consisting of a dialogue between members of the same 'club'. By the 1960's the emergence of ITV, increasing financial stringency, logistic and expansionist pressures transformed the informal mood of the club into an impersonal command structure - "Management was discipline" (Donnellan, 1972, p154). External exigencies are transformed into internal pressure - Donnellan's description of this is worth quoting at length:

"This changing style of relationship between Producers and Management, this increasing sense of distance, of detachment - was brought home to me during a series of films, produced in 1970 and transmitted, after considerable discussion, in 1971, called Where Do I Stand? - an ironic inquiry, since I was told very categorically where I stood before it was over! These ... were about working people and I had hoped to make a couple of dozen of them as they were cheap and simple. Technicians had been involved in the discussions about format and on location the camera crew were invited to join in the questioning of the chosen subjects. Afterwards this was the only specific criticism that was made - and that this freedom constituted an improper use of a crew.

The first three programmes were with a Communist miner-worker, who described his revolutionary philosophy; a game-keeper, who caught rabbits and a West Indian railway worker who attacked the Union. Two more were subsequently made - an Irish gypsy and a woman shop-steward. These programmes were a very serious attempt to reflect, openly and without filters, the views of ordinary people; to expose ideas from a quarter not usually well represented on Television - and yet comprising some 70% of the viewers. As such of course the films were biased, not politically I mean, but in favour of the person who was being interviewed. We only did 5 but these were presumably regarded as too left wing; had we done the full two dozen I would have included a National Front supporter too.

No one has told me what was supposed to be wrong with the programme series which, considering its late and irregular placing, got an unusual amount of press comment. I just found I was 'persona non grata' and was subsequently removed from production on BBC 1 and forbidden to make 'socially aware' documentaries." (Donnellan, 1972, p154-5).
Kumar (1974) also draws on personal experience, this time a year spent as a radio producer. His analysis is reminiscent of Smith (1973) and indeed gives all the impressions of having been influenced by the latter writer. Kumar's argument is that the BBC occupies a central place in the national culture and is constantly required to sustain that position. It is, in effect, constantly engaged in 'strategies of survival'. The BBC is torn between its relationship with the State and its commitment a concept of independent broadcasting, the latter implying its pursuit of all areas where its creative personnel might lead, the former implying that this pursuit might ultimately lead to a conflict with the interests and needs of the State. Each strategy is geared to the maintenance of a modus vivendi, the treading of a finely charted line between the conflicting interests. One central strategy is the employment of 'professional broadcasters' experienced in the ways and needs of the organization, who can control, for example, any interview or studio situation, who have the added benefit of being a prime agent for the socialisation of new producers and who therefore provide the organisation with a crucial control mechanism. Combined with the control of the technology, the BBC can permit entry to the ether of many and varied groups and individuals, losing none of its control of the situation and retaining its own relative autonomy. Faced with a society of more and more sectional interest - that is, where a consensus on moral and political questions no longer exists - such control processes become ever more important. They are particularly important in sustaining both the 'institutional mythology' - 'Well we have had Tariq Ali on many times' - at the same time as not infringing the sanctity of the dominant political code - 'Yes, but he was interviewed by Robin Day'.

A similar view was put forward by Hood (1972) in his description of the 'politics of television' in Britain. The television organisations, he argues, are bound by a series of controls - drafted within the legislation which underpins broadcasting, and also contained within the economic control the government has over broadcasting - that effectively tie the organisations to
the socially established culture, a middle class, middle ground domain. Where the basic ground rules of this consensual position are broken there is activated both a process of internal self-regulation and external pressure. This latter pressure derives from established individuals, the advisory councils, letters, phone calls, the press, government departments, organizations of the establishment (police, CHI, professional groups, armed forces, the Churches) and most importantly the political parties. The result is that "The pressure the broadcasting organizations have to deal with are therefore frequent and effective." As a direct consequence of these various pressures, Hood argues, access to the media of mass communication, of which tv is the most potent, is structured within 'legitimate' areas - groups and individuals outside this area being effectively denied an expression of their views.

The problem of course for the broadcasting organizations - and this is the main conclusion of Smith, Hood and Kumar - is, in relation do they stand to a situation in which the moral and political consensus is challenged by increasingly powerful and dissident groups. The school of thought represented here has the organizations moving with the representatives of the dominant political groups - Hood's 'ruling classes' - and against those oppositional forces which emerge in the process of change. Hood has an interesting paragraph or two on the fate of Hugh Greene - a thesis largely supported by other writers and by Greene himself - which throws light on this line of thought (his is not really an argument drawing on extensive evidence, but rather an assertion). He concludes:

"... the political intervention which ended the Greene regime and the appointment of an ex-Cabinet Minister as chairman of the BBC can be taken as a sign of the politician's displeasure. The Corporation - like the ITA - runs least risk of annoying politicians when it interprets impartiality to be the duty to reflect the middle of the road consensus in political matters which is spamed by the two party system and acceptable to the whips on either side. Greene's mistake was to believe in the ideology of the BBC and to act as if it were a true reflection of the place and power of the BBC in the political and social structure of this country." (Hood, 1972, p17).
There is here a subtle implication that those who remained within the BBC did not 'believe in the ideology' of the organization, which is perhaps in contradiction with the assertion that "The narrow social range from which the staff of television organizations are drawn and the immense pressures in the organisation - among them are job security, team spirit, indoctrination with the ethos of the working group - are sufficient to ensure that the ground rules of consensus politics are not broken". (Hood, 1972, p19). The whole question of why the 'Greene regime' ended provides a fascinating case study of the 'politics of television' and as such is treated at length later in the thesis. It throws into sharp relief the kind of processes that operate on and within broadcasting, and that therefore ultimately shape media material. There is plenty of other evidence of the kinds of external pressures which operate on broadcasting - notably two books by American journalists Friendly (1967) and MacNeil (1968). The difficulties of the external constraints on broadcasting were indicated in the 'troubled reflections' of one of Britain's leading broadcasters Robin Day (1970) who pointed to the financial dependence of broadcasting on both government and commercial interests.

All these latter works are, whatever their merits, essentially anecdotal, and while they provide some interesting and potentially useful insights, it is difficult to see how one might establish an adequate theory on such a flimsy base. For every assertion of the significance of external pressure that can be detailed, a counter denial can be produced - indeed every public assertion by leading broadcasting personnel is such a denial. For example, Lamb (1974) describes in some detail the BBC's resistance to government pressure. It is no good simply to describe these as 'ideology', thought distorted by interest. One must demonstrate both the interest and the distortion, and demonstrate the generalizability of such findings.¹

¹ The methods adopted by Elliott (1972) and Burns (1963) are for example more adequate in this sense than the descriptive approach of Smith (1973) and Hood (1972), useful though these are.
Otherwise there is no way of distinguishing the actual merits of Hood's description of Greene's removal and that implied in Wilson's account of the appointment of Lord Hill (1974). 2

Cultural Determinants

There is a clear need to discuss the operation of cognitive and intellectual structures in influencing the making of television, since a significant body of opinion holds that the operations of media institutions are heavily influenced by the intellectual dispositions of those involved in programme production. The previous section dealt with the literature on institutional processes and mass media production, much of which is concerned to make the point that the product - be it a television programme or a newspaper - is a consequence of various organizational processes and external constraints and not the inclinations and beliefs of particular individuals. It was implied that even though, for example, the publisher of a particular newspaper could exercise and enforce his own particular viewpoints, this was not an alternative open to the senior personnel in British broadcasting where the possibility of certain ideas dominating or being imposed is expressly denied and forbidden.

One needs to consider then the intellectual world of broadcasting: do most media personnel hold a similar world view or a series of world views, or 'meaning systems' (Parkin, 1972), and if so where do these originate, and to what other systems do they correspond?

The Intellectual Framework of Broadcasting

"... programmes gave the overall impression of being slightly tilted toward anti-capitalist economics, towards cultural

2. More recent accounts (Lusty, 1975; Hill, 1974) of this provide much new information and cast doubts on the Hood thesis. Particularly interesting is the argument that Lord Hill was not Wilson's first choice (Lusty, 1975).
radicalism, towards the political left …"¹

"An article attacking the BBC for its alleged anti-Labour bias during the election has been sent to the New Statesman by Joe Haines, Harold Wilson's personal press officer. The tone of the piece is variously described as 'petty' or 'embittered'. Inevitably it is being regarded as reflecting Wilson's own attitudes."²

Taken together these two quotes would seem to entail a good deal of incompatibility. It is possible of course that at different times the broadcast media have been biased against left and right. This is not the concern here however, but what is of concern here is the general tone and implication contained within not only these two quotes but a multitude of similar ones that have always characterized public discussion of the media. The implicit, and often explicit, argument is that the media are intentionally biased. One is even tempted to say that this is currently the dominant explanation of media process. In a series of interviews with broadcasters (Bakewell and Garnham, 1970) and in various other pieces there was a good deal of consensus among them that the general ideological bent of production personnel involved in political broadcasting is liberal left:

"You tend to find that television does accumulate around it left-of-centre people ... the whole direction of television is left of centre." (Smith, Bakewell and Garnham, 1970, p166).

"I think it is probably true to say that the vast proportion of producers and directors are of a fairly left wing persuasion." (Connell, ibid, p169).

"Nearly all of them (production staff) are (liberal humanist). You can practically always assume that they will think A is a good man and B is a bad man, that this is the right course, and this is the wrong course and this is enlightenment and this is obscurantism ... their view of life is this liberal humanist view." (Huggeridge, ibid, p164-5).

"There is (in the BBC) a kind of consensus, a pool of shared social and political assumptions, which on many subjects - abortion, divorce, censorship, drugs, immigration, promiscuity, capital punishment, penal policy, education and so on, are at the best partisan opinions and at the worst the opinion of a small educated middle class and left wing minority." (Jay, Sunday Times, 19.11.72).

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¹ Report of speech by Eldon Griffiths, Tory MP, 2.4.70.
² Newspaper report, 2.8.70.
Production personnel are liberal, middle class intellectuals." (Tyrell, 1972).

The point behind the point made by these numerous distinguished broadcasters is that this liberal-left hegemony within television generally, and within the BBC in particular, influences the kind of programmes made available and therefore supports one side of the argument that television is biased. The literature on broadcasting is full of the details of political battles between broadcaster and broadcaster, broadcaster and politician. The detail though is usually at the level of anecdote, often amusing, occasionally insightful, but rarely providing the basis for a generalization to a wider level of argument and meaning. Any review of the area from the perspective of 'how far are belief-structures influential?' quickly draws out the complexity of the problem, immediately destroying the simple notion that overt political bias is the explanation. There are clearly different levels to the belief structures, differentially important in contrasting situations, each derived from different processes. Much of the writing in this area moves between descriptions of 'professional ideologies' of broadcasters, values drawn from the very heart of their occupation, and descriptions of the political ideologies of broadcasters, drawn from their particular life histories. In looking at the role of belief structures in broadcasting one is, then, tapping the intellectual framework of the broadcaster's occupational being and his social being.

The internal discourse of broadcasters, and their public exposition of that discourse through pamphlet and talk is characterized by a number of recurrent themes and concepts. It is perhaps useful to describe this as the 'internal dimension' to broadcasting's belief structures, and comprises the principal components of the professional ideology of broadcasting.

If to be a professional is to possess qualification through training and experience, and to hold consideration for the needs of a client and the
quality of work (notably what one's peers think of it) then broadcasters are indeed professionals (Burns, 1963). As with all professional groups specific beliefs have arisen which constitute at least a significant proportion of this group's world view. Such bodies of belief emerge as a response to pressures by the group to explain its role and purpose in society; or by the group's attempt to sustain a self-identity in their own, and the world's eyes. The particular ideologies of broadcasting emerged, I think we can see, from a number of relationships. There was a close identity with the purpose and role of the established press and thus with the ideology of the press. Aspects of the ideology were imposed by outside bodies either in the constitutional provisions which underpinned the broadcasting organisations or in tacit agreements between them and successive governments. The concepts which have emerged through these processes can be described as a commitment to the idea that the broadcasting organizations must provide a public service, that it must inform, educate and entertain, that it must at all times be objective, impartial, balanced but always responsible. At the same time it had to be recognized that the programme maker was essentially a creative individual. Along with this emerged two opposed views of the purpose of broadcasting, which largely but not absolutely coincided with the split between the BBC and ITV. One might be described as the BBC 'ethos' with its strong overtones of a Reithian legacy - paternal, only grudgingly entertaining more populist notions; the other can best be termed the commercial ethic, epitomised by the life and times of Sir Lew Grade. To further complicate matters, there is also the body of beliefs, varying from broadcaster to broadcaster, drawn from the wider political culture.

Muriel Cantor in her major study of producers in Hollywood found that a

1. Something of the substance of this can be gathered from his response to the moral laxities of his unfortunate subordinates. When for example Reith heard that one of his employees, Peter Eckersley, was obtaining a divorce, he called him into his office and declared: "My son, you have strayed from the paths of righteousness. Our ways must part for ever. You are dismissed." (Boyle, 1972).
commitment to professional norms varied between her sample of producers, according to education, training, ambitions and aspirations. One of the concepts mentioned above, creativity, was particularly important in the Cantor study since creativity was a key norm for members of her sample. Unfortunately for the creative group of which the producer is the focus (writers, directors, actors, etc.) the values and ideas of the primary audience, the Network, tended to clash with the values and ideas of the creative group, and in the final analysis to be over-ridden by the Network.

The values which tended to dominate, contrary to the norms of the profession, were those of the Network rather than the individual communicator. The propensity for the individual producer to conflict with the Network increased in proportion to his identification with the central norms of his profession, but there was little evidence that these professional norms influence to any extent the final products. The producers own ideas for subject matter for the programme counted for little if they did not accord with the ideas of Network executives, and those were the values and ideas of a commercial enterprise which responded rapidly to the winds of social change and opinion - "Violence today, sex tomorrow, sci-fi the day after."

The political orientations of the producers varied from conservative to liberal, though she produced no evidence of a correlation between their "expressed political viewpoints and their relations with the networks" (Cantor, 1971, p139). In other words their overt political inclinations did not play a particularly significant part in the day-to-day activity of the producers. Again the demands of the Network chiefs were of paramount importance. The theme which Cantor develops is a familiar one in other branches of sociology and literature, that of the creative individual confronted and frustrated by the stark reality of all powerful bureaucracy. The conflict in the situations studied by Cantor varied along with the types of occupational identity (according to background and training) that the individual producers possessed. The sense of occupational identity seemed to also determine the perspectives they had on the role of the Network, their
own role, their perception of the audience: thus, the type of producer she describes as the 'film-maker' has least trouble over political attitudes since they have a rather instrumental view of their role, aiming ultimately to use it as a stepping stone to the 'big screen'.

Cantor's is an interesting study with which to begin this section for a number of reasons. She has produced one of the few full treatments of the subject available to use but more important she displays quite clearly the limited role of professional and overt political ideologies in determining the content of television programmes. Of paramount importance is the wider reality of the organization and then the social, political and economic structures of American society. The whole drift of the argument belies the proposition that the making of television programmes is strongly influenced by the personal dispositions of communicators.

The difficulty with which the individual producer can impose his own beliefs was detailed by Epstein (1973). He takes up Agnew's speech referred to earlier in this thesis and argues:

"In assuming (...) that a handful of men in each network news organization are 'free' to pick and choose the news as they see fit, this analysis tends to neglect seriously a number of built-in constraints which over the course of time may severely limit and shape the discretion of individuals in gathering, selecting and presenting news." (Epstein, 1973, p8).

The argument that what appears on the screen relates to the values of those responsible for putting it there, assumes according to Epstein, that newsmen have a stable set of values or ideologies which they bring to the news organization. It ignores the possibility that opinions derive from the organization. He argues that not only do ideas also flow from the organization to the newsmen (often quite intentionally, "they recruit or inculcate producers with the 'right' outlook and values" (p229)), but also a number of factors limit the possibility of particular beliefs dominating: the screening out of ideologues by the organization during recruiting, the group nature of production, where a series of individuals of differing views effectively control each other, and the imposition of strict guidelines and rules. There
is also the incompatibility with the professional ethic of any newsman imposing his own views on the broadcast product: "The presumption at CBS was that the qualities of being 'committed', 'politically involved', a 'true believer', 'dogmatic' or an 'advocate' were mutually exclusive with those of a 'professional objective newsman'" (Epstein, 1973, p206-7). Epstein did observe a strong attachment to the professional code of the newsman, and his perception of the elements to this professional code emerged during discussion with newsmen about the nature of news. To Epstein's contention that news is a derivative of organizational processes newsmen asserted that it was not, that it was fixed by an external reality. They argued that news "mirrored reality"; that they were professionals anyhow who made:

"decisions about news stories independent of the needs, expectations and hierarchy of the organizations for which they work." (Epstein, 1973, p25).

The analogy most often drawn by the newsmen was with doctors and scientists "who take their values from the standard and code of their profession" (p25). As Epstein points out at great length, such a view is essentially fiction since the most important values were drawn from the organization. They professed a system of news values for making decisions about programme content, a basic and familiar one being the 'unexpected event'. In fact, as Epstein shows, most news items were anticipated and known about in advance for the very good reason that otherwise it proved difficult to get crews to the scene of the event. There was consequently a tendency to focus on "routinized events" such as press conferences, Senate hearings, speeches by important news makers etc. What is interesting then is that the overt belief-structures of newsmen are essentially fiction and that "constructs such as the 'mirror of society', 'autonomous professional' or 'news consensus' have only limited power in explaining the selection of network news" (Epstein, 1973, p41). More important than the professional and political ideologies of individual newsmen was the reflection through the organization of wider economic and political realities. Particular beliefs do not register very high in Epstein's description of causality in the news production process.
Gelles (1972) concludes, with Epstein, that 'bias' and 'distortion' in
the media (what he refers to as the 'Agnew theory') do indeed occur but not
because of the political disposition of broadcasters, but because of inherent
problems of handling and operating the medium:

"The real distortion is that, in striving to present visually
exciting news, the newsmen can use his technological knowledge,
skills and the medium itself to create and present unreal
events. The result of this is that the viewer is presented
with stories defined as news, and which look like news. The
event actually occurred, it is the film which is fake.
Therefore the viewer receives an improvised version of an
actual event." (Gelles, 1972).

While it is inevitable that "personal perceptions, values, cognitions etc.,
are both a part of the selection (of news material) and are communicated
in the presentation of the news ..." (Gelles, 1972), the dominant factor was
the organizational requirement for a particular type of programme and not
communicators' belief structures.

Sigelman's view (1973) was that there is a basic compatibility between
the belief-structures of the media institutions hierarchy and the ordinary
reporter. This was important in the sense that it allowed the maintenance of
a distinct editorial and political leaning, without the apparent transgression
of the norms of the profession. Again the dynamic came not from intellectual
but from organizational processes in the sense that the recruitment,
socialization and working arrangements were geared to ensure an intellectual
compatibility between employer and employee. Beliefs here, then, are
important, not for creating a particular bias but for maintaining a bias.
Thus viewed, the canons of journalism - that "As a tribune of the people ...
the reporter is duty bound to present the public with a fair, disinterested
account of political happenings" (Sigelman, 1973) - become mere mythology,
since the ownership and the reporters function within a common framework of
beliefs. This is very important since previous descriptions have implied the
control of neutralising of inconsistent beliefs by the hierarchy. Here the
two are in fundamental agreement - the needs of both (one to sustain a
political line, the other to sustain the illusion of autonomy and independence)
are served. I shall return to this theme, arguing that to look at the
encompassing ideological frameworks is more useful in that it allows us to integrate the different levels of explanation of the roles of different types of belief structure.

In similar vein, Gieber and Johnson (1961) studied the reporters covering city hall in 'Ectoria', California, and concluded that while reporters and politicians aimed at different ends in the communication process, through the nature of their relationship they gradually became integrated and shared a common set of interests and a shared frame of reference.

Another perspective on the 'meaning' of belief systems is offered by Tuchman (1972, 1973a, 1973b). In an analysis, through participant observation, of news production in various media institutions in the United States, she was repeatedly confronted by statements from journalists about the 'objectivity' of their reporting. What she argues is that given potential pit-falls in their situation - attacks on their role and the physical difficulties of actually fulfilling that role - newsmen employ the concept to 'defend' themselves:

"Attacked for a controversial presentation of 'facts' newspapermen invoke their objectivity almost the way a Mediterranean peasant might wear a clove of garlic around the neck to ward off evil spirits." (Tuchman, 1972).

and "Processing news leaves no time for reflective epistemological examination. Nonetheless, the newsmen need some working notion of objectivity to minimize the risks imposed by deadlines, libel suits and superiors' reprimands." (Tuchman, 1972). Thus the newsmen operates in a potentially hostile environment but through the manipulation of the technology (1973a), and the form of presentation of material - verified facts, the presentation of conflicting possibilities, the presentation of supporting evidence, the judicious use of quotation marks, appropriate sequential structuring of information - and his working concepts, he is able to satisfy the criteria of 'objective reporting' and to ensure and stabilize his position. At the same time, she argues, there is always more work than can be coped with and so
the newsman employs a series of 'typifications' of news which enable him to 'control' the news input and thus meet the deadlines imposed by the newspaper cycle. Clearly though such typifications will involve covert assumptions and values which are treated as 'facts', which Tuchman describes as 'common sense' assumptions, but which I along with Gans would see as more appropriately described as "unquestioned cultural or political assumptions and values ..." (Gans, 1972). While Tuchman tells us much about the utilization of particular concepts, and provides highly imaginative descriptions of the details and meaning of, for example, news film, there is no sense of the wider structures - whether ideological or institutional within which all this occurs - and one is left with a version of the notion that a professions' ideology emerges from conflict. At the same time the implication that the organization of work feeds off these typifications seems somewhat to misconstrue their derivation.

MacDonald (1971) in a fairly lengthy discussion of the problem of establishing 'objectivity' within the media argues that one difficulty is presented by the role that a reporters 'personal history' will play in news decisions - and of "journalistic conventions", (i.e. news values), and organizational processes, and the importance of 'source control' - in creating a non-objective news report:

"When the reporter moves from the relatively uncomplicated, concrete, even physical phenomena into the realm of the abstract and the complex - i.e. studies, conferences, programmes, policies on urban affairs, race and ethnic relations, foreign and military affairs, economic and fiscal conditions, the administration of criminal justice, cultural ferment, youth unrest, population problems, environmental issues, politics and government -the value judgements he must make at every critical stage in his investigation and interpretation of the facts must reflect the values he already holds. Again, these values flow from his personal history. They are the products of his education, his religious experience, his childhood, family life, social and economic background, friendships and associations, national ties and cultures, as well as his emotional life and experiences, and his reason."
(MacDonald, 1971, p30-1).

1. See Molotch and Lester (1972) for a similar treatment.
This is a broad description, making the point that the process of socialization imbibes the reporter with a world view which 'seeps through' into his work. What one can see here is another version of the assertion that men function within an intellectual bracket, their view and interpretation of the world deriving from deeply rooted ideological structures. Perhaps the most sophisticated, and in a way successful exposition of this point is in the work of Stuart Hall (1971, 1972a, 1972b, 1973).

Hall 'situates' production within its institutional and cultural setting:

"The media ... while formally autonomous of government and the state, have always operated under guarantee of a sort transferred legitimacy from those institutions. Though exercising a wide measure of editorial autonomy, broadcasting must operate within the mode of reality of the state, and its outlook can't in the last instance transcend the ideological perspectives of society's dominant institutions." (Hall, 1972a).

The broadcasting institutions, in Hall's description are a constituent part of the 'ideological apparatus' available to ruling elites, persistently employed to legitimate a social order; the encoding of messages is structured by the existence of dominant meaning systems; the 'outsiders' who are granted access to the broadcasting facilities are derived from elite personnel and representatives of established groups, 'accredited spokesmen', with the consequence that the range of opinions made available is skewed, limited.

He states:

"...we may crudely characterize the communicative exchange as follows. The institutional structures of broadcasting, with their institutional structures and networks of production, their organised routines and technical infrastructures, are required to produce the programme. Production, here, initiates the message: in one sense, then the circuit begins here. Of course, the production process is framed throughout by meanings and ideas: knowledge-in-use concerning the routines of production, technical skills, professional ideologies, institutional knowledge, definitions and assumptions, assumptions about the audience, etc., from the passage of the programme through this production structure. However, though the production structures of television originate the television message, they do not constitute a closed system. They draw topics, treatments, agendas, events, personnel, images of the audience, 'definitions of the situation' from the wider socio-cultural and political system of which they are only a differentiated part." (Hall, 1973a, p2-3).
What then happens to the notion, central to the broadcaster's professional code, that they are autonomous operators in the social universe. One need not, Hall states, refer to the conspiracy theory or detail the iniquities of external pressures to deny the validity of this assertion, "Broadcasting accommodates itself to the power-ideology nexus by way of a number of crucial intervening concepts (Hall, 1972b) - notably 'balance, impartiality, objectivity, professionalism, consensus'. The precise nature of each of these concepts, their actual operation in practice, is such as to accommodate the professional rhetoric and the interests of the dominant social order:

"Despite the requirements of 'objectivity', 'balance', 'impartiality' etc. the media remain oriented within the framework of power; they are part of a political and social system which is 'structured in dominance'. Objectivity, impartiality and balance are exercised within a framework; and that framework is one which, overall, the powerful, not the powerless - elites, not audience - crucially define." (Hall, 1973b).

The process of subordination is complex and involves a "model of society and its major institutions as a 'complex formation structured in dominance' (Hall, 1973). Broadcasting then is in this view structured by a bracket of legitimacy based on the stability of existing political processes, political structures and political processes, political structures and political meanings. Its message-output reflects this, it pursues the details and operations of the political process but does so in a manner which reproduces both the conformities and contradictions of that process. If Hall has a central 'purpose' to his descriptions it is to point to the contradiction which lies at the heart of British broadcasting in an age of declining consensus:

"The media cannot long retain their credibility with the public without giving some access to witnesses and accounts which lie outside the consensus: it would not have dared to broadcast to the nation on the eve of the Newry march without at least one interview with Kevin Boyle, the Civil Rights organizer. But the moment it does so, it immediately endangers itself with its assailants, who attack broadcasting for unwittingly 'tipping the balance of public feeling' against the political order. It opens itself to the strategies of both sides which are struggling to win a hearing for their interpretation in order to redefine the situations in which they are acting in a more favourable way. This is broadcasting's vicious double-bind." (Hall, 1972b, p105).

Hall has been dealt with at length because of his relative theoretical
sophistication which has been influential in the formulation and construction of this thesis. His, however, is not a theory of media institutions; propositions about the implicit limitations of the concepts of objectivity etc., the role of elites, the ultimate subordination to the dominant political structure all need to be tested and argued out. There is an attractiveness to Hall's grasp and articulation of a broad theoretical sweep, but one is left demanding the evidence. As was pointed out in the Introductory chapter the lack of an empirical base leads to significant inaccuracies in his work.1

His description is somewhat akin to that of Sigelman (1973). Once more the professional ideology is seen to operate within a prescribed framework; the communicator can be objective, impartial, balanced - always taking into consideration of course the various other forces operating against these - but within agreed upon boundaries. Once those boundaries are crossed tension ensues and the latent 'meaning' and limitations of the concepts become manifest. Broadcasting, in this argument, operates within a normative consensus provided by "liberal class societies" and "the rule of law, constitutional legality, the two party parliamentary structure" (Hall, 1973, p16). The world which the media reflects is that of 'political elites' and while it may question and interject its own definitions of a situation these will be within a "sanctioned terrain" (Hall, 1973, p23). The broadcasting institutions are balanced only between different sections of the ruling elites; 'impartiality' and 'objectivity' are "operational fictions" (Hall, 1973b, p101), and so on. There is both reality and appearance, meaning and mystification in the ideological code of broadcasting. What Hall is saying is that of course the media are biased and distorted, but not at the level of choosing a

1. The treatment of the role of the external environment on decision making within the media has been patchy and flawed with either an empirical bitterness or an inability to move from the heights of abstraction to a solid empirical grounding. What is required is a method of tapping the relationship between the media and their external social, cultural and political environment which satisfies both the criteria of historical veracity and empirical validity.
Labour or Conservative point of view, rather at a more global level of operating within, and effectively supporting, a liberal-democratic world view against all others.

Warner (1969) on his study of network news 'gatekeepers' in the United States, observed that their idea of balance was more an "equilibration of political forces which could make their power felt by the members of a mass media organization" than a notion of "ideology from objectivity" (Warner, 1969, p177).

(1969)

Carey/also points to the historical incongruity of the present day notion of 'objective reporting', Born in an age of order (he claims) the concept no longer fits with an age of declining consensus, and in its efforts to accommodate itself to the external situation it produces a falsely-ordered, devitalised view of the social process. Donnellan (1972) a broadcaster himself feels the application of balanced, objective reporting is bleeding out truth and enforcing an unfortunate distance between the communicator and such disasters as, and the example is his, Aberfan.¹

As was stated in the previous section there is some evidence that on provincial newspapers the publisher will tend to influence reporting and thus the paper could be said to be biased. Gerbner (1964) has stated that "under conditions of ideological plurality, there is no fundamentally non-ideological, apolitical, non-partisan news gathering and reporting system.", a conclusion based on analysis of the coverage of the same law case by papers of a different political colouration. The deep seated nature of ideological concepts was pointed to by Hartzmann and Husband (1973) who argued that coverage of race in Britain is actively racist partly because of the role of

¹ An interesting development in the field of print journalism is (Wolfe (1973)) "the new journalism". Though Wolfe argues that this is not to be confused with "advocacy" there is a clear commitment in, say, the work of Norman Mailer which makes no pretence to more traditional genres of 'objective' reporting.
particular news values (an emphasis on the negative, violent aspects of race) but also because of the symbols employed derive from a culture which has at the core of its dominant ideology racist concepts. There is obviously by no means total ideological hegemony, and one or two experimental studies have thrown light on the results of what might be termed "ideological conflict". Carter (1959) took samples of student journalists at southern and northern universities in the US and asked them to write crime stories in some of which the suspect was a negro. In all cases, Carter claims, stories with the negro suspect had a more lenient evaluation of the guilt of the suspect. Kerrick et al (1964) found that editorial writers who disagreed with newspaper policy were more likely to slant their articles towards that policy than writers who agreed with the policy.

Gans (1971) describes the various criteria which newsmen employ to select news for their programme (or their paper/magazine since he sees a basic similarity in the various form of media) and conclude that while newsmen do not "apply political values to the selection of stories" (p95) consciously, political values do enter. They enter because "the professional norms of journalism are in part political; the emphasis given to the activities of government and to those who upset the established social order puts a political cast on almost all news"; and also because "the newsmen is ... a member of his culture" (p95). By way of example, he cites the post-Tet-offensive treatment of the Vietnam War by American newsmen. They began to emphasize the horrors of the war and in doing so expressed a changing mood towards the war felt by sections of the American population. His broad conclusion is that the tv news tends to reflect the values of the American middle class, a position which rests on the perhaps tenuous assumption that this group does have a homogeneous world view.

In his study of Wisconsin telegraph editors Gieber (1956) observed that his sample did not have a clearly articulated system of news values, nor did they, on the whole, find the opportunity to insert their own political attitudes into copy, though they were aware of, and responsive to, the
particular political inclinations of the publisher. In another study on the attitudes of reporters covering educational matters, Gieber (1963) found that reporters in fact operated a double value system. He argues that the reporter operates within two distinct frames of reference: one, enclosing his professional self, and emphasizing the negative and conflictual aspects of education news, the other, enclosing his private self, emphasizing the positive contribution of education to society. It is an interesting proposition, then, that communicators are able to divide their intellectual world so that one aspect does not intrude on others. Such a view would go some way to explaining another means by which reporters who, while clearly holding opinions on the subject they are writing about and who possess the elements of a political ideology, are able to employ a completely different set of values.

Lang and Lang (1968) show clearly from their study of newsmen that these thought in terms of a professional code and particularly emphasized that their function was to "report the news and its background" (Lang and Lang, 1968, p153). It would be difficult, however, for any individual to introduce an element of bias since whatever leeway individuals have in using the technology and resources at their command, it must be exercised within the framework of an overall policy set by the organization. Thus, if the individual communicator does have an influence on what is disseminated it is through their ability to influence the organization. There was nevertheless a strong commitment to the notions of objectivity, but also an equally strong acceptance of the difficulties presented by the nature of the medium.

So far this discussion has been about two particular 'types' of belief: that structure of beliefs which relates to the occupational activities of communicators; and that structure of ideas which the communicator possesses through belonging to one culture rather than another. I have tried to comb the literature to see what we already know about this area. There is, however, a third structure which needs to be considered, a structure which in
a sense is particular to British broadcasting; it is of course what has come to be known as **BBC culture** or **ethos**.

In his book on *Corporation Man* Antony Jay has an interesting piece on what he describes as the 'folk-wisdom possessed by groups or organisations.' It is of particular interest to us here because Jay was, before writing the book, a senior television producer in the BBC and latterly a senior executive with the Corporation. His description would seem to reflect a view often presented of the 'culture of the BBC' and its consequences for that organisations activities, even though Jay is ostensibly talking very generally. His argument is that men, and particularly those who would survive and prosper, operate in 'ten-groups' and as a spin-off from the collective experience emerges a significant body of belief which informs all future activity:

"There is another aspect to decision-taking, which is nothing like so emotionally charged but still significant: the post mortem, the reviewing of the decision in the light of its result - drawing conclusions, learning lessons, building up the store of shared folk-wisdom within the ten-group, the talk round the fire at the end of the hunt; comparing today's events with past ones and looking for common threads, passing on pieces of observation, reviewing old beliefs in the light of new evidence, offering tentative judgements for refutation or confirmation, agreeing who had done well or badly, remembering any act of exceptional courage or skill. This sort of discussion tends to be intensive and compulsive in the early days of a group when there is much new experience and little precedent, and although it quietsens down with time, it always goes on, and a radically new danger or opportunity can start it up again with the old intensity. In time this body of folk wisdom becomes a decision-making factor which restrains even the leader: it is difficult for him to go against the body of knowledge and custom in whose formulation he has taken so large a part." (Jay, 1972, p93).

The significance for this becomes clear when placed alongside a description of the BBC 'ethos' offered by Stuart Hood, again formerly a successful tv producer and senior executive in the BBC:

"... the official ideologies of both the BBC and ITA lay claim to a degree of independence not borne out by the realities of the situation. Of the two, the BBC's ideology - sometimes called the BBC ethos - is the more coherent; a great many people have been working on it for a very long time and it has itself been subsumed into the national ideology, along with the monarchy, the parliamentary system and the Anglican Church." (Hood, 1972, p12-3).
The concept has also been described as:

"... an underground code ... the proper sensitivity of production staff to the world around them, so that they are concerned with a relationship to the audience which cannot exist if the language in which they are talking, and the assumptions they are making, seem to be remote from the language and assumptions of the audience and of the times in which they are communicating." (Greene, 1969, 110).

"... certain propositions come to be regarded as true. They are then acted upon, occasionally without a great deal of foundation in fact or experience. There is, particularly in television, the division between entertainment on one hand and 'balance' or 'serious' programmes on the other." (Wedell, 1968, 161).

Hood sees the whole ideology of public service broadcasting as a fiction, nurtured by Reith and service during wartime, its boundaries and limitations are provided by the political orthodoxy of the two party system. His tone is unequivocal: of the BBC and ITN news services,

"the political line of both organizations has remained the same. In practice it is the expression of a middle class consensus politics, which continues the tradition of impartially on the side of the establishment so clearly defined by Reith. Impartiality is impartiality within bounds and is applied to those parties and organizations which occupy the middle ground of politics; where impartiality breaks down is when the news deals with political activities or industrial actions which are seen as being a breach of the conventions of the consensus." (Hood, 1972, p18).

The sustaining of this situation is achieved by selective recruitment from particular social backgrounds and the 'pressures' from within the organization. There is then according to Hood a high degree of control within the broadcasting organizations, a lack of internal democracy and a commitment to the politics of the 'middle ground'.

Reith created two structures: one, an organizational hierarchy, elitist in nature, and finely tuned to control and sustain his other creation, the intellectual commitment to the ideas and values of the British upper and upper middle classes. The most recent biography of Reith (Boyle, 1972), details clearly Reith's desire to fashion a broadcasting world, and therefore a social world, in his own image and likeness:

"Only the authoritative guidance of a true elite would satisfy Reith where broadcasting to an unlimited audience
was concerned. The masses, he believed, would learn in time to enjoy what was good. To offer them what they wanted would have turned the BBC into a spiritual whore-house, himself into a cultural pimp.” (Boyle, 1972, p151).

The precise nature of these beliefs is rarely considered directly. The substance was spelled out a little more clearly in a piece by Burns, who declared:

"If the social function of broadcasting is properly construed as the provision of political, social and cultural navigation charts, the job Reith chose for the BBC to carry out was that of maintaining a kind of pilot service. Or, to shift the line of vision a little, the BBC developed as a kind of internal diplomatic service, representing the British - the best of the British - to the British. 'BBC culture', like the BBC’s standard English vocabulary and pronunciation, was not peculiar to itself but an intellectual ambience composed of the values, standards and beliefs of the professional middle class." (Burns, 1963, p20).

As Burns, among others, has observed, this structure suffered greatly under the impact of television, commercial television and changing social structures during the 1950’s, to such an extent that it is now reasonable to question whether such a description is still applicable. Burns (1972) argued that the different sections of the Corporation encountered seem to be dominated by one or other age-grade (290). He distinguishes four particular age-grades: "the pioneers of the 1920’s; a second group who are associated with the years of expansion and the establishment of the BBC as a nationally and internationally important institution during the 1930’s; the war-time group ... and those who came in with, or after, television" (290). Jay takes up this point and argues that the difference between the values and ideas of the old and the new BBC has achieved a physical separation, that Television Centre and Lime Grove became "peopled by the innovators, the adventurous, the people impatient with the hierarchy and the restrictions of Broadcasting House, and (with) the middle class assumptions of BBC sound radio." (Jay, 1972, p156). Similarly Kumar argues that there was a congruence between the intellectual identity and purpose of the BBC and that of the other parts of the Establishment - Church, Parliament, Oxbridge. All was changed, however, by the social changes of the 1950’s and 1960’s. At the heart of broadcasting’s troubles, Kumar claims, lies its efforts to sustain a new identity, compatible
with the spirit of Keith but also in tune with the spirit of the news age. Perspectives may have changed, one world view may have replaced, or at least forced to move over a little, another world view, but the broad realm from which these are drawn is still the same general area the socio-economic territory of the middle classes, "the broader liberal, educated middle class" (Elliott, 1972, p143). Thus while the general orientation of values may have moved from Scottish conservative to Hampstead liberal - to put it rather crudely - the argument is still that sectional values predominate in broadcasting and that communication is essentially about the transmission by an elite culture to a non-elite mass. These various studies relate to descriptions of broad 'world views' and as such operate at a somewhat abstracted level. The precise dynamics of changing world views, the extent of uniformity within, say, a liberal world view, is hardly detailed. Burns' piece does indicate that the implied uniformity of the other works is striated by age-differentiation, and while he is discussing the features of organizational arrangements it is clearly necessary to observe an implication of the relationship between the perspectives of age and the intellectual frameworks applied to programme making.

More straightforward studies deal with commitment to party politics. For example, Buckalew (1974) in a study of local radio and television news editors found that political affiliation did not play an important role in editorial decision making, but Seymour-Ure (1969) in his study of the editorial policy making in the press argued that because most of the newspapers he studied were from "pluralist, non-totalitarian political systems with some degree of more or less explicit commitment to liberal democratic values" and all, with the exception of South Africa and Canada, were characterized by a general agreement as to the legitimacy of the existing political arrangements and a broad commitment to the values of liberal democracy. Thus there would be an inherent tendency, derived from the political culture, to focus on those political processes, for example, which in Hall's description exemplified the media's ultimate subordination to the values of
the ruling order. At a less global level he detected, as did most of the
other works discussed here a commitment to rational discourse and an
identification with 'consensus' politics, and also a commitment to accuracy,
the avoidance of wilful distortion, and an independence from political and
advertiser pressure. There was therefore, at all levels in the newspaper
organization a wide commitment to the ideology of the 4th Estate. A high
level of abstraction has characterized the discussion of the social structuring
of film content. Huaco (1965) and Kracauer (1947) have applied the notions
of the sociology of culture to their analysis of the mass media, or more
precisely, the film. Huaco argues that there are definable 'waves' of film,
each related to the specific social structures within which they occur. Three
variables define a specific wave: subject matter, content and treatment.
For such a wave to occur Huaco identifies four structural prerequisites:
the right kind of personnel, the necessary organization and plant; a receptive
organizational mood; a receptive social mood. What all this adds up to is
the production of a situation-specific genre, that is one which occurs in a
specific historical and cultural setting. To place the prefix 'Italian'
before the genre-term 'neo-realism' is not simply to geographically pin-point
the location of the neo-realist film, but rather to indicate that such
films were a product of elements explicit in Italy in the immediate post-
1945 period, which is when this particular wave occurred. Basically Huaco
argues that art is ultimately dependent on non-artistic structures and
forces. Lovell in his description of the French 'new wave' (Lovell, 1972)
points to the internal and external factors facilitating the movement.

In similar vein Kracauer (1947) has argued that "deep psychological
strains" in the Germany of 1918-33 were dominant factors in the production
of films during that period. In summarising Kracauer's main themes, Jarvie
(1970) declared:

"... the tendencies toward fascism, which were present in
Germany before Hitler came to power, are symbolised in and
can be analysed from many films of that period. (The films
are) the unconscious expression of hidden psychological
propensities which revealed a developing predisposition to fascism." (Jarvie, 1970)

Hall's description of the emergence and style of the photo-magazine Picture Post in the 1930's and 1940's is cast in a similar mould:

"... for a moment, the conditions were created which enabled a historical experience directly to inform a style. We can speak then neither of Picture Post as 'reflecting' the mood of the country, and even less of Picture Post as creating such a climate unaided. The collective social experience and the formulation of a distinctive 'social eye' reciprocally informed and determined each other. Both arose as an active response to the real movement of history." (Hall, 1972).

What I have tried to illuminate here are the kinds of propositions which are implied in the situating of the television programme, not only within its institutional but also within its intellectual setting. All these examples are, however, the result of a textual analysis, whereas I am particularly interested in is detailing the 'mechanics' by which 'texts' are arrived at. What we can argue is that a number of frameworks, encase or structure the television production. The purpose of this research is to demonstrate the role of those frameworks, to display the significance of their component parts.

This discussion was rather grandly and ambitiously entitled 'The Intellectual Framework of Broadcasting'. It sprang from two sources: one an observation, the other a premise. It was observed that much of the public discourse about the media made the point that media personnel were 'politically motivated' and that this was why 'television is biased'. The premise was that men possess beliefs and that when considering activity, such as making programmes about politics, especially about politics, it is vitally important to consider if these beliefs are more or less important. It was also vital to consider this area in view of the fact that there is a clearly defined and often vehemently supported body of beliefs relating to

1. For some insightful criticisms about the methodology involved here see: Elliott and Chaney, 1967; Harvie, 1970.
the specific purpose and tasks of the occupation.

Several themes emerge from the literature relating to the professional and political ideologies of communication. There is a coherent body of belief among practitioners that they must serve the audience, in an objective, balanced and impartial manner, keeping in mind the need to be responsible but at the same time to provide an entertaining diet of programme material. They are to operate, also, independent of the state and all other vested interests. While communicators vary in their politics along a spectrum from left to right, there does appear from the literature to be something of an imbalance in that liberal left individuals are in greater abundance than their colleagues of a more conservative hue. These are, however, very general points and there has certainly been no systematic appraisal of the political state of communications personnel. One of the strongest points to emerge from the literature, however, is that political ideology - at least in a narrow sense - is a private world either divorced from the day to day activity of broadcasters, or, where necessary controlled within the organization by a series of restraining forces. While a perspective on beliefs must be established, considerable importance must be attached to the requirements and instructions and purposes of the organisation. That they are able to do this follows not from the organization's ability to control personnel through socialization, though this may play a part, but rather it follows from a basic identity between the belief structure of the organization's senior personnel and the working reporters, producers etc. To understand the role of 'ideology' one must not look solely to imposition and control, but to a series of shared conceptions about the nature of a legitimate political order, about the nature of the medium, and about the requirements of the broadcasting organization. The point is that the professional ideology of broadcasting, arising as it does from the social responsibility theory of the press, rests comfortably within the dominant political ideology of liberal democracy. Thus it is not difficult to see why such authors as Hall and Hood can outline with perhaps a sense of exasperation the apparent ease with
which communicators can declare their objectivity when to Hall and Hood’s mind their whole life and code is geared to the interest and well being of one political order. Communicators on the whole favour liberal democracy and work within the intellectual frameworks it provides. Hall and Hood do not favour its political and social arrangements and seek to establish new paradigms. These two writers are of course largely aware of all this and are right to point out, though in a different way, that paradigms only survive and operate so long as they do explain the world, when new explanations are called for so are new paradigms.

The BBC is a curious 'organism' and as I have tried to show deserves almost a separate treatment by itself. Its distinctive persona, though it clearly fractured under the impact of a number of forces, certainly didn't totally dissolve during that period. In what I feel will prove to be a seminal work in the discussion of the mass media and ideology, Roger Brown (1969) points out (though this in itself is not a particularly unique proposition) that mass media ideologies develop in relation to other social institutions, since it is a general point that belief systems appear to develop in those areas "where there is potential or actual conflict with members of other interest groups." It is interesting then to look at the relationships which are implied in the ideologies of broadcasting. Three elements are that they must inform, educate, and entertain. Very briefly we can see here a relationship with Parliament, in the sense that that institution has demanded that they so be; there is also, however, the relationship with the audience, and the feeling that they wish to be informed etc. Another aspect of the code requires that they be objective etc. Here again is a relationship with Parliament and the State, but also a relationship with a whole history of the notion of the 4th Estate, i.e. with the established institutions of the press. The particular 'ethos' which exists derives from a relationship with the history of the institution and the organisation's hierarchy. Relationships of any kind are never static, and thus the precise
meaning of any one concept at any one time is contingent on a series of factors. What they all add up to, however, in the life of the working communicator, are series of definitions with which he functions in the daily activity of making programmes. This, however, is moving over into the whole idea of a conceptual outline of broadcasting, which is the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER THREE: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the introductory chapter to this thesis I looked at the notion of political communication, pointed to the centrality of political television within this process and indicated a number of problems which had arisen from discussion of the internal operation of the media.

In this chapter I want to look more closely at this broader framework. Broadly speaking two main themes can be identified. One connects historically with a conception of newspapers in a liberal democratic society as organizations which through their ability to scrutinise the governing elites, and their provision of information for the electorate, are able to act as a 'fourth estate'. Counterposed to this view is what one might term the sanctioned media model, which views the broadcasting media as an appendage of the State or of commercial interests and thus largely geared to the needs and interests of those dominant groups. One can perhaps separate these positions into camps which employ either a liberal democratic world view, or a class based or elite based analysis. It is possible to see the distinctions between the opposed explanatory structures in the very language which they employ, the one speaking of "civic culture", "accountability", "watchdog", etc., the other speaking of "ideology", "control", "elites", etc. The one sees the media as a means by which the political institutions are held responsible, the other sees the media as a means by which these institutions sustain an 'irresponsible' position by legitimating their position in the public consciousness.

A fuller account of these two diverse views of the situation of the broadcast media, and an assessment of the questions they raise about the
The flow of information is seen as moving from A, the political actors, to B the electorate, via C the media institutions, though the media also create information themselves by casting a critical eye over the operations of government. This is the 'watch-dog' role so ably described by Seymour-Ure (1968) in the context of the print media. Likening the press to a pressure group which has the ability to enforce certain sanctions, he states, "The sanctions of a newspaper is the power to publish what a party or Government wants to keep private, which is ultimately connected, probably, to an estimate of electoral advantage" (1968, 304). Thus the criteria for judging a healthy press in this view is not the sheer number of press outlets, points of view, etc., but whether the existing Press is able to carry out fully and efficiently this watch-dog role. Discussion of the precise role of broadcast journalism has involved variations on a similar theme. Should the broadcast journalist function as a mouthpiece for the State, the neutral purveyor of someone else's information, a source of non-partisan comment and criticism or as an overtly partisan editoralizer (Blumler, 1970)? The proposition offered by Blumler is that British television moved "from the more subdued second function, which predominated in the 1950's, towards an enthusiastic application of the third in the 1960's" (1970, 72). Referring to his own work in the 1966 Election, he develops a position which encapsulates and reproduces one view of the broadcast media, that of the liberal democratic theory of the Press. In other words, that the broadcasting media in Britain, having emerged from the dark, paternalistic age of the
Reithian era, have actually begun to incorporate certain functions that attach to the role of the Press in a liberal democracy - not only the transmission of the information with which the electorate can begin to make its decisions, but also the establishment of a critical presence in the political process. A century after the print media, and four decades after its own birth, the broadcast media gained membership of the Fourth Estate.

What, however, is the Fourth Estate, and what precisely is this 'theory of the Press', how does it apply to the broadcast media and what implications does it have for a discussion of the nature of programme making?

**A Theory of 'the Press'

On considering the substance to the 'theory' which underpins certain conceptions of the role of the Press in Western political culture, one has to consider the proposition that there was an evolution from a libertarian view of the Press to a view which holds that the Press has a number of 'Social Responsibilities'¹. This argument embodies a rather genteel view of history and differs somewhat in its view of the development of the Press from such works as Williams (1965). It involves a rather Whiggish view of the gradual accretion of constitutional changes and the gradual emergence of a liberal democracy. It avoids the harsh realities of the means by which the Press actually gained its politicised role, constantly hampered by the State, and ignores the connections with changing economic structures and attendant changes in the structure of power between rising and declining classes. Beneath the emerging world of liberal democracy lay the historic clash, Williams would argue, between the class in the ascendency, the urban middle class, and the class in decline, the landed aristocracy. Williams notes, "The newspaper was the creation of the commercial middle class, mainly in the 18th century. It served this class with news relevant to the conduct of business, and as such established itself as a financially independent

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1. The following account is, as are many other pieces in this area, based on Siebert et al (1956).
I n s t i t u t i o n . " ( 1 9 6 5 , 1 9 7 ) . H o w e v e r , t h o u g h t h e r e m a y b e a d e g r e e o f
difference in the explanatory frameworks, the differences are more of
emphasis than substance and relate to the details of the precise sequential
ordering of events and change. The views embodied by this 'theory' provide
one dominant explanation of the situation of the Press and it is at that
level that they need to be considered, as the summation of a historical
position which only approximates to historical reality.

With the 17th and 18th century radical transformation of man's view of
man - the emergence of rationalism, the development of the middle classes,
and the preponderance of market forces, the attribution of significance to
the individual per se and his possession of natural rights, with the refocussing
from the deity onto the laity, the ground was well prepared for the emergence
of a Press liberated from the authoritarian attachment to the State. "By the
end of the (18th) century libertarian principles were enshrined in the fundamental
law of the land, in constitutional phrases protecting freedom of speech and of
the press." (Sieber , 1956, 44). The vision embodied in the work of John Hilton,
John Erakine, Thomas Jefferson, John Stuart Mill, a developmental image,
spanning three centuries, was of a society of rational men engaged in the
pursuit of truth (Siebert, 1956). Since a rational decision was deemed to
require information upon which to dwell before arrival at that decision,
particular unpolluted sources of information became crucial. The first
purpose of the Press thus became the provision of information; "Basically
the underlying purpose of the media was to help to discover truth, to assist
in the process of solving political and social problems by presenting all
manner of evidence and opinion as the basis for decision. The essential
characteristic of this process was its freedom from government control
or domination." (Siebert, 1956, 51). Thus while one view would see the
emergence of the Press as dependent on the fact that it served the specific
interests of the urban middle class, the tendency here is to view the emergence as the fruition of the actual intellectual desirability of a free press. Siebert says that the purpose of the Press was and is to "discover truth", others might argue that the purpose was to discover the state of business and the latest share prices.

The immediate problem, however, was how one could guarantee the 'truth' of the information provided? The solution was seen to lie in the inescapable logic, the self-righting mechanisms, of the free market-place of ideas, "let the public at large be subjected to a barrage of information and opinion, some of it possibly true, some of it possibly false, and some of it containing elements of both. Ultimately the public could be trusted to digest the whole, to discard that not in the public interest and to accept that which served the needs of the individual and of the society of which he is a part" (Siebert, 1956, 51). Jefferson articulated the point, "The discernment they have manifested between truth and falsehood, shows that they may safely be trusted to hear everything true and false, and to form a correct judgement between them" (quoted in Smith, 1973, 36). Thus in the free market-place of ideas - always assuming that any individual who so wished had the facilities with which to market his ideas - truth would drive out falsehood. The key factor was that the Press was divorced from the government, it stood as an apparently autonomous entity in the midstream of social and political affairs. In this situation the Press could not only be the purveyor of information about the Government but could also act as a watch-dog on the government. With the development during the 19th century of a British governmental system which emphasised the accountability of the government and its attendant institutions to the people, with advances in education and increased awareness of and activity in political affairs, the Press were lauded as central institutions in the political process.
Through its ability to transform the complexities of government the Press was seen as an ideal means of communication between electors and their representatives, enabling the former to arrive at rational decisions in choosing between rival claimants to being the latter. It was only a short step from the Press enabling the electorate to hold the Government to account, to its holding the Government to account itself by seeking out corruption and attacking abuses of power. Thus in this full-blooded conception of the Fourth Estate, the Press was not only a broker of information, but also potentially a breaker of governments.

Such briefly was one view of the historical development of a political press. It was very clear, however, to even the most fervent advocate of the Fourth Estate that the 19th century did not only bring changes in the political structure and that a number of developments in the organization and economics of the Press rendered meaningless the very notion of a libertarian Press even as it was apparently achieving its rightful position in the political process.

Carey (1969) argues that one witnessed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in, for example, the American news media what one might describe as the rebrokerization of the Press. Arising from a 'fetishism of objectivity', which itself derived from the need for the news agencies to serve an ideologically heterogeneous readership (Carey 1969, 32-3) it led to the assumption "that the highest standard of professional performance occurred when the reporter presented the reader with all sides of an issue (though there were usually only two), presented all the 'facts', and allowed the reader to decide what these facts meant". The Press in this view became a passive link in a communications chain, and not as the theory of the Press so far outlined would have had it, as an active watch-dog, a constituent of the Fourth Estate. The difficulty and inherent danger in this development would clearly be that in abandoning its interpretive and critical role, in
transmitting 'untouched' information from society then the Press would reproduce that information in all its confusion and contradiction. This would in itself rest on a 'development' in the dominant view of the audience since as we have seen libertarian theory rested on the premise of the individual's capacity to detect truth from falsehood.

The idea of a libertarian theory of the Press suffered a further blow with the incorporation of broadcasting within its ambit in the early decades of the 20th century. The theory had assumed the existence and availability of numerous outlets, and yet here was a new medium, the central characteristic of which was that it was physically impossible, given available technologies, to have numerous outlets. Every broadcasting organisation therefore had built into the principles upon which it was established a clear element of State control - the very antithesis of the then dominant libertarian theory of the Press. As Smith states (1973, 45) the emergence of broadcasting was a midwife to what became known as the Social Responsibility Theory of the Press.

It was also the case that the axiomatic basis of the libertarian theory did not stand too close an inspection in the context of the advanced industrial society of the 20th century concepts of rationalism, natural and individual rights, free enterprise, all seemed to wither before the realities of industrial society. Above all else the economic logic of libertarian theory - that outlets were available to all who wished to possess them - became patently nonsensical in the face of the immense costs entailed in publishing. Thus the concentration of the Press into fewer and fewer units, the increasing criticism of the press's role in society as that concentration increased, the undermining of the rationalist assumptions of man, the challenge to the efficacy of the 'free market' place of ideas, that is the general intellectual challenge to the basic assumptions of the Enlightenment which had provided the intellectual justification for libertarian theory,
all served to chip away at the foundations on which the old theory had rested. As much as anything else it was noted that nowhere in libertarian theory was the public accorded a right to receive information. In response to such changes the Press began to express a commitment to the general welfare and to express a responsibility to their audience (Peterson, 1956, 83).

Theodore Peterson (1956, 75) described Social Responsibility theory as "largely a grafting of new ideas onto traditional theory". He was making the point that Social Responsibility accepted the libertarian view that the Press service the political system with information, discussion and debate; that it should enlighten the public and therefore encourage self-government; act as a watch-dog of government; facilitate commerce through the use of advertising; entertain; and be financially self-sufficient (Peterson 1956). What the emerging view did not accept was that the Press actually did perform those roles.

The theory of a socially responsible Press received its clearest articulation in the Commission on the Freedom of the Press in the United States, which published a number of reports in 1947, and in Britain by the Royal Commission on the Press which sat from 1947-9. The implication of the movement from libertarian to Social Responsibility concepts was that "Press freedom was a freedom to provide a certain kind of service to society, it retained no freedom to please itself" (Smith, 1973, 45). The Canons of Journalism adopted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1923 called on newspapers "to practise responsibility to the general welfare, sincerity, truthfulness, impartiality, fair play, decency and respect for the individual's privacy" (Peterson, 1956, 85). The emergence of this theory and the codes of practice which it entailed and which were attached in particular to the broadcasting institutions, its exponents would argue, reflected a developing view that man was far from rational, was, in fact, immature and irrational. It is in this historical context that one can
situate one view of the position of the broadcasting institution in general and their political broadcasting sections in particular, as being autonomous units guided by a number of key principles.

It is useful to illuminate the point by listing the five requirements which the Commission on the Freedom of the Press saw embodied in Social Responsibility theory:

1. That the Press provide a "truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning". In this we can perhaps see the division between 'fact' and 'comment' which was underpinned by the notion of objectivity.

2. The Press should serve as "a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism".

3. Should project a "representative picture of the constituent groups in society".

4. Should be responsible "for the presentation and clarification of the goals and values of the society".

5. Provide "full access to the day's intelligence" (Commission 1947).

This then was the articulation of a guiding framework within which the Press should function. While it was still felt that the Press retained its independence from the State, the concept of freedom implied in this autonomy subtly changed. Peterson describes the position, "Libertarian theory was born of a concept of negative liberty which we can define loosely as 'freedom from' and more precisely as 'freedom from external restraint'. The Social Responsibility theory, on the contrary, rests on a concept of positive liberty, 'freedom for', which calls for the presence of the necessary implements for the attainment of a desired goal" (1956, 93).

Crucially, whereas in libertarian theory under no circumstances should the State intervene in the affairs of the Press, Social Responsibility theory
holds a view that the State must not only allow freedom but must actually promote it. "Government", Hocking of the Commission tells us, "remains the residuary legatee of responsibility for an adequate press performance" (Hocking 1947). By extension then it is clearly within this context that many would view the enabling Acts and Charters of British broadcasting as an exemplification of the fulfilment of this duty. The subtle, and to many critics of broadcasting exasperating, relationship between the Minister responsible for broadcasting in Britain and the broadcasting institutions themselves is touched on in Chapter 4. The following statement, however, might well be culled from the record in Hansard of a Minister's response to a question of, for example, the BBC: "If the freedom of the Press is to achieve reality, government must set limits on its capacity to interfere with, regulate, or suppress the voices of the press or to manipulate the data on which the public judgement is formed." (Commission 1947).

Broadcasting became a prime exemplification of the Social Responsibility theory: too powerful, too scarce a resource to be allowed to operate completely unfettered and 'irresponsible', a whole battery of guidelines was laid down - educate, inform, entertain, be impartial, balanced objective, act in public service, be fair, operate codes on taste and violence. Yet great pains were made to create broadcasting systems which visibly functioned beyond the control of governments. The argument of the Commission that absolute freedom of the Press to do as it pleased "wears the aspect of social irresponsibility. The Press must know that its faults and errors have ceased to be private vagaries and have become public dangers. Its inadequacies menace the balance of public opinion. It has lost the common and ancient liberty to be deficient in its functions or to offer half-truths for the whole" is sardonically echoed in the opinion of Anthony Wedgwood Benn that broadcasting is far too important to be left to the broadcasters. Thus what one view would - as we shall see - interpret as a system of control, is here felt to be the very
mechanics by which broadcasting autonomy is actually sustained and operated.

The notion of socially responsible autonomy, which is what the Social Responsibility theory actually involves, is readily apparent in the numerous public statements by senior broadcasting executives. Charles Curran quotes with approval Sir William Haley's view that the BBC "remains an independent body. It has charge of its own affairs. Its programmes are safeguarded from outside interference. Its position within the community and the corollary of its trust of impartiality remain" (BBC Handbook, 1973, 9). Curran challenges, however, the rather patrician, neo-Smithian view of Haley that the intent of broadcasting is to raise public taste, and sums up the position in a manner which is a classic exposition of the doctrine of social responsibility: "The BBC does not exist to shape society to some pre-determined pattern. Supplying that society with an accurate and comprehensive service of impartial broadcast journalism is not shaping it to a pattern. Setting out to 'raise taste' would be. We have a continuing duty to educate as well as to inform and entertain..... it is providing a service; it is not setting itself up as an arbiter of taste or a manipulator of society. But, if it is doing its job responsibly and well, it will give its audiences a clear picture of the prevailing scale of values within society, and will reflect the order in which society as a whole (often described as 'the consensus') classified those values. By being truthful and responsible, it achieves more than it could ever achieve by setting itself up as the nation's guide in matters of taste or morals." (BBC, 1973, 9-10).

Freedom and detached observation, comment and the provision of information, these provide the framework for this liberal democratic view of the situation of broadcasting in British society.

The position taken here is one reply to the question of what proximation the institutions of the mass media have to the whole society in general and to the dominant institutions within that society in particular, notably the
government and State structure. By implication it denies that these structures are able to influence programme content. The central proposition within Curran's statement and within statements similar to it is that broadcasters are of the nation, but not of the government. Broadcasting becomes in this view the 'representative' of the nation, one means by which the notion of the accountability of rulers to ruled is implemented. A former senior TV news executive Donald Edwards (1962, 12) stated, "If broadcasting is to reflect the nation, we must include matters in dispute. We must communicate the views of others, however distasteful or embarrassing they may be to some. This is our duty as honest reporters. The public is entitled to the truth as interpreted by all sides - and so on behalf of the public we put probingly, searching questions to Cabinet Ministers, railway chiefs, industrial bosses - all 'them who push us around'. The public have not the opportunity of putting the questions themselves. We do it for them."

This is, of course, the 'accountability' function referred to by Blumler (1970) and is a clear exposition of the 'requirements' of the Press as outlined by the Commission (1947). Kenneth Lamb (1974) in a lengthy account of numerous crises and the difficulties involved in covering political affairs, brackets his discussion with the statements that "The BBC is in every proper sense of the word a national broadcasting service, but it is not and never has been government-controlled or government run.... The BBC is independent, and its independence is vital to its credibility. But it is also a corporate citizen. It is not above or outside the nation, but a part of it", sentiments echoed by Sir Michael Swann (1974) in his reflections on his first twelve months as Chairman of the BBC.

One could reproduce many similar statements by broadcasting personnel about the position of broadcasting. Broadly, they add up to a position in which the broadcasting organization, particularly through its news and current affairs department is able, through its independent position, to
provide information and 'explain' events and processes for the citizenry which comprises its audience.

There is also another interesting strand to this argument about the situation of broadcasting, and this is reflected in the academic formulation of the situation of political television in, for example, elections. The position is exemplified in the work of Seymour-Ure (1968, 1974) and Blumler (1969, 1970, 1974), and their work provides a detailed and sophisticated formulation of the view of broadcasting as consisting of autonomous but responsible institutions.

In Seymour-Ure's illuminating book on the Press (1963) he argues that of the various functions which the Press can fulfill the most important is the question "whether the newspapers we do have are properly equipped to assemble, interpret and criticize information about politics and Government." (1963, 307). In this way the Press is able to sustain the democratic basis to British political life. The only real problem which the Press faces in this view is whether it is suitably equipped for its role, which is presented as analogous to that of the Opposition in Parliament.

The structure of Seymour-Ure's argument is of the press fulfilling the role assigned to it by the Social Responsibility Theory of the Press, the watchdog of the democratic process. It may have one or two teeth missing, it may be rather insipid occasionally and guard the wrong doors, but watch-dog it nevertheless is. Now the interesting feature is that when one comes to read Seymour-Ure's and Blumler's accounts of political television, similar themes emerge.

In a rather perceptive and certainly most useful account of the development of the media's coverage of the general elections between 1945 and 1970, Seymour-Ure (1974) identifies several dominant trends in that coverage: the general growth of election broadcasting, instigated by the rise of television as the principal political medium, the break up of the
parties' monopoly over political broadcasting and the rapid expansion of
the broadcasting institutions own programme. At the centre of his analysis
is the notion that broadcasting quickly came to occupy the centre of the
electoral stage to the general chagrin of the parties who came to see
television as being a, perhaps superior, rival in the definition of the
issues of the election and in shaping the campaign. The campaign-of-the-
parties, or so the scenario goes, became the campaign-of-the-media, and
particularly the campaign-of-television as a new independence of the broad-
caster emerged during the last years of the 1950's and the decade of the
1960's (Seymour-Ure, 1974, 212-3).

Blumler (1974, 135-6) makes a similar point when discussing a number of
the features which distinguished the coverage by the British media of
elections in the 1970's. He points to the
"evolution of both television and the press - the former mainly since
1959 and the latter unevenly throughout the post-war period - towards
a more autonomous relationship to the party system ... Thus, less
emphasis has been placed in recent years on the more passive media
functions of transmitting party-originated messages, and more on the
active provision of frames of reference that serve to filter and inter-
pret such messages. Consequently, British elections have appeared
to become increasingly media affairs rather than party affairs. Of
course, no such contrast should be pressed too far. The main outlines
of electoral choice in Britain are still set by records, policies and
rhetoric emanating from party activities and decisions. Nevertheless,
the presentation of that choice to the public has recently been shaped
more by the values, attitudes and forms of audience service of media
men than by the politicians more partisan concerns."

Seymour-Ure refers to Blumler's work on the election of 1966, which Blumler
spent in the BBC Current Affairs Group (Blumler 1969), to make the point
that the new independence of the broadcasting organizations often created a
situation where the priorities of the two groups, broadcasters and politicians,
would clash, what he terms "a lack of identity between the strategies" (1974, 214)
Blumler, in fact, also made this point in a piece on the general process of
television in political communication (Blumler 1970, 94) in which he argued
that there is a lack of clear "role definitions which enhances the potential
for conflict".
By 1970, Seymour-Ure states, the

"... media as a whole were detached as never before from the party system. In 1954 they stood towards one end of a spectrum: there were still a few 'official' party papers, and on the air the parties had absolute control over the very limited number of election programmes broadcast. By 1970 they had shifted far towards the other end. In an era of universal suffrage the parties had paradoxically lost control over the means of appealing to the electorate." (1974, 234-5).

He concludes that we can expect to see even more expansion in the significance of broadcast journalism since it would be too much trouble for the politicians to force a reversal in the developments of election broadcasting. We look forward to a future where 'broadcast programmes (are) increasingly free of rules imposed from outside about party balance at election time; and (where there is) an orientation in current affairs broadcasting ... that was similar to what has just been called 'positive criticism' in the press" (1974, 237) - positive criticism being the adoption of an "anti-government stance regardless of party", "suspicious of government and well equipped to expose it" (1974, 236).

The general drift of Seymour-Ure's thesis is clear: through a gradual process of change in the setting of the media institutions, with the corollary of much expanded and improved election broadcasting, a detachment has arisen between the political and media spheres, to the extent that the media have now become potent forces in themselves and challenge the sovereignty of the Parliamentary process. Blumler's conclusion about the overall state of the media in general, and broadcasting in particular, is in similar vein. Discussing a number of indications in the February 1974 election of the increasing flexibility of the coverage of elections - increased coverage, more time for minorities, experts, ordinary voters, new news programs - he says that this is heartening when so much of the analysis of the mass media emphasise the constraints which inhibit their actual operation. Speaking of the relatively free hand which producers in broadcasting had in covering the February election, he states by way of conclusion:
"Some part of the explanation for this must lie in the public service model of organisation that Britain has sustained in the broadcasting field for many years. This has ensured that financial constraints do not stifle innovatory impulses at source, and has helped to keep alive the principle that communication should serve citizenship." (1974, 161-2).

The View From the Other side: the 'Colonisation' of the Fourth Estate

"By controlling every major opinion moulding institution in the country, members of the upper class play a predominant role in determining the framework within which decisions on important issues are reached." (Domhoff 1967, 83).

Two central themes emerged from the discussion of the literature which reflect the more overtly radical perspectives of many writers on the situation of broadcasting as opposed to those numerous authors referred to in the 'view from the Fourth Estate'. That view of broadcasting in general, and political broadcasting in particular, emphasised the approximation to a 'theory of the press' in liberal democratic societies paying particular attention to the sense of autonomy which pervades the position. The view from what I have called 'the other side' - implying its generally 'radical' base - emphasises a very different view of the historical development of 'the Press', the constraints, the actual lack of autonomy, the sheer inability of broadcasting to achieve what the rhetoricians of the Fourth Estate claim it does achieve, the attachment to dominant institutions within society - be they political or commercial - and to society's dominant ideology. Within this explanation twin themes also emerge. One that the restraints on, or 'structuring' of, the production process derive from other social institutions or social groups - for example, the State, institutional elites, social classes etc.; this position is exemplified in the work of, for example, Smith (1973), Hood (1972) and, of course, Miliband (1973). The other theme, while in broad agreement with the overall conclusions of these writers, derives from the more 'sophisticated' pastures of media research and points to the structuring of the programme making process by particular
routines and ideologies that derive from the occupational setting of the organization and from the general structure of ideas within society, as, for example, in the numerous works of Stuart Hall referred to at length in the literature chapter and in a recent paper by Murdock and Golding (1974).

Overall, these views imply that political broadcasting is bound to the dominant institutions and ideologies by an actual subordination in power terms, by an intellectual disposition to acknowledge the role and centrality of those institutions and ideas and by occupational practices which serve the status quo rather than 'alternative' views of, say, the political process and history. This latter notion of 'occupational practice = status quo' is clearly defined in Elliott's perception that the programme making process is locked into a rehash of conventional wisdom and his much quoted observation that programme making has more to do with the contradictions than the conspiracies of capitalist society.

What I wish to isolate here are the central points of this explanation and to indicate how one might begin to consider their implications in the light of evidence gathered.

The premise of the elite position is that any analysis of the context within which broadcasting occurs — and by implication within which programmes are made — necessarily involves a consideration of the political, economic, and cultural factors which inhibit and ultimately control what happens.

Because of the integration of the broadcasting institutions within the framework of a ruling class or elite, to accomplish its tasks as envisioned

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1. There is of course some problem here over the precise terminology, and as to whether ruling groups consist of social groupings (Domhoff 1967), economic (Miliband 1973) or organizational elites (Mills 1967). They agree, however, that power is concentrated in somebody and that therefore decision making is controlled. Interesting analyses of these questions are contained in Crewe (1974), notably his Introductory chapter, and Stanworth and Giddens (1974) especially Ch. 1, 3, 12.
by the Fourth Estate view, it would necessarily have to place its very existence in jeopardy. Such a line of analysis reflects a more total observation that interaction within society is about conflicts between social units of unequal power. The perspective approaches the 'problem' of media production from the perspective of political sociology - though this is often not explicit - and views the treatment of the media as one part of the discussion of the nature of social order. As Dowse and Hughes (1972, 13) state, the "area of substantive concern for the political sociologist is the problem of social order and political obedience". If one view of the world sees social order as sustained by a commitment to a set of common norms and by agreement between the plurality of groups within society as to the basic legitimacy of the values which characterise society, the implications of this alternative view of the situation of the media involves a different perspective altogether. The social structures of Western society, the position states, are heavily stratified, with an unequal distribution of power and wealth between the different strata. In such a society social order may be maintained through the use of force but as Rex (1974, 213) notes, "the use of bullets and prisons, has on the whole not been seen as necessary elements in British capitalism". The implicit observation is that those societies in which the mass media are both most visible and discussed, are characterised by a high level of agreement as to 'legitimate' values, even though the structure of rewards according to available evidence is manifestly unequal. Thus the dominant orders need not exercise their institutional power to sustain their dominance since they rule, however ironically, with the acquiescence of the lower orders. By extension then, it is argued that 'the ideas of the ruling class are always in any age the ruling ideas' - and our age is no exception - not because of any rational convergence at a point of mutual agreement by two different classes (or elite/non-elite, etc), neither because of the persistent use of force, but rather because one
class/elite, through its command of power and privilege will be a position to legitimate its world view. Hence "those groups in society which occupy positions of the greatest power and privilege will also tend to have the greatest access to the means of legitimation. That is to say, the social and political definitions of those in dominant positions tend to become objectified and enshrined in the major institutional orders, so providing the moral framework of the entire social system" (Parkin, 1972, 83).

There is then, in this view, beneath every moral order a political order from which the moral framework is derived and by which it is sustained. Through that moral framework one witnesses the intellectual subordination of one group to the values and ideas of another. Should command of the processes of legitimation - the assumption that the existing order of things is rational, objective and therefore legitimate - fail, the institutionally privileged groups are able to fall back on their command of 'power' to maintain the order that the mechanics of legitimation failed to achieve.

In this view then the Press would either be ideologically in-tune or suffer the fate of being politically/commercially out of order.

Parkin (1972), whose book is rapidly emerging as something of a minor classic in the discussion of the dynamics of stratification, does not in fact refer to the role of the mass media as an agency of legitimation. It is, however, within this explanatory framework that one can situate the references in Chapter One to Miliband, Enzensberger and the Free Communications Group.

In a review of the state of elite studies in Britain, Rex (1974, 216) asks what are the "institutional and ideological means whereby the elites relate themselves and the classes which they represent to those over whom they exercise hegemony. Three phenomena of importance here would appear to be the political labour movement, the non-elite institutions of higher education and the media. The central process here is the incorporation
into or co-option of the leading figures in these spheres into the elite world”. The point was made somewhat more stridently and with none of Hex’s professional skill in a recent book by a Canadian sociologist who claimed to be providing ‘a political sociology of the Press’ (Hoch 1974), and who subtitles his work "An enquiry into behind-the-scenes organization, financing and brainwashing techniques of the news media"!

In a recent paper Murdock and Golding sought to integrate the broad implications of this form of analysis within an empirical analysis of the functioning of media institutions. Clearly and correctly they recognise that there could be no 'theory' of mass communications sui generis and sought to place their analysis within the framework of a political economy of the mass media: a description of the economic dynamics of media institutions and the consequences of that dynamic for public consciousness. They declare: "The mass media .... play a key role in determining the forms of consciousness and the modes of expression and action which are made available to people", a serious accusation and, if true, a mightily important one. They continue:

"There is a limited range of information made available by the media, the range of interpretive frameworks, the ideas, concepts, facts and arguments which people use to make sense of their lives, are to a great extent dependent on media output, both fictional and non-fictional. Yet the frameworks offered are necessarily articulated with the nexus of interests producing them, and in this sense all information is ideology." (Golding and Murdock, 1974, p.226).

In substance - that levels of taste, information etc., are related to media output - this is not a particularly unique description. What is original in the context of media sociology is the fusion of the concepts of political (with its implication of 'power' 'interest' etc.) and economy (with the implication of the material ordering of society). Bonded together they provide an analytic framework within which the institutions of the mass media can be situated and explained. Within this though lies the need for another explanatory structure (acknowledged by Murdock and
Golding - "It is not sufficient simply to assert that the mass media are part of the ideological apparatus of the State, it is also necessary to demonstrate how ideology is produced in concrete practice." (1974, p.207).

What would be required then from this perspective is a political sociology of media institutions that will focus attention on the way in which these institutions, in reproducing the precepts, values and ideas of ruling elites, actually operate. It is precisely the lack of such an approach upon which to build that has defined much of the work on media institutions. One can detect in these numerous writers a coherent position on the functioning and situation of the broadcasting institution within society, one that is in sharp contrast to the Fourth Estate view. Both views, if only by implication, entail a view of the formation of content, but never adequately articulate that view. There are a number of difficulties with the positions and it is the general conclusions to be drawn that form the basis for the next part of the discussion.

Conclusion

Two principal and opposed themes about broadcasting are detectable amid the numerous statements and analyses available and it is these which provide the basis for this analysis. The liberal democratic viewpoint argues that the political process is a system that falls into a number of discrete parts, of which the media form one part of one relatively autonomous system, the political communication system. The counter view, taking its basic perspective from the observation of Wright Mills that any such liberal democratic view of the political systems of advanced industrial societies is little more than a "fairy tale", argues that the systemic view of the political communications process is meaningless because it fails to account for the structure of power within these societies. The system is weighted in favour of dominant groups and dominant institutions and this is necessarily reflected in the
communications system. The starting point for this discussion then about the nature and circumstances of communication are the opposed views that power within society is diffused, and that power is concentrated.¹

The implications of this discussion can be presented graphically. In the Introductory chapter a fairly simple diagrammatic representation of the political communication process was established. In the light of what I have here described as the dominant trends in the explanatory framework as it applies to the broadcast media in particular, one can

1. After this chapter had been initially prepared two new pieces came to light which further illuminate the tendencies pointed to. In a very recent paper Gurevitch and Blumler (1975, forthcoming) state in a discussion of the roots of media power that one root is 'normative': "This springs from the respect that is accorded in competitive democracies to such tenets of liberal philosophy as freedom of expression and the need for specialized organs to safeguard citizens against possible abuses of political authority. This tends to legitimate the independent role of media organizations in the political field and to shelter them from overt attempts blatantly to bring them under political control."

Murdock, in developing work along opposed lines, states: "The nature and extent of recent changes in the social structures of advanced capitalist societies have been the focus of considerable argument and remain a matter of debate. The position taken here, however, is that on balance the available evidence tends to support the view that despite modifications, the class system remains "the fundamental axis of the social structure" and the source of "remifications which are generally more widespread and intricate" than those produced by other structural dimensions ....... Hence because of its centrality and pervasiveness, a consideration of the relations between the class system and the mass media system provides the most fruitful starting point from which to begin exploring the relationship between mass communication and social structure" (Murdock, 1974).
in which a) represents the broadcasting institution as an autonomous unit interacting with but being divorced from the political sphere, and in which b) represents a view of the media as being colonised and controlled by the dominant political and economic institutions within the society?

There is an interesting observation to be made which illuminates the differences between the two points and this is that as a general proposition when political scientists have studied 'power' they have detected its pluralistic distribution; when sociologists have studied 'power' they have concluded that it is concentrated (Crewe, 1974, 34-5). In this context it is noticeable that the two writers in the British academic discussion of the media organizations who have described the 'autonomous' situation of the media — and autonomy can be seen as an institutional corollary of a 'pluralist' society — are Blumler and Seymour-Ure, both of whom are political scientists. Those who have emphasised the non-autonomous nature of the media — and lack of autonomy of one form or another would be an obvious corollary of an elite view of society — are on the whole sociologists. Ralph Miliband would seem to be something of an exception.

The distinction lies partly in the 'Fourth Estate' view's attachment to formal processes and formal relationships, to the proposition that the
text-book description of a 'Free Press' has a basis in fact. Thus the
tendency would be to look at the formal distribution of roles in the
political system, the assumed connections between the political
communications system, the governmental structure and the electorate
— indeed the very use of such concepts as government distinguishes the
position. The sociological perspective emphasises the informal
distribution of power, the 'real' as opposed to assumed practices of
Sociologists social and political activity. / would therefore argue that power in
broadcasting does not lie in its formal place, i.e. the public service
corporation, the Board, the editor, etc., but actually lies in other
institutions and persons, the State, the 'advertiser', the 'class', etc.
However, it would be wrong to suggest that such writers as Blumler are
unaware of informal processes, and what one needs to add is that the two
views begin from different perspectives; the one looks to the actual day-to-
day operation, the other looks to the connections between the media and
other social institutions with the assumption that having detected the
link the former is somehow logically subordinate to the latter.

It is possible to argue, and ultimately this could prove to be a
most persuasive argument, that there is actually no real difference or
disagreement between the two viewpoints and that they are actually talking
about twin levels of the same overall process. The point is, in fact, similar
to that made by Wright Mills of the pluralist arguments that their analysis
of power within American society leads to the broad conclusion that power
is diffused rather than concentrated. Mills, identifying pluralism as an
intellectual analogue to the broad theories of liberal democracy, argues
that though there is an apparent functioning of these principles at one
level this fact does not negate the overall distribution and meaning of
power, nor does it deny the conclusion that the notions of liberal
democracy within the context of Western power structures are little more than a 'fairy tale' (see, for example, Mills' *Structure of Power in America* in his Collected Essays, Horowitz (Ed) 1967). Thus one might extend this and argue that the media do indeed function as a Fourth Estate within the context of the rather narrow confines provided by the Parliamentary system, but not within the broader framework of the political, economic and moral order that underpins that Parliamentary system.

In turn, this Millsian proposition begs the question of how that broader framework - the political, economic and moral order - is integrated within the programming process. For this one has to move from the macro-perspectives of general explanation to the micro-perspectives of the actual operation of programmes. What is the nature of programme making, who is involved, who makes decisions and in relation to what are those decisions made - who is consulted, what factors are weighed against other factors, what resources are or are not available for implementing decisions? In what ways do organizational requirements influence programme making, and just what are those requirements and in relation to what are they formed? Are the interests of the maker of political television and his organizational superiors diverse or unified? In what ways are other facets of the external setting of political television significant in influencing decisions about programme content? These are the kinds of questions which formed the basis for the analysis.

Problems created by the absence of a micro-perspective are, as we have seen, only too apparent in the work of Miliband (1973). This work has received immense praise as the exemplification of the elite perspective on the social process. It clearly embodies the position that the mass media in general, through a series of mechanisms, are one means by which
the dominant social orders reproduce their social power. Along with the
educational system, they are an instrument used by the State (in its
capacity as the institutional rendering of the power of a ruling class),
and are therefore for the State, but not of the State (Miliband, 1973,
50-1). They exist within the general structure of the political system,
rather than the particular structure of the State.

Commenting on Miliband, Poulantzas (1972) adopts a position developed
by Althusser (1971) that the media, along with other institutions,
constitute the 'ideological apparatus of the state', a view which is
similar to that developed by Miliband in the sense that the function of
the media is to legitimate the power of the dominant social orders. It
differs, however, by placing the media within the state structure —
contrasted with Miliband's description of the media serving the State
from without. Poulantzas criticises Miliband for simply counterposing
bourgeois concepts with his own 'concrete facts' and thus functioning
within a bourgeois frame of reference, "placing himself on their own
terrain" (Poulantzas, 1972, p.240-41).

There is a good deal of irony in Poulantzas' critique, notably when
Miliband takes up the defense, albeit in an oblique manner, of 'abstracted
empiricism'. Countering Poulantzas' accusation that he fails to develop
an appropriate 'problematic' Miliband retorts:

"I think it is possible to be so profoundly concerned with the
elaboration of an appropriate 'problematic' and with the avoidance
of any contamination with opposed 'problematics' as to lose sight
of the absolute necessity of empirical enquiry, and of the empirical
demonstration of the falsity of the opposed and apologetic
'problematics'." (Miliband, 1972, p.256).

Just what constitutes 'empirical enquiry' is itself 'problematic' but there
is a strong propensity when dealing with his thesis for Miliband to resort
to "intellectual sleights of hand" (Crewe, 1974, p.39) and "imaginative
speculation" (ibid., p.43). By no means could his description of the
operation of the mass media — whether defined as ideological apparatus or instruments of legitimation — be described as 'empirical enquiry'. Rather it constitutes a series of useful theoretical assertions which potentially form the framework for an enquiry.

The view from the Left tends not to employ data systematically gathered from within the media institutions and thus has no attendant practice for its theory. Ironically — because they are interested in power and control within society — there is little or no theory of process, of the practice of power within the institutions themselves, and only when that is achieved will there be any adequate understanding of the relationships between the mass media and the wider political, economic and cultural structures. Analysis has not gone much further than the application of sometimes insightful, sometimes erroneous, inferences. For example, analysis of the social background of media personnel often entails an assumption about 'control'. Wakeford et al (1974) include among a list of "18 selected elite groups", "Controllers of the Media", "The Governors of the BBC, Members of the ITA and the proprietors of the seven national daily newspapers". Whether these do or do not constitute a distinctive social grouping is not the point here. What is interesting is that the concept of elite is so readily attached to a concept of control which would necessarily embody an understanding of decision making procedures, which is absent from their analysis. Thus it might be interesting to know that all these people came from certain sorts of background — indeed it would be amazing if they didn't have a number of distinguishing characteristics, since members of these bodies are selected from the usual Civil Service criteria of the 'great and good' — but it logically tells us nothing about their actual function. This reflects a general feature of studies which employ a ruling class/elite analysis of society and its institutions where a detailed picture of the social composition of assumed controlling elites
necessarily entails assumptions as to their actual functioning, their actual possession of power and their use of it to further their own specific class/elite interests. The importance of this point can be seen in Wakeford et al's inclusion of the Governors of the BBC. As can be seen from the discussion in Chapter 6, one of the principal themes in the history of the BBC has been the lack of control which the Governors actually have. The flaw - and it is a central difficulty with many elite studies - is to only consider formal status and to fail to account for informal processes. These is no logical connection between social composition and decision making procedures, nor between social origins and social behaviour and if we wish to situate the media within the social process, and to explain the way the one relates to and is influenced by the other, it is, or has been argued, to an analysis of decisions and behaviour which we must look.

At the same time it is at least arguable that the Fourth Estate view is unreal in its assessment of the extent to which the 'logics' of other social structures actually impinge upon the political broadcaster. As we shall see in the next chapter, immense formal power over broadcasting accrues to the State, and one would also need to point out that most sections of the 'Press' now form parts of large industrial combinations. Protestation that that power is never used or that the interests of the parent company are unimportant may be either true or remarkably naive, but they are certainly unsubstantiated.

The view of the socially responsible Fourth Estate is then divorced from the more fundamental processes which have underpinned the development of the media. Its implication within the present context ignores division within the media - for example, the historical division between quality (content of record) and light (entertainment). It also avoids the observation that the media, having been a vehicle for the political
assertion of a middle class - and therefore in their time reformist - now form the voice piece of an established class. Thus one could understand that they may be divorced from the established political structures, but this does ignore the fact that they still exist within the social milieu of the urban middle classes. There is then, of course, that area of publishing and broadcasting whose purpose is not the articulation of a class world view, but rather whose purpose is derived from the entrepreneurial activity of that class, that is the media as commercial enterprises. They will reproduce that class's world view as a consequence of their activity and not as a purpose of their activity.

What one needs to consider is the differential between intended and unintended consequences. Are the media attached to State/commercial interests and therefore fulfilling a clearly purposive function, or are they inhibited by a number of occupational routines and practices which effectively mean that they serve dominant interests, or are they detached from, and intended by the logic of a liberal democratic society to hold to account, those interests? The evidence of this thesis will be geared to the argument that while the second proposition holds a good deal of attraction, that is, that what is evidenced is a kind of historical or evolutionary coincidence between the paths taken by political broadcasting and the needs and interests of dominant institutions within society, one has also to allow for a good deal of actual autonomy and also of real pressure/subordination. What I think will also become clear is that the pressure from the external environment is internalised within the taken for granted practices of programme making.

Discussion of the broadcasting polarities of autonomous institutions and State/commercial appendages obscures the complexities of the relationship between the internal and external features of programme making and has tended to detract from a discussion of the way in which
programmes are made - and in the context of the overall discussion of broadcasting in society, unless one is talking about programming, the whole discussion of media institutions is futile. One could not discuss the school in the context of a political sociology of British society without considering what happens in the classroom, because whatever it is that schools 'do' to children they 'do it' largely in the classroom situation. Neither could one have a 'theory' of 'the classroom', the framework would be provided by a discussion of, for example, socialization. Thus one could seek an integration of the treatment of data gathered within the classroom and a discussion of socialization so that the former informs the latter. Thus, to draw the parallel with the media, one is placing the discussion of the programme production process within the broader discussion of a political sociology of broadcasting. Just as one cannot have a 'theory' of the media institutions per se - something recognised by Murdock and Golding (1974) who sought to establish their discussion within the framework of a political economy of western capitalism - so one could not have a 'theory' of production. Rather one has at some point to link it to the broader framework of the political sociology of British society. It is for this reason that the two positions which I have drawn, though opposed, are both vitally important because they both seek to place the media institution - though not the production process - within the general structure of British political, economic and social life. By thinking in terms of the relationship between the programme making process and the much larger question of, for example, legitimation, one would be more able to treat the media as integrated within the wider dynamics of a social process.

While both views implicitly recognise that no view of the situation of the media is possible without a 'theory' of society, neither view has adequately recognised the necessary connections between a theory and its practice, or 'empirical validation' for those who deny the Marxist
implications of 'practice'. Until the linkage is made, such views of broadcasting are at best interesting propositions and at worse ill-founded beliefs.

What we need to understand are the internal and external dynamics of programme making rather than the mere appearances. The position adopted here, though it stems from a different academic tradition and is employed in a different context, is not dissimilar to that adopted by Silverman (1968) in calling for a more actor-based perspective and methodology and a more ready recognition of the presence and role of an 'environment'.

Thus knowledge of production should in the first place stem from the perspectives and experiences of those directly involved. To use a simple but relevant example, it is no good pointing to pressures from advertisers and politicians if one cannot at the same time show some kind of response or display how this is integrated within the activity of the programme maker. Neither, however, can one sustain a view that programming operates only at the level of the individual dispositions of producers because Mr. Wilson, to use a crude but obvious example, is, much to their regret, a keenly felt part of the total production environment. Wilson's rage at a broadcaster may not immediately or directly impinge upon that broadcaster but may entail a series of events which are of consequence for that broadcaster in the long run. The particular formulation of those 'events' are then the visible, though subtle, representation of a system of power.

It is necessary then to consider the individual perspectives and life experiences of producers - in the sense in which Becker has stated in discussing the 'naturalistic perspective' in sociology (1971, 64) that "to understand why someone behaves as he does you must understand how it looked to him, what he thought he had to contend with, what alternatives he saw open to him" - and the way that shapes, and is shaped by, their
functioning within an internal context with its own (or that of its controllers') perspectives, goals, resources, etc. At the same time one has to consider the outer or external context with which the inner is in constant and involved contact. The premise of this thesis is that one can in fact begin to make a number of clarifying statements about the situation of political broadcasting and therefore about the nature of the political material with which the bulk of the population are presented. By inference it will tell us much also about the institutional arrangements which characterise the British social structure and therefore go some way towards resolving the implied conflicts between the 'liberal democratic' view and the 'elite' views of the situation of broadcasting in general and political broadcasting in particular. By confronting empirically the numerous statements made from entrenched and opposed traditions, one can establish a degree of understanding of the actual as opposed to the assumed determinations in the making of political television. Focussing on the relationship between the internal features of programme production, from the perspectives of those involved, and their relationship with external factors, will I think draw attention to a number of difficulties in the view of the 'autonomous' institution by indicating that programme material is produced by a number of processes and frameworks which to an extent at least inhibit the assumed act of communication. At the same time, the perspective will also indicate that the view that the broadcasting organizations are effectively within the grip of the dominant institutions within society is, in the present context, unnecessarily simple and crude, notably in terms of the imputation of purposive action, rooted in elite interests, as accounting for programme content.

The subject of this thesis is defined by a problem within a problem. The first involves the nature of the political television process, and this implies the second problem, one which is at the heart of the
political process, the problem of order - the means by which a political system functions and, most crucially, sustains its own existence. Does analysis of the nature of production lead to a conclusion that broadcasting fits within a view of the political system within which political television provides the necessary linkage between individuals and groups at all levels of society? Most importantly a to and fro of information and response between leaders and led? Or does the analysis lead to the conclusion that broadcasting as political communication serves dominant interests within society rather than the abstracted requirements of an abstract entity, the political system? The discussion of political television is then a 'battle', and a familiar one at that, between the tenets of pluralist views of liberal democracy and Millsian/Marxist views of an elite ridden society.

There are then a number of features to the approach. If political sociology is the study of "political phenomena through the use of sociological concepts and theories" (Crewe 1974), then this work forms a political sociology in that it focusses on the relationship between occupational processes within programme making, interaction with other social institutions and their impact on the most significant form of political communication, television. Beginning with a framework provided by two apparently counterposed views of the situation of broadcasting an attempt is made to integrate a wider concern with the overall social context of political television with an assessment of the internal operations of programme making. The broad implications of 'theory' are confronted with a number of conclusions based on evidence systematically gathered.
SECTION TWO

THE FORMAL CONTEXT
CHAPTER FOUR

THE FORMAL CONTEXT OF POLITICAL TELEVISION
This chapter deals with the many formal restraints which operate on political television. The formal context consists of two main areas: rulings which relate directly to political television, and rulings which relate indirectly. The rather loose term 'ruling' has to be employed here since many of the factors of the formal context, though important, do not have the force of statute and thus cannot be described in legalistic terms.

1. DIRECT RULINGS

George Wedell (1968, 75-6) observes that a tremendous de jure authority accrues to the government of the day vis-a-vis the broadcasting organizations. They have well within their gift the very right of the organizations to exist. He notes, perhaps rather astutely, that "it is a measure of the extent to which the Government in this country proceeds by convention, that this de jure situation is not appreciated by the majority of the citizens". This power is readily apparent in the various regulations which surround political broadcasting (though this thesis is about television in this area the rules apply equally to radio): they are contained within the Charter (1964) and the Licence and Agreement (1969) to broadcast of the BBC; the Independent Television Act 1964; the Representation of the People Act 1969, and a number of informal agreements established between the broadcasting organizations, the government and the main opposition parties.

The British Broadcasting Corporation is a body incorporated by Royal Charter. It is required under the terms of that Charter to acquire a Licence from the government in order to broadcast its programmes, in accordance with the Wireless Telegraphy Acts of 1949. The Licence and Agreement currently in operation were signed on the 7th November 1969. Within them are a number of rulings on the conduct of political broadcasting. Clause 13(2) orders that the BBC broadcast,

"an impartial account day by day prepared by professional reporters of the proceedings in both Houses of the United Kingdom Parliament".

Clause 13(4) provides that the Minister,
"may from time to time by notice in writing require the Corporation to refrain at any specified time or at all times from sending any matter or matter of any class specified in such notice".

This is obviously a general ruling which could apply to any area of broadcast material, but the BBC Handbook (1973, 174) notes the existence of a 'Prescribing Memorandum', sent by the Minister and which attached to and elaborates on Clause 13(h),

"(1) requiring the BBC to refrain from expressing its own opinions on current affairs or on matters of public policy; (2) forbidding the transmission of television images of a very brief duration 'which might convey a message to or influence the minds of an audience without being aware, or fully aware, of what has been done' "

The first prescription here expressly denies the BBC any right to editorialize, and the second prescribes the use of subliminal messages. Though the prescriptions are non-statutory in the sense that they are only contained within a memorandum, they were produced by a Minister using the powers vested in him by the Charter and by the Licence and Agreement. The same memorandum notes assurances given first by Lord Normanbrook to the then Postmaster General in a letter dated 19 June 1964, and reaffirmed by Lord Hill, that the

"BBC's chairman recognized the BBC's duty to treat controversial subjects with due impartiality and to ensure that, so far as possible, programmes should not offend against good taste or decency, or be likely to encourage crime and disorder, or be offensive to public feeling."  

While these are clearly self-imposed restrictions, "their formal communication by the BBC's chairman to the Minister and the latter's formal acknowledgement of them have invested them with something of the nature of a prescription" (BBC, 1973, 174).

1. Street (1972, 81) makes the point that the IBA is expressly precluded from putting out subliminal messages, whereas the BBC isn't. He may be making a fine legal point but it is obviously the case that the Prescribing Memorandum specifically precludes the use of subliminal messages.

2. The importance of this prescription to the whole of political broadcasting in Britain is dealt with in Chapter 5. The precise 'meaning' which Lord Hill attaches to impartiality - the often quite partial nature of impartiality - is also considered in Chapter Six.
Clause 13(3) requires that "The Corporation shall, whenever so requested by any Minister of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, at the Corporation's own expense, send from all or any of the stations any announcement (with a visual image of any picture or object mentioned in the announcement if it is sent from the television stations or any of them) which such Minister may request the Corporation to broadcast; and shall also, whenever so requested by any such Minister in whose opinion an emergency has arisen or continues, at the like expense send as aforesaid any other matter which such Minister may request the Corporation to broadcast". There is an important addendum to the Clause which is that the Corporation, if instructed to broadcast a message,

"may at its discretion announce or refrain from announcing that it is sent at the request of a named Minister".

It is widely held that this is sufficient to deter the use of the Clause by any Government, though it must also be noted that the powers of the clause have never been used anyhow, and the whole question is somewhat academic. It is difficult to see why any government would be particularly concerned about it being known that the imposition of the order has taken place since the circumstances would presumably be of such major political importance that any loss of face entailed in such an announcement would be of little consequence. As the Corporation is quick to point out the Clause is by no means as restrictive as it first appears in that it only incorporated existing practice; government announcements always receive space in news bulletins and more routine announcements, for example, police messages, are arranged informally between the department concerned and the BBC Newsroom. Street (1972, 77) makes the observation the the requirement refers "not to statements about government policy, but to official announcements; for example, the calling up of certain classes of reserves ...". On a strict reading of the clause Street is clearly wrong, his point failing to take any account of the first part of the Clause which only refers to 'any announcement'.

The power of the Minister, for example in the face of intransigence on
the part of the broadcasting organization lies in Clause 19(1) of the Licence, which effectively empowers the Minister to commandeer all BBC facilities, and in 23(1) which provides for the revocation of the Licence by the Minister without necessarily having the approval of Parliament. The formal context of the BBC in the area of political broadcasting is loose and ill-defined, and one point of view would see it as resting on 'trust', "The policy of impartiality was conceived and initiated by the British Broadcasting Company. It was seen as a positive ideal, valued in itself and appropriate to a body which was based fundamentally on a motive of public service and providing information available to all. This principle of impartiality was seen also as an indispensable condition of a necessary advance, on the basis of public confidence, towards the freedom of the broadcasting service to deal independently with news, events and opinion, as to which broadcasting was at the beginning subject to many restrictions. The BBC has regarded this policy as a trust ever since and has never wished to alter it."  

Though the precise details of what the BBC can and cannot do are effectively missing from the founding documents, there is a firm indication of the possible retribution should it veer from the paths of righteousness. The sense of their being a relative lack of limitations was described by Greene when Director General. He declared, "The BBC in fact operates under one of the least restricting legal instruments known in Britain, namely a Royal Charter, supported by a Licence to operate from the Postmaster General. These two instruments lay down a relatively small number of things which the BBC must not do ... For the rest the BBC is left to conduct its affairs to the broad satisfaction of the British people (and, in the last analysis of Parliament) under the guidance and legal responsibility of Governors" (Greene, 1969, 98).

Prescriptions entailed within the empowering documents of independent television in relation to the coverage of political affairs, are modelled on

the arrangements which exist for the BBC, the difference being that they are actually articulated in statute. The relevant points are contained within the Television Act 1964. This was described by O'Higgins (1972, p123) as imposing "considerable legal control and restriction over the matter allowed to appear."

Clause 3.1 (paras b and e) states:

"It shall be the duty of the Authority to satisfy themselves that, so far as possible, the programmes broadcast by the Authority comply with the following requirements, that is to say...

b. that a sufficient amount of time in the programmes is given to news features and that all news given in the programmes (in whatever form) is presented with due accuracy and impartiality;...

e. that due impartiality is preserved on the part of the persons providing the programmes as respects matters of political or industrial controversy or relating to current public policy."

Appreciating that impartiality, with the concomitant implication of balance, is often not possible within the context of a single programme, the Act makes a provision that in applying paragraph (e) a series of programmes may be considered as a whole.

Clause 3.2 states, that it:

"Shall be the duty of the Authority to secure the exclusion from the programmes broadcast by them of all expressions of their own opinion as to any of the matters referred to in paragraph (e) of (subsection one), or of the opinion as to any such matters a) of any of their members or officers, or b) of any programme contractor, or c) in the case of a programme contractor being a firm, of any partner therein, or d) in the case of a programme contractor being a body corporate, of any director or officer thereof or person having control thereof."

Clause 3.3 bans the use of any subliminal messages.

These points then relate to a number of demands made of the members of the Authority, but the Television Act also specifies a number of powers which the government possesses. Clause 18.1 states that the,

"Postmaster General and any other Minister of the Crown may, if it appears to him necessary or expedient to do so in connection with his functions as such, at any time by notice in writing require the Authority to broadcast ... any announcement ..."
and 18.3 adds that the,

"Postmaster General may at any time by notice in writing require the Authority to refrain from broadcasting any matter or classes of matter specified in the notice ..."

Street (1972) argues that though the Minister may require the ITA (now IBA) to refrain from broadcasting material as he sees fit, as he can with the BBC, unlike the latter "non-compliance does not threaten the power to broadcast" because though the IBA has a licence to broadcast from the Minister it "differs from that of the BBC in that it is silent on programme content and therefore makes no express provision for revocation on non-compliance with directives". The Minister, Street claims, could at most obtain a court order of mandamus which would require the Authority to comply, the members of the Authority then being held in contempt if they failed to do so.

These then are the rules which are bound within the main body of founding legislation. The most interesting features are that the prescriptions applied to the IBA clearly derive from the experiences of the BBC, but that the latters expressed commitments are less than those of the Television Act. Perhaps the most significant and certainly the most frequently cited difference between the two situations is that the IBA's commitment to impartiality - the concept which is at the very heart of political broadcasting - is statutory. The BBC's commitment is more oblique in that while the Licence forbids editorializing the concept of impartiality is embodied in organizational practice rather than in statutory inhibition. The closest the notion comes to articulation is in the unpublished memoranda which attach to the Charter and in the documents popularly known as the 'Principles and Practices'. Two main documents need to be considered, Principles and Practices in News and Current Affairs which is issued as an internal memorandum by the Editor News and Current Affairs; and Principles and Practices in Documentary Programmes.

The former memorandum espouses the need for impartiality and balance, the operation of which enable the BBC to sustain a non-editorial posture
(para 15). The balance need not, the memo continues, be sustained within any one programme and can in fact be achieved over a period in a number of programmes. Paragraph 17 of the memo outlines the position which the BBC has sustained vis-a-vis the exigencies of political crises. This states that as between the party battle the BBC is impartial, but as between the political order within which that legitimate battle takes place and other political orders the BBC is not impartial.

The second memorandum steers an unsteady line between the sometimes incompatible needs of impartiality and creative responsibility. It denies that the producer of a documentary has any right to interject his own opinions into the presentation of his content, particularly in the realms of controversial broadcasting. At the same time it implies that in some situations the producer may indeed interject his own views:

"such commitments would not be acceptable in areas of high controversy but only in circumstances where the producer's stature as a programme-maker qualifies him to make a personal visual or artistic statement on some subject in which wholly black or white views do not exist" (Source: Smith, 1974).

Though these are internal memoranda, the interpretation is as if they were statutory, and one can conclude that on any reading the formal context as found within the basic founding legislation is demanding and restrictive.

A number of other features of the direct formal context need to be examined: these can be dealt with under the following headings: 1. ministerial broadcasts; 2. budget broadcasts; 3. party political broadcasts; 4. election broadcasts; 5. parliamentary affairs.

1. **Ministerial Broadcasts**

In February 1947 the BBC, the Government and the Opposition reached a number of agreements on the rules for covering politics which were formalized in an *Aide Memoire*, published as an appendix to the Report of the
Broadcasting Committee of 1949 (Beveridge). Though it has been amended on a number of occasions since that date (1948, 1955, 1969) the side memoire has provided the basic pattern for much of political broadcasting since 1947.

Ministerial broadcasts are ones in which the initiative comes from the government and in which the speaker is a Minister. The 1947 Aide Memoire stated that "In view of their responsibilities for the care of the nation the Government should be able to use the wireless from time to time for Ministerial broadcasts which, for example, are purely factual or explanatory of legislation or administrative policies approved by Parliament; or in the nature of appeals to the nation to co-operate in national policies such as fuel economy or recruiting, which require the active participation of the public. Broadcasts on state occasions also come under the same category. It will be incumbent on Ministers when making such a broadcast to be as impartial as possible, in which case there will be no question of a reply by the Opposition. Where, however, the Opposition think that a government broadcast is controversial, it will be open to them to take the matter up through the usual channels with a view to a reply." This meant that the BBC decided whether the Opposition would have the right of a reply. The revised aide memoire in April 1969 develops two categories of Ministerial broadcast. The first is where Ministers wish to "explain legislation or administrative policies approved by Parliament, or to seek the co-operation of the public where there is a general consensus of opinion" (BBC, 1973, 91). In these cases the BBC undertakes "to provide suitable opportunities for such broadcasts within the regular framework of its programmes; there is no right of reply by the Opposition". (BBC, 1973, 91). The second category constitutes occasions when the Prime Minister or senior Ministers wish to broadcast to the nation on matters of prime national or international significance. As

1. This followed from the initiative of the Ullswater Committee in 1933 whose Report recognized that political broadcasting had become and would continue to be one of the important duties of the BBC, and recommended procedures to be followed in arranging these broadcasts.

2. The full text of the Aide Memoire is contained in Becker (1967).
these necessarily entail controversial elements there is an unconditional right of reply for the Opposition. If the Opposition chooses to exercise that right of reply a third programme follows in which a discussion is held between representatives of the two main parties and any other party "with electoral support at the time in question a scale not appreciably less than that of the Liberal Party at the date of this Aide Memoire". 2

Though it is assumed that the aide memoire applied as much to independent television, there is a difference between the IBA and the BBC in regard to Ministerial broadcasts. Because the IBA is bound by the Television Act which specifically requires that it ensures the impartiality of programmes dealing with matters of political or industrial controversy or relating to current public policy, it has to examine the script of the Ministerial broadcast beforehand in order to decide for itself whether it is or is not controversial, i.e. impartial. If the broadcast is not impartial the IBA must arrange for the Opposition to broadcast. It is then, presumably, theoretically possible for the Opposition to have a right of reply on ITV and not on BBC. Such an eventuality is unlikely since in practice the IBA follows the general terms of the aide memoire. If ministers are invited to broadcast on any matter then the rulings of the memoire do not apply and the broadcasting organisation is free to allow replies by the Opposition.

B Budget Broadcasts

Time is offered to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and to an Opposition party spokesman to broadcast on successive evenings in Budget week. The broadcasts are on both radio and television.

3 Party Political Broadcasts

These are probably the most wrangled over and perhaps least important aspect of the whole of political broadcasting. In 1966 The Times commented,

1. Quoted in Street, 1972, 79.
"Things are decided by a self-constituted committee of the broadcasting authorities and the three big parties, the former trying to cut down the time and the latter cutting it up. The Committee is responsible to no-one in particular, and having done its work for the immediate future it dissolves, leaving nothing there to take the rap".¹ The Aide Memoire (1947) states, in sections 4 and 5 that:

"A limited number of controversial party political broadcasts shall be allocated to the various parties in accordance with their polls at the last general election. The allocation shall be calculated on a yearly basis and the total number of such broadcasts shall be a matter for discussion between the parties and the BBC. The Opposition parties shall have the right, subject to discussion through the usual channels, to choose the subjects for their own broadcasts. Either side will be free if it wishes to use one of its quota for the purpose of replying to a previous broadcast, but it will be under no necessity to do so. There will, of course, be no obligation on a party to use its whole quota."

The length of time to be allocated to party political broadcasts is arranged by the broadcasting authorities in consultation with the main parties. The allocation within that overall time is decided by the parties, who also choose the subject and the speaker for each broadcast.

In addition to national broadcasts by the main parties, the Scottish and Welsh National Parties have, since 1965, been allocated party political broadcasts in Scotland and Wales.

The BBC under its Licence cannot send out any other controversial party broadcasts. The IBA is not legally bound to relay the broadcasts - neither for that matter is the BBC, strictly speaking, bound by law in this matter - and in practice the parties have to fit in with the IBA's own suggested times. Should there be a libel occur within a Party Political Broadcast then the programme company could be liable for damages, since they are broadcast by agreement and not by compulsion. On the other hand, if the libel were contained in a government announcement, that is, one which is theoretically compulsory, then it is unlikely that either the BBC or the IBA could be

¹. Quoted in Higgins, 1972, 131.
Regulations relating to party broadcasts are included in the next feature of the formal context which are rulings that refer to broadcasting during elections.

4. **Electoral Broadcasting**

From what we know of the media's effect on political behaviour, one time in which their influence is particularly limited is during the partisan battles of the election period. Yet ironically these periods are the most jealously guarded and severely prescribed in the whole of political broadcasting.

As late as 1953 the broadcasting organisations refused to even risk 'influencing' the votes of the electorate by covering the course of any particular election in their news bulletins let alone in any special discussion programmes. For example, during the 1955 election all current affairs programmes were cancelled, and even a drama which was thought to have political connotations was cancelled. The broadcast of an Oxford Union debate was put off until after the election "on the grounds that it might bear on some elections issue" (Becker, 1967). The debate was that 'the methods of science are destructive to the myths of religion'.

From 1924 to 1958 the party political broadcasts comprised the only radio and television coverage of elections campaigns in Britain. This extreme sensitivity to the role of broadcasting in elections underlies the rulings that apply to electoral broadcasting now.¹

Prior to a General Election arrangements for party election broadcasts are agreed upon by the Committee on Political Broadcasting, with representatives from the three main parties and from the BBC and IBA. The broadcasting authorities as with party political broadcasts in non-election periods, make available a certain amount of time which is then allocated

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¹ For footnote ¹, see next page.
The main breakthrough in the coverage of elections came with the Rochdale by-election. As we have seen, up until 1953 political broadcasting during elections effectively meant party political broadcasting. There was little or no questioning of the laws governing political broadcasting or "of the cozy entente between broadcasters and the major parties". In 1958 Granada decided that they would cover the by-election in Rochdale on 12th February. The company argued that if all the candidates agreed to an equitable distribution of time, such coverage would come within the law.

Granada managed to enlist the support of the local party associations, and even managed to overcome opposition by the Labour and Conservative association to granting time to the Liberals - the latter accepting half as much time on the Labour and Conservative candidates. As Seymour-Ure (1974, 211) notes, after the coverage, "The heavens will not fall: and 'soon it became normal practice to request by-elections on the air, as well as to broadcast debates between the candidates, provided all of these agreed to appear'". The Times of 23rd June, 1958 noted that "The day has gone when the argument was likely to turn academically on the principle whether or not a general election would be televised at all while it is on progress. At Rochdale - the parties have been coaxed and chivvied into committing themselves too deeply to make possible a return to the BBC's old safe course law for political broadcasting, or even to scruple over-nicely about the legal snare of the Television Act, 1954, or the RPA 1949 ......."
by the parties themselves. The distribution of the broadcasts in the
eight elections in the period from the end of the war to 1974 are contained
in the following table:

**PARTY ELECTION BROADCASTS, 1945-74.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Radio Total length (mins.)</th>
<th>Television Total length (mins.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Con.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.250ª</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lab.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.250ª</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lib.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.100ª</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comm.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Common Wealth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Con.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lab.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lib.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comm.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Con.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lab.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lib.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Con.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lab.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lib.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Con.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lab.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lib.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Con.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lab.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lib.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Con.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lab.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lib.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sco. Nat. *</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welsh Nat. *</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Street (1972, 31) points out that the party representatives effectively dominate the Broadcasting Committee, "the broadcasting representatives allow their views to be overridden by the political members". He continues, "In the 1970 election ITN's News at Ten had to be cut down to make way for politicians' speeches; audience participation shows in which politicians were questioned by the audience were banned, and confrontations of opponents and evaluation of party speeches by political commentators were prohibited". He is clearly exaggerating here, the points he raises reflecting the scheduling procedures of the ITV companies rather than a deliberate imposition on the news time of ITN by the politicians; and the ban reflecting the refusal by party politicians to take part in audience
participation shows, or in direct confrontation with opponents, which though a fine distinction is an important one. Harison notes, "The BBC-ITV decision to shift the broadcasts to 10 p.m. (from 9.10 p.m.) to facilitate joint scheduling was accepted without enthusiasm, for it meant smaller audiences". There were, however, a number of restrictions agreed on by the committee that year: no live audiences, no Sunday programmes and full consultation over invitations to speakers and the choice of constituencies for survey.

The participation of parliamentary candidates in broadcast programmes is governed by electoral law. Section 63(1) of the Representation of the People Act, 1949, declared that,

"No expense shall, with a view to promoting or procuring the election of a candidate at an election, be incurred by any person other than the candidate, his election agent and persons authorized in writing by the election agent or account - a) of holding public meetings or organizing any public display; or b) of issuing advertisements, circulars or publication; or c) of otherwise presenting to the electors the candidate or his views or the extent or nature of his backing or disparaging other candidates: Provided that paragraph (c) of this subsection shall not - (i) restrict the publication of any matter relating to the election in a newspaper or other periodical; or (ii) apply to any expense not exceeding in the aggregate the sum of ten shillings which may be incurred by an individual and are not incurred in pursuance of a plan suggested by or connected with others, or to expenses incurred by any person travelling or in living away from home or similar personal expenses".

This effectively meant that candidates would have to include in their overall expenses those incurred in broadcasting - transmission and production costs - and this would clearly place him well above the limits on election budgets. If he didn't pay the costs then the companies would be involved in an illegal practice by facilitating his transgression of the electoral laws. In 1959 Grenada, following their success with the 1958 by-election, simply decided to ignore the problem, even though a strict reading of the law forbade any appearance by candidates, other than in the party political.

broadcasts. They had been advised by Sir Ivor Jennings in August 1959 that:

"1. No candidate should appear on television unless all the other candidates in his constituency are prepared to appear;

2. All such candidates should appear in the same programme, each of them speaking for x minutes in an order determined by lot;

3. Candidates should be instructed that they must speak judiciously about the "issues" of the election which appear to them to be important on the national plane, and must not address their constituencies direct; and

4. Granada should make it plain, preferably through the announcer at the beginning of each session, that the candidates are explaining their opinions to viewers generally, because it is just as important to have good back-benchers as it is to have good front-benchers."

It was agreed that candidates could appear in non-constituency programmes so long as they did not mention their own constituency.

A problem always lay in the situation when leading politicians appeared in party political broadcasts: could it be inferred that in allowing the politicians to appear the broadcasting authorities, by not giving time to the other candidates in the particular politicians' constituency, had aided and abetted the commission of an electoral offence under Section 63 of the Representation of the People Act 1949? The appearance of the Prime Minister or other Ministers would, under the Act (63,1 (b)), constitute "presenting to the electors the candidate" and "his views".

In 1964 this ambivalent position was challenged in the Courts. The post-Hugh McDermid stood under his real name, Dr. C. M. Grieve, as a Communist candidate in Sir Alec Douglas Home's constituency. After the election Grieve claimed that Home's appearance in 5 party political broadcasts violated the Representation of the People Act 1949. By applying ordinary principles for the interpretation of statutes the BBC and the ITA

had occurred expenditure in violation of the Act, and by appearing, Home had aided and abetted the offence. The Election Court ruled against the petitioner on the grounds that the subjective intention of the BBC and ITV was to give information to the public rather than to support the election of Home and that "since Parliament did not specifically prohibit the system of allocating time for party political broadcasts in the RPA 1949 when the practice had existed for some time, it should be held that Parliament did not mean for the Act to make the practice illegal."  

The law was revised under the Representation of the People Act 1959, Section 9 which gave broadcasting the same exemption as the press in regard to electoral expenses. Section 9, which came into force on 11th August 1959, provided the central feature of regulations relating to elections and needs to be treated in some length.

Section 9 states:

"Pending a parliamentary or local government election it shall not be lawful for any item about the constituency or electoral area to be broadcast from a television or other wireless transmitting station in the United Kingdom if any of the persons who are for the time being candidates at the election takes part in the item and the broadcast is not made with his consent; and where an item about a constituency or electoral area is so broadcast pending a parliamentary or local government election there, then if the broadcast either is made before the latest time for delivery of nomination papers, or is made after that time but without the consent of any candidate remaining validly nominated, any person taking part in the item for the purpose of promoting or procuring his election shall be guilty of an illegal practice, unless the broadcast is made without his consent."

This is very clear then that if a candidate appears in a programme and his opponents are not given the opportunity to appear, or refuse to give their consent for him to appear then the candidate and the organization is guilty of an illegal offence. However, a vital additional clause (9.4) states that,

"Section 63(1) of the RPA 1949 (which subject to the exceptions in the proviso, makes certain illegal expenses when incurred.

1. quoted in Becker, 1967."
without authority from a candidate's election agent) shall be amended by inserting in paragraph (i) of the proviso, after the words 'a newspaper or other periodical', the words 'or in a broadcast made by the BBC or the ITA'."

This additional phrase greatly strengthened the position of broadcasting in covering the election.

Clearly the Act requires a good deal of clarification as to what is actually saying. The 'pending' period for a general election extends from the date of the dissolution of Parliament or "any earlier time at which Her Majesty's intention to dissolve Parliament is announced" to the close of the poll. A by-election pending period is also from the date of the issue of the writ to the close of the poll; and local government elections' pending begins 5 weeks before election day, and for a local election to fill a casual vacancy, from the date of publishing the notice of the election. 'Taking part' in a broadcast is defined as involving active and conscious participation by the candidate. Thus a news item read by an announcer about a candidates activities is not affected by the Act, nor is a film of the candidate making a speech addressed to his constituents deemed as 'taking part'. If, however, the candidate is addressing a television or radio audience through a camera or a microphone, for example, if he is interviewed by a reporter on a doorstep - then he can be held to be taking part, and the 'consent provisions' must be applied. A constituency survey - a familiar form of political television during elections - is not affected if either silent film or extracts from speeches are used. If, however, the candidates are interviewed they are deemed to be 'taking part'. A studio discussion of candidates has to include all the candidates or at least be agreed by all the candidates. From any candidate, who is not appearing, written consent had to be obtained for the others appearing.

Between the start of the pending period and the close of the nominations no candidate may take part in any broadcast about a constituency or electoral area. Candidates may take part in current affairs programmes so long as they do not mention constituency matters or their own candidacy.
The logic behind this restriction is that before nominations and it is impossible to know who all the candidates in the election are, and therefore one could not obtain consent from them all for the broadcast. Broadcasts can be made by, for example, the Prime Minister in a broadcast speech so long as he didn't refer to issues in his own constituency.

What is the situation of the operation of the news process, and the use of ordinary news values, during these restricted periods? The interpretation of the Act by the broadcasting authorities is that speeches may be used in news broadcasts (bulletins and news magazines) if they have a genuine news value. This is the case even if the effect may be to help one candidate more than another on any one day. In national news reporting of the whole election balance is maintained over a period though not necessarily within one bulletin. The respective share of time in news reports should, over the course of the whole election, be in accord with the latest ratio agreed by the parties and the broadcasting authorities for party broadcasts. In the reporting of an election in a specific constituency, candidates must be treated with parity over the period as a whole and particularly on the final day before the poll. On polling day at any election reference cannot be made to election issues, and in a general election (and the GLC elections) reporting until the polls close is restricted to factual news about polling. At by-elections and local government elections, however, factual news about polling can also include the reason for the election and other details.

5. Parliamentary Affairs

In 1964, the Governors of the BBC established what was to become known as the '14 day rule'. This effectively meant that the BBC would not broadcast discussions on any subject which was to be debated within the next fortnight or on legislation which was already before the House (Seymour-Ure, 1974, 141). The consequences of this was that programmes were

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1. This account is based on internal documents.
continually being replaced or withdrawn. The restraint was formalised within the aide mémoire of 1947 and became a mandatory restraint in 1955 (Street, 1972, 83). The rule was suspended for a trial period of six months in December 1956, after which time it was suspended indefinitely. The broadcasting organisations are now free to arrange any discussions and talks on any political matter. The BBC is of course, under a statutory obligation to broadcast an account of parliamentary proceedings when the House is sitting.

What these various rulings and restrictions 'mean' is that political broadcasters are not only involved in the trilogy of prescriptions that broadcasting must inform, educate and entertain its audience. They must also be 'fair' and 'impartial' in the presentation of news and all controversial matters, and must not express any opinion of their own on political matters. These are, however, general rules the interpretation of which in terms of programme policy is left to the broadcasting organizations.

Apart from these direct rulings which apply to political broadcasting, there are a number of other regulations, mainly statutory, as part of their overall application touch on the activities of the broadcasting of political material. Of central concern here are laws of libel and contempt, the official secrets Act and the 'D-Notice' System, and it is to a treatment of this indirect formal context that I now turn.

2. INDIRECT RULINGS

1. Defamation & the Law of Libel

In discussing this area of law - a remarkably complex one - it is necessary to include broadcasting within the broad category of the Press.

It is a civil offence to make untrue statements about another person where those statements are also defamatory, and it is a criminal offence if those statements have a tendency to lead to a breach of the peace. It is
not enough, according to Street, that the plaintiff is made to look ridiculous or a laughing stock, the statement has to be an attack on his character or reputation. Thus TW3 could satirise without creating heavy libel suits for the BBC (Street, 1972). Though "the difference between libel and slander is unimportant" (Street, 1972, 143) libel can be seen as consisting of statements of a more permanent form, whereas slanderous statements are transient and temporary. ¹ Seymour-Ure (1968, 129) provides a useful working definition of libel:

"... a defamatory statement reflecting upon a man's character or reputation, which tends to lower him in the estimation of right thinking members of society; or which tends to bring him into hatred, ridicule, contempt, fear, dislike or disesteem with society generally."

The complainant must prove that a statement fits one of these definitions, that the statement clearly referred to him and that the defendant published it. A number of other provisos need to be made. A group cannot be libelled; if an individual consents to publication he cannot then sue; it is not necessary for a statement to suggest the plaintiff is at fault for it to be libellous — an allegation of insanity, for example, is libellous even though no blame is imputed; secondary and ironic meanings of a statement may make it libellous (Seymour-Ure, 1963).

A number of possible lines of defence are open to a defendant. The defendant can claim justification, "there is no liability whenever the statement made is substantially true" (Street, 1972, 149). In some situations the defendant can use the defence of 'privilege'. This pertains to coverage - "fair and accurate contemporaneous reports" - of judicial proceedings and verbatim reports of parliamentary papers, to which an 'absolute' privilege attaches. A 'qualified' privilege also attaches to reporting parliamentary debates, to reports of the proceedings of local

1. As is indicated in Chapter 5, the law relating to libel is something which many producers are particularly aware of. The assignment of a reporter to certain types of items often depends on the producer's assessment of the reporters ability to avoid the pit-falls of this area.
authorities, some public bodies and company meetings and to reports of lawful public meetings on matters of public concern. In all these cases, and others, the Press need not worry (subject to qualifications) about being held liable for defamatory statements that it prints. A third line of defence is where comments are made as matters of public interest and which are 'fair' i.e. 'honest', published in good faith and without malice.

Cecil King wrote in 1962 that the "British law of libel is an absolute nightmare to editors and working journalists" (in: Seymour-Ure, 1968, 127). Two main areas of complaint are voiced by the Press about the libel laws. One, that they inhibit them from publishing information which is in the public interest and this therefore denies the whole notion of a free press acting as the public guardian. The second complaint is that the penalties for libel, even though in civil law they are not normally intended to be punitive, can be extremely harsh. The case usually cited is that of the award to John Lewis, a former MP for Bolton, and his company of damages totalling £217,000 against the Daily Mail and the Daily Telegraph. Lord Shawcross, a fervent advocate of more protection for the press against possible libel suits, has made the interesting point that it is not the "substance of the law" which the Press find particularly difficult but rather its "administration and operation". One might read this as implying that the financial consequences of libel suits are excessive.

The position of the press on libel was summed up in The Law and the Press (1965) which was produced by a working party of Justice (the body of lawyers forming the British Committee of the International Commission of Jurists) and the British Committee of the International Press Institute, chaired by Lord Shawcross. They concluded that the "scales appear to have been tilted somewhat against the press ...", and suggested a number of

reforms which they would wish to see instituted - for example, that the Court of Appeal be allowed to vary the damages awarded by a jury. The report pointed out that a good deal of evidence suggested that material was not being published for fear of possible libel suits, even though the information was of real public interest. They cite Sir William Haley; "After 34 years with newspapers and nine years in the BBC, he had to admit that there had been occasion when he thought that things ought to have been published and they had not been published." The early stages of the Profumo Scandal are often cited as an example of this.

Seymour-Ure concludes his assessment of libel and the Press with the assertion that the Press do indeed have much to fear from the libel laws and states, "Even if one thinks the press unduly timid, one may be prepared to acknowledge that nasty experiences with the law have cowed them into timidity and that a change in the law is one way - and perhaps the best - to encourage them" (1968, 138).

The precise implication of the libel laws is difficult to define and Seymour-Ure in arguing that they are inhibiting, states that this is based on rather impressionistic evidence. The laws are certainly ubiquitous, difficult to define, loaded with unknown factors. Street's (1972, 152) interpretation of the meaning of the libel laws for the press is somewhat different from the ones already cited. He states:

"There is little to support the Press view that the law of libel prevents newspapers from commenting on many matters about which the public should know. The Press cannot, for instance, hold the law responsible for its inept and cowardly showing in the Profumo affair; a newspaper which publishes the truth cannot be held liable to the victim, whether he be a Minister or a non-entity".

1. The difficulty is of course that it is often not absolutely certain that one has the truth - sometimes because the operation of the restrictions, for example the Official Secrets Act, bars access to, or use of, necessary evidence.
He acknowledges that excessive damages did create difficulties and inhibitions but points out that in "1965 the Court of Appeal changed its policy; it decided that if it were satisfied that a jury award was so high that it must have been not only compensating the victim for his loss but also punishing the defendant for his wrong, it would always set aside such awards because they would be too high. Since 1965 no high awards against the Press have been approved by the Court of Appeal; yet the Press campaign for lower damages persists as if this radical change in their favour had not occurred" (1972, 152). Street's point is that any change in the libel laws to suit the Press would necessarily entail a destruction of the delicate balance between the protection of the individual's reputation and the preservation of free speech. His general verdict is that if anything the balance has been disturbed and now unfairly favours the Press against the individual.

The problem of course lies in the difficulties of devising libel laws which would prevent unwarranted attacks on individuals but which would also facilitate the political guardianship role which the Press sees as its main function. The importance of the Press in political communication lies in its relationship with the representatives of large institutions - political and industrial - rather than in the coverage of scurrilous 'blood and lust' stories. It must not be forgotten that one of the motivations for libel laws has been the press's own rather unsavoury history in this area. If the press has two important roles, one as political communicator the other as entertainer, the libel laws span, rather awkwardly, both roles.

2. The Official Secrets Act and the 'D' Notice System

The Official Secrets Acts of 1911, 1920 and 1939 are an important restraint on the process of political communication. Section One of the 1911 Act makes it an offence "for any purpose prejudicial to the interests or safety of the State" to make,
"any sketch, plan, model, or note which is calculated to be or might be or is indirectly useful to an enemy; or (to obtain or communicate) to any other person any sketch, plan model, article or note, or other document or information which is calculated to be or might be or is intended to be directly useful to an enemy..."

Section 1(2) of the Act states that even if no specific act shown to be prejudicial to the interests of the State can be proved against any person, he may still be convicted "if from the circumstances of the case, or his conduct, or his known character, as proved, it appears that his purpose was a purpose prejudicial to the interests or safety of the State...".

Section 2(1) of the Act made it an offence for various classes of person, for example, persons given information in confidence by holders of office under the Crown, i.e. Ministers, civil servants, judges, policemen, persons who hold office under the Crown etc., who had obtained information by virtue of belonging that class to communicate it to an unauthorised person, or to retain such information when produced in documentary form.

Section 2(2) makes it an offence to receive information which is known to violate 2(1), unless the individual could show that the communication of the information to him was contrary to his desire.

Only one case was brought under the 1911 Act (Williams, 1965). In 1920 the Coalition Government introduced a strengthened Act. Among its provisions the 1920 Act made it a criminal offence for any person in possession of an official document to neglect to hand it back to the authorities or to the police. Thus if a newspaper obtained an official document it became an offence for them to retain it. The most significant feature of the new act from the point of view of the Press was Section Six which states that individuals had a duty to reveal any information they had about offences or suspected offences under the 1911 and 1920 Acts. This was widely interpreted as meaning that journalists would have to declare their sources of information about government departments, though during the debate on the Bill in the Commons, the Attorney General Sir Gordon Hewitt stated that it was not an attack on press freedom. There were in
fact a number of cases where it did appear to have this effect (see Seymour-Ure, 1968, 152-3) and in 1939 Section Six was amended to limit powers of interrogation to spy enquiries. The complaint has always been of these Acts that not only do they protect national security matters but also information whose significance was that it could harm reputations, prove embarrassing etc. In other words the claim is that the Acts are a pretext for hiding what the Press has a duty and a right to disclose.

One of the features of the Official Secrets Acts is that it is difficult to know precisely to what areas of national security they apply. Street states "if a statute so widely drawn were rigourously applied, the Press would continually be under the threat of prosecution for matters of no importance to security and would be afforded no defence. As is commonly the case, the explanation lies in unpublished unofficial arrangements behind the scenes" (1972, 218). That is, the D-Notice system.

Following the Secrets Act of 1911 it became readily apparent that some system of guidance for the Press would need to be established to see them through the many potential pitfalls of the Act. In 1912 the Admiralty, War Office and Press Committee was established which circulated advisory Defence Notices to the Press. The Committee is now referred to as the Services, Press and Broadcasting Committee, and consists of eleven representatives of the Press and broadcasting and five of government departments. The central figure is the Secretary to the Committee, usually an eminent military gentleman.

The D-Notice must relate to "naval, military, and air matters the publication of which would be prejudicial to the national interest". The procedure was described by Seymour-Ure (1968, 155):

"If a department wishes to have a Notice issued, the normal procedure is for a draft to be settled with the Secretary, who knows from experience the form most likely to meet with Press approval. The draft is then taken personally by the Secretary to available press members of the Committee in London, and if they agree to it it is circulated to all the other press members and then issued by him as a D-Notice, unless there are objections, in the name of the Committee as a whole."
The Committee does not actually meet therefore unless there has been a disagreement or some new principle of restriction is involved. In very urgent cases the Secretary may issue a D-Notice on his own responsibility with the agreement of at least three Press members, who must meet together for the purpose. In form the Notices consist of letters of request circulated confidentially to the editors of newspapers, news broadcasting services and a few specialized periodicals.

The Notices have no power in law, which is not to say that if one were ignored the editor or producer wouldn’t find himself in trouble under the Secrets Act.

3. Contempt of Court and Contempt of Parliament

Contempt of court arises for conduct which tends to bring "the authority and administration of the law into disrespect or to interfere with litigation" (Street, 1972, 155). In certain circumstances it is contempt to criticise a judge, or to report cases to which particular restrictions apply. O'Higgins (1972, 40) defines contempt of court as 'any interference with the proper administration of justice, as by physically interfering with the judge or by publishing any matter which might prejudice a fair trial'.

The aim of the law of criminal contempt is to ensure that the jury enters upon its task free from bias. If there was to be a retrial for example, and material was published prior to the retrial in which "the reliability of one of the leading witnesses in the case (was attacked) members of the jury at the retrial might well have been prejudiced by recalling what they had read" in the article (Street, 1972, 156). It is not the case either that contempt can only be committed once an arrest has been made and committal proceedings begun. It is sufficient that the committal proceedings be imminent. The problem then of course is how one knows that committal proceedings are imminent. In 1967 David Frost interviewed Dr Anil Savundra about his activities as head of a large insurance company, only seven days before his arrest and subsequent conviction. At the time of the interview, given voluntarily by Savundra there were no actual proceedings but following his conviction Savundra
appealed on the grounds that pre-trial publicity in the press and on
television had prejudiced a fair trial. Though the appeal was unsuccessful,
Lord Justice Salmon in issuing the judgement on behalf of the Court Appeal
severely criticised the Frost interview. He declared:

"At this time it must surely have been obvious to everyone
that he was about to be arrested and tried on charges of
gross fraud. It must not be supposed that the proceedings
to commit for contempt of court can be instituted only
in respect of matters published after proceedings have
actually begun. No one should think that he is safe from
commital for contempt of court, if, knowing or having good
reason to believe that criminal proceedings are imminent,
he chooses to publish matters calculated to prejudice a
fair trial." (Source: O'Higgins, 1972, 42).

Frost of course claimed that he didn't know that proceedings were
imminent. Nevertheless Salmon's point was crystal clear — any
future repetition of 'trial by television' prior to the real thing would
result in a contempt. There is nothing to stop investigatory journalism
in this ruling so long as proceedings are not imminent. The question thus
becomes a judgement of when the point of imminence commences.

Contempt can arise then through the publication of material which is
likely to prejudice a fair trial. Where there is no jury and the judge
sit alone the rulings are more relaxed. Street states "... in 1960 ...
a newspaper report published between conviction and appearl which if
published before trial, would have been prejudicial because of its likely
effect on a jury was not a contempt because experienced judges of the
Court of Criminal Appeal who would alone decide the appeal could be relied
on to be completely uninfluenced by such a press report" (1972, 161).

Criticism of judges is a difficult area, fine distinctions being
made between fair comment on the nature and meaning of his judgements
(cannot be held in contempt) and imputation of improper motives, bias
etc. (contempt).

The Criminal Justice Act 1967, section 3, makes it unlawful to publish
any details of committal proceedings except details of the court, the names
of the parties, details of the charges and the decision whether to commit. The evidence may not be published until the committal proceedings have ended, and not until the end of the trial if they are committed. These restrictions do not apply to the trial proper. Restrictions do not apply to reporting proceedings which take place in chambers. There are a number of other restrictions, for example, the publication of the details of divorce cases. Since 1965 the Press has had the right to cover hearings for contempt which prior to that date had been held in the absence of the Press and public.

Contempt of court is an extraordinary difficult area to define and its imprecisions are no doubt responsible for the level of uncertainty in its use among journalists. Perhaps the other important feature apart from the level of vagueness is that it is in essence judge defined law. The power to hold people in contempt was adopted summarily by judges in the 17th century, effectively establishing a convention with all the permanence and strength of a statute.

Contempt of Parliament is not noticeably important in the affairs of political broadcasting but nevertheless needs to be mentioned. The law relating to Parliamentary Privilege derives neither from statute of case law. It encompasses a body of privilege which if breached by either citizen or parliamentarian, may be regarded as contempt to which there is no appeal. A number of features of Parliamentary Privilege can be described. First, they seek to protect Parliament's ability to carry out its duties effectively. Thus any "act or failure to act which obstructs Parliament in its duties contravenes this principle and is thus a contempt or breach of some specific privilege ... To take a clear example, it is a contempt to bribe a Member, for he is then led to judge issues by standards irrelevant to them and governed by his receipt of the bribe. His independence is compromised" (Seymour-Ure, 1968, 166). Second, a long historical battle has been fought over the right of the press to publish accounts of
Parliamentary proceedings, and it was long regarded that to do so was a breach of parliamentary privilege and therefore contemptible. Since 1771 the practice has been to allow coverage. Arguments against allowing publication were that "misrepresentation and reflections obstructed Parliament in its duties by diminishing the respect due to its members. The other - which might be used to justify party and cabinet secrecy today - held that if members knew that the public would learn what they said, they might be prevented from speaking with complete frankness" (Seymour-Ure, 1968, 168).

Thirdly, and these are the privilege cases which have been more common in recent history - though they are relatively rare - relate to representation and reflections which cast aspersions on members. The penal power available to Parliament is in fact rarely used. Though Parliamentary privilege can be treated as part of the formal context of political broadcasting and thus as one aspect which might be important in programme making, the area of privilege and the consequences of proceedings relating to privilege are ill defined and dependent on a number of fluctuating factors, for example, the general political climate, the subject of the complaint etc.

This then briefly is the formal context. It embodies the legal and quasi-legal infrastructure upon which the process of making programmes is established. There are many different elements most of which appear at least opaque in their precise meaning. It is not surprising then that every broadcasting organisation retains, and every producer seeks advice from, a number of lawyers. The actual operation of each element in this formal context is equally unclear, involved as it is with numerous other factors which interact at the point of production. The rest of this thesis is about that interaction.
SECTION THREE

INTERNAL WORLD = SOCIAL CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

The only way of seriously answering the question 'why is political tv as it is, what processes influence and form it?' is to actually go into the institutions and find the information. The intended result of such a venture as practised in this thesis was a description of analysis of the processes by which the dominant political images of our time are transmitted to the viewer. Material gathered from interviewing and observation is used to describe the internal situation of programme making, and particular case studies (employing interviews, archival work, observation) provide the basis for a discussion of the interaction between the internal world of the programme and the wider social context.
CHAPTER FIVE

The Internal Context of Political Broadcasting

The perspective of this chapter is clearly implied in the title. In response to a written request for an interview, one current affairs producer wrote that he didn't have any,

"clear idea of how I produce television programmes, and although I can see that it might be useful to you to analyse the way in which I operate, I don't actually think that it will be useful to me. In fact I think it would make it more difficult for me, because I find this type of self-analysis "stuntifying". So I am sorry to appear churlish but I am afraid I have to refuse your invitation to be interviewed."

and another very senior news executive wrote in reply that "I don't know what you mean by production, but then neither do I!" That the factors which influence programme making in television are somehow mysterious and obscure was a common initial reaction, frequently summed up by a shrug of the shoulder and the observation that it somehow 'just happens'. Conversely it was frequently pointed out that I was wasting my time, as are most academics, in looking for the 'hidden meanings' since it was really all rather simple and straightforward.

Neither version comes near to explaining how political messages are made. Through talking to people actually responsible for making programmes, through watching them actually at work, one can detect a number of forces which operate within the immediate setting of programme production, 'forces' which stem from the nature of the medium, from the technology that has to be employed, from the previous history of broadcasting, from the organization and from the profession of the broadcast journalist. This
discussion will be of these forces which together constitute one level of an answer to the question of 'why is political television as it is?' Before expanding these points, however, I want to discuss the more formal features of the structures within which these processes take place. The discussion here is of a regional newsroom and a nationally networked current affairs programme.

A Newsroom Structure

Two features strike one about the newsroom process: one is that it is cyclical, that each day is basically the same; the other is that the movement of ideas for any programme involves a constant process of discussion and documentation, suggestion and the hardening of that into a script. The particular newsroom studied had a budget of £1300 pw. This pays for all external costs: that is, the buying of film stock, the processing of film, fees to reporters, stringers and guests on the programme (who also get expenses), the provision of entertainment (the famous 'green room' always amply stocked with various drinks) and the hiring of free-lance camera crews. The staff of this particular newsroom were categorised into the following: news staff (9), television production (6), film editors (3), researchers (2), secretarial staff (3), facilities clerks (2), copytakers (3), temporary staff (6), presentation department (4), free-lance reporters (4).

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1 Chapter 6 contains a detailed account of the formal features of ATV's news and current affairs department.
The working day began at about 9.30 am most people arriving between then and 10.00 am when the morning meeting began. For the meeting each received a 'prospectus sheet' which lists the various possible stories for that nights programme. At the meeting the prospects are discussed, suggestions made, stories and ideas allocated to researchers and reporters to see if they can be 'hardened' up to see if they are fit for inclusion in the programme that night. A second meeting is held at 2 pm to discuss the final running order for the evenings programme - by this time it is more or less clear what will be included, all that is left is the final preparation of items, the writing of scripts, the editing of film timing. At this meeting also the possibilities for the following days programme are discussed.

The newsroom is divided into two main areas: the news desk, which provides early morning and lunchtime radio bulletins, as well as a 2 minute news bulletin for the 6 pm news magazine. The desk is manned from 6 am, one news assistant working a shift from 6 am - 2 pm. He it is who is responsible for the news prospects sheet, basing that on the assessment of possible stories by the news assistant working the previous nights 2 pm - 10 pm shift, and also a reading of the early morning wire copy and papers. The second area is provided by the new magazine desk from which the Chief News Assistant (CNA)

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1 For example, the prospects sheet for one day of the observation listed 5 possible stories: a Council corruption case; the reopening of a plastics factory; a naval base case; local regiment in Ulster; a local pop group.
as producer of the day, takes immediate charge of the main 6 pm programme, though subject to the continual supervision and control of the News Editor ('producer' in my sample). The final decisions about the programme's content are made by about 4.30 pm, by which time also the presenter of the programme has arrived and read his script (his script is always written by someone else - though this particular presenter, an ex-actor, was felt to have a skill for improvisation).

Much of the 10 am meeting consisted of a post-mortem of the previous evening's programme. Everyone in the newsroom was permitted to attend and if they so wished to take part in the meetings. The discussion was however clearly dominated by the editorial staff, and the News Editor in particular (the format for the post-mortem was for him to go through the previous night's script, making comments). The meetings often became quite animated. The kind of discussion involved is exemplified by the following discourse: the context was a discussion of a film on Ulster which the CNA and a reporter had just brought back from that province (their trip was sponsored by the Army):

News Editor: I wasn't mad about the introduction - didn't like the cliches, the two lads (soldiers who had been interviewed) were alright.

News Assistant: The story didn't achieve what we set out to achieve.

Reporter: It's boring, not topical.

News Editor: Yes it is (topical) there's thousands of families with people over there.

N.A.: We should have been talking to those in
the firing line, and we didn’t.

Another NA: We should have been asking them how they really feel being in Northern Ireland, compared to what they expected — contrast the image of army posters, etc., with the reality. What did they feel about the campaign to bring them home?

The post mortems consisted of a general banter, were taken very seriously but, as one might have anticipated, did not appear to lead to any particular conclusions. Items for inclusion in the programme lasted from 30 seconds to 4 or 5 minutes. Any item longer than that would have to be regarded as a particularly good one, though just what that was no one could articulate. The source of items varied, the most important being the newspapers (especially local ones), the wire services, their own stringers, phone calls, and letters. The structure of the newsroom and the movement of a programme item is presented schematically in Figure 1.
The input of ideas and suggestions for possible items is extensive. The actual writing of the script is done by three distinct groups: the News Desk; the News Magazine desk, which also, in the form of the producer of the day, writes the link pieces between items and checks the scripts emerging from the third group, the Reporters and Researchers. A key influence is the amount of time available, and the script is timed down to the last word, allowing for a speaking speed of 3 words per second. When these preparations are complete, the script is passed to a programme assistant who makes a final check on the timing.
The Current Affairs Programme

The current affairs or features programme operates, usually, on a different scale in terms of time and resources from the news and news magazine programme. The process is linear rather than cyclical, though as with the news process it is characterised by a number of dominant routines and procedures. What particularly dictates the working day in the current affairs programme is a continual process of informal meetings between the producer and those preparing programme items for him. The formal structure obviously varies with the size and significance of the particular programme. I want to present information on two programmes: one small, one very large.

The former was part of BBC2's Features Department and was produced totally from one room. The producer had working for him an assistant, one researcher, a secretary and a director. This is clearly a very small structure, and provides the bare minimum of personnel necessary to produce a programme. The second programme was large and complex, reflecting its special significance as a part of the output of political television.

The Editor works through Assistant Editors and senior producers. Though the technical grading of producers varied, the producer was regarded as anyone working on a particular story and was responsible to one of the assistant editors or senior producers for everything that might be connected with the particular story he was working on at

1. For the purpose of this description only I shall employ the original title and not the generic title 'producer' used elsewhere in the thesis.
that time. The **producer of the week** was usually an assistant editor. Producers and researchers were deployed on the Editors instructions by the producer in charge of **Forward Planning**. Effectively run by the FP Assistant, this section handled all requests for film crews and all requests by producers for future use of the VTR, studio time, film viewing time, travel arrangements and cash advances. She ensures that all reporters and production staff know where they are to be working and when. The FPA also ensures that cutting room facilities will be available, maintains routine contact with overseas networks, keeps telex messages on file, checks schedules and arranges the programme billing. She also maintains costing for the Editor and is formally responsible to the FP producer, and assistant editor and the Editor.

Basically, the task of the producer following his deployment was the making of film stories. Occasionally the programme would produce a special programme or a series of programmes for which an Assistant Editor would be responsible and have working for him one or more producers for filming or studio preparation.

Initial responsibility for the programme - everything that was intentionally said or shown - lay with the producer of the week, and he in turn was responsible to the Editor. He was therefore expected to read and approve every word of every script as early as possible; to know about every still picture, view every foot of film, every second of
videotape, approve every speakers presence, the manner in which speakers are introduced, the form of discussions, the questions that will be put, the manner in which any subject is presented. It was then through him in the first instance that editorial control was deemed to be maintained.

Reporters and presenters who would at some point appear on the screen numbered 12 - 14 (the number fluctuated according to the movements of free-lancers). Producers divided into a hierarchy of researchers, junior p.a.'s, senior p.a.'s, assistant producers, producers, senior producers totalled about 30. This was then a large programme by any standards, and while I was not able to obtain official confirmation of the budget for the programme, a figure of £1 million p.a. was suggested by one individual. I was however able to obtain the official figure for another smaller and less prestigious programme, of £300,000 p.a. so the higher figure for the other programme seems realistic. This, very briefly, was the structure of editorial control. A large operation but with one crucial feature, all lines of authority stemmed from the Editor.

If that is the editorial structure, consideration must also be given to the technical operations side. Responsibility for putting the programme on the air lay with the studio director, who was himself responsible to the producer of the week. Through the studio director the producer is connected to various other people and departments within the organization - the floor manager
in the studio, videotape facilities, graphics etc.
The programme had its own cutting rooms for editing film, with a number of film editors and their assistants, each responsible to the Chief Film Editor who was himself directly responsible to the Editor and not the producer of the week. The CFE is in touch with Forward Planning and either he or his deputy always attends the morning conference. Through the CFE the producer keeps in touch with the dubbing theatre, the transfer suite and the cutting rooms. The CFE was assisted administratively by the Film Traffic Assistant and a records clerk, the former, in the context of a programme which relied heavily on filmed reports, was a notably vital cog in the whole machine. He it was who arranged the movement of all film into and out of the cutting rooms, to and from the film library and other archives, and to and from laboratories for processing. He controls the Dispatch Rider and maintains close touch with the Film Dispatch department and BBC shipping at Heathrow. The highly complex engineering facilities available are within the charge of the Engineering Coordinator who is a senior engineer attached to Current Affairs Group who in effect advises the Director and the producer of the week on the facilities they can have made available to them.

Administratively, three types of Producer's Assistants were of particular importance: the Coordinating Assistant, which basically involves running the office; the Gallery Assistant; and the News Intake Assistant. There are also secretaries to help producers, type scripts and drafts,
film shot lists and instructions to the film editor for cutting film; another secretary is responsible for assisting the studio presenter; another helps the assistant Editor, and another works for Forward Planning. Two clerks also deal with film facilities and photographs.

The morning editorial meeting is attended by the Editor and the producer of the week, those producers on duty that day, the producer in charge of Forward Planning, the Chief Film Editor, the Studio Director for that day, though anyone who wished to contribute something could attend if they so wished. All members of the production staff were expected to attend the Monday morning meetings.

Sources of Information

The News Desk received copy from the PA, Reuters, General News Service, and was supervised by the News Intake Assistant (NIA), who also supervised the telex machine. The NIA, again usually female, made sure that radio and television bulletins were heard and seen; collated and distributed agency messages to producers and presented the producer of the week with news summaries. The news desk - occasionally supervised by a producer, the News Producer, maintained contact with the main newsroom to check on what stories would be included in their bulletin, how they will be treated, how their news resources were deployed and to arrange any possible cooperation. His responsibility was to keep the producer of the week informed of any possible news stories.
The producer working on a story was responsible for developing background material for it and was expected to cover anyone who might have information including News Information, the Reference Library, External Services, the Monitoring Service and the BBC's own foreign correspondents were all regarded as important sources of information. The producer was also expected to consult 'outside experts', to keep in touch with business, trade union and political sources; also to consult 'specialist journals' - the Police Review and the Journal of the Forensic Science Society, to name but two, were regarded as mines of information and were readily available!

An extensive index (the 'green cards') was kept of innumerable associations and organizations, and also contained details of foreign countries, significant individuals (usually those who had appeared on the programme), with special attention being given to telephone numbers (day-night-weekend).

Le Monde, the NY Herald Tribune, the Irish Times and the Belfast Telegraph were held in some esteem.

The various specialist correspondents in other departments - Air, Education, Science, Economics, Industrial, Motorings, Political and Diplomatic - were also regarded as useful sources of information; also the contacts available through specialist programmes, the regional newsrooms and the local radio stations. A medical adviser and a political adviser were also available for consultation.

Protocol

Any invitation to a senior political personality - a Minister or Shadow - had to have the approval of the
Editor, who had to consult higher authority (usually the Editor, News and Current Affairs, though occasionally it would go to the Director General), and foreign heads of state were always approached through the DG's office.

The producer was expected to meet with the studio director and the producer of the week as early as possible on a set day to discuss the organization of that evening's programme, the seating arrangements for contributors, the graphics for the programme etc. He was also to supply the Editor with material for the headline to the item - words and pictures - for the trail to the programme and for PR releases.

All scripts - studio, dubbing, interviews, discussions, including details of speakers, outlines of the script, details of film and pictures, seating plans - had to be approved by the producer of the week. This was followed by a draft script and questions which, having been amended, had to arrive at the teleprompter 90 minutes before transmission at the latest. The coordinating assistant was responsible for distributing scripts. Responsibility for the recording of an interview or the transmission of a programme is shared by the studio director in the Gallery (i.e. control room) and the floor manager (actually on the studio floor), though in the final analysis the director is responsible in the sense that it is he who is answerable to the Editor for the successful transmission of a programme. Accountability to the Editor for content of any programme lies with the producer of the week, who
sits in the gallery during transmission.

No invitation to an interviewee can be confirmed without the Editor's approval and there was a finely defined pecking order for participants in the programme. Somewhat amusingly this aspect of protocol was exemplified by the ritual which surrounded the transport of participants to the studio in organization cars; 'ordinary interviewees' were to be met at the front doors whereas Heads of State or Ministers were to be met on the pavement as they stepped from the cars.

The programme presenter is supplied with background and briefing material by the producer, and draft questions had to be put to the Editor or producer of the week so that they could approve the 'line' to be taken by the interviewer. Any viewers letters which arrived for the programme were seen by the Editor, who was also to be immediately consulted about legal matters and serious complaints. Uncomplicated correspondence were answered by a programme correspondence section, but produces replying to letters were formally advised to be "courteous and impartial". At the same time no member of the production staff was allowed the slightest contact with the press without the Editor's and the Press Officer's approval.

This somewhat complex structure, involving as it did a good deal of segmentation of functions, was nevertheless bound together by a structure of authority centred on the Editor.

This then is the formal structure within which programme content is generated. The controlling point
is the 'producer' about whom the whirl of the programme actually turns. The central premiss of this part of the thesis is that an analysis of the role of the producer, an elaboration of programme making from his perspective, can provide important clues to the various forces which shape and mould political television. It is then necessary to provide more detail on that role and to answer the question of 'just what does the producer actually do?'. Does he serve the whims of his political masters or is his role that of the free-floating intellectual plugged into an advanced technology?

The Producer in Political Television: Autonomy or Servitude?

The information gathered during the course of this research concentrated on decision making about programmes (including both the origination of the programme itself and the subject matter for the programme); on the role of particular power holders; on the requirements of the law and the organization, and on the attitudes towards these requirements; the particular conception of the audience and the role that the 'viewing audience played; and on the technical and financial resources available to the programme.

'Producer' is used here in a generic sense and embodies the actual job description of 'Producer', 'News Editor', 'Editor', 'Executive Producer'. Persons occupying these positions are the central characters of British political television, and their role is built into the very heart of programme making. Through them and their work experience flow all
the forces operating on and forming the programmes made available for political consumption. While the titles vary the job is similar in all cases. The role of the producer in a major current affairs programme on BBC television was described in the following way:

Q. What duties go with your position? What is entailed in being 'producer' of the programme?

A. I think I make it possible for other people to work, though I don't delegate everything. I like to put my handwriting on the finished product. I like on the day to have a hand in writing some of the script ... Apart from that I spend my time in conferences with everybody in the programme. I'm a great one for reviewing progress, so that if an idea comes up I say 'That interests me, go away give me a treatment'. They come back a few days or a few hours later with a written treatment. That's good for them its good for me. It disciplines their mind and also its easier for me to understand. We then have an argument about that. I then say 'Well go away and do some more about this'. And this process is repeated several times, by which time we've got to the point of no return and we are actually committed to doing something because we are spending money. Anyway, we are spending their time so if I pulled them off there'd be too short a time scale for them to do anything else ... We also have formal meetings, I have a couple a week. Monday mornings there's an hour, maybe two hours, we have a general thrash around in the hope that I may get some good ideas, and it's also boss-bashing time. About Thursday-Friday's a bit late because we are tied up if we have a programme on Friday - Thursday morning we ought to, we usually do have a meeting in the morning to recapitulate everything we are going to do that week, and review progress. But inbetween there are lots and lots of informal meetings. It's exit one or two people, enter one or two more people all day long. In between that I sort out the hire and fire policy of the staffing. I'm responsible for my budget which is about 300,000 p.a. which I'm always overspent on. I'm trying to find out new ideas, new people and constantly looking for - people will ring me up and say 'there's this, this and this story you ought to know about'.


I spend some time going out on recce's myself to keep my hand in. Also, if there's something very, very awkward I wouldn't like to have somebody going solo, and if there's nobody else I will go with him as a witness. We wouldn't bug the conversation, we'd simply have somebody like myself who would be able to stand up in court afterwards and say what really went on. I try to read myself into the problem but but most of this is done at home. If people are away from the office they talk to me by telephone. I have to be always available, always contactable. A certain amount of it is mildly enjoyable, like I get lunch with various people - I find that's a great strain on the liver and on the head.

Part of my job must be of course keeping people happy: my front men, my reporters, making them think that this is the most worthwhile job that they could be doing, the best programme they could be on. Taking decisions about, you know if you favour one you upset the other man - you've got to be a bit like Solomon. Decisions on who can have - if there's only one reporter for two jobs - who has him. Can a man have a crew for Timbuctoo, no he can't it's too expensive, we'll have to do it some other way. Bad news for him. I have to cope with my staff who have to do the best job possible because it's their professional career at stake, which means the most expensive job possible. They want perfection. I want it good and I want it on the day and it's my job to keep the cost down as far as possible. Also I find myself saying to people 'Now I think you are not imaginative enough, go out and think of something else'. Or I'll deliberately float an idea - I hope everyday to float a few ideas, to suggest more exciting, more original ways of doing it. Scripts come back to me, I sub them, I sub them very carefully. I sub everything I can put a pencil to. I'm a great rewrite man, I have a typewriter on my desk and I'll rewrite anything that's put in front of me. A film reporter's script I'll go through very carefully. I have my own very strong convictions about English language and house style and the way we say things in television journalism...

I will keep relations outside with the rest of the BBC - like I'll consult the lawyer on something dodgy about the law of libel or something. Other departmental relations. I'm always looking for more real estate, more television time, other programmes we could do as spin offs, this kind of thing.

I spend some time closetted with the administration, mainly on financial and staff matters; and also my leadership, my boss, on everything including
editorial matters. But I get a very, very free hand. I'm the one that decides in the end, and has a responsibility in the end for what happens. There's very little pressure on me, partly due to the skill of my Group Head who keeps it away from me."

This is a rather elaborate, and unusually reflective description of the job but it does reflect the basis of producing at this level. There are of course minor distinctions to be made, few producers for example would be involved in quite the 'heavy subbing' that is implied here, but the basic similarity of the job of producing even across different organizations was detailed by a producer working on one of independent television's more prestigious current affairs programmes.

Q: What duties go with your position?

A. Well it's the same role that's called different things on different programmes: World in Action, it's called Executive Producer. This Week, it's called producer. Panorama, it's called Editor.... It's all the same job and there is no real difference between any of these functions.... What it means in terms of responsibility is that I am just like the producer of a small programme except that on a large programme you need a number of producers, you need someone who is in charge of the producers and the programme; you have the final responsibility in the programme and are ambassador to the outside world - to the IBA, to the company, and take full management and editorial responsibility for it.... On a week to week basis I run the programme in quite some detail. Obviously with a (long) programme there are a number of items you have to delegate, but I keep quite a close eye on most things. It varies a little and I have a sort of deputy on a weekly basis, a sort of producer of the week, and we work in partnership together. But I keep either

1 of following page.
1. While I am in this thesis using the term 'producer' in a generic sense, within the setting of the larger current affairs programme there will be numbers of individuals working to a senior producer (the various positions described by this interviewee). The origination of this was alluded to by a former Editor: "I need to explain perhaps the origin of the word 'editor'. It was introduced by Donald Baverstock in the latter years of Tonight, when Tonight had grown and had producers and senior producers, and it was clear that a new function was evolving of someone who didn't have time to make every segment of a programme because the skills had grown in number. There was a division of labour in fact, and so above all these various functions of film producers and studio producers and so on, there was a new fellow and they started using the word editor. This then became standard for someone in charge of a large team which contained many producers. Originally and indeed still, it was made analogous in some ways to the editor of a newspaper who is responsible both for the layout and the content."
a detailed eye on most items or a general eye where nothing of importance would escape me. I decide which items go ahead.

We have a meeting on Tuesday. At that meeting suggestions are made and I decide which ones should go ahead. I'm like the editor of a newspaper but whereas in the newspaper you have departments... here we are much smaller, though we are a very large programme we still only have around 20 people, so it's not too big...

These references are taken from producers of large programmes with substantial resources. The descriptions differ in the smaller programme though only marginally, even on one programme in the sample where there were only three people, including the producer, actually producing it. The young producer of that programme, in which contributors were allowed to discourse on any topic of contemporary relevance, noted that while technically his grading within the BBC was as Acting Assistant Producer he was on this programme "not working direct to a producer, I'm doing a producer's function. I work to an executive producer". He had working for him only one assistant and a researcher, which given his own personal inclinations, meant that the whole process of producing that programme was "very conversationally based".

The situation in regional broadcasting, the position and role of the maker of political television in the non-London ITV companies, and in the regional stations of the BBC, was complicated by the fact that news and current affairs tended to be produced within the same department. Interviews with regional producers produced the following broad description of their position and the general conclusion that, as with their London-based colleagues, they
make most of the important decisions about programmes.

"I'm responsible for two things basically: one is the regional news output - which in television consists of a nightly news magazine programme.... The brief basically is to report the news of the area and to reflect the life and interests of the people in it. We also have a late night television news which is about three minutes long and goes out at closedown. We have a Saturday sports programme... So I'm responsible for all those. I'm also responsible for radio news. The second part of my job is to be responsible for supplying the Network with regional news".

A number of other producers in the regions alluded to the relationship with network news, though opinions were divided. All the BBC producers felt that they had to serve the network, but the ITV producers, who of course are in no way required to serve the interests of ITN, argued either that they would keep the 'best' stories to themselves, or would serve ITN so long as it didn't conflict with their own interests, or felt that they had a moral responsibility to provide ITN with anything they wanted even if in so doing they affected their own interest. Of overriding importance in all this, however, was the fact that any relationship with London on news matters was essentially a financial relationship, that if London wanted a story or an item then they covered the costs, a fact which the hard pressed producer constantly fighting to make ends meet was eager to exploit.
Q. You mentioned the relationship with London, could you expand on that?

A. Yes. It revolves around a financial relationship. If I cover a story for London, even if, as I almost inevitably would, I take some of it for myself, they pay for the whole operation. They hire my camera man and reporter for the day and I ride on their coat tails because there's a system in the BBC which put simply .... says richest user pays".

The editor has responsibility for what goes into the programme. He also takes responsibility for the programme budget. "if budgets go over I get an initial not rocket from upstairs, which are/difficult to deal with, because basically we are allowed to average our budget so if I go over badly one week I can save the next".

If the 'producer' is of central importance to a programme production; in the sense of having financial and editorial responsibility, how important is he in the origination of 'ideas', and how autonomous is he within the wider context of the organization. What I think will become clear from this discussion is that there is much substance to the declarations of autonomy, that the formation of programme content cannot be explained in terms of the persistent imposition by the hierarchy within the organization of its view of programme content. The position is far more subtle and complex, and such a view would anyhow be unnecessarily static. Conspiracy theory of media production does not get us very far in explaining the
process, nor does the proposition that producers are a body of docile hacks, haplessly responding to pressures from all sides. n David Dimbleby, who has himself been in a number of controversial situations, once described the current affairs programme as the "battlefield where the struggle for the independence of the broadcaster and the freedom of the BBC goes on day after day".1 He was talking about the difficulties of producing from Lime Grove the BBC's main current affairs department. Go beyond the portals of that building and the perspective on production change somewhat, the immediacy of political intrigue sinks into perspective before the more pressing harassment of an awkward technology, a limitation on resource and survival itself in a hostile, competitive environment.

It is interesting then to discuss the question of autonomy with producers in different situations, with those working within Lime Grove and those working within an ITV company or in the BBC regions.

Six of the interviewees had produced or were producing major programmes from Lime Grove. They all claimed a similar degree of autonomy though the details varied slightly. The producer of a rather distinguished programme was asked: "Do you ever find that you do something because someone above you wishes that you do something, or you don't do something because that same person doesn't want it done? One hears a lot about interference or undue pressure being applied". "Not true. Absolutely. Nobody says you ought to be doing this or you ought to do that.

We did a film on the British Communist Party, a very delicate film. My idea to do it. Nobody suggested it and nobody interfered at all. No sort of hierarchical anxieties at all on Northern Ireland etc. No one vetting me at all. It's very much your own responsibility and if you get it wrong you get it wrong. His assertion that there were no anxieties about Ulster was a trifle bizarre, theremost clearly are. Other producers venturing an opinion on the Ulster coverage stated that their own feeling was of a need for responsible attitudes towards covering affairs in the province - summed up by the statement, "Northern Ireland, I'm very much aware myself is a very problematical field". A BBC producer when discussing the question of balance had said that "the programme can do anything because you can balance over a period, except over certain issues like Ireland where you can't say you will balance over a period because it's going to produce a riot before you've got time to. So over that you do feel an obligation to balance in a very conspicuous way, everything, all the time."

A producer working in Scotland described the difficulties presented by the Northern Ireland situation:

"One night these two funny men went into the Apprentice Boys hall in Bridgetown on a Saturday night and hid some gelignite in the stove. The caretaker came in, lit the stove to heat the pies for the dance and blew the place apart. Nobody was seriously hurt, but it was a bomb explosion in a hall of an affiliated organization to the Orange Lodge in the East End of Glasgow. It could have given rise to lots of bother. On the second mention of this on the television on the Saturday night we said that the police were saying that it was nothing to do with the IRA, and it wasn't really, it was two crooks. That night the Assistant Chief Constable and others intercepted a group of people coming up from Ervin to Glasgow to do a Church.

1. An interesting account of the very long history of anxiety is contained in Smith (1972), and referred to below.
Now if you are facing that kind of situation there are obviously cautionary feelings that come up in the back of your mind about delving too deeply into this. There's no direct pressure. I've never had any direct pressure on me at all with this sort of thing but I console myself with the thought that I know what is to be covered and what is not to be covered on these sorts of things. We know that volunteers have been sent to fight in Northern Ireland; we know that the bulk of the detonators used by the provvos are stolen from the national coal board in Scotland; other things of this kind we know. We know of people arrested in Glasgow for other offences who have been traceable to the UDA or the Provos. We've reported cases where there was a hold-up by a fund raising team for an Ulster extremist group. You can report things like that, but not necessarily dig into it. We don't ask 'How many others are there of them about?' We don't do that sort of thing'.

This is a rather unusual situation but what it does make clear is that a keenly felt caution over this area inhibited the news magazine from becoming involved in this area.

The dominant view is that the producer operates within a field of autonomy, freedom if you like within prescribed frameworks, restrained flexibility:

A. As a producer, what would you say the role of the producer in television is? For example, how autonomous is he in determining the content of a programme?

A. If you are talking about the producer of a programme... he has quite a lot of freedom I would say. Well, take this programme I have been producing recently. I can't think of a single occasion when I was stopped from doing what I wanted to do. There are various checks which happen in this bit of the BBC which are routine e.g. Cabinet Ministers, you have to get it cleared at a higher level. That is usually routine and is sensible actually because you don't know what other producers are doing, and Robert Carr might appear on 5 different programmes in the course of two nights, it's silly. I don't remember ever being stopped from doing what I wanted to do. Occasionally I've been discouraged; occasionally if there have been two roughly equal propositions my bosses have suggested that one might be better than the other. The other form of control over one is money .... I think on the whole I've not been interfered with. Mind you this
is partly because I've been in the BBC long enough to be pretty sensitive to what is or isn't on, and compared with a bloke who's come in straight from newspapers or ITV, I probably have an almost unconscious awareness that something is not on because of a row's there's been about something or other, so I probably don't even start to do it. So you can't take my answer totally at face value. There's a watch, I'd say a watch is kept on one'.

The producer of a large current affairs programme pointed to a particular incident which may seem trivial, but in being trivial introduces an element of perspective to any discussion of autonomy of the producer. In responding to a previous question he had indicated his feeling that there was a good deal of autonomy enjoyed by the working producer in the BBC, and commented "At the end of the week you've got a programme that may or may not be good, but you've done your best and that's a marvellous way of getting it out of your system. It's like writing a book every week or every day, that's not bad".

Q. You give the impression of being fairly autonomous within?

A. I think so yes. I made a case for what I was doing by example. By saying 'This is what I'm doing just watch this space'. When I came to the (programme) just over a year ago, when (the previous producer) left, I changed it first and then argued - I didn't really need to argue because my boss said 'I think that's right, what you are doing'. I then found there was aggro about the change of title which was, in the end, not as important as all that, (but) at the time I was very upset about it and lost a lot of sleep over it and got very cross with the senior management in this place. When it was all over I found I was far too busy anyway getting the show on the air and we were able to keep up morale by saying 'look the last thing you should worry about is the title, we are not changing our policy because no one wants us to'. Actually it was a bit of a cock up at a very high level, whereby certain people were imagining that they were asking for one thing when they were asking for something else. There was no malice in it. There was no
wish as far as I could see to interfere with me or my predecessor. There was a communication fault, but then it's a busy world and one can forgive this. There was a bit of maladroitness bungling here and there, but then no more than you'd find in comparable organizations - it's all water under the gate.
From that argument onwards we've had nothing really but general support for the line we are taking.

Q. Would you say that the situation of the producer is similar in other programmes in current affairs?

A. No I think I get more autonomy .... because there's still this feeling that the 'fellow has got a lot of very specialist contacts and specialist knowledge, he must know what they are doing'.... Now if you are producer of Panorama, I don't know but I suspect that you are much more in the public eye - by public I mean the management, they are looking at you very hard indeed because it's on BBC1, it's a 20 year old show, it's very very important that it shouldn't put a foot wrong. This must be a terrible strain on the producer ...."

The question of whether or not the change of title of a programme is significant is more important, at least in some eyes, and was a point raised by Anthony Smith when discussing the change from Tonight to 24 Hours to Midweek - the view implied is contentious but is interesting enough to deserve an airing. Smith's point is that changes in the BBC are never abrupt, always subtle. Discussing the end of 24 Hours he describes the attitude of those responsible for taking it off the air in terms of their expressed feeling that the programme had had its day:

"The powers that be were beginning to look at 24 Hours and say: "Well, it's time to make a change; there's a change of some indefinable kind in the public attitude towards it and its material; it's gone on for 7 or 8 years, as long as its predecessor Tonight .... The change was buried in that kind of consideration, and there were similar motives in
the change from *Tonight* to *Twenty Four Hours* eight years previously. Then they wanted to have a brighter later programme, avoiding the repetitive trendy leftism of *Tonight* in its last period, which had lost much of its audience to the rival early evening programmes of the commercial companies. But then 24 Hours went the same way, constantly accused of liberal-radicalism and there was a change of editor, bringing me in; for a while I think it in fact contained less of the 'leftism' of which it was constantly accused. Then came Northern Ireland, the Six Day War, May '68, and the whole student rebellion around the world, all the issues of police and authority in general — that whole range of issues which supposedly left in its aftermath a public feeling that indulgence of the left had gone too far; the way 24 Hours chose its issues was deemed to be no longer fashionable, although it seemed from inside that history rather than producers had chosen the issues. But you could only produce a change by altering the title, the producers, the format, the principal personalities. The feeling that a change was due was dictated by a recognition of a change in society plus a demand for a creative shift, seen through the prism of institutional imperative".

"But what is the 'institutional imperative'?

"The institutional imperative is that this particular man, this programme, this formulation of issues has become dangerous to us, us the BBC .... There are too many rows, there's too much pressure directed against us because of this man, because of this position, because of something."¹

1. Interview with Author: 28.5.73
This description by Smith was particularly interesting on two accounts: one, that I was informed by a former Head of Current Affairs Group, BBC TV quite independently and without prompting that towards the end of the '60's, Attenborough, Director of Programmes, Television, and Wheldon, Managing Director, Television, argued that people were becoming bored with politics and that therefore their output should reflect this. It is of course difficult to judge with any degree of certitude the relevance or accuracy of these observations. The sense of hostility they conjure up was both supported and denied by other producers. Another statement for example, declared that there had been a veritable campaign in the late 1960's by the end DG to emphasise the need for 'exposition' and less 'argy bargy' in current affairs programmes. The generally rather optimistic view of the producer's position was denied by one senior producer. In reply to the observation that a frequent impression held by outsiders of the BBC is that the producer is not that autonomous, he observed that within the programme staff no one was autonomous, in the sense that they were working to a producer, but concluded that the producer himself is not in effect autonomous since with any programme there are a number of institutional demands, the central one's of which are the fact that the organizational hierarchy has a view of what it thinks the programme should be doing, and the other that there's the knowledge that somebody above one didn't want that kind of treatment of subject that individual B would apply. And these can be
quite complex. These can change from month to month. It might be, one might feel terrible inhibitions from sending a particular person to cover a particular story one month, but the next month feel that their particular cloud had cleared". This response is similar to that of a previous respondent who argued that he had been around the BBC for a number of years and knew if there had been a row somethings were "not on". The difference lay in the general acquiescence of this respondent and the general hostility of the one just cited to this illusive but binding "knowledge".

There are in the life of any producer incidents he can point to where his own editorial responsibility was impinged upon by a decision made by a superior. These do not however form a particularly clear pattern. What did form a pattern was the seriousness with which the regulations relating to political coverage were taken. A close watch is kept on the number of MP's appearing in programmes, and particularly close attention is paid to the appearances of Enoch Powell for whom permission had to be sought from the Editor, News and Current Affairs. The producer of a specialist programme, however, covering political affairs made the point that:

"We get quite strong reactions from MP's, though on the whole the programme doesn't attract outright antagonism. In fact, I can't remember a time when any particular item was attacked. Their suggestions are usually in the realm of what angles we should have taken, or what aspects emphasised....."
I've had 18 years in this thing and I don't think the pressures are as great or frequent as people would think."

Are we to conclude that this interviewee is wallowing in a sort of false consciousness? What is probably significant is that his programme was small scale, viewed by a small audience and therefore not likely to attract the kinds of public, and organizational attention given to other, more 'significant' programmes. The same theme of relative non-interference and freedom from pressure was forcibly made, with two notable exceptions, by other interviewees working within the news department of Television Centre and in the BBC's Feature's and Presentation's Departments.

A senior producer in BBC television news described decision making as an "osmotic process among a number of people rather than an oligarchical tyrannical operation". A producer who had worked in the news division since 1942, declared in terms which are by now familiar that:

"I have in effect total say in what has gone into this week's edition ... By that I don't mean that I am completely free to do what I like, I've - I was going to say I've learnt the rules but that's not quite right - I was aware of the general policy of the news division. I am aware of my own involvement in news. I am aware of my own interests. And taking all of these things into consideration I produce what will go on the air tonight with a fair amount of, a certain belief that I've been as honest in my selection and approach as one can b
expect a human being to be".

Q. You say that you are aware of these various elements, in what way would you be aware?"

A. Simply that I've spent thirty years in the News Division one way and another. For the last 15 of those years I've been at a high enough level to know what the general thinking is at any particular time about anything that happens to be going on ......

I would be aware of what is going on simply from talking to my colleagues on the 6th floor which is at it were the editorial section. I don't necessarily agree with everybody's point of view, but I wouldn't do something that went against the accepted policy of the day unless I had a very good reason for doing so".

The situation of the producer is not that of a person under siege, rather it is one of an experienced individual who is aware of limitations, accepts them but formulates their nature and meaning in vague terms: "What is going on", "accepted policy" etc. tends not to view these limitations in terms of the 'Principles and Practices' and memoranda with which any broadcasting organization is festooned. When pressed he talks of "news and news values". A much younger producer working in the BBC Presentation Department who, though he told of an incident in which a Controller had threatened to take off one of his programmes because he thought it too controversial, felt that though the use made of the medium was disastrous, his own personal autonomy

1. Internal documents produced in the BBC which lay down rulings about the treatment of controversial issues. They relate in particular to the concept of impartiality.
as a programme maker was assued. The limitation of
which he was most aware was that due to limited resources:
"...in return for the limitations we live with I
would say that we probably have more freedom and
more autonomy as a department and that filters down.
I as a producer probably have more freedom and
more autonomy than a producer would in another
department".

The only imposition or restriction deriving from
the organization which he could think of when prompted were
those relating to moral standards. He pointed out for
example that three or four years ago he would have been
able to use four letter words, but that now the climate had
changed, even though there had been no formal ruling on it,
and the use of four letter words is now unwise:
"...I want whatever I film to go on the telly and
if it said 'fuck' and I had to bleep it, it would be
a silly convention because everybody would know what
was being said... At the moment the broadcasters
seem to have conceded and they seem to accept that
the collective standards demand a certain sort of
standard on television, and the collective standards
seem to be that you don't say 'fuck' in front of
your granny, and so you don't say 'fuck'. I don't
actually as it happens think that that is particularly
important".

The only restrictions that he could think of then
related to an area which he didn't think was particularly
important. Producer's awareness of these limitations is
through the much vaunted system of 'referral' espoused in
doom laden terms by the Managing Director Television:
"the wrath of the Corporation in it's varied human
manifestations is particularly reserved for those who fail
to refer" (Wheldon, 1973, 11).

Q. What about people higher up in the organization
(than the producer level), do you have a lot of
contact with them?"

A. Well it depends. They are very good. They
operate this sort of retrospective censorship.
I'm supposed to know what is not permissible to
transmit and if in doubt I'm supposed to refer it
up. If I have something which I'm worried about,
for example, some particularly gory killing in a fox
hunt is the sort of thing that everybody moans about,
then I'm supposed to refer it up. But nobody sees
the programme except me before transmission, though
my boss does quite often out of interest. But I'm
in charge of it until its gone out but then, if the
shit hits the fan I have to carry the can. If any
of the rules have been broken and if I do it often
enough then of course they'll take me off the
job, they'll stop me doing it. But I mean there's
none between me and transmission, unless its something
very, very inflammatory like Northern Ireland or
South Africa - I'm obviously expected to know that
I should refer it up".

The impression created is of an essential mutuality
between the producer and his employers only occasionally
disturbed by a contentious issue. An interesting feature
of the interviewees working in ITV was to contrast their
own autonomy with the restrictions imposed upon their BBC
counterparts. Yet as I have tried to show there is no great
sense within those ranks of any particularly repressive
situation, merely an acknowledgement of the various
political and moral boundaries within which they had to
function, and a sense of the bureaucracy within which they
had to work. ITV producers were eager to mention the
informal relationships they had with management:
Q: What about contact with executives?

A: Yeh... Unlike some organizations one could name beginning with B, there is no question of notes, memoes, hierarchial structures, anything like this. There is one man I will talk to and go in and see, I will go in now if I want to see him and he will come in here if he wants to see me. He lets one run it the way one wants, but if he's interested in something he rings me up and says 'what do you think?' and I'll say 'terrible'. Sometimes he says something which is quite a good idea and I'll follow it up, but that's the only outside thing. He knows what's going on all the time obviously, but he's not the person who says 'this week we do so and so, this week we do something else'.

Earlier in the interview the same producer declared "I've never been stopped from doing anything, but there are two ways of seeing that: one is that its because I've never been nasty or you could say that its because its a very easy going company with a good deal of autonomy. And I think the autonomy in this company is probably quite high really. I'm self-sufficient, there is no-one over me".

There were no responses from other ITV producers challenging this view.

A View From the Regions

There is a strong metropolitan flavour to political television as there is to all broadcasting. The regions are nevertheless vitally important in the process of political communication. A number of regional producers were interviewed, principally those responsible for the 6 pm
news magazine programmes put out by both ITV and BBC. These producers and the departments for which they were responsible occasionally produced other forms of political television, and a number of them produce programmes involving local MP's or discussing local current affairs. What then is the position of the producer in the regional setting, how does it compare to that of his counterparts in the capital? In the course of 19 interviews with producers responsible for regional political output a familiar theme replayed itself: it became clear that they regarded themselves as essentially autonomous but recognised that this was structured within boundaries defined by their superiors. All argued that editorial responsibility was within their hands, but also indicated that lapses in taste or a decline in the viewing figures would inevitably lead to their superiors questioning their fitness to have that responsibility.

"If you consistently do things in a way which they don't think it right and proper, obviously they will look at you again and say 'do I want this guy to work for me?" Another typical reaction was:

"Obviously if the Controller of Programmes has an opinion about something he lets it be known. Equally if the Company's chief executive has an opinion on something he lets it be known, but I must say in all honesty we don't get the kind of editorial interference that you are talking about. I'm not denying that occasionally they say 'Didn't like that' but we don't get the kind of thing that
folks somehow imagine happens, where somebody says you must do such and such... On the other hand you can't ignore the fact of where executive responsibility finally lies...."

and:

"...By and large my boss leaves me on my own to do the programme and either kicks me or pats me after it every now and then.... I have a very good relationship indeed editorially with my boss here. I feel that when we are talking we are talking more or less as equals. I accept that he is the boss and that if he says 'do this' then ultimately I do that. I don't believe that he has ever done more than suggest that a particular story should be pursued in a particular way. I don't think he's ever imposed anything on me. I've certainly never felt it. He may have done it with such diplomacy I wasn't aware of it happening. In my previous job I used to have more clashes with the person who was in a similar situation. This is when I was a producer elsewhere, and I worked to a manager who had the same responsibilities as the Manager,¹ here,... and we used to clash quite strongly about films and cutting films and the way subjects were treated sometimes. But even there though I would go home absolutely grinding my teeth, looking back at it I don't know think it was an unhealthy relationship, it was simply a different one".

¹. The position he is referring to here is that of Regional Television Manager, the senior administrative position in the BBC's regional stations.
A somewhat rosy picture is painted here of the position of the producer of political television in both a metropolitan and regional setting and it does seem that on the whole the person seeking political intrigue in the making of these programmes will be disappointed, the truth of the process is much more prosaic. One cannot explain production in terms of the imposition of a clear cut hierarchical will, save in the broad sense of the establishment of a programme's working budget, general rulings on standards of taste and the control of the numbers of appearances by MP's. The strictures and impositions of the political institutions of British society are by no means as frequent, forceful or important as is often argued. Hall's point that the "broadcasting institutions exercise a wide measure of editorial autonomy in their programmes" (Hall 1972b) is substantially correct. Hall sees this autonomy as occurring within and ultimately defined by 'the underlying structure of ideological and institutional constraints', which means that media institutions (presumably he is referring principally to news and current affairs departments) are both autonomous and constrained - a "complex formation" indeed. The meaning of Hall's description is obliquely stated - broadcasters and politicians are ideologically in-tune; when they are not, conflict is inevitable.

When either the purpose of the broadcaster or his overt ideological inclinations lead him marching onto ground which the politician regards as sacrosanct the 'real' structure of power, the ultimate subordination to the state is made apparent. In 'normal' times, though, Hall tells us the
reality of this relationship is masked by the operation of a number of key concepts—objectivity, balance, impartiality, professionalism and consensus.

The argument that there is a consensual avoidance by the media of certain issues most of the time, and an enforced avoidance some of the time tends to ignore certain features of programme making which militate against consideration of what the academic and radical mind might see as fundamental issues. The 'eunuch form' of political television, if eunuch it be, derives to a large extent from a number of features internal to the process of making programmes. The dominance of a particular form of broadcasting, the news magazine, the pursuit of audiences, the nature of the medium etc. all have militated against the act of political communication by providing a framework within which the political communicator must operate. The sense of autonomy which I so lengthily described is on the whole real when viewed from the perspective provided by questions that relate to political and editorial interference, but unreal when viewed from the perspective of actually making programmes. (Elliott's thesis that the process of communication is characterised more by contradiction than conspiracy holds a good deal of truth). Any producer (and therefore any programme) in political television operates with a particular identity for his programme; a limited amount of resources, a series of ground rules with which he must concur; and a series of

1 The phrase comes from Smith's (1974, 114) biting but perceptive observation that the broadcast journalist is a "eunuch in the harem of ideas".
loosely held ideas about the purpose of political television within the wider purpose of the organization as a whole and the method by which that purpose will be achieved. His life and work is a continuing debate with stylistic, technical, legal-political and ideological structures.

The setting for the operation of these inhibiting frameworks is provided by the absence of another framework encompassing the producer and the audience.
THE FUNCTIONING OF IDENTITY

"...his identity presses upon me". Keats.

The most frequent observation of sociologists who have written or talked about the mass media in contemporary society, and notably that part called 'news', has been that they detect within the overall flow of messages a coherence and a patterning. Numbers of criteria are repeatedly - the repetition is the key - employed by communicators to select those messages that they will transmit from the mass of messages that theoretically are available to them. The sociological analysis of news thus becomes a problem of elaborating the nature of those criteria. Hence news, from this sociological perspective, becomes not a 'mirror' to reality, an objective description or whatever, but a manufactured 'product' (i.e. an artefact resulting from a process) to be 'consumed' by an audience. It is a description of the world whose reality has more to do with the process by which it is created than any accurate or objective depiction of that world.

There is however far more to the formulation of programmes, even news programmes, than the operation of a series of news values. Clearly from a sociological perspective the analysis anyhow should be about the


2. Hood, (1967, 105) notes that the early years of television news were controlled by men who did not feel that it was the most appropriate medium for news. He observes, "In Britain their attitude was reinforced by the extreme conservatism of the BBC's News Division whose upper echelons manifested an almost pathological fear of the new medium."
origination of those values. At the same time there is more to political television than news, so any treatment of the formation of political messages must go beyond consideration of only the news process. The treatment of news values often begs many questions about the social processes that underpin them. There is for example the simple but immensely important observation that the criteria applied to news, that is the dominant news values, changed drastically in the late years of the 1950's and the early years of the 1960's (Smith, 1973).² It was not, however, only the content which changed during those key years, the whole style and place of television news and television current affairs also altered drastically.

It is remarkable but true that the first use of television newsmen in a form which we would now recognise - familiar anchormen in the studio, filed reports from television reporters, the use of specialist correspondents, did not emerge until 1961 with the Big News at the Los Angeles station KNXT.¹ The point was well described by Greene (1969,11): "the face of broadcasting in this country was fundamentally changed in the Sixties. Movement in the Fifties was much slower. ITV started in the autumn of 1955, but a good BBC man who was at home in the late Forties would still have been at home in the last Fifties. He might not be at home in the last Sixties".

1. For a discussion of this see M.Green (1969). Up until July 1954 British television news was caste in the cinema newsreel style, and radio news was the dominant form of news programme until the late 1950's. On this see Paulu (1961), especially Ch.5.

2. cf. footnote 2 on previous page.
This is not so difficult to comprehend when one considers that in Britain the BBC's news service always led, if one were available, with a Royal news story, and until 1959 would not mention any aspect of election news. Change at Alexandria Palace was slow in coming and only began to emerge with the appointment of a former journalist, Hugh Greene as Director of News and Current Affairs in 1958. When developments did come the impact was felt first not in news but in the current affairs division. A number of developments impinged upon the broadcasting organizations and enforced changes. A series of technological developments for example created new possibilities - satellites, compact cameras, videotape, new editing techniques - and produced the possibility of more lively, because immediate and visual, television. Technology did however provide the central drive. This came from the pursuit of an audience in a competitive market - it was the initial formulation of new formats followed by their success in terms of audience size which provided the shift in form that characterised the movement of television from one historical context, an essentially pre-war one, to the present historical context, a commercial environment which emphasises the maximization of audience size. There was no way for example that Robert Wood when he began the Big News in 1961, or Current Affairs Group when they started...
Tonight in 1957 in response to the end of the 'Toddler's Truce', or ITN when in 1967 they were forced, more or less by the ITA to start News at Ten could have known that these particular formulations would be successful.

Much has been made in the British context of the reactionalry role of Tav Høle (Smith, 1973, 81) who was Head of the BBC's news division, and the liberalising impact of Hugh Greene. It is true that it took only three years of not noticeably strong competition to sweep Høle from that office (he was 'promoted' in 1958 to Director of Administration) and it is true that in the context of a coming review of broadcasting (Pilkington) a different approach was required. The point is of course that the career of these two men were merely the figurative representations of the "epistemological rupture" engendered by the transition from a monopoly broadcasting situation with all the manifestations of Reithian paternalism to a competitive situation with all the manifestations of the commercial ethic. Change lay in the whole attitude to the subject matter and its presentation and was clearly spelled out by a senior broadcasting executive:

"You've got to think in the 1950's of the coming of television. I think that the BBC badly needed that shake-up, and particularly in the field of news. The whole development of television news in the BBC was very slow indeed, and the whole attitude was extraordinarily stuffy. Television news was to be a version of a radio news bulletin with a few pictures. The journalistic attitude was very strange indeed. I remember the Head of OB in television talking to me one day in Alexandria.

2. Hill (1974) has a fascinating account in Chapter 3 of what he calls the 'Battle for News at Ten'. 
Palace, and boasting of the fact that at the Cenotaph Ceremony in November (1952) when a man ran out towards the King in an apparently hostile manner as the King was about to lay the wreath, that immediately, as if by nature, without a word of command, the cameras were turned away from the incident so that it wasn't shown. Well to me an old journalist that seemed a very strange thing to boast about and I can assure you that the attitude changed in that sort of matter, and today there'd be no turning of cameras away from an incident like that.

This does seem to support the proposition by Smith that in the 1950's the "prevailing powers at Broadcasting House believed that television was not intended by God to be a news medium at all" (Smith 1973, 81). In a situation where only 30% of the viewing audience was watching BBC this could not prevail, not only because it might affect the possibility of raising the licence fee - the recurrent theme in the post-ITV years, nor just because the BBC wanted a second channel, but also because low audiences might call into question the very right of the BBC to exist. It is then as if there were an anomaly at the heart of broadcasting which rapidly shrivelled under the new conditions. What we can detect in the making of contemporary political television is the petrified form of the programmes which came to prominence in the years of flux following the emergence of ITV. The programme forms which arose from this situation provide the blueprint for contemporary political television embodied within what one might term a series of programme values that together constitute a number of specific identities - the news, the news magazine, current affairs, the feature, the documentary. Producers it is
argued operate with a clear notion of what their programme 'is like', a concept which he both develops and inherits, and employs in making a programme along with the available resources, the technology etc. Into this is built a keenly felt but poorly developed sense of the audience.
Content and Style as Identity

Producers have clearly worked out views on the stylistic appearance and subject matter of their programme. Derived from a number of sources, this provides an important framework within which political content must fit. It thus provides one means by which the affairs and happenings of the political process beyond the walls of the broadcasting organization are transformed into the representations of that process which emerge from within those walls.

I approached the question of identity by asking producers to talk about the way in which they made decisions about subject matter for the programme. With great facility producers were willing to detail numbers of factors which they took into account. A typical if notably articulate presentation was provided by a News Editor at ITN. As with most respondents he argued that there was an element of randomness to news though he, like various other interviewees, was willing to acknowledge the point that patterns and routines are detectable. Several did however stick rigidly to the belief that 'there's nothing you can define about news' and 'it just happens'. The News Editor raised a number of criteria which he felt to be important: 'the most important events,' but this wasn't really suitable since, he argued, it begged a whole number of questions. The problem as he saw it was that what was important in Edinburgh may not be regarded as news in Bolton or London therefore, he declared, "we have to use stories that appeal to everybody,"
that are of interest to everybody. You have to remember
that we are serving a mass audience and that therefore we
must maintain their 'interest' and this led to his
second criteria, a keen and persistent theme in all the
interviews of entertaining and interesting stories.

'Interesting' he interpreted in a largely political sense,
questions of national political importance, happenings in
Westminster etc. Industrial news he thought was
tremendously important, in two senses: stories in this
bracket (strikes being the most notable example) are
politically important and thus interact with the preceding
category; at the same time the 'audience actually likes
them. There are at the present time a whole series of
strikes and disputes which perhaps we take an
unrepresentative interest in, but this is because we have
a largely working class audience, and they are obviously
interested in this'. Action stories provided his next
category, and he included within this Ulster, plane crashes,
car crashes, other disasters. His next criterion was
provided by background stories, where he felt that they
should provide information on government papers and
reports etc. His final criteria were picture stories,
by which he meant those stories which though they fitted
none of these previous criteria must be included because
of their visual quality.

All these he argued were instantly recognisable by
any journalist since "there is a kind of running
consensus in the whole media as to what is and isn't
news". The News Editor, he argued, is strongly imbued with this consensus since he sees copy from the agency wire and is therefore aware of what everybody is thinking. He would "need a very good reason for breaking out of the general feeling. This consensus also tends to reflect to a considerable extent the wider social and political status quo. Therefore we tend not to cover the activities of minority groups".

He consciously pursued a "certain stylistic presentation" based on the use of two newsreaders, 'packages' of filmed reports of 2 to 2½ minute lengths in which the reporter does everything, 'wraps' which are bunches of short stories, where possible utilising film, "we use these to change the gear of the programme", and "an easy and informal style" of spoken word "though we still have a very serious programme, especially when you consider that our viewers are basically a Daily Mirror readership type. we do in fact manage to achieve a higher level than that paper". The 'understanding' of this style was, as with that other illusive element 'news value' seen in terms of an instinctive feeling viewed in terms of 'this is boring' or 'this isn't an ITN story'.

The operation of a number of news values is, even by their own account, not in question. The focussing on elite figures, the searching for the dramatic and visual are clearly perceived influences. What is not perceived, but what I think is vital, is that the operation of these
values along with the particular form of presentation constitute a stylistic paradigm that persists because it produces what is the central concern of the broadcaster, an acceptable audience size. The relationship which is often implied in political television is that 'news' forms a frontispiece to the other dominant forms of political television, the news magazine and the current affairs programme. The interesting feature however is that while these are meant to complement the news-form (in-depth discussion, background analysis etc) the central problem they have to face also is the relevance of their form in audience terms i.e., can they obtain and sustain one?

A preoccupation with style of presentation has figured prominently in the recent history of BBC television news, whose audience figures were decimated by ITV and by ITN after 1967. The assertion that their change in style, exemplified by the introduction of two presenters for the main 9 pm news and its extension to 25 minutes was a response to changing external circumstance, was denied by the Editor of Television News:—

Was the change in television news a conscious process of competing with ITN?

Not really. The style, where there is one, and there isn't much of one, is normally about getting the ritual gestures right, that we introduce people in this form rather than that form; that we call them 'Mr. Thing' instead of 'old Fred Thing'. It's a fairly marginal sort of activity. Changing the style, the overall style, was not after all that radical, you would think we hadn't been doing it since 1964 which we had been on BBC 2. It was two newsreaders because it is very difficult for one newsreader to command the right tone, the longer a programme gets the more difficult it is. He's constantly finding
himself caught out in more changes of intonation within a given length than he can cope with, and so it's easier to have two newsreaders. The newroom in the background was simply to make the point that this operation doesn't take place in a splendid vacuum. It is the result of a great deal of effort."

The interesting point is why it was felt necessary to say that it is the result of a lot of effort by many different people and who had suggested that it took place in a vacuum anyway. The answer of course is that no one had suggested this, but the BBC's news division, was sorely affected by the emergence and effectiveness of ITN. The news programme - the public figure of the presenter(s), the limited length of items, the use of short filmed featurettes, the knowing familiarity of the newsreader, the placing of 'serious' news at the beginning of the bulletin, the conclusion with a light or sporting piece (unless that happens to constitute a serious item) - is then a carefully prepared package within which the events of the world are made to fit. If the function of news values is to limit the views of the world made available, programme values successfully ensures the length and style in which that view will be presented.

Programmes other than news programmes also operate with clearly specified identities, existing editorial briefs which indicate what they can and cannot do. During the course of an interview with the producer of one programme he related an incident which I think clearly illuminates the point. The programme he had previously worked on was what might be described as a rather sophisticated pop programme on BBC2.

1. The newsroom is not actually in the background, it is another part of Television Centre. The effect, courtesy of a technological 'trick', is illusory.
It identified clearly with the world of the so-called 'pop culture' and thus was much intrigued by the Warhol affair – a documentary on ATV about the artist and film maker Andy Warhol and made by photographer David Bailey, which produced a good deal of threatened and real litigation in relation to the possible banning of the programme. It was temporarily delayed by court order but was ultimately allowed to be broadcast. The interviewee had thought that as Warhol was such a significant cultural character it would be useful to devote one programme to a discussion of Warhol's life and times rather than to the usual line up of rock groups. The night of the programme discussion – with an audience that could be measured in thousands rather than millions – there were nine phone calls of complaint (in the BBC a log is kept of all phone calls, and this is available to production staff and their superiors). The following day the Controller of the channel sent a memo to the producer saying that though he hadn't seen the programme himself he "had heard" that they had had a discussion on Andy Warhol, that theirs was a music programme and not a discussion programme and that therefore there were to be no more discussions on the programme.

There are obviously important questions about the nature of editorial control and the quality of the judgement involved in the Controllers ruling. What is
interesting is the way in which the possible content of
the programme was sharply defined by a specific ruling
about its nature.

It may of course be that the Controller was also
re-establishing the programme format in order to suppress
content. If, for example, the discussion had been about
a pop group, the 'aesthetics of pop' say, one is left with
the question of whether the memo would ever have been sent.
The producer himself was in no doubt that the memo was
prompted by the change in format rather than the specific
content - the issue of the Warhol programme had after all been
widely discussed throughout the whole of the media.

A similar insight was provided during an observation
of a programme produced by the Religious Department of BBC2.
The Warhol episode had led to consideration of the way in
which a programme's subject matter was made to fit within a
tightly prescribed area, even though the inclination of
those producing it was to develop the content in particular
ways. Discussion of the news had also led to the
proposition that the treatment of any subject matter had
to meet and satisfy certain stylistic features. What I
wanted to do in the context of this particular programme was
to explore these propositions further. The results are I
feel most illuminating.

The period was December 1973 when a major preoccupation
of the media was the alleged "energy crisis". The producer
of a regular programme with the Religious Dept. had been
offered an extended time period of an hour and ten minutes in which to discuss the question of 'has the God of growth failed?'. The idea behind the programme was that they hold a debate between those in the country who said that 'of course you had to have growth in the economy' and those who argued that 'it is suicidal to continue with growth' and that 'what is required is a radical restructuring of values and a new social contract.' They had been given by Aladáire Milne, the Director of Programmes, only a working day - they had been informed at 9.30 am and had to "convince" him by 5.30 pm - to assemble two "suitable" panels - one pro-growth, one anti-growth.

That 8 hour period was marked by a continuous stream of suggestions, principally from the producer and the researcher. Possible 'names' were repeatedly swapped "Well, what about......? He/she would be very good on this". The name is then contacted:

"This is the .... programme. We are mounting a special programme on the topic of 'has the God of growth failed?' do you happen to think it has?... Oh you are not available on that date. Could you suggest anybody then who might have something to say on this?" And so the process is repeated - Philip Sherard, Dick Taverne, Barbara Ward, Powell etc., the names emerge, are checked and noted as yay or nays. There is constant talk about "the sort of people we want". When asked on the criteria they would employ in deciding on which people to contact and include, the researcher said "it's people you know and those that are suggested to you. Of course at the moment

1. The original use of the phrase 'social contract' had been called from what the producer described as a "rather impressive" letter.
there are the added problems of the three-day week and transport difficulties". (They had for example approached the Editor of the *Times*. He was holidaying in the family cottage in Somerset and pointed out that a return to London might entail certain difficulties. They offered to send him a BBC car to pick him up and return him. He declined the offer).

Their first task was to assemble the anti-growth panel. "We need Bloom, Ward and Montefiore". "No, not Montefiore. What about Galbraith?" "No, he's in the States". "Try Trevor Huddleston, or what about Barbara Wooton?" "No. She's sensible but that is about all". "What we need are two practical men along with a visionary". More names poured forth, a litany of the more visible personalities of the British social and political culture.¹ The producer remarked that they must "remember that we only want one socially involved person". One means employed for excluding names was that they "are not big enough". A response to one suggestion for example was "who's he, he's just a second rate journalist. He hasn't got the stature to be on the programme". Desmond Morris's name was broached but was rejected by the producer on the grounds that "He's more anti-city than anti-growth. Also he's not really accepted intellectually, though I admit he would be very interesting".

The choice for the anti-growth panel gradually hardened around Trevor Huddleston ("frightfully good") and Bernard Levin (they had noticed from his column in *The Times* that

1. Frequent reference is made to a well-thumbed copy of *Who's Who?*
he was now a 'no-growther', and he was also a seasoned television performer), balanced by a "philosophical ecologist". Having arrived at this point of decision they began the process of assembling a pro-growth panel. The names again were familiar - trade union leaders and government ministers predominating. They faced a problem in that they were trying to get names who were 'good' and had 'stature' but who weren't overexposed in the media. This becomes something of a contradiction in terms, since in effect stature is increasingly determined by media exposure. It was particular problem in the closing months of the 1970-74 Heath administration when industrial problems were massively important in the realm of public affairs discussion. William Whitelaw was suggested as a possible panellist by the researcher, "he would be nice - he's so much more than a politician". It was while they were contacting Whitelaw's office that the producer began to define the implicit identity of the programme. I have shown how panellists were assessed according to their particular compatibility with certain categories - 'philosopher' 'political' 'pragmatist' 'visionary' 'stature' etc. The programmes identity was an underlying premiss as to what it would contain, not in terms of the specific subject matter but rather how that fitted with a broad area of subject matter and how it would be treated. For example, describing to the press officer in the Department of Employment that the programme would be about the whole question of growth, the producer added: "As you will understand from my department, religion, we won't talk about this question of growth in wholly economic
terms, but also in more philosophical terms. Mr. Whitelaw will be on the panel with two others who share his views about growth". He didn't however mention that the two others would in all likelihood be trade unionists.¹

There was a built in paradox of using well known personalities on a panel that might be summed up in the aphorism that personality reproduces personality. This became clear when the researcher suggested a trade unionist who was not particularly well known. The producer replied...

"if we have a small trade unionist among the big fish we are going to be accused of setting them up. The higher up the economic and political scale we go - the more Robin Day type people we use - the more high powered a trade unionist we will have to have".

They agreed that the pro-growthers should include a trade unionist, a member of the government and an "A.N.Other figure". Enoch Powell and Jimmy Reid were suggested.

¹. The producer declared prior to this "Robin Day (who was to chair the discussion) is apoplectic about the thought of getting the unions and the government on the same bench". There was then the enticing possibility that the programme's attractiveness would stem not just from the discussion between the pro- and anti-growthers, but also because of the irony of having trade unions and government supporting the same argument at a time when in their normal affairs they were involved in a conflict of huge proportions. It might be argued that the attraction lay in the possibility that their being on the same bench would typify the "consensus politics" which it is often argued is the position sought by the media. I am convinced however that a more immediate factor was the assumed attraction of the ironic.
The researcher thought "a professor" would be useful to have on the panel, "someone like Vaizey" - whose credentials were checked in Who's Who - "or a philosopher like Runciman or Hampshire". These were all possibilities for the A.N. Other name and had the distinctive characteristic that they were, among other things, "non-institutional", that is, they had no apparent connections with any of the two main power blocks, industry (trade unions/business) or political (government/opposition).

In the course of his effort word was received from the Editor, News and Current Affairs, via the Head of Department, that "the programme won't go ahead if it's too current affairish, so we'll have to sail pretty close to the wind on this, particularly on the growth side. We can't have a boring pragmatist and we can't have anybody who is too political". "What about" it was put to the Head of Department "someone who is in space research and is a bit of a visionary? that would keep you away from current affairs". By asserting the implicit identity of the programme - that it wasn't current affairish but was 'sort of philosophical' they had effectively ruled out the possibility of using many of the people they had originally intended to use - notably the senior trade unionists and politicians. It was interesting that the reaffirmation of the identity of the programme emerged after their intention to use these panellists had been made clear.
to the Department Head and through him to ENCA.

The particularly sensitive point - though this is of course difficult to be absolutely certain about - was the possible inclusion of Powell. Far from happy with the situation the Head of Department declared:

"I'm being forced closer and closer to the icicle of Des Taylor (ENCA). All political matter has to be cleared with the Chief Assistant to the DG and by ENCA, who weigh it up in the light of outside political affairs".

Despite the overall political conclusions to be drawn from this incident, the programme had a declared purpose which meant that participants were excluded not on the grounds of political unsuitability but rather on the grounds that they had no relevance to that programme. Whether one sees this as a control process skilfully operated or a rather unfortunate consequence of rigid adherence to programme identity is problematic. Its consequences in influencing the content of the programme were nevertheless profound.

The problem was then to find an 'economist with a philosophy of life' which led to consideration of "Christians involved in industry - what about Sir Roy Geddes or Alan Davies of RTZ?". And so after several hours they were left with "Christian industrialists": they were christians, and therefore fitted one feature of the programme, the religious factor; they were industrialists, therefore pro-growth and therefore fitted the immediate need of the panel; they weren't overtly political and therefore not "current affairsish"; therefore satisfying the proscriptions of the organizational
hierarchy, and they had the necessary ingredient of being proven performers, therefore satisfying the requirements of good broadcasting. Their possible presence did not in the long run counter the objections of senior personnel and the programme was not broadcast.

Indiscussions like this there is a constant interplay between the style of presentation of a programme - its visual identity - and its content - what I wish to call the intellectual identity, sometimes characterised as a "house style".

You mentioned the phrase 'house style'. Is this a particular set of ideas you have about the programme?

Oh yes. The way it looks - is it going to look like BBC 2, is it going to look like current affairs; is it going to look like its own self, as a recognisable product. For example, the set, the graphics, the way we position the lettering in the graphics on the screen, the kind of shots we have of our studio set, the way we introduce things and people, the way we shoot the film; certain house rules. We always have an opening shot that is very, very wide indeed, on film as well as in the studio, because then it gives me a chance to do this that and the other. To set out my stall. This last season, I've always tried to start the show by saying "Tonight we are going to tell you all about so and so. And we've got the Chancellor of the Exchequer here...." and somebody else will say "...and I have got the Minister for Trade and Industry..." or whatever it might be "...over here....". "And over here we've got another group of people who don't like what the Chancellor has done about this, that and the other. And we've got some jolly films as well." That kind of thing. A recognisable way of introducing people, a set of cliches I suppose. We have to make the show hang together, as if it were a service in a big cathedral with lots of lady chapels, so that there's a service going on in each part of the building.

Would there be a house style in relation to the ideas side rather than the stylistic aspects of the programme?
Yes, it's ideas as well. Communication, the language is very important to me. The way we say certain things, the way we present certain bits of information. Though, of course, in terms of ideas, anything about the economy as far as my programme is concerned is relevant. How do I want to tackle it?

For the last twelve months I've been running a thematic presentation. That's to say every week I say "This week it's all about so and so..."

After years of current affairs programmes I was bored with the presenter or reporter saying "I'm sorry folks, that's all we've got time for, and now to something completely different." There's always a break. If it's worth talking about you may as well continue talking about it and you might get out some more information, so that poses stylistic changes and ideas and the way we put ideas up because it excludes certain things.

The comment here, which throws most light on the making of programmes is 'I'm in the theatrical business really.' By using such a description the producer is being both literal and figurative. He is implying that his foremost task is to keep his viewer entertained and therefore to retain him as a viewer. This does not mean that he suffuses the programme with a sawdust and greasepaint air, rather that his programme is essentially a composition, within which the content rests. Underlying his firm opinions about how the programme looks, what kind of items will be presented, how they will be presented, who is involved etc., is the key to his thinking, a feeling about who it is that is actually watching. The focus of the programme was economic affairs but the producer wished to interpret his brief in a very loose manner so that it didn't just appeal to city financiers, but also to 'ordinary people'.

"If you broadcast to experts you aren't broadcasting you are narrow casting in my view. You are infuriating the expert by not telling him enough because he knows it already. And you are going over
the head of the individual, the ordinary man who
doesn't know as much as the expert. Anyway I think
you can forget about the experts."

His approach to his programme - albeit at an abstracted
level - fed on a notion of the kind of person he had to
'sell' it to; a person who was not particularly
informed, who liked seeing the Chancellor saying
something rather than having someone saying what the
Chancellor had said, liked pictures but liked a theme
to be developed through rather than cut short. He added:

"We could do a very objective, cold, tepid piece
about the balance of payments, but what we really
want is the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the studio, so in a sense then I'm not doing what a
newspaper does, a journal or record or something
like that. For obvious reasons, I'm in the
theatrical business really. If I want the
Chancellor of the Exchequer it's a set occasion,
he's being interviewed, it's an important thing.
If they can interview him in a newspaper then they
can sub it down. If they want they can make it
quite different, whereas you can see the dandruff
on the Chancellor's collar, which is dreadfully
important. You can also get him in a different
mode from the bland presentation in a newspaper,
because if you read a newspaper you can cut from
one paragraph and one story to another entirely,
but you can't do that in television, you've got to
stay with it to the bitter end. Therefore, the
style of presentation is very much tied up with my
intellectual approach to the story.

A suggestion was made to this particular producer
by one of his production team that they do an American
trip. The producer had already indicated to me that he
tried to arrange trips abroad for his people from time
to time since this kept them happy and also produced
"pretty pictures" for the programme. This suggestion
was for a three or four week stay during which time they
would shoot several film stories. The cost would be
high and the producer made it clear that "we'll have to
talk very hard on this". The ensuing discussion however provided a fascinating glimpse of the centrality of the operating brief of the programme.

A number of stories were suggested: the US Postal service; the Securities and Exchange Commission, which it was felt might feed into a piece they were preparing on the role of the City in the British economy; the Railroad system, how does the American experience provide an insight into our own,

"Pictorially it will be very good. The thing that will come out is that they don't have a transport policy."

black capitalism, or as one put it, "coon capitalism". This latter was certainly the most favoured suggestion and, as with the railway story, an interesting feature was that the broad conclusions of the story were predetermined,

"Let's face it. The conclusion we are going to come up with is that it is the system versus the blacks."

No idea was forthcoming, however, for the producers request for a theme to cover the whole trip. Given the impasse, the discussion moved onto another possible area for a programme, the energy crisis. They saw two possible stories here: one, the overall situation from a political perspective; two, the details of the energy crisis - how much coal etc. The producer observed

"I like the political story, but it's not economic. The one that is economic we don't like."

The discussion then returned to its original area by the observation that

"What we should be doing is the money background to the Watergate story,"

though none of the others present agreed with this view.
He rejected the idea of the 'economics of being black' story (this was not of course strictly speaking the original idea, but no one pointed this out) on the grounds that it was "just another race story", and felt that the situation of the blacks didn't really impinge upon him, and therefore didn't impinge upon the audience. The originator of the idea disagreed and felt that it "doesn't matter whether it's relevant to the GB experience, it's still good news and current affairs material".

The task then was to fit a particular type of content into a particular programme brief, and at the same time to satisfy a number of other criteria such as visuality, interest level etc. The point which was made about the 'black' story being "good news and current affairs material" failed to take into account that the programme did not have so wide a latitude in which to function. This particular programme, though it was organizationally rooted within the Current Affairs Group had the difficulty of the previous programme referred to in that it couldn't be too 'current affairsish'. The bulk of political television programmes operate not news values but a number of programme values which are in part extractions from and elaborations of events as determined by the news division, whose translation into programme content is influenced by the programme's relationship to a particular programme department. Where the producer functions with a programme form established by his department, we can term this the derived identity. Within that broad bracket, the producer is able to formulate and develop the precise make-up of the programme, and this we might term the developed identity. A producer
of a programme within a features department declared:

"We have vague terms of reference. The Controller said recently that we could do almost anything so long as it's good, which is a rather nice redefining of our brief. Basically I suppose we are human affairs oriented. We spend a lot of our time looking at the problems of the underdog and people who get pushed under by the system, but really we work by a process of exclusion. We don't do something that obviously belongs to light entertainment or obviously belongs to plays or current affairs, or politics or religion or anything the other departments should be doing. Occasionally if we feel they've slipped up we'll nip in there and pinch it. For example, the big 2½ hour programme we did on a review of the Welfare State 30 years on, that could equally have come out of current affairs department. We think we did it in a much more human way than they would have done. We think they would have had far more politicians and done it as a sort of political shouting match. In all the film we shoot you'll find more ordinary people than in anything that comes out of current affairs."

By human affairs oriented he implied the focussing on non-elite figures and an avoidance of abstractions which the viewer would avoid because he felt it was boring.

He saw himself and his programme as contrasted with the sin of boredom as perpetrated by current affairs programmes. His conception thus led him to focus not only on particular sorts of subject matter, but also on particular treatments of that subject matter. The following account gives some of the details which lie behind this point: his programme he hoped,

"is a way of presenting an overpowering abstract idea in a way which is understanderable and really brings it home to ordinary people. Our biggest success in that way was the Welfare State programme. We were wallowing around in the problem of how to do it. The obvious thing to do was to pick out all of the bits that had gone wrong and which didn't seem satisfactory. But we were worried in that whatever we selected we would be editorializing it in a way which we didn't want to be seen to be doing."
Then the researcher came up with the very bright idea that solved the problem for us. He suggested that we choose two families, one fairly poor and one fairly rich and just compare them in every area where they came into contact with the Welfare State, and that really brought it home to people. People could sit down in the corner and look at the programme on the telly and they could identify with it. That seems to me the real thing and I think a lot of current affairs coverage fails to do this. It's actually very boring listening to politicians talking about abstract ideas, it's much more interesting listening to people talking about what really matters to them. I believe that all we are really doing is a sort of popular education job if you like. If we are failing in that because people are either bored or because they don't understand it, or the subject isn't of any interest to them, then there's not much point in doing the programme it seems to me."

Producers in this kind of situation, where they are involved with political material, are faced with a dilemma: how to make entertaining programmes in an area in which he believes that people are not particularly interested. The responses in many ways reflect their situation, and this producer was able to develop a programme style and format which he felt avoided the pitfalls of 'boring' television. In other words he employs tried and tested formulae, particular formats which he has derived from the whole tradition of his area of broadcasting, from his department and which he has developed during the course of his programme making. In so doing, however, he may dilute and even prevent the transfer of political information, which is still his main task - the "popular education job". From this producer's point of view the main difficulty was not conflict with political elites but rather the development
of an entertaining format. His problem ultimately was rooted in a strong identification with this mysterious person, the 'ordinary man' and an implicit concept of his likes and dislikes. Out of this abstraction emerges a solution to what he feels to be the problems posed by the abstractions of the political process. Beginning with the assumption that the audience is bored by much of the political material with which they are presented, and contrasting his own programme with a number of other types within which he does not fit, he depicts the programme as a feature, using film, focussing on 'human interest' problems and 'ordinary people' rather than abstractions and boring politicians, and thus able to make the complex world of public and human affairs intelligible. Only through sustaining this particular identity can he sustain interest among his audience, the key word in his vocabulary.

If the development of identity through the development of a particular stance vis-a-vis public issues, through an identification with certain types of participants and with certain types of subject matter is one means by which the producer establishes a programme identity, a number of other strategies are open to him, such as the use of particular broadcasters and reference to supervisors.
Programme Identity and Other Broadcasters

Kumar (1974) points to the central importance of the presenter in broadcasting.\(^1\) It became clear from the research carried out that the professional broadcaster around whom any actual broadcast takes place effectively embodies within his own person both a type of subject and the way in which the subject will be treated: he encapsulates what I have termed the 'identity'. The point was made by a producer in the BBC Current Affairs Group:

"Talk-In varied considerably when Robin Day was presenter and when David Dimbleby was presenter. With Robin Day we tended to be much more topical, much more political. This meant we couldn't plan the programme until pretty late - frequently not before the week concerned, and sometimes as late as the day before. We had a much smaller format for most of those programmes, using only three or four people. So we could work right up to the day before. But with Dimbleby the programmes are much bigger, with a big invited audience. Programmes are prepared at least a week before or at least it is off the ground by then in the sense that you get a number of people who you can confirm. We did start with Day in the first place with an audience show and they were alright. But we came to the conclusion that given the fact that the viewer identifies Day with politics, we weren't actually getting a bigger audience and on the whole his particular skills were not really being exploited and so in a sense we retreated and did what he is good at which is the more formal debate and 'Minister tell me what the hell you are up to?'"

The initial important decision was, as Kumar indicated, the employment of particular personalities. That having happened, the programme is constructed around him in accordance with a number of characteristics he is felt

1. See Chapter Two
to possess: he is, then, the embodiment of the programme identity. The programme is still, at one level of definition, current affairs, but whether the audience will be seeing a discussion with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or whether they will be seeing a discussion with a large number of people on the subject of wealth depends wholly on the person around whom the programme is being formed. The irony is that it is felt by the producer, by the rest of the programme staff and by the Department, that the two versions are what the audience wants, when in fact they are the assumptions by the programme makers about what the audience wants.

Producers also tend to pursue their interpretation of their superiors' own feelings about the direction and subject matter for the programme. I asked producers about the role of comments from their colleagues and superiors, of how this influenced their own assessment of the programme and how the programme should develop in the future. I have repeatedly emphasised the connection with the audience, of how the formulation of the programme related to the pursuit of the chimera of the entertained ordinary man. On occasion, though, the necessary pursuit was of the entertained organizational superior. One producer summed up the situation in the following way:

"The fact of the matter is that although one would like it otherwise, the comments and attitudes of one's senior colleagues are bloody important because ultimately they are the ones who decide whether a series continues and whether you are the right guy to produce it."
You get a programme that people you meet at home will say "Oh God that was boring". You will then find later on that your BBC high-ups have said "Great programme, fascinating programme." For example, we did a programme with Franz Joseph Strauss, which really did send most people fast asleep straight away. It read very well in the Listener for people who knew about European Institutions but as a television programme I don't think I met anybody who stayed with it. But I said at the time, and I knew I was right, "I bet you the BBC hierarchy will like this", and sure enough they did. Every week we get minutes of a meeting in which they go through different programmes and sure enough it was commended. That happens very, very often.

Q: "Do you find then that this would begin to influence you in terms of later programmes? You have the Strauss programme, do you say "we'll repeat that type of programme"?

"There is no completely straightforward and simple answer to that. What I try to do is I try to get a brief out of the people above me, and that isn't all that easy."

Q: "How do you do that? Is it in the form of a formal request or is it over a drink?"

"Oh no, informal. The head of current affairs is very accessible. I see him frequently but on an entirely informal basis. I say "Well, what do you want the programmes to be? Who do you want them to appeal to?" In the BBC as opposed to ITV we don't have the same necessity to obtain majority audiences across the board. We want them in some of our programmes, but we do have the constitutional responsibility to cater for minorities and so it is a valid question to ask one's boss "Well, is this meant to be for the intellectual 2 million or do you want me to appeal to a much bigger audience?"

A Brief Identity

The precise identity of other programmes may be a function of a brief laid down at the programme's beginnings, combined with a general understanding of the dominance of particular forms within particular programming areas, fused to the producer's own interjection of style. A programme studied within the BBC's News Division was
particularly interesting in this sense. Its initial brief was that it would be a "review of the best of the week's news film", that it would cater for the deaf as well as the hearing and would be broadcast on a Sunday - which significantly was seen as the end of one week rather than the beginning of a new week. These various factors had a number of consequences for the production in terms of what they could do and how they could do it:

"Because the editors of the day are obviously presenting the news of the day as it happens, whether they are doing it well or badly depends entirely on the person, on the day, on the circumstances and on the viewer's own reactions. But that basically is what they have to do. They don't have to weigh the overall effect of a story's impact apart from where it's going to hit that evening. So in other words they can even lead with a trivial story for example the Liza Minnelli-Peter Sellers engagement the other day. Well, somebody upstairs went stark raving mad and led the bulletin with that. He made it the lead item as if he were running the Evening Standard.

There are of course times when you can justify this and presumably he would say to himself that this was the big news story of the day. This is what most people would want to know about. By the end of the week I don't even think it's worth mentioning. So I have a different approach to things. The things that have been important day after day are not necessarily the stories which are going to take a lot of space in this programme. There are other reasons why my standards have to be different. Indeed in the programme today I've felt the need to go into a bit of explanation. At the end of last week's programme I got a call from somebody in the Guardian who wanted to know why we had said, "Now, the Watergate affair. In the last couple of weeks we've tried not to overplay this", and a little later in that programme we used the phrase "is it going to be the most boring or the most exciting story of the century?" He wanted to know why we'd used the words 'boring' and 'overplay' in this connection. Well the fact is that it's perfectly legitimate for people night after night in a news bulletin to run minutes of talk about Watergate, but at the end of the week such as this what you needed if you are a normal viewer wanting to know more about Watergate were the pages and pages of print in the quality newspapers. I can't possibly
do this even if I could find some way of summing up the Watergate affair in ten minutes with somebody speaking to camera. That would be perfectly acceptable in a normal programme but ten minutes of somebody's head and three or four lines of print, quite apart from the problems of printing would not be on for this programme. Anybody who wanted to read that amount of print would do far better to go to the newspapers for all the details. So that was what I meant when I said "try not to overplay it", we would have been going over the same ground for the sake of it. It would have been boring not because the events themselves are boring, but because a constant repetition of the same facts is boring. That applies to this week's programme as well. Obviously the big story is the Lambton-Jellicoe affair. Well what the devil can I do that isn't available in much more sensible detail in newspapers. I can't compete. So my standards are different, they are not ordinary news standards."

There are a number of factors tied up in this description which I will return to in this thesis - the most interesting being his observation that he can't compete with the press for detail because of the limitations of space and time. Along with this is a slight implication that his colleagues elsewhere in the News Division are more able to compete. In fact the time available to this programme is greater than the time available to main bulletins which leads one to conclude that his difficulty lies elsewhere or that he is totally wrong about his colleagues. I think the answer involves both these. When asked, if his standards weren't normal news standards just what standards did apply, his comments were revealing.

"This used to be more of a problem than it is now. When I changed the programme a few years back I got approval for changing the billing. We used to be a "review of the week's world news". That meant that because we said this was what we were going to do, this meant that we had to review the week's news, however boring it might be. I eventually got this changed to the "best of the week's news film and other matters of interest". This gave me scope and it meant that I could throw out important stories
that in my terms were not important stories. Although I don't necessarily throw out a dull but important story it does mean that I don't necessarily feel that I've got to devote a great deal of length to it. How do I choose things? Well this week I came in knowing that there would be something about Watergate to be considered but I didn't know what on Wednesday. Obviously the Lambton-Jellicoe story but again I didn't know what to say about this. What I'd seen on the news bulletins I didn't much care for. I have my own feelings at times about what we should do and what we are wasting our time and money doing. You know, I see absolutely no reason or point in wasting money and resources and air time in shoving up exterior shots of the houses where people involved in scandals may or may not be. This doesn't seem to me to add one atom of information, excitement or enjoyment. Anyway I knew I was going to have to do something about that. There was the Skylab story coming. I knew there was going to be the Paris Air Show, and there would be Iceland possibly, and as it turned out, yes. On the features side I had a lot of very good film from our team who'd flown out to India for the drought there and this would be available. Also it was the week of the Chelsea Flower Show and there would be film of that. There were also various other items which on Wednesday I was gathering and thinking about and looking at."

He indicated a number of other possible film stories which were visually appealing such as a bank robbery in Germany, "a bit of drama", which he would probably use (and did in fact use in the end), and concluded

"At the end of the week I don't think that detailed facts of the week's news stories are what a review of the week's news is all about. The basic facts are not necessarily as important as the overall feeling of the thing."

And 'the thing' is the sum total of the week's news, represented not by the most salient or important points but rather the most visually appealing pieces. This is not because, as the cliche goes, all of television is dependent on visualisation but because he has a brief from which he works. The particular formation of this
brief created a number of difficulties. The positioning at the end of the week left him with the feeling that everything which could be said had been said on almost every issue. He was therefore in the ironic position of being made redundant as a news programme. At the same time the brief entailed his using film. At the time of the interview, for example, there were a number of stories which exemplified his difficulties in this area - he refers particularly to Watergate and the Lambton-Jellicoe affair. Neither of these were compatible with the programme brief, in the sense that neither were particularly visual stories. Their explication would have been difficult in that the captions which had to accompany the spoken word for the use of the deaf viewers, made it technically impossible to use lengthy explanations. This particular producer's solution to the problems was to have the brief changed slightly so that it became the 'best' of the week's news film rather than the more prescriptive 'review of the week's film'. In transforming the brief he alleviated a series of potentially contentious areas. This particular case does indicate the significance of a brief derived from above. It exemplifies the way in which the content of political communication can be shaped to accommodate workable programme formula.

This particular programme emerged during the formation of BBC2 in 1964. Each of the existing departments of BBC1 were asked to put forward ideas for programmes which would fit within the 'minority taste' brief of the new
channel. It was suggested that a special news programme which would appeal to the hearing but would also provide a service to the deaf and which would be able to use film might be useful. The perspective of the programme was thus heavily structured by its original formulation. It is not always the case however that the idea behind the programme is so clearly formed before the real work of producing it begins. The initial formulation of some quite notable programmes has been vague, leaving in effect the producer with little or no brief:

Tonight, TW3 and Pebble Mill At One were all formed in this way. A brief look at the origins of TW3 throws further light on the process described here. Given its success - at its peak something like 12 to 14 million viewers watched the programme - the beginnings of the programme were remarkably simple and ill-defined. In a recent interview Sir Hugh Greene described how he saw the programme's origins.

"I'd just got this as a vague idea in my mind that in the atmosphere of the early 60's it would be very good to have a programme which did something to prick pomposity, and show politicians and others in their true character. I had got this vague idea from Berlin in the back of my mind, I talked to Kenneth Adam about this, he sympathised with it and I talked to the people in the Television Light Entertainment Department, informally at parties and so on, just throwing in a few words of encouragement.

1. As previously indicated the pressures leading to the formation of these programmes were institutional - a logical use of resources to fill extra time that was available.

2. Greene 'claims' direct responsibility for three programmes having appeared: TW3, Perry Mason and Songs of Praise.
to start thinking about this. Then came in some ways the other decisive incident. There was an American comedian called Mort Sahl, who was associated with satirical programmes in the United States, he visited England and was asked to do one programme for the BBC, done by Light Entertainment. I remember this, it wasn’t very good at all, Mort Sahl hadn’t been in England long enough to get the flavour of England. I remember listening to this at the Television Centre, and what infuriated me, really made me lose my temper which I don’t often do, was the framework provided by Muir and Norden in which this was put on, with either Muir or Norden, I forget which, standing on one leg and saying ‘Fancy Aunty BBC daring to put on something like this’. For someone in the BBC to talk about Aunty BBC on the air, with that sort of coy approach, enraged me so much that I told Light Entertainment to stop thinking about this and put it, with Kenneth Adam’s association and agreement, into the hands of the Current Affairs Department, where you had all the bright young people of Tonight and so on, and they then set to work thinking about the new format, and from that point on I didn’t interfere at all, I didn’t ask to see anything in advance and whatnot. On the night of the first number I watched it with some nervousness, unclear as to what it was going to be like and was delighted. Seldom has a programme begun so splendidly. But that was the real genesis of it all.”

“Did you go to current affairs because that seemed the only logical alternative to light entertainment given your disillusion with light Entertainment?”

“Yes.”

“When you went over to current affairs you must have presented Baverstock and co. with a basis of the model of a programme.”

“No, I didn’t. They produced their model of a programme. All that – I can’t remember one’s exact words after all these years, but all that I did was to suggest to them that they should think in terms of a programme which took an irreverent look at what was going on in the country or in the world. It was up to them to work out how to do it. And then as I say I didn’t take part in the discussions, I didn’t see anything in advance, I left it entirely to them.”

“When you say that you wanted the programme to take an irreverent look and that was about it as far as you were concerned, did you want to do that because you thought that society was becoming irreverent or because you thought that society should be irreverent?”
"I thought society should be irreverent. I thought it would be a very good thing for society and for leaders of that society if they were treated with a lack of reverence."

In another interview Baverstock sought to play down the role of Greene and Adam and yet his responses were remarkably in keeping with Greene, who anyhow plays down his own role in the formulation of the sort of programme it should be. He ridiculed the notion that Greene had been influenced by the pre-war German cabaret, but said that the central thrust of the programme was an attack on cant, the unctuous hypocrisy which characterised post-war British society. It was also, he declared, particularly important that the programme be on Saturday evening, "because then people are 24 hours from having finished work, and 24 hours from going to work", and are therefore at their least public and most private, in a position to - a curious phrase this - 'speak the private truth'.

There is a sense of serendipity in all this. Had the programme been produced by Light Entertainment as was originally intended, transformation of the rather vague notions of Greene and then Baverstock into the programme that was TW3, would presumably have been noticeably different. The point remains though that the sense of purpose and identity embodied by TW3 was developed rather than derived.

In the present context one is tempted to formulate a law that programmes which are not specifically recognised by broadcasters as political are more likely to have a developed rather than a derived identity: that the less
the political content, the greater the latitude for developing particular programme features. A discussion programme in the sample was produced from neither a news or current affairs department, and indeed was only included because on the weeks in which the sample of programmes was drawn up the subject matter happened to be political. When asked about the programme, the producer declared:

"...they said "You will produce a programme in that slot". It was a 25 minute slot, it was studio based, it had very little money. I happen to have a general theory that the notion of balance inside television programmes is pretty sterile. Exchanging worked out points of view, one with the other doesn't get anywhere beyond a statement of first principles. Mary Whitehouse will say "I believe so and so" and Ken Tynan will say "I don't, I believe so and so". I work from the general principle that ideas are best expressed unchallenged if you want to understand them. So we first of all gave the programme the vaguest title we could think of, Opinion, since this clearly could cover anything. We pulled out of the Dictionary of Quotations an Oscar Wilde quote which identified the key constituent of an opinion as being prejudice. We said that the programme is basically going to be talking heads and will consist of people who have got positive ideas on things, and generally we decided to let them go unchallenged. So we shopped around for first of all big general areas: we said "football season's starting, what shall we do about football?" So we found a footballer Eamon Dunphy, and let him express his opinion in the company of people who could be expected at the very most to qualify his ideas. The only concession we made to balance was to say "We are not therefore going to take up a political stance that belongs to the programme and field teams of people pushing points of view that correspond with that." We consciously did the opposite sometimes. One week we got a copy of the Spectator, read through the whole thing, found the three most extreme right wing points of view and said "Put these people up against Anthony Howard and they'd all disappear, put them into the studio together and you'd get a much clearer idea in 25 minutes of how the right wing man thinks." So we did that and it was quite fruitful."
The situation was not quite as stark as implied here, there are obviously a number of mechanisms which would be employed to distance the views of the participants from possibly appearing as official programme policy. The two most central are the billing - that this is an opinion, and the audience is expected to understand and appreciate the point; and the presence of the detached chairman putting questions to the participants. At the same time the programme would not be identified as mainstream political television, and therefore not only would the intellectual ground rules vary, the whole perspective of the programme's style and development would vary also.

Why this should be the case is less easy to state than the fact that it is the case. It seems to stem from the structural position of the department within which it was produced, Presentation, which does not have as clearly overt a role as do the other departments whose programmes figure in this study. The external political awareness of politicians is much more tightly focussed on the television produced by the main political departments, and this in itself creates a more 'liberal' atmosphere from the programme makers' viewpoint. The programme is also a part of a minority channel's output with an audience small even by the limited standards of that channel. Its assumed significance, and therefore its potential to generate anxiety, will reflect this perspective. The position was ably described by another producer in the Presentation department, during a discussion
of a late night programme which had featured, among other things, a quite vicious cartoon of Edward Heath, who was at the time Prime Minister. It was pointed out that one always assumed that politicians were highly sensitive to their portrayal on television and that television controllers were sensitive to those sensitivities. He declared:

"Context, you've got to see it in terms of context. We can do things from this department which you could never do from other departments."

Identity from Other Media

Current affairs programmes are obviously more geared to the mainstream of political life, which can be understood as the activities of political elites. The attachment of these programmes to the world of the dominant political culture does not follow just from the statutory or ideological link to that world - though such links are clearly important, but also from an attachment to a number of that culture's dominant journalistic forms, and I have in mind the New Statesman/Spectator and Sunday Times/Observer formats.1 Implied within each model is a sense of the subject matter, the audience for that subject matter and the way the audience wishes to have that subject matter treated. The point was described in the following by an ITV current affairs producer:

1. I do not pluck these names out of the air. It was astonishing the number of producers who made reference to them - notably the Sunday Times.
On Monday night before I come in I sit down with the papers from the weekend and I just think for an hour. I don't look to the papers just for stories. I suppose most items can be subdivided into three: one is the sort of political ideas, trying to plot current events not so much from a journalistic news sense but trying to isolate the ideas that are behind something like Phase 2. The idea is not just to put the Government's point of view but to pose the real issues which it forced the Unions to come to terms with. There are issues in the air like Northern Ireland. Political ideas which one tries not to cover in a news way. I don't like to grab Gerry Fitt and say 'What are you going to do?' Rather I like to say 'Look at the White Paper on this subject.....'. We have very long talks about it and take things like that very seriously. We endeavour to be different from other current affairs programmes, because we have the time to think for about three or four days about something like that rather than a couple of hours or a couple of weeks. In three or four days you've got time to really get to grips with the White Paper on Northern Ireland, to read it with a number of people who know a lot about Ireland and work out what the important questions to isolate are, and then say if that's the important question, how can we go about presenting that interestingly on television. Now that's what I'd count as the sort of ideas section.

The next section is just pure 'Insight' type journalism. For example, the boat that was caught this morning off the coast of Southern Ireland: where did it come from; where was it going to; who paid for the arms? All those kinds of questions. That's just pure journalism. We are for example mounting an investigation at the moment into the (Wakefield) mine disaster and have two people up there at the moment. I've been trying to decide whether to do a 20 minute documentary into what the causes of the disaster were. If something like this disaster happens then you respond immediately, and if you are a daily newspaper you respond in one way, but if you are Panorama it's just not the sort of story that you are interested in. We are however interested in it in much the same way that the Sunday Times or the Observer would be. We as a programme, though not current affairs programmes in general, try when a major story like that breaks to do an analysis. It's not a political event but we do try to do a news analysis.

And the third item is that each week, out of 4 or 5 items, we have a short final piece on something which is not news or current affairs. It's very difficult to describe what we are looking for but to some extent we try to make the last item entertaining. Last week we interviewed (a well known film star) and we've done one with (a well
known footballer). They are more digestible, more palatable than the other items. They are not necessarily not serious, but are general interest for a current affairs audience. They are ideas which you come across in the paper or hear about.”

The quality press and periodicals act not only as sources of items and background reading on items, but also provide the working model for the programme. His description of the types of stories they will have is a pastiche of the diverse contents of dominant press sources. The effect is amplified by the use of working reporters from these papers as contributors, broadcast journalists or link-men in the studio. The necessity of producing something, the feeding off and in a sense imitation of the currently available collective wisdom of the world of print means that the consideration of certain forms of political material - 'oppositional politics' is one that is often cited - is difficult, quite simply because they don't seem relevant to or compatible with that programme's intent. The point is I think suitably made in the following description of the origination of the ideas for a current affairs programme:

"But are there any particular criteria you would employ to make the final decision? If you are being fed ideas from various sources at any one time on what basis do you accept and reject?"

"Does the idea attract me - that's important. You can't please everyone so you may aswell please yourself. I think that's a fairly good rough and ready rule of thumb. Is it something that is sociological or political in essence, or economic? I say 'No, don't bring me the sociology, give me the economics'. I want to hear cash registers ring; narrows it down a bit. I say 'Will I learn something about the economy in watching this programme, or will it simply be
a lot of politicians arguing or sociological information that we can't understand. In other words a poor man's Panorama or a poor man's Midweek, which we are not. Let them do that, it's easier. We do something that is much better and more specialist. So we have a lot of politicians arguing anyway, but you want to have certain facts and figures to establish the parameters of the story. We did a story, say, on tourism about 6 or 7 months ago, and we explained with 2 or 3 films and a couple of big discussions how it is that tourism is our greatest dollar earner or something like that, it's a very big industry. It's a cottage industry at the same time. Should there be a Ministry of Tourism or should we let it go along as it always has done, in the great informal ad hoc English way? Now in the course of that we tackled hotel prices in much the same way as the Sunday Times Business News did 6 weeks later. It's always my joy to think of something that say the Business News will do afterwards not before. One of my immediate questions is 'how came you by this intelligence?' And if they say 'I read it in a newspaper.' I say 'Yuck!', because so did everyone else. I'm wrong of course, because more people may see us than read the newspapers, and may not be the same people. But I have a horror of being regarded as the younger brother of Fleet Street."

His standards, then, are set by his differentiating himself from Panorama and Midweek and associating with the parameters established by the Business News. The distinction between the two areas is of more than metaphorical significance, it exemplifies the functional code of identity from which programmes emerge.

Slowly, numbers of forces - what is happening in the news media generally, what they can actually do given available resources, what would be suitable for their programme with their sorts of audience, what they are supposed to be doing given their programme brief - crystallize so that eventually a code is established which the producer utilises in constructing the programme. Every producer operates such a code, though its precise nature may be poorly articulated. In the following account
its nature was clearly articulated:

In terms of the criteria of content, of what one actually wanted the programme to do. The thing, I suppose, the answer is really like this. At one's disposal was an average of about 40 minutes per night, on which with a particular array of repertorial skills, in which one could do anything. There were no obligations in the way that a news bulletin has obligations – it must obviously cover that which is generally determined by the various evaluative processes to be the big news of the day. Nor was it really like Panorama, in the sense that that programme has periodic obligations, although it's similarly free to do the set-piece interview with the Prime Minister or the Leader of the Opposition on current major events. Its freedom was greater than that, but its freedom was to use the qualities and the skills that it possessed. So I gradually worked out a series of criteria for what constituted an item. If I can remember them all they were:

There's a kind of story which told you what really went on - you have to use the word 'really' in most of these criteria. It's not what was the news, but what had really happened. These are all ideals. So one of the things of judging 'is that an item?' was 'is it the kind of item that tells you not so much what happened but what really happened?' In other words, if the news is telling you about the sacking of various ministers for misdemeanours, a 'really' item could be the degree to which British society believes sexual morality is no longer important; or an examination of integrity in high office, what is the meaning and what is the expectation, a discussion about that for instance; or the historical of that is in a sense telling you what the news story was really about.

Secondly, there is the extension and elaboration of a news story. There's a simple means by which you can tell people far more, even in the 40 minutes available, than the news, and that is in itself valuable. There would be an event, let's take the same event, you can take all these 5 criteria to the same events, you could by simply doing 40 minutes on one of these particular political scandals, through just using factual presentation of 'this is where it happened' and 'this is where they...', just telling the story in pure narrative terms with a far greater accumulation of fact and picture and narrative content.

Third criterion is personality. There you take an important figure involved in a news event and you just do a portrait of that person, anything from a day in his (her) life to his (her) life story.
Told narratively. A subsection of that criterion can be a major interview with a personality which is simply a skillfully conducted interview of 20 minutes length, which itself was a particular skill of the programme.

Fourthly, there was the story that wasn't in the news at all but ought to have been. That is to say, perhaps I ought not to have used the word 'ought' in there, but which could have been or should have been if one focused sufficient attention to that particular subject. You could say that a story that had simply been ignored anything from the scoop, like the Washington Post having Watergate when nobody else had; just getting information which wasn't formerly news yet, but by breaking it it became news. Or something in a slightly more moralistic way, but a story about a scandal in housing or a fantastic good deed done by somebody, something, it needn't necessarily be negative. It could be, and usually was, something quite positive about something very important or very interesting that had happened, that no one else had paid attention to and wasn't worth paying attention to unless you could do it at length.

Now the next criterion. Well there's a subsection of that which is investigative reporting, where you have built, not by process of discovery, but by a process of painstaking and elaborate research which you very seldom do thoroughly enough to fulfil this criterion. But by doing it you produce a major investigative and important thing. Now I think the best of these was the story of the propaganda campaign behind Biafra. At a time when everyone else was being pro-Biafra one showed, just by doing academic research and some historical research and a certain amount of daredevil digging around, the most amazing story of how the propaganda campaign was put together around the world.

So these are 5 major ones. But there is a sixth one. This is a story which no one else, which justified itself because someone who happened to be working on the programme could do it particularly well. In other words it fitted no criterion at all beyond the fact that one happened to have someone who was particularly good at that, or that particular thing, and therefore one could, through technical skill rather than through any formulable criterion of news worthiness, but through sheer technical skill, something was validated which otherwise would not have been validated.

I have been arguing then that producers when making programmes employ a 'code', the constituents of which provide programmes with a workable identity. Put simply,
producers operate with a blueprint or a framework and in this sense their work is structured and inhibited. If I might return to an analogy described in Chapter 2, their work is more a feat of engineering than of architecture (Sigelman, 1973). Yet there is clearly no absolute imperative about employing particular identities for programme making, and yet equally, experimentation, the development of new formulae, is not the order of the day in political television. It is not unreasonable to ask why this state of affairs pertains. To answer this one has to look more closely at the derivation, persistence and petrification of programme formulae. In this way one can tap a distinctive aspect of the social origins of political television.

When producers say of their programmes, "it's what the audience wants", the judgement implied within that statement is based on audience figures. This at least is the clear message of any discussion of the audience. The producer holds no precise details of his audience but he does have a crude awareness of the audience figures for his programme, and so do his superiors.

In a recent article Austin Mitchell, a man who has crossed between psephology and performing on television, describes the 'decline of current affairs television'. He shows that over a period of time various current affairs programmes have suffered a decline in their audience, Table 1.
There is obviously something in Mitchell's argument that the declining figures reflect not only an increasing avoidance of political material, but also the impact of the new newsprogrammes and their increased length - he posits "a 'Gresham' law of television" in which "the topical drives out the analytical", and "an undigested deluge of facts curtails the scope for depth, discussion and interpretation" (Mitchell, 1973, 133-4). This is no place to become involved in the argument about how necessary current affairs programmes are, but it does seem to me that Mitchell touches on an important point, though I think inadvertently, when he says that:

"Television has a basic responsibility to serious discussion and analysis of serious problems. Whatever the ratings figures, this responsibility is not fulfilled by programmes at dead of night or the odd serious item in a deluge of trivia. At the same time, current affairs producers have to formulate a response to the changed situation produced by the greater importance and impact of news. This means new formulae and new approaches, in addition to the old ones."


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Table 1

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24 Hours/Midweek</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Panorama</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>This Week</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World in Action</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Mitchell 1973)
From the point of view of this discussion the most interesting feature is that these programmes were relatively successful in their early years - *Panorama* and *This Week* were both developed and successful in the mid-1950s and *World in Action* began broadcasting in 1963. It was their early success which led to their subsequent transformation into a persistent formula for current affairs broadcasting. It is also the success of the news magazine *Tonight* in the 1957-62 period which has led to the persistent presence of the news magazine in any sample of political television - as Austin Mitchell declares in a tone of despair, "*Nationwide* prospered.......*24 Hours* languished".

The irony is that it becomes rather difficult to say just what the news magazine is: it is news, political interviewing, economics, sociology, entertainment; film report and studio report; interviewer-interviewee, and group discussion. It is a programme which can contain both a serious political interview with the Prime Minister and a film about clog-dancers, an investigation into striking car workers and a 'Nurse of the Year' Award. From this morass we can I think see three components to the overall identity; a public affairs component; a magazine component; and most significantly, a view of the audience. Any cultural form owes much to a number of antecedents, and the origins of this rather curious of political television lie in the immense success of *Tonight*. 
Tonight - A Seminal Programme

A description of Tonight written in 1961 could readily apply to any news magazine programme now on the air:

"One night it may concentrate on three items as immediately topical and serious as the situation in Paris before the expected invasion by paratroops, the plans for a teachers strike, and American and Cuban exiles clamouring for another invasion of Cuba; with only an interview with Annigoni and a song thrown in as lightweight at the end. Another night the programme will start with a fox-hunting debate, press on to the mystery of an apparently suicidal crow repeatedly dashing itself against a window pane and follow up with a tame mink."

(dill, 1961).

Tonight began transmission from a tiny studio in Kensington on 18th February 1957. It is now part of holy writ that this was a momentous event not only in the development of television but in the career of a new post war generation of programme makers. Its producer and then editor, Donald Baverstock, was regarded as the new age incarnate. Like much holy writ such views are by now shot through with as much mythology as reality and it is not my purpose here to begin a discussion of that. Nor is it my intention to discuss whether Tonight and its people did represent a new social mood which dragged, as the saying goes, Aunty BBC kicking and screaming into the new era of the '60's.¹ My purpose in mentioning Tonight is much simpler - though I believe that the point is an important one from the perspective of understanding the present state of political television. Its emergence exemplified the response by the BBC to the challenge of ITV, which had

¹. For brief discussions along these lines see Smith (1973) Hill (1961); Booker (1970); Levin (1970).
begun transmission only two years previously. The
effect on the BBC’s audience figures was tremendous. The
mood this induced was described by Hugh Greene, who was
Director of Administration when Tonight began, Director
of News and Current Affairs in 1958 and was appointed
D.G. in 1959.

“There was a very serious competitive situation.
The figures were down to I think the lowest point
reached towards the end of the '50's was 27% to
the BBC and 73% to ITV. With the Inquiry coming
along and with the knowledge that one of the main
decisions to be made as a result of the inquiry
was who should be given a second channel, the BBC
or ITV, it seemed to me quite clear that whatever
the inquiry might recommend, if the BBC still had
an audience as small as that it would be politically
impossible for any government to allot the third
channel to the BBC. So the BBC had to become
more competitive and had to shake off a lot of its
old fashioned ways.”

The Tonight programme was broadcast nationally as
is Nationwide from the sample. Its significance was
readily apparent within the very first year of its
appearance, as was that of Panorama which began 2 years
earlier. The Annual Report and Accounts of the BBC
for 1957-8 stated:

"In recent years BBC television has greatly
developed its capacity for reporting on current
affairs and controversies and, more broadly, for
illuminating the most significant aspects of our
life and times. Programmes of this description
now form the largest single category of the BBC’s
output. Panorama which has been broadcast in its
present form since 1955, has continued to open
its weekly 'window on the world' to an audience
which now averages nearly 10 million. Its
reputation for independent and impartial enquiry
into topical matters of national and international
concern has been fully maintained. The new topical
magazine Tonight has been remarkably successful
and, with its blend of serious and light and its
ability to appeal directly to the viewer, has
firmly established itself as a novel and popular
form of television. Its average nightly audience
increased in one year from 2½ million to nearly 3 million."

These were, however, very much islands of success in a landscape swamped by the rivals of ITV.\(^1\) The figures presented to Pilkington are conclusive:

"At present the average evening audience for ITV programmes is running at about 12½ million people.

In homes able to receive both BBC and ITV transmission, the time spent viewing ITV programmes in the country as a whole, measured as a proportion of the total time spent viewing television, has never in any month during the past year fallen below 62% and has been as high as 71%......... The TAM figures from the beginning of ITV have been:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>ITV %</th>
<th>BBC %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>October - December</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>January - March</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>April - June</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>July - September</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October - December</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
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<td>1957</td>
<td>January - March</td>
<td>75</td>
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<td>April - June</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>July - September</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October - December</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>January - March</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>April - June</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>July - September</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>October - December</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>January - March</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April - June</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July - September</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October - December</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>January - March</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April - June</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>July</td>
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<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>August</td>
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<tr>
<td>September (first week)</td>
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<td>Sept (second week)</td>
<td>57</td>
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<td>Sept (third week)</td>
<td>71</td>
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<td>Sept (fourth week)</td>
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<td>Sept (fifth week)</td>
<td>72</td>
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<td>October (first week)</td>
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<tr>
<td>October (second week)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>28</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


1. An Audience Research Department Report (BBC, 1959, 6) could state: "BBC Television News enjoys greater respect than ITN amongst those who can view either. Nevertheless this is not powerful enough to prevent ITN audiences from considerably outnumbering the Band III audiences for the BBC-TV News."
The BBC's response to this was to point to the difficulties of sustaining a 'balance' between 'light' and 'serious' programmes, particularly at peak viewing hours (Pilkington 1960, Vol I, Appendix F, p. 210 ff). The dismal viewing figures, it implied, were the result of the BBC trying to do its duty to public service broadcasting by providing a diet of serious as well as light programmes at peak hours, a duty it noted that the ITV companies had singularly avoided. The BBC memorandum declared,

"It is the core of the BBC's programme policy that its more important serious programmes should for the most part be offered when the largest audiences are available......It is important not only to satisfy the knowledgeable viewer, but also to attract 'new' viewers to such programmes. Resources and facilities are directed to this purpose to the maximum extent. Many of the BBC's serious programmes have been successful in drawing audiences numbered in millions." (p. 211-2)

It was then able to produce figures which showed the two political programmes, Panorama and Tonight, at the top of a league table of serious programmes:

"During December 1960 (the most recent month for which particulars were available) the following audience for "more important serious programmes" were recorded:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>% Pop</th>
<th>Approx. No. of Viewers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panorama (Mondays)</td>
<td>8 pm</td>
<td>19 - 20</td>
<td>9 million - 9½ million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonight (Mon - Fri)</td>
<td>6:45 pm</td>
<td>13 - 20</td>
<td>8½ - 9½ million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safari to Asia (Wed)</td>
<td>7:55 pm</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9½ million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is the BBC (film)</td>
<td>6:20 pm</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music for You</td>
<td>8:30 pm</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face to Face (Adam Faith)</td>
<td>10:25 pm</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4½ million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Captains (Oliver Cromwell)</td>
<td>8:30 pm</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4½ million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arian Club</td>
<td>9:30 pm</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4½ million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insight (Tuesdays)</td>
<td>9:15 pm</td>
<td>7 - 9</td>
<td>3½ - 4½ million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Concert Hall (Barbarolli)</td>
<td>9:15 pm</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3½ million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge to Prosperity (4-part enquiry)</td>
<td>9:30-10:15</td>
<td>6 - 7</td>
<td>2½ - 3½ million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>% Pop</td>
<td>Approx No.</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Point (Sundays)</td>
<td>7.00 pm</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>2½ - 3¼ million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brains Trust (Thursday)</td>
<td>10-10.30</td>
<td>4-7</td>
<td>2 - 3¼ million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor (fortnightly)</td>
<td>10.10 pm</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>2 - 2¼ million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cinema Today: Japan</td>
<td>10.15 pm</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2½ million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Coming of Christ (film)</td>
<td>10.15 pm</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2½ million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacements for Life</td>
<td>10.25 pm</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BBC Memo No 10. in Vol 1, Appendix E Pilkington 1960, p. 212.

Tonight, Panorama and their descendants thrived because in a potentially hostile environment they created substantial audience figures and in helping to solve one dilemma, the lack of an audience for BBC, established a format of political television which could successfully be taken up by other and later producers. The close identification with the Tonight tradition and format was described by the Head of Local Programmes at Granada; we were discussing Granada's coverage of the Rochdale by-election, which was the first ever coverage of an election, other than the party political broadcasts, by television. The context of the discussion was the origination of programme policy, during which he declared:

"I don't think one can talk about local election policies in relation to the Rochdale by-election. I think one has got to go back as far as Granada is concerned to the BBC's Tonight programme in order to trace a thread in Granada's local programming. Like most other companies, Granada had done a form of late afternoon or early evening programme more or less from its start. They were really adequate for the time but didn't really thrill anybody very much - it was cookery and middle class ladies talking about knitting patterns, and all that sort of rubbish. Granada was pretty jealous of Tonight and in 1963 we started a magazine programme proper with Scene at 6.30, which was a

1. A Scottish producer used the phrase 'Japanese flower arranging syndrome' to describe the early state of news magazines.
good programme and attracted a lot of bright people. Historically it was right for its time and there were all sorts of reasons why it was good. There was for example a limited market for people to get jobs in. There was only Tonight which was good or us doing Scene at 6.30, therefore over the whole country people who were attracted to that sort of programme were available to us for Scene at 6.30, not like now where every company has got a moderate magazine programme, so that a man can go to several. And if you remember it was the time of the Beatles and the Mersey Sound so the whole thing was jumping anyway."

Every region is served by two news magazines, one provided by the BBC the other provided by ITV. The problem of talking to producers of news magazines as with other producers is the tendency to slip into loose and vague descriptions, cliches which make analysis difficult. Nevertheless what does emerge are certain themes about the audience and the programme producer of a BBC news magazine declared,

"It's a news magazine, so what goes in it ought to be new. Right, you often haven't got a new topic because the morning papers have been at it, but you ought to develop it so that there is some novelty about it even for somebody who has read the morning papers quite thoroughly. It should be of interest as far as possible to everybody in the region and that means I suppose it should be of interest to a casual visitor to the region as well as the people who are immersed in its life."

The news magazine is characterised by its being central to political television - in the sense that for large sections of the population it is the only experience of political material that they actually have, and also in the sense that they are an important part of the activity of news and current affairs departments. It is a form of political television which is also characterised by the fact that it is intended to entertain rather than
inform. When Alasdaire Milne, a former Editor of
Tonight, argued that the programme set out to entertain
in order to inform, he assumed that a balance was
possible. In a competitive age, increasing emphasis
is laid on the entertaining aspect, and therefore on
the incorporation of a number of audience-holding
techniques and material:

Q  "How is subject matter for your programme decided
on? How do you decide what items to cover in the
programme?"

A  "Basically given the criteria of the programme
which are basically that it is a daily magazine
programme which to some extent reflects the things
that happen in London and outside London and
outside this country; and being a magazine programme
it's supposed to have a bit of film in it, a bit
of studio, it's supposed to be partly political,
partly entertaining, partly social, partly to deal
with the arts - it's supposed to do a whole range
of things and it's supposed to be balanced in that
way i.e. the areas you deal with should be balanced
geographically, balanced in the types of story you
do and the weights they have, and it's balanced in
the length of time each has, so you work with those
criteria. There are certain things you ought to
do: when they blow up London you feel you ought to
do something about that. When a nose playing
pianist phones up you think that's very funny and
should be done. In the end those criteria and
the things that you find interesting. I mean I
can only operate on the principle that if I find
it interesting then maybe somebody else will. One
cannot worry about the viewer because he doesn't
really exist.
In conjunction with that you are very much in the
hands of what you can get. So your news sense
might tell you that what's happening in the States
vis-a-vis Watergate is very important, but it's no
good just sitting there twiddling your thumbs
saying 'this is desperately important, wouldn't it
be marvellous if we could get Nixon in and ask him
a few questions'. You are not going to get that,
and there's a limit to the number of times you can
wheel in the same hack Washington Post London
correspondent for his view of the thing. So a lot
of things you just physically can't do. You then
come down to the second division of things that
you can do. And it is the balance between the two.
You know that the ideal programme to put out would be very different from the one you actually end up producing because you just can't get it together."

One producer in ITV described the position in the following way:

"I suppose basically you're looking for a major news story, if there's one about, to lead off the programme. You're then looking for the rest of the news to follow it up. You're then looking for a major discussion item though we don't pursue items at any great length on this programme, we have a lot of items which are run fairly briefly. Tonight, for instance, I'm going to have an 8 minute discussion, I think on drinking and driving. I suppose you are also looking for a particularly unusual item which might be funny or music of some description. But music can come in a number of forms, it doesn't necessarily be head on with a group singing in the studio, it can be music married to film."

In some instances programmes might be influenced by quite extraneous factors. The need for example to satisfy everyone within a particular transmission area:

"We could do our programme every night on Devon stories, but we are conscious of the fact that we've got viewers in Somerset, in Cornwall and in Dorset who really want to know what's going on in their area, and although the story may be less important in Portland than a story in Plymouth, we would probably opt for the Portland story so that we could get a balanced look about our programme."

There is then a component created by the perceived needs of a diverse audience. A particularly interesting example is provided by broadcasting in Scotland, notably from Glasgow. Rivalry between Catholics and Protestants in Glasgow has been a feature of that city's life for many years. With the post-1969 strife in Ulster, the sectarian split against a general background of economic decay, the parallels with Glasgow have not been lost on the ruling political groups in that city. The perception
that Glasgow might well be the 'next Belfast' is not something taken lightly by producers of political television in the area.

When asked if there were any particular organizational rulings which affected his work, one of the producers said that there weren't but the question of covering affairs in Ulster did present a number of problems and difficulties. He felt that caution in this area was a "fairly responsible attitude. I'm not saying that you ignore it completely, clearly you can't, but we've to be very careful what we do though. We have to think perhaps that we are a bit more potent than the Daily Express or the Daily Record. It would be wrong to stir up troubles by sensational treatment of Ulster."

The same basic position was described by another Glasgow producer, though in more depth. What is particularly interesting within this reply is the way his integration within a wide programme network, and the search for particular stories happened to clash with his own peculiar situation. It also displays the extreme sensitivity which is felt over Ulster to which I have referred on a number of occasions.

"I would say we are on our guard. We of course accept all Northern Ireland material through the BBC national network. We don't have any independent coverage ourselves. Nevertheless there is the problem that it could happen in Glasgow. There have been several court cases and incidents, such as the two gentlemen who very foolishly left some gelignite in a stove; and the ones who tried to hide or planted explosives in the grounds of a Roman Catholic church. There have been a number of cases like this and we have covered them. We also covered troubles at Orange walks, but we've never really gone looking for it. Occasionally we have come under slight pressure from the South from programmes like Nationwide. I'm not all that keen to get involved in this."
Q Are they trying to pressure you to do more items in this area?

They would like to do something all round the country along the lines of 'what real support is there among the Irish immigrant population in areas like Birmingham, Liverpool, Glasgow, for the IRA and the Provisionals?' Really all we would have to do is to go down to Derry Tree and one or two other places and we'll see them selling the magazine, and on a Saturday night they'll all sit and sing the songs, but how real all this is I don't know. Inhibitions if any are self imposed. We will cover anything that is out in the open but we are not really going to go looking for Provisionals around the place. One of the things I wouldn't mind doing if it was possible is the special group in the Glasgow Police one of whose more recent concerns has been the activities of extremists on both sides. Now there is a case of pressure having been put on a BBC drama unit to drop a dramatised documentary. They came up here, phoned us and asked one of our reporters how to get to grips with some Orange Lodge people. They photographed the Black Lodge march. It was discovered afterwards by the Controller that in spite of their well meaning prescriptions in advance, what they really wanted to do was to send up Orangism in a big way. Then various other people started to intervene and the idea for the play has now been crushed....it could have caused trouble."

This is an unusual situation for the producer of a news magazine to be in though as we have seen from previous statements it is one that is often faced by current affairs producers. A number of factors combined to produce this situation. Northern Ireland politics is an intrinsically sensitive subject and coverage of the situation in Glasgow would anyhow be inhibited by the lack of available resources. A vital factor, however, was that there would be no point in becoming involved in that sort of subject matter since though you might satisfy journalistic criteria you would not satisfy the overall programme criteria which is the sustaining of an audience - this producer concluded by
saying that

"the bulk of the people in Glasgow, even those who
are first or second generation Scots and are
Protestant or Catholic, are not all that bothered
about that kind of content." 1

It will be argued that this argument on the part of the
producer was a mere rationalisation of a situation in
which discussion of contentious issues had to be
suppressed. This is not the explanation if it is
presented with the implication of conscious suppression.
Clearly suppression was a factor in one instance, but
in terms of the overall treatment of the issues of that
city over a period of time one must look to the
incompatibility of such subject matter with the standard
formulae for news magazines. If one wanted to argue
that there was a conspiracy against the raising of
certain issues by political television then one would
have to point to the conspiracy implicit in the forms
of political television, in this case the news magazine.

This I think gets to the root of the discussion
about the other factors which as well as the operation
of stylistic paradigms, shape political television.
The inhibitions lie in existing structures rather than
in decision making processes. It would on the whole be
impossible to actually control political television by
overt decisions about all content — unless of course

1. Though news magazines are classified as political
television they do not contain totally or even mainly
political material. For example, an analysis of items
in regional news magazine programmes produced the
following distribution:
Politics 7%, Work, Economy 19%, Police, Courts, Prison 23%
Environment 3%, Minorities, Race Relations 7%, Welfare,
Housing, Poverty 21%, Culture, Science, Education 13%
Human Interest 59%, Violence 13%. (Source: Croll, 1973)
we had an overtly political control of the broadcasting institutions and we clearly do not have that. It is on this basis then that one turns to a discussion of a number of other structures within which political television is framed and which provide the other constituents of the internal context.
RESOURCES

"... in every well governed state wealth is a sacred thing; 
in democracies it is the only sacred thing." (Anatole 
France, Penguin Island).

There has been some renewed discussion of late of the economies of the 
media in, for example, Schiller's treatment of an international media network, 
based on the United States (1970) and the attempt by Murdock and Golding 
(1974) to throw some theoretical light into the dark corners of the debate.
There has, however, been little detailed discussion of what precisely the 
broad abstractions of economic policy actually mean in real terms for the 
production of mass media messages in general and political messages in 
particular. The first and general conclusion one can draw is that in

Table Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BBC 1/2 - % of total output</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Talks, documentaries and other</td>
<td>16.5 16.5 16.0 23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information programmes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 British and foreign feature</td>
<td>16.0 15.5 15.7 13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>films and series</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Outside broadcasts</td>
<td>12.6 11.0 12.8 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Presentation material</td>
<td>9.5 9.6 10.2 4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Drama</td>
<td>8.0 8.0 7.2 6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Light entertainment</td>
<td>7.1 6.9 6.6 6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Children's programmes</td>
<td>6.7 6.6 7.1 7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 News, weather and other news</td>
<td>6.1 6.4 6.1 5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programmes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 School broadcasts</td>
<td>5.7 5.7 5.3 4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Further education</td>
<td>4.9 4.7 4.5 3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Sports news and reports</td>
<td>3.2 1.6 1.3 13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Religious programmes</td>
<td>2.3 2.2 2.1 1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Music</td>
<td>1.4 1.6 1.8 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.00 100.00 100.00 100.00</td>
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</tbody>
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programme making terms economics are translated into a trilogy of resources with which the producer has to function: a budget, a technology, and a time component.

The total amount of political material made available by British television is not insignificant, as the figures in Table Two make clear: these are figures produced by Halloran and Croll (1971), and though they employ slightly different descriptions of the meaning of political television, the categories covering the main area covered by their study would be 1 and 8.

The figures for ITV are produced on a weekly average; the following figures are drawn from the ITA Annual Report:

Table Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme Output: Weekly average - year ended 5 April 1970</th>
<th>Proportion total output</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% (1972)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News and news magazines</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentaries and news features</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Education (including repeats)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School programmes (including repeats)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's programmes:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) informative</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) entertainment</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays, drama series and serials</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature films</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment and music</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other outside broadcasts</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What I have broadly described as political television forms a large part of the total output of television, accounting for approximately 20% of all
broadcast material. Norman Swallow (1966) argues that one needs to assess the degree of importance that media organizations attach to news and current affairs by considering "the number of transmissions, the amount of money spent on them and the time of day or night when they are shown". Accepting for the sake of argument that the total amount of transmission time is a substantial proportion of overall broadcast time, it is still clear that news and news magazines now hold centre stage, while with the notable exceptions of World in Action, Panorama and This Week, the more full-blooded presentations of current affairs and features languish in the nether reaches of the schedule or on the minority channel, BBC-2.

The point about the length of programmes has been made by numerous people usually in the context of the cliche that the number of words in a broadcast news programme wouldn't even fill the front page of most newspapers. The consideration of time, however, is a little more complex than this.

The time made available to the programme is a reflection of the priorities of the organization and presents the producer with a number of formidable problems. It is difficult to isolate discussion of this factor from discussion of the consequences of the technology and the nature of the medium. A number of writers have observed that developments in technology have favoured the development of news and news magazines (Kumar, 1974; Smith, 1973; Swallow, 1966). It remains true, however, that television is not the most appropriate medium for political discussion - an ironical comment in view of the emphasis placed on it as a key element in political communication.

Why this should be so is closely tied up with the discussion of resources. The producer is forced to employ short and/or visual material which fails to delineate the depths of a political process; (this has led to the cynical

1. Time is not only of consequence in a linear sense, i.e. is it a 10 minute or 70 minute programme, but is also significant in two other ways. At what time is the programme broadcast and how frequently is the programme transmitted: is it every night or every week: this can be of consequence for the time available to prepare items; the time 'perspective' of the programme, i.e. a treatment of the days news, or a review of the events of the week.
observation that international relations is essentially reduced to arrivals
and departures at international airports, which though an exaggerated
description does contain a germ of truth). He must introduce the dreaded
'talking heads' - if Professor Milton Friedman has views on the nature
of inflation there really is only one way to transmit those and that is to
have Friedman or an interlocuter actually telling you what they are. The
search then is for a way round this dilemma, as in the Welfare state
programme described earlier which tried to symbolize a rather abstract
process in graphically human terms. As I argued the programmes determining
identity allowed it to develop the story in this way. Other programmes
would find it difficult to do this: a. because they would have insufficient
time to develop this idea, to do the background research etc; b. their
focus would be on discussion of more immediate events; c. they would not have
sufficient screen time to develop a theme. The lack of time in which to
prepare an item means that the production team is thrown back onto visual
sources (i.e. ones that they know of) - newspapers, magazines, other
programmes - and thus is thrown back once more into the general whirl of
media defined events. It is instructive to look at the early morning
activity on a regional news desk. Avid interest is paid to the early
morning papers, and, particularly, to local papers. These are a readily
available source of stories, easily translated into the sorts of material
that sustains a news magazine. Similarly, the current affairs programme which
goes out nightly not only finds itself dependent on readily available
subject matter - though clearly current affairs programmes do generate their
own subject matter on occasion; what is interesting I think is why they
don't do this more often, why they don't for example indulge in more
investigative journalism. This is something to which I shall return. It
also finds itself dependent on readily available people to discuss that subject
matter. The stage army of British political television derives not from a
desire by producers to perpetuate the ruling social and political elites, but
by the fact that members of the ruling elite are the only ones who they know
can talk, and before all else you have to have someone who is seen to be talking.

The implications of the amount of time available to prepare a programme and the length of time the programme is actually on the air are discussed in the context of an item on the Concorde. The producer's argument on this began with the observation that on some stories the production team had to not only become familiar with the vast amount of material available but would also need to involve outside "experts". Their ability to do this depended on their having time and money to do it and having the time available in which to present a programme item. He noted various people they would contact for the Concorde story: other journalists who worked in the field of aeronautics, authors of relevant books, BAC, the Ministry, politicians who had been involved in decision making relating to Concorde. His ability to contact these people he felt was a considerable strength, and he made an interesting observation:

"When you run a programme like Nationwide or even Midweek you are bound to live hand to mouth, you are bound to restrict the number of your sources because you don't have very much time. If at 6 o'clock in the afternoon you suddenly decide to do Concorde you've got to say let's get in Andrew Wilson because you don't have very much choice. If you had the kind of time we had then you can succeed in not using the stage army. These are the people you see all the time, the Hugh Scanlon's, the Norman St John Stevas, that tiny group of people, who are designed for television and move from one programme to another and the instant pundits like Peregrine Worsthorne. We try to avoid these like the plague. We'd be wrong never to use Hugh Scanlon because he's a very important man, but it's also wrong to think of him as the instant trade unionist/left winger who can be brought in at the drop of a hat."

Q: "Do other programmes only use him because he is available?"

"Well, I'll defend why they do it on the grounds of time. If you've only got a couple of hours - if you asked me here and now to mount a debate and I had a couple of days to do it then I would find out the right way of doing it. Firstly by finding the story and then finding the people to get on film or in the studio to try and make the story live. The chances are that it's not going to come down to the stage if you've done it properly, it very rarely does in our case. There won't for example be too many people who you would recognize on our show on mortgages because we will be finding people who are expert in the different sectors rather than looking for a Des Wilson figure. Although we may have him on the show he will be
among 7 or 8 other people who will have the very defined functions. It's fairly obvious. The more time you spend on it the more certain you are of the range of the arguments and the more precise you are about the people you want."

If this producer is correct, and I think that he is substantially correct, it still needs to be pointed out that many programmes are not in this situation in terms of resources. The effect on a programme in a very different situation was described by its producer:

"We don't do a nightly magazine programme. For one reason the distance we have to operate in, that is that distance from Aberdeen to the peripheries of our area, we simply haven't got time to get the stuff in. Two, any magazine I've seen, from the worst to the best, is a bit of a rag bag because it has to be done for 20-25 minutes every night of the week, 5 nights a week and I defy any organisation, even with the whole of the UK their beck and call, to do that without it becoming at times a rag bag."

In a slightly different area, it is no startling discovery to find that television news is dogged by various limitations - its dependence on film, the shortness of its stories, the distillation of quite complex political and economic processes into a few short paragraphs, Donald Edwards (1962) who was ENCA in the early 1960's in the BBC pointed to all these and more. His correspondingly senior counterpart at ITN stated similar views (Swallow, 1966, loc). Such arguments are usually premised on the assumption that the limitations on news are perfectly acceptable so long as there is the back drop of other current affairs and features programmes. What we can see, however, if we look at these is that these are themselves structured and limited by a number of factors. The tyranny of the dock, the paucity of the funds and the mediations of the technology are frequent themes in any conversation with producers. There was a strong sense in many of the interviews that these were the only things that they really thought one should talk about and certainly the only factors which they themselves thought were important. The operation of news values, the functioning of power and ideology, clashes with political structures - all are in the producer's minds eye the dross of an abstracted and dull academic argument that pales into insignificance before the impact of the formulation
of resources available to any one producer in any one context. I have, of course, agreed with this argument in a limited way by seeing resources as one formative factor in the making of political television. It is certainly the most visible for the producer.

The actual resources available vary from programme to programme. There are for example tremendous disparities in the financial resources though it was not particularly easy to obtain the budgets for many programmes. The figures I did obtain however are sufficient to support this point and also gives some indication of the kind of money available. For two regional programmes I saw figures of £1,550 p.w. and £1,300 p.w., and for two current affairs programmes figures of £300,000 and £338,000 p.a. which would be for a season of approximately 30 one-hour shows. There is a difficulty here, however, particularly in the context of the BBC where often the cost of an item is taken off a budget other than the one officially assigned to the programme. It is therefore difficult sometimes to arrive at any exact figure. The two weekly figures were also based on two regional stations which are generally agreed, certainly within the BBC, to be somewhat impoverished. One might conclude that a programme like Nationwide (without its regional components) or a news magazine emanating from one of the more affluent ITV companies possesses a somewhat larger budget.

There was a sense of accommodation among some producers to the restrictions imposed by limited resources: "In London you have every

1. See for example John Whale's argument in The Listener (15.10.70) that news is about accidents of time and place rather than news values, and that it is therefore random and fundamentally unpredictable.

2. These figures compare to the £3,300 per hour cost of television suggested by Thorne (1970). Pratten (1970) in his analysis of the economics of television places a figure of £10-15,000 per hour for a documentary programme such as World in Action; £3,000 per hour for 24 Hours and This Week; £3,000 per hour for a national news programme; and £2,000 per hour for a local news programme. This compares to a £75,000 per hour cost for the Kneeben programme and £25,000 per hour for drama. A production of Robinson Crusoe by the BBC for showing in May 1974 is reputed to be costing £250,000. The figures drawn from Pratten (1970) are now four years out of date. As recent events in the BBC suggest (economy measures etc) costs are now substantially higher.
facility and so you don’t think about it. Here we have minimal facilities and so you do think about it, but after a while you get so used to working with these facilities that you don’t think about it. You’ve got two colour cameras, a slide scanner, a colour telecine, no VT at all, and you work out a way of working with these facilities. We don’t find them particularly inhibiting although in fact I’m sure anyone coming from London to work here would find them terribly inhibiting.” One way of detecting the actual as opposed to supposed significance of limited resources is to discuss the question of how the programme would be different if the producer had more resources available. This led to the interesting conclusion, notably in the news magazine area, that even if more facilities were available they wouldn’t have much impact on the programme content; “We perhaps would occasionally have studio groups in more than we do. We tend to have single interviewees now, but on the whole it wouldn’t be very different.” And yet the same producer, in response to another question, said he thought that they lagged behind other media in the discussion of public affairs “because we don’t carry a core of specialist reporters. In other words there’s nobody keeping an eye on education, nobody keeping an eye on local politics, on local shipbuilding, or whatever, in a way that you’d expect a local or national paper to be doing. Very often good discussion items come out of follow ups to newspaper stories rather than being generated by us.”

The further implications of the time people had to prepare a programme, the dependence on the stage army and the implications of the time available within the programme were outlined by another producer:

“The journalist and the academic, but especially the journalist, has this global view of the situation. You can stop a journalist in the street, or get him into a TV or radio studio and ask him to prognosticate on “Whither Nixon?” or something like that. If he’s any good, you’ll get something quite reasonable, unless he’s doing the sports page on the Sun. But if you want to have a considered
discussion or series of discussions leading from one side of a topic to another and now the same thing but from the other point of view, like incomes policy from the trade union, from the employers and from the consumers point of view. You'd get four people — not Vic Feather and Campbell Adamson — they are too obvious, they are the Shakespearean stage army turning up again, but they exist because they are good and Campbell Adamson will always turn it out. Now a newspaper can do this. The Economist is marvellous, they can just write down those four points of view, with a pretty picture on the cover and that's it. You are sold on that, you think what a wonderful newspaper.

I have to find people. Not Campbell Adamson for God's sake, we had him last week, somebody as good as if not better than. And to find a good trade unionist, not Vic Feather, not Alan Fisher from NUPE — "Now who's in the second rank?" Trouble is he's either a Communist or a Trotskyite or something like that, so how do we balance him? Immediately we are filling up our studio, we are getting to the point where, like the British climate, we are overcast perpetually. It's quite true, you are always thinking that we ought to have another point of view. In a newspaper nobody cares about this, if the Town Clerk's Society don't have their comments in the story, they'll probably ring the Telegraph and say "We gave it to you but it was subbed out." If we don't have the man from the Town Clerk's Association "... the views of Town Clerks were not represented in the programme on local government ..." Very bad deal. And in the end you have 50 people in the studio, which is unworkable because no-one gets a chance to say anything.

Another producer complained about the use of more than one item in an hour long programme:

"If we have an hour the time modules are all wrong if you run an hour long magazine. First, there's the exhaustion of the viewer after twenty minutes and then after forty minutes, He begins to think, "Oh Christ, and now for something completely different.... They've done the banking system of the world, I couldn't understand it but at least it was done; now they are doing something about tourism in Switzerland, that is interesting, pretty pictures; now another thing". The modules are all wrong. If you have three twenty minute modules or six ten minute modules or ten six minute modules, or any variation of these, at the end of the show you can't remember what was in the programme and that is very confusing. It becomes a hotch-potch, a medley of impressions that is too much for the feeble mind to take, or at least my feeble mind.

So I said that we would experiment with a solid programme where we say 'Tonight folks we will tell you all about inflation, or tourism, or steel, or industrial relations, but not all of them.' In this way you can avoid the problem of having the anchor man having to say 'I'm sorry folks that's all we've got time for' and move on to the next thing.'

The man in the gallery, the editor upstairs will not say during a programme discussion 'Give them a stretch, let them carry on and we'll scrub the film we were going on to because he's not sure that the anchor man, the chairman of the discussion, will be able to cope
with another 15 or 10 minutes. This is a great problem where the discussion may have dragged for the first few minutes but then takes off just before it's due to end. The discussants find their feet, they are going marvellously and then—bang—the guillotine, and we are into a story on topless waitresses, which is nice but all wrong because it breaks up the viewer's train of thought."

There is also a sense in which producers pursue a particular point of style and feel able to do so because they have time in which to develop whatever ideas they might happen to have. The converse to this is, of course, the situation of producers who do not have time for this. In the following discussion there is a consciousness of fighting certain dominant formats. The response emerged from a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of television when compared to print journalism, which proved to be a particularly interesting and fruitful area in that it led producers into thinking about and discussing their medium as a medium:

"But it imposes certain limitations. We have to write in distinctive style, this is why I always argue about house-style. The style for TV writing must be totally different: we can't recapitulate so we've got to be writing in very short sentences, short words; people run out of breath so we've got to give them plenty of full stops; people can't take in a great deal through the eyes, graphics can't be too fussy like in print. And when you work out that all print journalism, or most of it, is still, in spite of Harmsworth and people like that, all print journalism is very, very geared up to the educated 18th century man, and we are a very literary society still. I wouldn't say I long for the day when everybody is illiterate and they will have to rely upon TV, but it would be nice if people could cut themselves off from print journalism. I'm not the young brother of print journalism. I'm a cousin, standing up on my own.

If they have a montage of headlines or something like that, or press clippings and things of this sort, that they photograph, I say "No, never do that. Other programmes may— I don't because we have to do it the hard way. We have to show moving film." If you want to say "the last eight Chancellors have been in favour of inflation", it's easy to get from our press clippings library all the evidence you want: 'Hauding says "let's go for growth"' or something like that, 'Gaitskell says "Boom round the corner."' or something like that. You can prove it very quickly. It takes longer to sort it out, to find it and to process it and to then put it on the air, and write the commentary when you have moving pictures or even stills of eight Chancellors of the Exchequer, but its more fun because it makes us live in our own right."
Working with film has built into it an important limitation, often summed up in descriptions of the cumbersome nature of filming, which the increasing use of video equipment has lessened only to a limited extent. If, for example, a story breaks a particular distance away from the studios at a particular time of day it may mean that it is impossible to cover the story adequately. It may be impossible to get a crew to the story or even to contact one of the various stringer cameramen which any news organization has on its lists. There may be insufficient time to get to the event, film it, get the film back to the studio, have it processed and ready for the transmission time.

Effectively then, to appear on a programme, an item has to occur within a critical distance in terms of time and geographical location. The shorter the time available, the shallower the treatment will be: as one approaches the temporal and geographical critical point, the type of coverage is reduced from a reporter to camera/interviewing witnesses etc., to the presenter in the studio reading to camera a brief report.

It goes without saying that the closer to the critical point an item is, the less likely it is to appear at all. We have already seen that current affairs programmes also operate within a critical horizon: one might define the point in axiomatic terms, the closer to the critical horizon (i.e. the less time there is) the more likely it is to be 'Hugh Scanlon' discussing whatever there is to be discussed.

At the same time though, the point must be stressed that the producer refuses very often to make the most of his resources, in the sense that even where he has, in theory at least, sufficient time to develop a story or approach it with a degree of originality, he will often refuse to do so because such moves are unlikely to pay dividends in terms of
the audience. During the period of the local council elections of 1973, I spent time with one of the commercial companies which mounted a special late night coverage of the election results. They used a panel of three—two sitting MP's and a Liberal candidate for Parliament—to discuss the results as they came in. What was particularly interesting was that the two MP's had been used by the producer of the programme on many occasions in the past. When asked why they were using the same people again, particularly in the situation where these were national figures, the elections were local and therefore it might have been more appropriate to use local figures, the replies were somewhat vague. We can, however, see a number of reasons as to why this situation arose: they were both experienced politicians and therefore able to generalise out to the national level—and, after all, the interest in the local elections was only in so far as they reflected national attitudes to the government; they were both seasoned television performers, who knew each other well and who were about evenly matched and who therefore wouldn’t produce the embarrassing spectacle of the Labour Party "being slaughtered" by the Tory Party (or vice versa) in a televised contest; and they both represented the middle ground of their respective parties and were therefore not controversial within the context of the internal politics of the two parties.

As I have already shown, the time at which news magazines go out has important consequences for the type of material which they would use. This effectively means that each item will have a very limited amount of time (4½ minutes was regarded as quite lengthy, 8½ minutes was substantial) and thus are not such as to be able to develop the item to any length.

Time is not everything, however, the money and technology available, as has been alluded, are also vital. One producer declared:

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1. This is certainly one of the themes which emerge from the discussion of ATV's coverage of the General Election. See Ch. 6.
"The whole game is played within very tight rules imposed by the finance and the facilities. With our budget it's very difficult to manage, and the quality of the programme undoubtedly suffers. If I could, for instance, say to the reporter 'Right, I'll pay you more for the story but you'll only do one that day', and I could say to the cameraman 'I'll only get one story out of you today but it's going to be a good one', it would obviously be a better story than the usual one which the reporter probably only has half a day on, and the cameraman can only spend half a day on because I've got to overwork him - I hire him by the day - and so I'll ask him to shoot supplementary material for a story we are building up or for the day after's programme. The game we are playing is to let the cracks and the thin plaster show as little as possible."

Another stated about the limited facilities:

"It does mean that we don't even think about doing some stories in a certain way because 'Christ, we can't afford to send a cameraman that far for a relatively minor story that might not come off very well anyway'. So it affects your judgement in that sense. It means another set of ground rules in which we have to build our programme."

The picture is not always so bleak and numbers of programmes have quite healthy budgets, though I think the following extraction indicates it is impossible to divorce one form of resource from another:

"Financial factors are always important because you cannot in my view continue to make good television if your budget is low; though you might have a flash in the pan, you couldn't do it every night. Ultimately, that's important is a good staff, time and enough money to do the programme the way you want to do it. That means you can do it on film if you want or hire a studio in Washington if you want. For example, we've been talking about Watergate just now. If you were the producer of Midweek and I told you to do Watergate tonight, you wouldn't do it very interestingly or very well. I have the money to hire a studio in Washington or occasionally send a film crew there, and we would do it in the proper way. I think probably you don't have to say more than that. Financial considerations are all important in my view. When I'm setting up a programme it's probably the only thing I'm really interested in. Of course there are things like the Television Act, but I put that sort of thing out of the way and the thing that I fight hardest for is the budget."

Commentators have been keen to point to the dependence of much political television - the context is usually that of news - on visual material.1

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1. Croll (1973) shows that 53% of all television news and 43% of all news magazine programmes consist of filmed reports.
There are a number of points to be made here. The visual component is what distinguishes television from radio, and yet there was a feeling among some respondents - one which I now share - that radio was a more appropriate medium for politics. Not only is political television encumbered by the persistent need to be visually appealing, it has the added disadvantage that built into this is the use of what is, despite many recent developments, a cumbersome technology. The political television producer is in a sense doubly cursed. The meaning of this problem - along with one or two others - was elaborated in the following statement:

"There is no doubt that one cannot write a very colourful piece from the heart of Saigon without showing some pictures. It's no good saying 'There is a civil war raging in the middle of Beirut' unless there are some pictures to show it.

Television is also a very cumbersome way of gaining news. When you think that there are seven people employed on providing half an hour's television a week - and that's only on the spot; when it comes back here there are probably another 7 or 8 people employed, it takes a long time. Ideally the programme should take about 3 weeks for planning, execution, editing and everything else. The point is that if you are a newspaper reporter you're on your own, you write your stuff and file it. Television, however, is a group activity and if one of the parts of the group is weak then this can cause serious problems.

The other thing, of course, is that off the record staff never goes on television. Nobody is going to say 'I will give an interview to you off the record' because by being filmed they are on the record. Therefore my own feeling is that things like Insight, financial matters, Poulson, are all very difficult to get over in visual terms. So although you shouldn't say 'I can't do it because of that' they are not ideal subjects for television."

There is much sense then in the argument that the presence of the technology leads to its use in particular ways even though the usage may be gratuitous or may soak up resources that might be more fruitfully employed.

1. This view is, of course, slightly inaccurate in that television journalists are part of the lobby system and therefore receive off the record information as much as any other reporter. One can, however, see the difficulty that this producer is referring to. The lobby may be useful for print journalists who write specialist columns on politics, obviously developing an argument into which is built the information received in confidence. It is much more difficult for the television political correspondent to develop arguments at any length, and so the use of the information contained in the lobby would be more readily usable if contained within an interview with the actual source - which would defeat the purpose of the lobby.
But pictures are ultimately the be all and end all of television; they are what the audience wants, and therefore they are what the producer must provide, even though that provision detracts from a central purpose which is the depiction of the political process and the communication of political information.

Producers are excited by the medium's potential to reach enormous audiences but dismayed by the medium's transient nature and the difficulty with which the abstractions of politics are translated into televisual terms, "How do you film a process?" You can show its visible manifestations, its leading personalities, its comings and goings, you can employ visual and metaphorical representation but you can't show an abstraction in visual form. The ultimate solution has been the use of 'talking heads' which then has built into it the use of particular talking heads who fit the prescriptions of good television - a further factor leading to this dependence on the 'stage army'. Such individuals obviously tend to become more and more competent performers and therefore more and more usable. They are particularly conscious of the format within which 'talking heads' can talk; they will know what to say and when to say it, what not to say, what is possibly too contentious, etc. The whole discussion programme format, which as we have seen stemmed from the very nature of the medium, takes on a standard appearance - it in effect becomes ritualised. The difficulties of reproducing abstract political and economic processes into a suitably televisual form, the subsequent dependence on a limited range of participants, the 'stage army', and their integration within the established routines of talk programmes - their transformation, in other words, from

1. There is much illusion and irony in this view. Not only are the audiences for political television decreasing but also, as I have argued, there is evidence that as the audience for types of political television increases, the political content actually decreases, as, for example, the news magazine.
spokesmen and discussants into performers, are candidly described by a producer who had worked on both news magazines and current affairs programmes:

"I've been involved in a lot of discussion programmes and I know how they operate and what the ground rules are and the sheer artificiality, to say nothing of banality, of a great many of them. Puts me off entirely. Even in programmes where I'm deeply interested in the subject matter, I simply will very reluctantly accept a studio chat programme as information."

Q: "When you say 'ground rules', what do you have in mind?"

"Normally when a studio discussion programme is held, the organizers, whether they be producer, assistant to the producer, or researchers, or the interviewer/chairman takes trouble to find out what everybody's standpoint is, of course, before they come on. He then tends to frame the programme in a way that they will get across the strongest points. He allows a certain amount of time for denial, contradiction, argument, etc., and then tries to wheel everything round to a good closing point - which is not necessarily a summation or clarification of what was being discussed earlier. Quite often it's just a good dramatic out, that's all they are looking for. In lots of these programmes there are so many complex bits of human chemistry; for example, in the programme for which the Chairman of the Governors of the BBC apologised for involving the MP's (the programme was A Question of Confidence), I must admit that I sympathise with the sort of people who were at the receiving end because I know the way certain producers' minds work - 'Did you see her on women's lib? Marvellous, never stops talking, liable to throw something, lovely woman.' Again, studio discussion programmes are mostly convened by people whose means of outside contact is fairly limited, who are getting their names out of newspaper cuttings and magazines, or more likely they are filled because they've already been on. It's a standard reaction I've discovered. 'We'd dearly love to have Marcus Lipton on, but he's not available. We might settle for Greville Jarr - he did us a very nice turn the last time he was in.' That way though you start perpetuating a little establishment. In Scotland that's a particular problem. The quotient of informed and available people on all subjects is in most subjects narrow, therefore you tend to get the same old faces coming back expounding the same old ideologies, theories, opinions. You see one of the drawbacks - it's the same problem at the level of news information gathering - the limitations on contacts throws you open to the temptation of accepting information from acknowledged bodies and particularly bodies who have got something to say anyway. In the current affairs field, which incorporates the studio discussion programmes and other programmes, the limitations tend to produce those people who are willing to come on and talk and who therefore get to know the ground rules. You get awfully sophisticated tele-performers - (name of MP) I've never seen him on a programme when he didn't have the last word; he knows the rules, he reads the signals. I'm quite sure he cocks an ear, for example, if the studio manager has noisy cans (earphones) so that he can hear
what is said by the director. 'Two minutes now, get into so and so ...' and the MP will hear him and get the last word in. He knows exactly how to get the last word in. There's only a minute to go and he's talking and he'll hang on for a whole minute, and he won't be shut out. He'll keep saying 'Hold on, let me say one thing more ...' If somebody else is talking, he will butt in and say 'All very well, but I think the really important point we must make before the discussion finishes is ...' Frankley it's all a mandarin game ...

Q: "But you will still use him?"

"On some things, yes. I'm very much getting charter and charter in my old age about these kinds of people who turn up in these kinds of programmes, because the persons who arrange for them to be there in the first place have a very limited range of contacts. And frankly there has to be some kind of system whereby we get out into the big wide world and encounter for the first time certain new and interesting people who have things to say."

The difficulties and problems of distortion lie both in the use of film, which tends to present the mere surface of a subject, or by the use of particular individuals who represent the interests and views of a particular social group, notably the middle and upper middle classes. Why this situation occurs is not, as some would believe, because of the intended representation of the views of the dominant social class, or a willing trivialisation of events. Rather it follows from the peculiar circumstances of a visual medium, a particular concept of audience tastes, and the often difficult dynamics of putting a programme together. As I have shown the kind of issues which can be discussed, the depth and manner in which they can be discussed, and the people who will discuss them are heavily structured by the kinds of resources employed in political television. There is a problem then and one which producers were aware of and concerned about. It is not just a problem that elite figures are more visible, are in the proverbial book of contacts but that the elite figure is very often a better performer than many individuals. The interesting thing is that not all elite figures are used, even very senior politicians, trade unionists or industrialists are ignored. So the selection is not just between elite and non-elite, it also operates within elites. It is an unfortunate fact of television life that people do very
often tend to 'dry up'. During one period of observation, there was a small but interesting example along these lines. The previous night's programme included an interview with a fireman who had written an article on vandals and public attitudes towards firemen. They had the man in the studio to discuss the article and, in the view of all the staff, the interview had been very bad with the man not proving particularly articulate.

The news assistant who had produced the item thought that the reason it was bad was because they hadn't asked the right questions: "We should have aggravated him, acted as the devil's advocate."

Reporter: "The thing to do with nervous people is to annoy them, otherwise they die the death."

Producer: "We should know beforehand what people are going to be like - it's what we are paid for, it should be one of our skills."

Reporter: "Many interviews die after a minute and you have to keep them going."

Reporter: "Perhaps what we need is flexibility in the programme so that if an interview begins to crumble you can switch to something else."

Producer: "The reporter makes the interview."

News Assistant: "People from a disciplined force are very way of saying anything. You need somebody like (name of chief fire officer) who doesn't give a monkey's uncle about what he says."

The discussion dissolved into one of whether you could actually tell if a person was going to be any good by talking to him over the phone. The problem really, however, is not with the people who dry up on a programme but with the internal programme prescription that drying up, inarticulateness, is bad - and it is 'bad' because the audience doesn't like it. The problem, if one may for the sake of argument see it as a problem, is not insurmountable
but would require money and time, which are often not available. At the same time when the central concern is sustaining the interest of an audience the possibility of changing the 'entrance qualifications' for appearing is unlikely to appeal to programme controllers. Most people are very nervous before performances - even experienced interviewers and presenters. The problems which this does present were described in the following way:

"I'm interested in how you deal with people. Programmes are about people and it seems to me important to get the people as right as you can. For example, at the moment there's an ASLEF go slow. You want to know what the people in ASLEF think about the strike. We can do one of two things. We can ask them to the studio or we can go out filming. If we ask them to the studio, first of all we are likely to get the professional spokesman who, whatever their origins or loyalties, have a sort of middle class communicating function. If we ask these guys into the studio we get a pretty good performance and statement of their point of view. If we say no, we don't want the official spokesman, we want to know what the lads really think, you just have to think what you are putting them through: you are telling them that you want them to come to London and the BBC. Their families are saying 'You going to be on telly?' So immediately you are putting them in their best suits, you're taking them off their own territory into a wholly alien, hostile environment and, consequently, they are not going to do themselves any good at all.

So one of two things happens: either you use them and you portray them to a direct disadvantage - that applies to the majority of the population, not just your general prole, it includes your local GP and local academic - or you take the easy option of getting in the professional spokesman. In a film situation the technology is explainable; you're on his territory, he's in his own clothes, he isn't built up, he isn't made to travel, he doesn't have foreign drinks like whiskey. You go into his pub, you drink his bitter. Clearly, it's an artificial situation because if you walk into somebody's pub with lights you are destroying something, but at least it's more manageable."

The opportunity to employ techniques of this sort is open to few producers, but one can see within this description the way in which the peculiarities of the medium, the difficulty with which most people use it, the limited resources available, can all create a situation which excludes vast sections of the population from ever being represented. There is no conspiracy about much television, one is merely faced with a technological and resource fait accompli, a subtle but powerful organizing principal.
The explanation proffered here is not just that the hidden hand of television is that of a machine, rather that that is but one part of the explanation. The particular direction, style and focus of political television is not only subject to a number of resource limitations and the operation of stylistic paradigms that serve the audience more than the political process. There are also a number of ground rules which affect the course of production — the implication being that the 'hidden hand' may become all too visible.
"... Rules and models destroy genius and art." (William Hazlitt)

Political television is festooned with rulings as to what it can and cannot do. In chapter four I explored the formal aspects of those regulations, but clearly one cannot leave it at that. The actual operation of those 'ground rules' and their impact in the actual making of programmes needs to be considered. Rulings derive from both the legal and political structure, and from the broadcasting organisations themselves. Three distinct areas of ruling can be seen as particularly important:

1. those relating to the coverage of politics;
2. those relating to libel and contempt;
3. those relating to the overall commitment to objectivity, impartiality and balance.

It is clearly the case that interest in this area has principally focussed on the question of balance etc., and it is indeed the case that this area is vitally important. Indeed they are so important, and have been for so long that they operate at the level of commonsense understandings. Thus what one finds in looking at the role of 'ground rules' in political television is not only the prescriptive nature of the concepts involved, such as impartiality, but also their normative status within the profession of broadcast journalism.

The net effect is that television is heavily tied to the presentation of points of view that derive from particular sections of the social and political structures.¹ The rulings ensure that dominant interests are represented. This is, of course, hardly surprising and indeed it would not

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¹ It is remarkable fact that in 1964 only 61 politicians were quoted on radio or TV during the entire election campaign of that year; in 1966 the figure was 56% and in 1970 had dropped to 44. The two leaders Wilson and Heath took up 53% of all news coverage of politicians in 1966 and 1970. (Source: Seymour-Ure 1974)
be unduly perverse to argue that if the centre of political life in Britain was formed by the government, the GBI and the TUC, then programme makers are only right in relating their point of view. The point of the impact of the rulings that relate to political broadcasting is however not of this nature. What is important is that the manner in which these points of view are presented prevents the achievement of one of the objectives of broadcast journalism. The purpose of broadcast journalism is noble, the reality less so. Broadcast journalism is a curious hybrid of the declarations of Delane that the journalist "seek out truth above all things and ... present to his reader not such things as state craft would want them to know but the truth as near as he can attain it", and the stark realities of the relationship with the state, and with the ethics and resources that derive from a competitive situation. That rulings are restrictive is in no doubt, and the overall effect is to transform what should be an inspection of the political process and a transmission of information into the transmission of largely official viewpoints. The impression is akin to the whole of political television being transformed into a party political broadcast.

As will become evident, the rulings that political coverage be balanced were readily held by many producers to be worthwhile, and one stated that "I wouldn't conceive of doing an item without balancing it. It would be just totally foreign. This isn't because one is afraid of the IB3 particularly, it's just that it seems to make such enormous sense, you gain so much more credibility by presenting both sides." Credibility or not, the requirements to balance, that one point of view be seen to be weighed against another, one Tory equals one Labour man, combines with the laws relating to libel and contempt of court to inhibit serious, detailed observation of the political process and it is these with which I wish to deal first.
There was more or less uniform agreement that libel and contempt were vital, that any producer bucked them at his peril, but that on the whole they were worthwhile in that they sought to protect the rights of the individual. A description of the consequences of libel and contempt was put in the following way by the producer of a regional news magazine who stated:

"(They) stop us doing things ... As well as libel and contempt of court, the other big problem is political broadcasting, the restrictions on what you can do during an election period which makes doing political stories at that time a very unwieldy operation. As far as libel and contempt of court I assume that I am the person who would be up in court, and so I keep a fairly close eye on things. All the editorial staff who work for me are aware of the general rules.

Libel is much worse. We ran with a lot of effort a story about a group of local 'businessmen' who were trying to take over a biscuit factory which had gone through a series of vicissitudes and had eventually closed down. The workers were kept hanging on for many, many weeks in the hope that this group were going to reopen the factory. They might have reopened the factory but all they were really interested in was property speculation. The leader of the group was ultimately interviewed. We grilled him and ran it very long but everything we were doing had to be very much implied. We knew at the time we interviewed him that he was having to report to the police every day and that he was due in court in London on fraud charges, but we couldn't say it. OK it would have been prejudicial to his London trial and so on to have said so. Whether it would have been libellous to say that he was having to report to the police every day on some other matter I don't know, but it does make it very difficult to present the underlying truth and facts of a really good local story."

The last comment that the restrictions inhibit the presentation of a 'truth' goes to the very heart of what is a very serious dilemma, the conflict between the legal rights of the individual and the ill defined purpose of the broadcast journalist, or indeed any journalist, to present a 'truthful' view of reality. Even more restrictive than libel is contempt of court, cited by producers as the single most important restriction. "In practice libel and contempt are much more of a worry than the Television Act". When asked how they would actually affect programme making, he provided an interesting illustrative example:
"A thalidomide item that we did, if done another way would have been contempt. When Distillers made their offer of £20 million you weren't allowed to say 'Is this offer enough?' What you could say if you knew about the law was 'What does this offer mean to the children?' We got a lot of actuaries and things in the studio and did a very careful piece and a very illustrative piece, and worked out what it meant on a weekly basis per child. It's not at all a simple matter, it's very complicated. You didn't have to say in the programme 'Is this offer enough?' You never had to go anywhere near asking the question because as soon as you start going into an area like that in detail, although you do get an area of facts, you don't have to present opinions, your audience can form their own opinions from an impartial statement of the facts. I suppose the TV Act together with certain fashions in journalism, for example, the Insight type of approach, the Times News team, certain aspects of the Observer, that kind of highly factual journalism. This is what personally appeals to me a great deal.

In the abstract, it was possible to say 'Should they offer more?' but it was much more interesting to work out precisely what the offer meant, and doing it that way is more intellectually appealing, more factual and less opinionated. But in the end, after a long process, you're much more likely to end up with a firm solid opinion but that is not your starting point."

What he is arguing is that contempt is serious and forces you into employing strategies by which to avoid it. There was an interesting tendency for producers to say that yes laws of libel and contempt were important, they are so important that you just take them for granted and therefore they don't actually loom large in their mind except on those occasions when a specific problem arises.

"... the rulings are extremely important. They provide a kind of professional inhibition which you acquire and retain and develop over the years. With all these things you develop both individually and as a group a series of early warning systems for all these things so that people quickly report things that are going to involve any of these matters, and increasingly every important issue does involve one of these matters."

A frequently used word was 'fair', that what all the rulings actually meant was that they should always treat people fairly and if they did that then they were fulfilling their statutory obligations. Clearly then the situation moves between a pragmatic response to a legal requirement and commitment to a particular journalistic style. In Scotland, for example, though producers felt that the distinctive
character of the Scottish legal system made life for the working journalist even more difficult over the question of contempt, libel and the need for 'due impartiality' were seen as workable rulings since all that was required was that "you be fair and do an honest job of work". Contempt, however, was regarded as very difficult since "you are very much at the mercy of the judges". The Lord Justice General's ruling that no publishing organization was entitled to conduct its own investigation into crime or alleged crime, and that they could do nothing which would be alleged to be interfering with the course of justice - his phrase was "the river of justice can be polluted before it starts to flow" - was thought to be particularly restrictive.

Because of the nature of the subject matter that this affected, mainly criminal proceedings, the rulings applied particularly to news programmes and it is certainly possible, and this was in fact argued, that a story such as the biscuit factory item related previously would not be done in Scotland, at least not in the same way.

One of the ironies of the legal underpinnings is the actual vagueness of their formulation and meaning. A persistent problem is not that the law seeks to sustain the due process of law - those producers with whom this was discussed overwhelmingly welcomed this as a necessary protection of the rights of the individual - but rather that it is often difficult to know just what the due process actually is with any degree of clarity and certitude. The enormity of the problem but at the same time the difficulty of its operation were exemplified by the case of Niall Savundra who appealed against his conviction in 1967 on the grounds of the pre-trial publicity which he claimed prejudiced a fair trial. As was stated in Chapter Four, a central feature was an interview with David Frost on ITV in what was widely regarded as a "television trial".
The practice was savagely condemned by the appeal judge, Lord Justice Salmon, who concluded his summing up by saying that "The court has no doubt that the television authorities and all those producing and appearing in televised programmes are conscious of their public responsibility and know also of the peril in which they would all stand if any such interview were ever to be televised in the future. Trial by television is not to be tolerated in a civilised society." This it is argued had a rather profound impact on the broadcasting institutions who since have had a highly developed respect for laws of contempt.

Even where it was acknowledged that the existing situation was not quite so difficult as it had been immediately following the Savundra case, the point was still made that "even now I would not be inclined to say that there had been a major change. Very, very slight and only if you are clearing referring to the facts of the case, if your intention is clearly not to prejudice."

Lawyers are always available for consultation and advice, but editorial responsibility remains with the producer: "It's easy within the BBC and I suppose the ITV too to have a relevant lawyer come along and look at things, and they give you advice on whether or not to take a risk. And then you are on your own really. You are not obliged to take their advice but very rarely do you not - even in the heat of the moment when it's a matter of minutes before transmission, you always refer it upwards to the BBC if you want to take a risk, and if it's an important political question and you want to reject the advice of the lawyer, you have the whole BBC hierarchy to refer it up to and at some stage the Director General or someone will take the decision to go ahead despite the lawyer's advice." It is usual that if a decision for referral has to be made at the very highest levels in the BBC, it will be made by the ENCA, though there was not much evidence that this was a
particularly frequent occurrence, nor in most cases a contentious one.

Of obvious importance for political television are the regulations relating to election coverage; it is here that one comes into contact most obviously with the rulings that apply specifically to political broadcasting. In the context of an election, broadcasters are highly sensitive to the to and fro of the party battle. The distinction between election and non-election broadcasting were described by one producer who was presented with a dilemma by the presence of a National Front candidate in a by-election taking place within his transmission area. The date of the election had not been announced, nor had the writ for the election been issued, which effectively meant that the stiff restrictions on elections did not yet apply.

"We've interviewed the Liberal candidate and we feel obliged to interview the Conservative candidate when he's nominated. We were going to interview the Labour candidate because we feel we ought to balance even before the pending period. We won't now because there's an NF candidate and so we are wondering whether we need to do anyone more than the Conservative candidate at this stage."

Q: "Why do you baulk at the NF candidate?"

"I don't baulk at him, but we are not obliged to give parity to candidates at this stage. We are carrying things on their news value. What I was going to do was interview the Labour candidate because I had interviewed the other two. He is however very boring with nothing to say, but if we interviewed him then I would still further feel obliged to interview the NF candidate. I don't want to feel under that sort of obligation that I must at this stage interview every candidate in the by-election. I may well do it during the election period but that's a different thing. But at this period when we are reporting news of the election rather than setting out to balance as required to by law then I don't want to feel obliged to."

The detailed account of how the regulations relating to election coverage affected the coverage by ATV of the February 1974 General Election provides interesting examples of the way in which regulations are interpreted by producers, sometimes quite erroneously, particularly on the side of caution. The expediency displayed in this quote, the
way in which a decision not to interview one candidate led to their not interviewing other candidates, had a remarkably similar parallel at ATV. In many ways the delicate way in which the Representation of the People Act and the various other regulations are treated still, is reminiscent of the attitude prior to 1958 when there was no coverage of elections at all because of a strict interpretation of the regulations as they then existed.

As I indicated in Chapter Four, the requirements for balanced, objective and impartial coverage of any subject, but particularly political subjects, is clearly spelled out in law and/or memo. These requirements were widely accepted as being valid, as was the notion that the operational framework implied within the rulings applied to a representation of those legitimately established parts of British politics and in effect this meant the representation of the points of view of the three main political parties. The centrality of balanced reportage of political affairs is one of the basic rulings that underpin broadcasting and the beliefs of political broadcasters. The 'reality' behind the 'appearance' of this structure of balanced and impartial coverage has been a persistent theme of public comment on the workings of the rulings. Of particular interest are the vitriolic statements by individuals who have themselves worked, not only as producers but also as senior administrators, in the broadcasting organisations. Stuart Hood declared that both the BBC and ITV run least risk of annoying politicians when they interpret "impartiality to be the duty to reflect that middle of the road consensus in political matters which is spanned by the two party system and acceptable to the whips on either side". (Hood, 1972, 417). Norman Swallow, formerly assistant head of films at the BBC, and assistant editor of Panorama, declared in an attack on the concept of impartiality:
"... there are many spheres of public social life in which both the BBC and the ITA have cheerfully abandoned (impartiality), and hardly anyone has complained. A foreign visitor to Britain who for a few months consistently watched the coverage of public affairs on both channels might justifiably conclude that the BBC, the ITA and the programme companies shared a common point of view on many of the major issues of the day. They are all apparently anti-fascist, anti-Communist, opposed to racial intolerance and violent crime, highly critical of the governments of the Soviet Union, Portugal, Spain, Cuba and Eastern Europe, Christian but tolerant of agnostics, friendly towards the British monarchy and King Hussein of Jordan, hostile to most social and political cranks, suspicious of professional politicians, and supporters of the 'wind of change' as long as it never reaches gale force. These points of view are possible because none of them seriously offends those organizations which in the world of television public affairs are mysteriously regarded as the possessors of the appropriate truths; the larger political parties, the Royal Institute of International Affairs, the Institute for Strategic Studies, the TUC, the Federation of British Industries, the BMA, the leaders of Oxbridge, and the editors of the fashionable weeklies .... Television's impartiality tends to stop at Calais, where wogs traditionally begin." (Swallow, 1963, 227)

The position adopted by these writers is that 'impartiality' is limited in scope, and is used as a strategy of defence to fend off the possibility of actual interference from governments. The implication is that because of a parallel employment of two concepts of impartiality - one derived from journalism and one derived from the political needs of the organization - conflict is inevitable when discussing political matter. Subdued when there is a good deal of consensus on what is and is not 'correct' in terms of policy in the public sphere, the operation of an 'impartial' view becomes more acute when no such agreement exists, and where the purpose of the journalistic model of broadcasting to pursue the 'truth wherever it may lead' comes into sharp conflict with the view of the model of broadcasting which reflects the needs of the institution to preserve itself and the needs of the centres of power within society to remain undisturbed. An example frequently cited of this kind of situation
has been the coverage of Northern Ireland affairs.

For 50 years the needs of the Ulster establishment, the Unionist party, were a permanent and significant feature of the policy of broadcasters towards the Province. There was in effect a specific avoidance of serious discussion of the nature of the community power structure. Where attempts were made to address the 'problems' of the Province strenuous efforts were made to either prevent the programme being broadcast or to make sure that the incident was not repeated - the focus for such pressure being the office of the Controller, Northern Ireland.

Smith, in a lengthy article in *Index* (1972) argues that the events of the summer of 1969 effectively ruptured the profound silence which had pervaded coverage of the province's affairs since the founding of broadcasting in 1924. In so doing, they threw into stark relief two different and effectively opposed concepts of the role of the broadcast journalist: a view from the State that the broadcaster should merely reflect events; a view from an increasing number of broadcasters working in Northern Ireland and their role was to investigate and inquire. In the context of a social structure dominated to a quite extraordinary degree by a Protestant establishment the operation of the

1. Characteristic of this were the events surrounding a broadcast of *Tonight* in 1959 in which a film by Alan Whicker on Belfast caused considerable consternation within the ruling circles in Belfast. The Editor of the programme was informed by Broadcasting House that the incident was unfortunate and should not be allowed to happen again. Now at this point it is difficult obviously to say, exactly, why this attitude was taken by Broadcasting House. The explanation offered at the time, and subsequently referred to by those involved, was that as Ulster had a separate Parliament with a good deal of autonomy, it would, in theory at least, possess a separate broadcasting service, thus lopping one limb off the parent body. Whether this was a real possibility or not is debatable, that the hierarchy of the BBC saw it as a possibility is clear. Their response, that one left such issues alone, was characteristic. (Information derived from interview with Beaverstock, 16.1.74)
second role would inevitably generate conflict. As the crisis heightened from 1969 to 1971 a complicated system of referral developed within the BBC, paralleled by an increasingly careful scrutiny by the ITA of ITV's coverage of events. This was particularly relevant in the case of interviews with, and items about, the IRA. The item had to be cleared by the news editor in Belfast and the Editors of current affairs for television and radio in London. If approved the item could be recorded and then submitted once again for approval by London and Belfast, and often by BRCA in London. What was happening during these two stormy years was that editorial control shifted sharply not only from Belfast to London, but also from the producer level to the very highest levels of the Corporation, a development which was summed up in Charles Curran's observation that he was editor-in-chief. The tight system of referral was viewed by some, though as Smith points out by no means all, broadcasters in the province to be excessively restrictive. He makes an interesting point in saying that there emerged an increasing use of secondhand reporting, a situation which placed the standards and style of reporting back in the dull years of Tahu Hole when the BBC never 'had a scoop'. There was a gradual formulation of the parameters of impartial reportage which received its starkest description in the now famous words of Lord Hill that "as between the government and the opposition, as between the two communities in Northern Ireland, the BBC has a duty to be impartial not less than in the rest of the UK. But as between the British army and the gunmen the BBC is not and cannot be impartial." (Hill, 1974, 209). The context of these words was made clear in the memoirs when Hill stated that what his critics didn't seem to realise was that the hierarchy in the BBC "are fighting a battle against censorship, control, regulation, intervention from outside."
The claim of programme makers in news, current affairs or in any other field that they should decide what goes on the screen or emerges from the microphone without guidance or instruction from above, is just the sort of claim that brings external control nearer." (Hill, 1974, 210-11).

As I argue in Chapter Six, we can see this development over the coverage of Ulster as one part in the overall development of broadcasting in the late sixties in which the appointment of Lord Hill played an important role. These developments were serious but I think there is much to be said for Smith’s final point that also impinging on the development of the broadcast reporter’s role was the whole nature of broadcasting, and the fact that owing to the multiple factors outlined previously in this thesis, it was in many ways not within the capacity of television to adequately approach the questions posed by the crisis.

Professor Rex Cathcart, former IBA representative in Northern Ireland, in a recent programme on the difficulties of covering affairs in Northern Ireland states:

"... inherently in the nature of the state set up here in 1920 there were potentially problems for any broadcasting organization which would move in. Those problems relate to the fact that there is no consensus, no agreement that the State should be set up ... when the BBC came to Northern Ireland the decision which had to be made was what kind of an operation would they run there, and that decision became one of running what was essentially a broadcasting system supporting the state, so that for the greater part of its history the BBC has, of necessity, supported the state here."

1. There is a point to be made in response to Smith’s article in relation to his observation that it took “many years to wrest editorial power from Broadcasting House to TV Centre and Lime Grove in the days when television was first hit by commercial competition ..." (Smith, 1972, 30). I am not at all sure that editorial power ever was wrested from Broadcasting House, and more specifically from the Director General. Rather I think one has to see the late fifties and early 1960’s as reflecting the particular exigencies and perspectives of the Greene years. There was, for example, no doubt who had hold of the ‘reins’ when in 1964 Greene ordered that TV3 be taken off the air. The real battle of course has been whether the Director General or the Governors had ultimate control.

2. Transcript – programme broadcast 5.12.73.
The ideology of broadcasting, impartiality, etc., does not then embody a series of absolute definitions. In the context of Ulster balanced reportage is discretely circumscribed and limited, being defined by the organizational and state elites. The parameters of acceptability are determined not by the philosophy of broadcast journalism, but rather by the needs of the State to maintain its hegemony in Ulster, for example. The coverage of political crises, because such events necessarily are at the borders of 'legitimate' political action force the point at which day to day decisions are made higher and higher within the institutional hierarchy.

There is a temptation to leave the description at this level, and indeed many commentators on media affairs have tended to present a version of the above process as an absolute and all inclusive description of the situation of broadcasting. This is not, however, the whole story and one is really talking about quite specific programmes in specific historical situations. Not all producers interpret their situation in the same way, and not all would describe the concepts of objectivity, impartiality, balance as being particularly inhibiting. What others describe as infringements and restraints are, for some, useful guidelines. For example, when asked "How important would you say the requirement for balance, impartiality, objectivity is in determining what goes out?", one news editor of one of the smaller ITV companies stated:

"They are obviously important. More than anything else it is a help to have guidelines. So they are obviously important and essential."

It is significant that this comment came from the news editor of a company which by virtue of its location, available resources and defined area of interest would be unlikely to delve into contentious areas on a national level. There is, if you like, both a 'geographical' and
'political' distance from the concerns of the state. The dominant ideology of broadcast journalism is for him a relevant set of beliefs, readily applicable to his situation. He operates with a set of definitions which define the 'area of interest' and 'focus of attention' in his programme making and which tend to remove him from the situation where the possible contradictions of his role as journalist as well as broadcaster are teased out by force of circumstance.

Even for a nationally networked current affairs programme the concepts may seem adequate and workable:

"IBA pressure? If you are talking about outside pressures like the law and everything, IBA pressure nil ... But Northern Ireland I'm very much aware myself is a very problematical field. Personally, having worked in Northern Ireland, I'm always worried about Northern Ireland but unfortunately the situation has become so serious that almost anything you put out cannot be inflammatory any longer, because everything inflammatory has been said. That used to be a thing I used to worry about. I still worry about it myself in the sense that I wouldn't do four catholic programmes and no protestant programmes. I personally feel objectivity is very crucial, really. This is not a One Pair of Eyes series where you can hire a man from the New Statesman to say capitalism is wicked. It could come out in the programme, by the way, that capitalism is wicked, but that wouldn't be by setting out with a thesis, it would just happen to be in this particular situation capitalism was wicked ... That could come out, but that would be as part of an enquiry into a particular subject."

4. Are there any organizational rules that you have to contend with?

I think none except the legal ones. Occasionally, in the past, people have said 'What are you doing? We are a bit worried about that', for example over a programme on commercial radio in the United States, saying it's a rather appalling thing. People were a bit worried about that but nobody is going to stop it. I mean I just don't like commercial radio too much. The point is, it wasn't a programme that said it is a bad thing, but said this is what it's like in practice ... So I've never had anybody leaning on me and telling me 'For Chrissake leave off the trade unions' or 'For Chrissake lay off the Prime Minister' or 'Lay off Harold Wilson', because that hasn't come into it. But that may be of course because one has exercised a certain kind of self-censorship. I'm not aware of it but I suppose everybody does choose things here and there ... The last thing I would want to do would be to put on a piece that would tell people what to think about someone. Although, you might say, the way you have chosen the images, the way you've edited the interview would make people think this way. I don't think that I've consciously edited this way."
What is being described here is almost a model of 'message-by-accident', where in order to comply with the necessary strictures of political broadcasting the programmes are so constituted as to not take an overt stance; that a 'stance' might emerge is a secondary, perhaps fortunate, event. Clearly though, for this producer of a leading current affairs programme the concepts of impartiality had a good deal of validity and were ones which he tried to respect. At the same time he was arguing that there was little or no pressure on him to make sure that he followed the implied guidelines of the rulings - he was genuinely worried about Northern Ireland and created the impression that the greatest restraint on his action was his own feeling of the possible consequences of provocative broadcasting.

Another producer within ITV also working on a networked programme developed the proposition that while he recognised the implicit restrictions of the rulings, there are distinct ways in which these can be circumvented.

In response to the question of 'How important would you say the law is in your type of programming?' he declared:

"It is something you learn to live with quite quickly. To say you get round it is misleading; but you soon learn how to do proper journalism within the confines of, particularly, the Television Act. The Television Act, as it is now interpreted, is not, frankly, a great restriction and arguably has produced quite interesting journalism, and the IM won't now interpret the Television Act terribly literally. So, if you were doing a programme about defence, there was a time when they would count minutes and say 'Why don't you give half the time to the Minister of Defence and half the time to those who say he is wrong?'. They are now much more sophisticated in the way they interpret it and and they are now prepared to look at it in the way that a journalist does and say 'Have you fairly represented all relevant opinions on this subject?'.

Now it may be that it is inconvenient or you don't want to fairly represent every view on a particular subject ... There are rare occasions when you have disagreement - there was a time when they would say, if you were going to examine Protestant opinion then you've got to have Catholic opinion in the same programme, or you've got to have Catholic opinion in the next programme. They now would allow you to say, it's a proper journalistic question to ask 'Why are Protestants resorting to violence in the street?'; or to ask 'Who are the Protestant para-military leaders?'. Now they acknowledge —— that it's journalistically reasonable to ask those sorts of questions provided that you clearly, by whatever ... it may sound
old-fashioned to say that objectivity is possible and, of course, in an absolute sense they are right, but it is possible to examine a thing like that with a fairly sceptical journalistic eye, in my opinion, and approach something very close to the truth ... As long as you are seen to be fair and not particularly seen to side with any (side) over the run of a programme, not seen to go out of your way to defend a particular point of view, then they will leave you alone. I have had one or two tiny comments - not really significant. I don't personally often suffer from the Television Act, although you are aware of it."

There is a clear implication here of the broad restraints imposed by the legal rulings, though it is interesting that he, like many other producers, returns to the Irish situation as an exemplary focus for the process of operating within the law. It is also interesting in the way he discusses 'proper journalism' from other output which takes full account of the restrictions. There is again this sense that one has to follow the ruling: not because of any particular threat of sanction if you don't, but because they constitute the essence of good 'journalism'.

A strict balance is maintained on the appearances of politicians, as was indicated by the following statement:

"In politics there aren't restrictions but there is the set of built in inhibitions, for example, the need to create balance. We, in fact, solemnly count up every month the MP's and politicians who appear on our programmes, and if we are four conservatives short by the end of the year, we are going to have to start looking for four conservatives to get on, quite literally. One has to be very cautious. For example, at the moment we have three liberal MP's in our area who are all on good causes: Russell Johnston is knocking the Scottish Transport Group, David Steel is causing a great furor about maternity services in the Borders, Jo Grimond going for the threat of oil developers up in Shetland. These are good stories and you may feel the need to cover them, but if you find yourself trucking along with these three people will start howling.

Q: "Who will start howling?"

"Members of the public, members of other political parties."

Q: "And they will get on to who?"

"Probably me."

Q: "Not the Controller?"

"Possibly the Controller, depending on their personal knowledge. On the political side there are certain inhibitions but I haven't found them all that oppressive."
There is no real consensus of opinion on the significance and nature of the requirements of the law, and for example over the question of Ulster there is disagreement over their ability to report in what they would consider to be an adequate manner and as to whether their organizational superiors take a restrictive or liberal view of what they can and cannot do. The differential response to the situation of the journalist vis-a-vis the rulings reflects differential positions, in both structural terms and in ideological terms, occupied by producers working particularly within current affairs. There is no blanket, absolute situation into which all broadcast journalists fit, and for the person who produces a major network programme for the BBC the implications and necessities of his position are drastically different from the man who is responsible for producing news and current affairs in the highlands of Scotland. Their perceived area of programme material, their importance in the eyes of particular elites, their significance for organizational elites, their essential purpose, all are factors that together imply a different programme experience. There will also be a difference over time in the situation of the broadcast journalist, and periods of intense political activity will necessarily imply a response by the state elite that will be felt within the organization. Lime Grove is indeed the battle front, the prime interface between the structures of the state and the structures of broadcasting, both because of the centrality of the BBC to British national life, and also because it is the single most visible physical representation of political television. If I might extend his analogy, if Lime Grove is the main battlefield and the members of the Current Affairs Group of the BBC are its shock troops, then the current affairs and news personnel of the regional ITV clearly form its Home Guard.

Nevertheless, organizational and external restraint is a real feature
of much production within the sphere of political broadcasting. What then are the mechanisms of this restraint and on whom do they operate? As we have seen in some instances there may be little or no need to 'restrain' since there is already a disposition to acknowledge the organizational line. Where that inclination is missing, however, or where an action is taken which creates the anxiety among the state or regulatory agencies responsible for broadcasting, then other means must be sought and employed. These may vary from the oblique suggestion to the direct order, from the withdrawal of resources to the control of career patterns. There are the obvious examples of control - there is the blunt refusal to allow a broadcast, the refusal to give the go ahead for a project etc. These are, however, rather fierce examples and occur infrequently. A vital mechanism in the control procedure is the close control over career that the organization has. In one interview I discussed the BBC's ending of the Graduate Traineeship, and made the point that

"... I get the impression that what you are saying about the General Traineeship and the cutting off of entry to the BBC at source is that they will have more control over who is coming in (to the organisation) and so are able to manipulate career patterns in order to allow people to survive who they want to survive."

To which the producer replied:

"Yes, Well, by cutting off the General Trainees, they have in fact said that there is no structured career pattern for those people who are going to become producers and above. The only career patterns that are still systematically available are those of the technical grades, the engineers, the studio managers and so on. To become a producer now, in a way, you've got to either work your way up internally through these technical grades and apply for the jobs as they come up and go on attachment. What's becoming more and more common is that if you are a person on attachment - these are studio managers - you apply for an attachment and you get six months as a producer, and if you do well and they like you, you then apply for a job and if it comes

1. It was pointed out that it is not at all clear here who "they" actually are. The interviewee was referring to (1) the Head of Department, (2) the Appointments Board.
up in the department you may get it. So that's one way, although in fact there's not much mobility.

The other way is of outsiders applying directly for production jobs and then usually getting short term contracts which means that the BBC can renew them if they want to, or get rid of them if they don't want to. And that's really the thing, that's the great power they've had since they abolished the General Traineeship, they don't have to give anybody a job which lasts more than say a year or two. And they are going in increasingly for short-term contracts in both radio and television, and that of course gives them enormous control because if a man's a nuisance he's only a nuisance for a year."

Another important mechanism is the development of particular images of the purpose of broadcasting which reflect the perceived possibility of the situation at that time. This is not necessarily a process where there is a clear articulation of the position that receives official sanction, but rather is a more oblique, subtle process:

Q: "How do you know what senior executives are thinking? Is it done in terms of memos, directives, conversations?"

"Well, it's really made known when you put up an idea the first time and you get a discussion. What's very interesting is that programme ideas, no matter what future they may have, do generate quite interesting policy discussions at ... meetings, and one gets a sense of policy mostly, I think, at the meetings with the controllers because they are the closest we get to the very top of the hierarchy, that is the Director of Programmes ... the next man above that is the Managing Director and above him the Director General. So we get a quite clear indication from the Controllers of what's going on, in some senses, by their response to ideas. So really you get the directives by bouncing these proposals of them and finding which ones work and which ones don't."

Q: "So it actually depends on the internal political climate?"

"Yes."

Q: "Would the ramifications of this strategy be more important for particular departments?"

"Yes. Oh yes. I think that's so. I think Light Entertainment, Drama and Music and what have you, I mean there are internal political arguments presumably which will affect what they are doing, but the sensitivity of what they can show is very much a political and social sensitivity, so it's the area of language, morality and attitude which they feel the society is not certain about, so the best thing is to keep careful about that ... The political and the area of social morality, they think the society itself hasn't given any clear directives so the best thing is to steer clear from them yourself. And those are the difficult ones."
The most obvious mechanism of restraint is the direct order. We have seen how this might be exercised in the kind of public statement of what is and is not to be broadcast: the various rulings over the coverage of Ireland by both the IBA and the BBC being the most notable example of recent years. The direct order may however be couched in very distinct terms, as was suggested by one very well known current affairs broadcaster.

Q: "In current affairs, how much do you come up against particular organisational restrictions—say the attitude of ECON (Editor, News and Current Affairs), the Board of Governors or the Director General?"

"Very much, very much. Very important. But very much in the back of one's mind because all these things become absorbed and they become part of the structure of news and they're particularly dangerous because of that because they become hard to identify ... What happens is that a pressure is exerted and is not passed directly, very rarely passed directly, to anybody. Very rarely made explicit even, because it's felt that if it's passed directly it can be publicised and it can be challenged. If it's made explicit it can be avoided by obeying the letter but not the spirit of the rule. So it doesn't work on the whole as formal restraint except for some legal things about law of libel or something. But the things that really matter like the coverage of Northern Ireland or the way you treat a PM on the air, those things that are really important. It doesn't work by any simple rules. I couldn't tell you this is how we have to cover Northern Ireland, but what will happen is that somebody at the top will say something like: 'Sir, feel that we've had rather a lot of rough interviews with the leader of the Opposition. There's a bit of a feeling around at Transport House, I gather, that old Richard might have got it in for them a bit. I, or, leave it to you of course. It might not be a bad thing if we laid off him for a bit, or, just until things quieten down a bit. Maybe, or, I gather there's an interview with the leader of the Opposition next week. Well, maybe whoever you decide to do it, you will remind them of the need to be polite when doing the interview. I rely on you, I know you'll sort something out. Well, jolly good, thanks very much ..'

Now that is an example of control at its most extreme in the BBC, because what happens is that the man who's been told that has been given an order be a) keep an interviewer off the screen, b) to soften down an interview that the person who might do the interview does. Yet none of that can be found, it's not written in minutes, it's not written down in rules, it doesn't exist on an agenda of a paper, this is an informal conversation. But woe-betide the head of department if that person appeared on the screen a week later .. Crash out he goes. He does not understand how the system works. The system works by the most gentlemanly vice-like grip .."
This description is an interesting example of one form of description of
the occasional operation of direct control in programming by senior executives.
It is by far from being a universally accepted view among broadcasters,
and certainly a number of producers expressly denied its central point.
This particular comment was, however, made by a broadcaster rather than
a producer who on a number of occasions has had cause to come into conflict
with his institutional controllers, and there is a history of concern with
the 'tone' and style of interviewing, particularly within the BBC. In
January 1969, for example, Hugh Greene, then Director General of the BBC,
sent a memo to John Grist, then Head of Current Affairs Group, instructing
him that interviewers were not to become participants in discussions and
that they should avoid developing a 'personality cult'. He referred to a
David Frost interview with Powell on ITV, in which Frost had argued
heatedly with Powell on the subject of race, as an example of what he did
not want to happen on any BBC programmes.

There is a fourth important aspect which needs to be considered, and
this is the role of the audience in programme making. What becomes clear
is that a number of features deriving from the internal context of
production militate against the producer developing any real concept of
his audience. The net effect is that the audience is treated as an
abstraction and as an homogeneous whole, and is absent from the overall
framework of production.
The Absent Framework: the Audience-Communicator Relationship

The question of just who the producer in political television is communicating with leads to the ironic if not altogether surprising conclusion that he doesn't really know. What I wish to argue here is that this ignorance represents an important flaw in the whole concept of television as an agent for political communication. Not only does it provide no basis for communication, but also it lays open the programme making process to a number of other influences. Before considering the evidence for this proposition I want to briefly recap on the arguments employed in the literature on the nature of the relationship between the communicator and his audience.

A number of experimental studies have looked at the way in which it is alleged, communicators internalize pictures of their audience and produce material in accordance with those conceptions (Pool and Shulman 1959, Bauer 1958). McQuail (1969, 76-7) employing a perspective drawn from the work of George Herbert Mead argues that not only do images of the audience develop but that their existence is a prior necessity for any act of communication to take place. The communicator, in response to this necessity, develops a number of internalized 'others' with whom he 'converses' thus resolving the problem of 'knowing' the audience. The problem, McQuail argues, is that a number of intervening structures inhibit the development of this "imaginary interlocutor": "In the mass communication situation there would seem to be considerable obstacles to the development of a perception of the audience, and the possibility of a serious problem for the mass communication organization as a result." He detects three "sources of difficulty". Firstly, the sheer scale of the operations of a mass communications organization; secondly, the difficulty with which particular audiences can be addressed; and thirdly, the limited nature of
the feedback. The central problem for the communicator is then the inability of the communicator to establish the requisite 'imaginary interlocutor'. He states, "The normal mechanisms of adjustment open to the communicator would seem to be thwarted since the formulation of a satisfactory reference group to represent the anticipated audience is almost impossible" (1969, 79). Thus as one moves from interpersonal communication to mass communication the possibility of communicating decreases.

There is however another view of the audience-communicator relationship which holds that the problem of developing an internalized image of the audience 'out there' does not present itself since broadcasting in general but political broadcasting in particular is a closed world, a distinctive social milieu upon whose terrain the outside world rarely trespasses. The characteristics of the audience, its requirements in terms of information are not, in this view, of central importance to the broadcaster. The most biting elaboration of this proposition was provided by Mitchell (1973):

"Producers and presenters in current affairs, and particularly in the BBC, too often assume that they are doing programmes for people very much like themselves. This has always been the section of television which made the fewest concessions to the audience partly because Lord Reith still stalks the corridors of BBC Current Affairs Group but more because the other denizens are drawn fairly uniformly from Oxbridge backgrounds. They tend to deal with the subjects they took at university. They are hardly forced to question the elitist attitude and assumptions they absorbed there by frequent interaction with the mass audience they serve ... Clearly, in so far as news and current affairs programmes accept the assumptions and the linguistic shorthand of the elite who produce them, and in so far as they take background knowledge for granted, they will not get through to a mass audience. This may not concern the PPE graduates who prepare the programmes as a means of earning the esteem of the history graduates higher up the hierarchy".

1. The existence of common definitions of the situation, accepted norms and conventions, as in face to face communication.

2. His argument in some ways akin to that of Elliott (1972).
Mitchell is, no doubt because of the path his own career has taken, somewhat narrow in his perspective of the bases of political television. There is more to it than Lime Grove, though that building does loom large in this area of broadcasting. What I think will become clear, however, from the evidence to be presented here is that Mitchell's emphasis on the inner orientation of the producer, what Burns (1969,72) has described as "the safe enclosure of the artistic world", is a more relevant description than that of their pursuing an imaginary interlocutor. In the face-to-face or group situation the substance of what is communicated, the message-content, rests on a number of assumptions and understandings that the communicator derives from his audience. He can see whether they are young or old, intellectual or non-intellectual, he can see them laugh or scowl, applaud or jeer. More than likely his addressing them follows from an invitation to speak on a particular area and so to that extent his content is defined for him. In other words the linkages in the communication chain are clear. No such clarity exists for the producer of political television. But nor as a general proposition does that present problems for them. In studying the producers' perceptions of their audience, their attitudes to their role in the making of programmes, in influencing content, one gains no sense of viewing individuals frustrated by their inability to communicate. Rather the manifestation is of a relatively closed world festooned with a number of vaguely formulated, unsubstantiated assumptions about the audience, but vitally aware of its success or lack of success in overall ratings. There was however no precise idea of actual figures, rather of vague impressions haphazardly gathered. To begin with a very broad conclusion: there is little or no qualitative evaluation of the audience, but there is an important quantitative evaluation, thus
reflecting the focus on the internal features of programme-making rather than the external features of the audience. Elliott (1972) notes in a similar vein that "in many ways isolation and autonomy were the most striking characteristics of the production team's situation".

When asking producers about the sorts of people who watched their programme one was often presented with a rather quizzical look and a heavy implication that the question was not the most appropriate one to ask. And yet when responses were goaded out they were revealing of the prevalent attitudes among communicators to the idea of communication. From my reading of the transcripts of interviews there was no situation in which a producer felt he either held a precise view of the audience, even at a general level, or indeed that this was possible or desirable. The producer of a current affairs programme on BBC declared that "I don't think about the audience", and another stated,

"I really don't know very much about the audience actually. What I suspect and what I'm told is that it's very high A-B. The viewing has pretty much doubled since the start of the programme, and we seem to have built a fairly constant audience who appear to want to watch us."

One found similar statements in almost every interview, usually combined with an assertion that "it's everybody", "a cross section", "all sorts". When pressed on this it was possible to draw out a number of general impressions that producers have of the audience's overall characteristics and their needs for particular types of programme material. Grace Wyndham Goldie, a former Head of the BBC's CAG is alleged to have once stated that the audience consists of "mature people who are not informed but who wish to be informed". Now this is a naively classless proposition of the audience as an homogenised whole, but its sense lingers on as was reflected in the statement by an ITV current affairs producer that,
"I'm very aware of saying 'Christ nobody will understand that part of the programme' or 'you've got to take that argument more slowly'. I think most producers see as one of their primary roles, in the presentation of programmes, is being aware of how ignorant people are. A catch-phrase is that 'people are more ignorant than you realise, but far more intelligent than you expect them to be'. You can't assume that they know who the Prime Minister of Southern Ireland is, but don't preach at them because they will be able to understand a quite high-brow discussion of what workers participation, for example, really means."

A number of producers working on programmes in the regions outlined general assessments of their audience from which they drew on understanding of the 'programme needs' of that audience. There was an inclination, however, to conclude with a recognition that the "assessment" was really only guessing:

"Basically we've got a rural audience and rural audiences tend to be, to use a good Scots word, coo thy. They're very largely a farming community, so they are all very well spread out and they've got their own funny little lives down on the farm. They are fairly simple folk - I'm talking about the majority now, though I'm not talking down to them - they've got fairly simple straightforward agricultural lives. Life in the country is very different from life in the city. It affects the kind of things they like, and they go for the women's institute meetings and the candlemaking and the cookery. It's very difficult to gauge exactly what that simple majority actually do like. They like the simple things in life, you know, they like to see a local lad coming on for three minutes to sing. They prefer that to you doing a 12 minute close up on some big art exhibition. And then you get the candlemaking instances where they write in about the most ridiculous topics that we've covered. You tell me what the audience is like, I don't know, there's no way of gauging it".

It was interesting that one theme of the interviews in the regions was that the audience was not what one would describe as sophisticated, and yet this wasn't in any way a theme of the national programmes. Presumably one can only explain it in terms of the different programmes which were studied. The regional programmes were predominantly the 6 pm news magazine programmes, which are deliberately low key and low-brow productions, in contrast to the current affairs and features programmes, broadcast at a later hour and more earnestly serious. Even allowing for the distinctions implied here, the dominant theme of the interviews was that the audience for a programme reflected
the innate diversity of a heterogeneous society consisting of all social
types, all social groupings. The producer of a BBC feature programme
declared

"To start with it was a very middle class audience because
BBC2 meant getting a new set. But now there's a hell of
a lot of people who live in council flats where they can't
have aerials and so they get it piped in and therefore get
all three channels. We've now got a very good mixed bag
audience from what we can judge".

What then can we say about the argument that communicators
develop an imaginary interlocutor? One clearly wouldn't expect the
formulation to be in precisely those terms, but one might have
reasonably expected reference to some representative entity, if not
an internalized other than at least some 'average' figure. In fact
this is very far from being the case. The nearest to it was a producer
who argued that it is "impossible to have an image of a very large
audience. It's two or three people sat in front of the television
set". It would be interesting then if he had some more detailed
concept of the two or three people, but when asked to elaborate on
what these "2 or 3" were like he declared:

"Infinitely variable, though I suppose older rather than
younger, richer rather than poorer. It's very difficult
to say. There's all sorts of research done but I'm never
quite sure what to make of it."

Three producers expressly denied the presence of representative
figures at whom their programmes were directed. The producer of an
ITV news magazine stated:

"I don't have a 'Mr. Viewer' image. One knows that the BBC
goes for A-B audiences, and we go for C-D-E, with a few A's
and a few B's sort of thing. But that doesn't bother me at
all because we are dealing with a majority audience and
that's more important to me".

Thus not only is there an abstracted view of his audience, but also
a qualitative assessment is superseded by satisfaction at having a
majority audience - which in effect meant that his audience was
larger than the rival news magazine on BBC. The only concession he
claimed to make for a more specific evaluation or assessment of
the audience was not in the area of a need for precise forms of
political information, but rather rested on his assertion that he
occasionally put on items which would appeal to women (fashion)
and 'teenyboppers' ("if David Bowie were up in the area I'd have
him in the studio if I could"). Another producer, in arguing that
he didn't hold an image of a 'Mr. Average' in his head, held that
life was patterned, criss-crossed by distinguishing characteristics,
and that the audience for his programme would reflect this in all its
diversity. He stated:

"It's a fairly obvious audience in a sense. It's people
who come home early from work. It's kids and teenagers
who come home from school, it's mums who are already there,
old age pensioners who watch it all the time. It's everyone
really. But you can't start saying what type of person,
because you have no idea.
I assume that the person watching this programme is the sort
of person who likes that type of programme. He hasn't got
much alternative because if he switches over to BBC he sees
a similar type of programme. So you basically aim at the
widest possible audience. You assume a measure of
intelligence on the part of the viewer and you also see him
as someone who is interested in the same sorts of things you
are interested in. I really will not create, and reject the
idea that you have to create Mr. Average Citizen in his back
parlour and say 'would he like it?'. It's much easier to say
'would I like it?'

There are a number of points to be made here. This particular
producer affirms the familiar proposition that he doesn't know what
the audience "is like"; he specifically rejects the idea that they
have to develop an interlocutor; and indicates the centrality of the
ratings. The really interesting feature though is the emphasis at
the end on the reference that he would tend to make to his own
standards for decisions about content. This particular producer
went on to add about the role of the audience: "The audience is
important if it's there. If it starts dwindling then it's a sign
that something is wrong. You don't really spend the time worrying
about the audience except producing for them the best programme that
you can, and if it's not what they want you've got to produce a
different type of programme".

A typical response then was that audiences are widely based, that there is no representative viewer held in mind when making the programme. As one producer, in Wales, stated, "I don't see a Tom Jones worried about his mortgage and living in Cardiff". The use of themselves as a basis for judgement was only aligned to a wider view of the audience in those situations where the producer could state "the sort of viewers we have tend to be largely middle class people like ourselves. We've no way of knowing this, we just think that". This was the producer of a BBC programme, and one did hear the argument that ITV audiences were more working class than those of the BBC which were predominantly middle class. A similar point about affinity with the audience was made rather glibly by a BBC current affairs producer:

"I argue (to his staff) that I'm old enough now to make programmes for me. But because I'm in the prime of life and have become middle class, a bit elitist I suppose, I try to compensate for that by not being too elitist, not too middle class. But I would consciously accept that I'm nearer to the age group that I'm broadcasting to than my team are .... I have an affinity with (the kind of audience) who wear hats and drive Morris Minors in the middle of the road very slowly and either live in Yorkshire or Kent or Dorset and have a fairly solid attitude towards life".

Thus the closest he came to a concept of the audience was the identification of a level of affinity based on generational proximity to the viewers who watched his programme. The reference point was himself, but the focus remained legitimate, because the audience was like himself.

It is significant for the discussion of the audience-communicator relationship that not only were the images of the audience so broadly drawn as to be meaningless, but that this was widely recognised by those interviewed. It is I think possible to explain a situation where in qualitative terms the audience is not a central feature
of the producers working life.

There is the difficulty of the scale of the audience. The smallest audience of any programme involved in this study would be several hundred thousands and the largest would, on occasion, reach perhaps 15 million people. The evaluation of the tastes and standards of such an enormous number of people would present difficulties under any circumstances. Yet there are clearly a number of mechanisms by which the producer could impose on his view of the audience a sense of shape and order. The argument that the communicators develop an interlocutory figure does not necessarily entail that the figure derives from any considered assessment of the audience. However, as I have tried to indicate, the whole argument about the 'imaginary interlocation' does not stand up particularly well to the evidence and so becomes rather academic.

The problem of the audience nevertheless does present itself so long as one is talking about communication and so long as a number of feedback-sources are available. What then happens to these sources of information about the audience? It would be curious indeed if one could show an attention to feedback sources and the persistent absence of an 'audience' image. What one found in the interviews and also in the observation was at best a crude awareness of feedback, a general distrust of these sources, combined with an occasional strategic use of their content. What I would understand by the overall purpose of feedback is - to distinguish it from ratings - an in-depth evaluation of audience needs and response to the programme content with a view to its integration within the programme making process. Such a description remains, however, hopelessly naive and of no relevance to the actual nature of programme making.
Three main sources of feedback are readily available to the producer: audience research carried out by the broadcasting organization; letters and phone-calls in response to a particular programme; personal contacts.

A number of things stand out about the producer's attitude to audience research (AR): he does not see much AR; what he does see he doesn't think very much of; and in a number of situations there is actually no research at all carried out which could possibly be seen by him. The response of a producer of a news magazine was that, "We pay a bit of attention to audience research, but really I'm not too convinced of how scientific they are". It was in fact rather difficult to get producers to say anything about audience research. In looking through the transcripts one is struck by the general paucity of the answers to questions in this area when compared to other areas of questioning. In a number of instances questions about audience research as a source of feedback from the audience indicated either the ineffectiveness or absence of research. One producer noted, "across the country we have a fairly good viewing figure, although audience measurement by the BBC in the regions tends not to be done unless specially commissioned for the regional programmes. They do it for national network programmes, but they don't necessarily do it for regional programmes. We had a survey done in the last quarter of last year. That postulated that in December of last year — and these were the last figures that I've ever seen for a television programme in the evening, we were doing about 22-22% of the population over 5 years old .... The breakdown of the figures I wouldn't be too sure about, but I think we get a pretty fair cross section".

This statement was made in September 1973, and so for a period of 9 months the producer had not only not seen any in-depth audience research, he hadn't seen any research at all including his ratings figures. This was no means an unusual situation, and another producer declared,
"we've never carried out specific AR because as you know there's a separate BBC AR department and that carried out research on regional figures so that we know roughly what the size of the audience is. But we've never carried out detailed research. The reason for this is that first of all it costs money and secondly we were supposed to have colour for quite some time and it kept getting postponed and so we decided to postpone any detailed audience research until we were in colour and colour had been going for some time. Then we would be able to get some idea of the audience. But as far as I can tell the only way that we've got of knowing what the audience is like for our programme is obviously from the people who phone us up and write letters to us"

The limitations on the use of audience research is no peculiarity of the regional television stations of the BBC. Producers in ITV regional stations, ITN, and BBC and ITV current affairs and features programmes all made more or less the same point about the relative absence of AR. In network programmes, notably in the BBC, a good deal of AR is actually available to the programme maker, but I can find no evidence from my study that the fruits of the scientific evaluation of audience tastes, standards and needs plays any important part in the occupational life of the producers of political television.

This then would seem to throw a good deal of importance in feedback terms onto a source already mentioned in these statements, that is letters and phone-calls from viewers. The number of letters which programmes receive obviously varies with their scheduling and subject matter. According to current affairs producers the number of letters which their programmes would receive varies between about 15 and 50 per week. One somehow expected

1. It is estimated that between them the BBC and ITV spend £1 million p.a. on AR: Television Research Committee, Second Progress Report and Recommendations, Leicester University Press, 1969, p28.
2. The correspondents studied by Tunstall received on average 14 letters a week. These were not, however, of any particular use in the formulation of an audience image since the letters were either from "cranks", were factional enquiries or did not contain any information on readership (1971, 252).
far more than this; for example, one producer of a current affairs programme on ITV talked about the low level of letter writing both in terms of quantity and quality:

"I guess I get around 10 to 20 letters a week."

MT: "Only 10 to 20?"

"Does that sound very low to you? (Yes). You don't get many. On other programmes like World in Action you get far less. I must add that most of the letters we get are really not very well considered letters to put it politely. They are mostly invective, or 'why doesn't that cow wear proper lipstick?' (a reference to a female presenter) or 'why doesn't that cow talk about God and why does she always look so left wing?' Those kind of letters are really not one's that challenge one intellectually. Occasionally, however, perhaps 2% of letters make you sit down and think 'God, this guy has thought it out, I've got to write a proper reply!".

Programmes always get a large amount of PR material, and some programmes notably news magazines get far more letters than a current affairs programme. This reflects the positive encouragement of letters by this type of programme, for example, through increasing the use of consumer items which clearly encourage people to write. During the observation at ATV the morning post averaged 30 letters which came directly from individuals rather than from organizations and firms.

There was some evidence that producers did try to assess to an extent their audience by reference to the letters. One producer discussing the relative lack of importance of his colleagues in terms of feedback, referred to his experience on a previous programme which had had a very high level of letters - it was a 'consumer' programme. Referring to the volume of letters he declared:

"That's what really mattered to me, if you're making a programme for a general audience you learn a lot from the letter. I obviously didn't read all the letters, but from going through them you see what they liked, what they didn't like, what they didn't understand, what we'd done too fast, what hadn't been funny. I find that much more useful than colleagues who often have an axe to grind."

This was on the whole an unusual response, a more typical one being that 'We

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1. The producer of Nationwide stated in a broadcast on the Communicator and the Audience (BBC Radio, 25 January 1973) that his programme received an average of 1,500 letters per week.
get letters that I'm sorry to say tend to be more about people appearing rather than the content of the item or the story. Certain people object to certain presenters and reporters on television. They object to the way they speak, they object to the way in which questions are phrased. There was a sense of despondency that the letters weren't more articulate or pertinent. A number of producers argued that not only were letters often not particularly relevant or informative, but also stated that experience in reading viewers' letters led to certain skills in graphology!

"I would hope that I was attracting a general audience with as many C's as A-B's there. I know that I am because I get letters in immaculate typescript from people who've got good typewriters or secretaries in their office, and I also get spidery handwriting on lined notepaper from old-age pensioners."

Another producer of a programme which received quite a high level of mail (150 letters per day on average - though I suspect he was including Hi material in that), made the point that there tend to be many people who write regularly to the programme (a point made by a number of other producers). He added,

"You start to recognize handwriting. You get a high proportion of nuts and eccentrics. There is a certain style of handwriting, you recognize it immediately - it's sort of both hands, heavy print, capital 'i's' with dots and a rather bad biro. Lots of words are underlined. Every current affairs producer becomes a sort of mini-amateur graphologist. You can recognize a nut at a hundred yards.

The other category of people who write are the ones who want help. You get an awful lot of people who write or ring and think you're actually Parliament or a citizens' advice bureau."

There was also some indication that letters may be used strategically within the organization - letters thus becoming important in those situations where it was in the interests of say a senior executive to make them important.

1. Stuart Hood has made a most apposite summation of the feeling implied here: "If one works in television one must reconcile oneself to the fact that the bulk of the audience reaction is from cranks, from the unstable, the hysterical and sick ... To form an equable judgement about one's audience from phone calls or correspondence is difficult, if not impossible ... The only positive thing the programme-maker knows about its audience is its size". Hood, _A Survey of Television_, Heinemann, 1967, 38-9.
I was also told that quite senior personnel would occasionally become involved in a lengthy correspondence with a letter writer who happened to engage his interest, and there was also some indication that letters would occasionally lead to items for programmes. On the whole though, letters provided either a very general impression of the audience (being employed to support notions that, for example, 'we have a broad cross-section of viewers' etc) or were felt to be too few to be representative or were on the whole written by individuals who were in some respect unusual and therefore were definitely unrepresentative. There is no way in which letters can be seen as a significant part of a communication chain, and one is led to conclude that in fact the concept of feedback is not particularly appropriate.

If letters were not strikingly relevant in the development of a concept of the audience for a number of reasons telephone calls were positively distrusted. Though some live programmes did take up phone calls during the programme, "We've just received 2 phone calls saying that what the MP said about housing is nonsense, what do you say to that MP... ?", and though logs are kept of phone calls, there is to say the least a rather aloof attitude to the people who do phone. Reference was frequently made to the fact that only those with complaints tended to phone, and this was felt to be unfair on the programme makers and also unrepresentative. Let me refer to just two statements by producers which from the evidence I have been able to gather sum up the relevant attitudes in this area:

"Letters and phone calls? We take note of them but tend to think they come from cranks."

This was a rather blunt representation of the position on calls though the second statement by another producer while taking account of the complexities of discussing the role of phone calls made a broadly similar point.

1. Elliott's study (1972, 1:1-2) led him to the conclusion that correspondence was "no use to the production team in suggesting programme ideas for the future, because of its content, the way the team related to it, and because by the time most of it arrived the production team has disbanded and each member was working with another team on a new programme".
"I honestly don't receive many phone-calls immediately after or during a programme, although some people will phone me during a programme immediately after an item."

FT: "What sort of people?"

"I would say the bulk of them tend to be, from the calls I've had, the ordinary working class people who've taken umbrage at something. A great many tend to be extremists on one point or another: rather than left and right, however, I would say that angry phone-calls tend to come from people who are involved in the Roman Catholic and Protestant religious feeling in central Scotland. Sometimes people just phone in and go screaming mad. Occasionally you get people who phone up and say they like something though these are few in number. When it happens though it can be quite touching - for example a story of a blind girl in need of an operation which she could only get in America led to a lot of phone calls from people wishing to help and saying they were touched by the story and thanking us for putting it on.

But these occasions tend to be fewer than those where somebody says something controversial, or somebody calls to say something that somebody of an extremist standpoint thinks should have been said. And occasionally we get downright lunatics - and I use the phrase lunatic advisedly, really scatty people who say that they want to phone the man in the studio so that they can tell him to take back what he's just said. He's probably said something totally harmless and well within journalistic impartiality. For example, a lady phoned up and said 'Phone him and tell him' and I said 'I'm sorry the programme is on the air' and she said 'Don't tell me that, they've got a telephone at the side I've seen him use it before now, just phone him up'."

Golding (1974) has noted: "Relations, friends, taxi-drivers, doormen and secretaries serve as functional microcosms of the unknown audience, and are frequently mentioned in defence against the accusation that communicators are too isolated from and unresponsive to their audience". Certainly one source which was referred to by a number of producers as a possible means of assessing the audience were personal contacts with the audience, "family and friends", "what I hear in the pub". However, this was nowhere stressed as being in any way significant source of audience information.

In trying to explain the absence of an 'audience image' I have pointed not only to sheer scale but also to the overall paucity and inadequacy in the possible mechanisms by which knowledge of the audience could have been established. The problem of feedback is a difficult one to assess. The levels of wariness which exist towards audience research, letters, phone calls which do not on that basis constitute
part of the communications process can be seen from a number of different perspectives. Does the attitude to feedback lead to the absence of an audience image, or does it reflect an already existing lack of concern with the audience thus reflecting an ideological stance vis-a-vis the audience.

As a general proposition producers see much of the feedback as irrational and/or negative and therefore to be rejected. That the nature of the available feedback is dubious is undoubtedly true, and would on the whole present very serious intellectual problems for the producer in attributing any significance to them - for example, anyone who has read through many of the letters that are received can attest to this. The conceptual vacuum thus represents a very real problem. However, while they may be the case, the attitude to the audience - or rather if the drift of this argument is correct, the lack of an attitude - reflects the subordination of the producer's professional commitment as a communicator to his commitment to the wider goals of the organization, the most relevant of which is an emphasis on audience maximization. The assessment by producers of the audience thus may be seen as ideological in the sense that it is consonant with their real interests.\(^1\) The attitude towards the audience, the general deprecation of the feedback sources, the establishment of a gulf between the production and the viewer stem, at least in part, from organizational practice. This is then a view of the forces sustaining the internal world of the producer and his production, a world cut off from the audience because there is no organizational emphasis on knowing the audience, only on having one.

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\(^1\) The definition I have in mind here is that by Burns (1969, 63): "a coherent system of ideas and principles may nevertheless be consonant with the self-interests of a group of people".
This then is the third force sustaining the absent framework, and to clarify this point one has to briefly leave the discussion of the data gathered in the interviews with the producers and look at certain problems and inconsistencies in the public rhetoric of administrative personnel in BBC and ITV.

Public Service and Serving the Public.

There is a gulf between the public representations of senior broadcasters and the realities of their occupational world. At the level of public statement the main proposition is that broadcasting in Britain is about 'public service'. Charles Curran, Director General of the BBC can state that, "Our only stated obligation in the Charter, and therefore our central responsibility, is to serve the public", and Sir Robert Fraser of the then ITA can state on 24th September 1970 at a dinner given by the Authority to mark his retirement:

"And so, with an audience of amber, I have said nothing about the one feature of Independent Television with which they will be equally familiar: the great political compromise, the successful political compromise, on which the whole Act rests, of creating a system of private enterprise under public control".

The public is a central point of reference in these statements but according to Curran the broadcaster cannot accept as given the level of popular taste, he must seek to influence it, raise it and thus fulfil the proper role of public service broadcasting,

"...we can serve the public, if we so choose, in a wholly servile way. We can obey the commands of the public. We can respond entirely to their dictation of what they want. That course would satisfy none of us in the BBC. But it is also possible to serve intelligently. By that I mean that we can detect in the ebb and flow of public opinion those things for which there is some demand, though not an overwhelming demand, and we can seek to meet the widest range of those demands. That seems to me to be the responsible path. We are there to provide the widest range of what will be enjoyed", (Curran, Broadcasting and Society, 1971).

1. At a speech in Edinburgh, 23 March 1971, Broadcasting and Society.
The Chairman of the then ITA refers to the benefits of improving standards which accrue from competition:

"... in the years of controlled competition between the two broadcasting bodies, the scope and quality of British television have been vastly improved" 2

Kenneth Lamb (1970) speaking of the licence-fee system declares:

"It reinforces a frame of mind in the BBC which impels us constantly to ask ourselves the question: 'What ought we to be doing to serve the public better?'. But if the BBC is to seek to serve the public it must listen to what the public says."

He then proceeds to list the various means by which "the BBC conducts this essential dialogue": programme correspondence, AR, the advisory councils etc. He states, "... we try to make proper use of the information we receive. Audience figures and indications of reactions are made available to programme departments and to planners in a variety of charts and reports issued at daily, weekly and quarterly intervals". A kind of theoretical footnote was made by Robert Silvey, then Head of Audience Research at the BBC, in another Lunchtime Lecture in 1963, when he declared that

"'Communication' cannot be said to have taken place unless there is a recipient as well as a communicator and the part played by the recipient is anything but passive" (Silvey, 1965, 6). What such accounts fail to take note of is the tendency of the relationship between the two broadcasting organizations to undermine the pretensions to public service in assessment of taste and the emphasis on the audience as a series of statistics.

Other statements by senior personnel do begin to indicate a slightly less righteous but more realistic posture. The whole argument of the BBC to the Pilkington Committee was that the competition for audience had a debilitating effect on standards. Indeed this was the basis of their demand to be allocated the second channel. Aylestone in an address to

2. Lord Aylestone, TV and Public Taste, ITA Notes, No 22, May 1971, p10
the Royal Television Society in Birmingham in October 1968 declared,
"Other things happened with the coming of Independent Television. The first and most obvious, was the struggle for big audiences. All television calls for big audiences - that is the nature of the beast, and I know of no public television service in any country which is not keen to get as big an audience as it can for its programmes." Howard Newby a senior BBC Radio administrator stated in The Listener on 3rd December 1970,

"I have been using the word 'competition' to mean rivalry for large audiences. In talking about radio and television it can have little other meaning .... In the public debate about broadcasting, and more particularly that part of the debate that has to do with the apportioning of funds, the only hard facts are about the listening and viewing habits of licence-payers. Everything else is opinion". (Reprinted in: In the Public Interest : a Six Part Explanation of BBC Policy, January 1971, 13)

Given this kind of explanatory framework it is not difficult to see why there is an apparent de-emphasis on substantial in-depth audience research as opposed to what can only be termed head counting. As Wedell (1968, 235) notes there has always been an ambivalence within the BBC towards the audience - a tension between a willingness to accommodate the information about the audience emanating from AR and a refusal to be drawn into programme making by plebiscite. This was the position at the time of the Beveridge Report. The emphasis was changed somewhat by the Pilkington Committee, a position which was later summed up in a BBC document: "The conduct of AR, and the communication of its results to the rest of the Corporation, constitute the limit of the (Audience Research) Departments responsibilities: its findings are never mandatory." (Audience Research in the United Kingdom: Method and Services; BBC, 1966, p3. Quoted in Wedell, 1968, 236). The Pilkington Report did not deal extensively with audience research, whereas the Beveridge Committee had heavily criticised the prevalent attitudes as "irresponsible". The prevalent attitude, which does not appear to have changed since 1966, is that the programme maker need only take account of the audience as reflected in the AR findings in those situations in which he chooses to do so. There is, as Lamb states in the extract quoted
previously, a formal distribution on the findings of AR. Within that
though there appears to be an emphasis on quantitative data. It is
however, difficult to obtain any indication as to the measures which
are taken to implement the findings at programme-making level, other
than that they are "never mandatory".

The position vis-a-vis audience research was perhaps most succinctly
summed up in a speech by Charles Curran at an international seminar on
'Broadcaster/Researcher' Co-operation held in Leicester on the 17th-21st
December 1970. He stated that,

"If there has been a single discernible thread running through
what I have said I hope it will have been this: the BBC is in
the programme-making business and its overriding concern must
always be with those who make programmes and those who watch
and listen to them. We reject the idea that we should contribute
financially to research because it is not part of our proper
function to redistribute public money in this particular way.
We have no right to pick the pocket of the viewer to find out
what is in his head .... Research must always be subservient
to programmes." (in: Halloran and Gurevitch, 1971, 58)

It is this general background of organizational practice which can
be seen to provide a third process sustaining the absence of an adequate
and meaningful conception of the audience. It is the light of these
three factors - scale, feedback, organizational practice - that one can
begin to explain not only the absent audience but also the facility with
which producers are able to deny the significance of the audience. As
a general proposition one can argue that producers declare that the
audience does not figure in the programme making process in any sub-
stantial way, and that this leads to a dependence on themselves as
points of reference.

The producer of a current affairs programme on ITV, making a virtue
of necessity, made the point that he was the one who was responsible
for the programme and that one couldn't distil the necessary creativity
from the audience and that this was what successful programme making
was all about. He was an advocate then of a state of creative autocracy:
"I don't think you can plan a programme for an audience, and I don't know quite who you would plan it for. As I said before, when you make a decision as the producer of a programme, you can't be democratic because you have to make them very quickly. In the end . . . I never say to myself in a blatant way that I will construct a programme for any audience, and I really don't know anybody who does that in any programme. I think if you get to the stage, which you see on television all the time, where you say 'I will construct a situation comedy for them' it's usually awful. It's only guys who are writing things like Steptoe and Son or Till Death Us Do Part, those who are writing because they personally believe in the idea, who are doing anything worthwhile. This is not to say that they ignore the audience because I'm sure they don't; they are aware of their audience, but not primarily aware - they keep the audience somewhere to the left of their vision but not straight ahead and that's the same with me . . .

I back my own judgement because I've seen how my own judgement works out in practice. I have a broad sense of how successful my programmes have been, and I actually like to think that they've been very successful in terms of audience as well as critics. I'm not at all that interested in making programmes for very small minorities, but I'd also recognise that I never really set out to make a programme for a mass audience because I never believe that it's either possible or particularly worthwhile."

The "I'm responsible" argument was argued more forcibly by the producer of a BBC current affairs programme who stated "I try to use myself as arbiter for the simple reason that in the end I'm responsible for it. They'll fire me if they get fed up with it. So in the end I have to say 'I don't like this' or 'my preference is for so and so'." One can reproduce similar statements from different producers in different situations:

"I think the audience is very unimportant. It's a pity, but they just don't come up with massive suggestions. We have an advisory council that meets here three times a year, lay people who are interested in broadcasting who are asked to make suggestions for programmes and even they don't come up with very many. We are just left to get on with it really."

There is a strong sense in this statement of the professional distance, the broadcasting clergy possessing the knowledge and expertise, and the 'lay' audience, unable to contribute, there to be spoken to rather than
communicated with, a passive rather than active audience. The producer of a BBC features programme did however feel that the lack of an audience image signified an absence of professionalism:

MT: "You didn't have a particular audience in mind when you were doing the programme?"

"No. In fact the thing that makes us a pretty unprofessional outfit I'm sad to say is that we tend to make the programmes for ourselves. I was really just making programmes for myself which is bad."

An interesting feature which emerged was the producers, having said that the audience wasn't important and that they used themselves as a kind of gauge of programme content, tended to add that they did try to sustain "a level of interest" among the audience, tried not to "bore" them. This became closely tied up with the attitudes to the ratings, "interest" being confirmed in viewing figures. The producer of a current affairs programme on ITV in declaring that the ratings weren't particularly important, only served to make the point that they were, to the extent that their centrality is very much of a taken for granted nature:

"I don't think one could say how much store one puts in the audience ratings. They are not the be all and end all. No one in ITV, the Managing Director or the Programme Controller, has ever said to me 'Your ratings are bad'. I don't think they've been that bad anyway. The only thing I'm interested in is whether they fall from the previous programme. My feeling is that if you can hold an audience within a few points of the previous programme then it's a lot, because after all the previous programme is always an entertainment or something. If you can hold them - it obviously depends what is on the other side - but if you can hold them then I think you are doing it well. Look it's a fantasy to expect people who have been working and are tired and everything else, to think that they want to sit down to an undiluted diet of catastrophe, news, trade figures and everything else. It's absolutely silly to think that ... Why should we expect the audience to dot around from news to current affairs to documentary. They'd be a fantastic audience if they did. They'd also be mad."

The problem then is one of sustaining a level of interest and therefore viewing figures against the natural tendencies of the audience to drift off into other, less demanding areas. A similar position was adopted by a producer working in a completely different context, that of producing a BBC news magazine programme:

"... in a television programme of 20 minutes at night you are trying to hold audience attention, by not having too many solid items at the beginning. For example, we always try to orchestrate our headlines. For this we usually have three subjects in the headline: Nos 1 and 2 tend to be more important stories, No. 3 tends to be usually a feature type subject that will probably be about ½ minutes on film."

And a Scottish producer tied up the different threads of depending on their own tastes and perceptions and seeking to blend that with audience interest and thus sustaining an audience. When asked about the importance of the audience he stated:

"Totally, in the sense that there's no point in making a programme that nobody watches. I don't think they can influence the programme though. What we are aiming to do, and it happens to be our privilege, is to produce the best programme we are able to do and the best general interest programme that we are able to do. We would very rarely say 'there's not much point in doing that because who's interested?' But at the same time if we thought there was a general interest in an item and we thought we could do it, we would do it."

In other words the audience is important so long as they are there, but as people with specific interests and needs they are encapsulated within a concept of 'general interest' that only occasionally is allowed to intervene in programme decisions.

Producers do not have an obsession with the ratings in the sense of avidly following them for every programme that is produced. Rather they develop what one might term a sense of well being, an ill defined feeling that their programme is able to maintain a level of interest among the
audience. As previously indicated producers may in fact have no idea about the precise audience figures for their programme, may even deprecate ratings, but they nevertheless retain a residual sense of the state of play:

"I don't think you can manage to work anything out from the ratings. I mean on some of the programmes which I thought had been absolutely fantastic, the ratings have dropped and on some of them in which you think the programme is absolutely diabolical the ratings have gone up. There is no way of reading anything into the ratings, and it's a terrible danger to try and do so because you get trapped in the ratings game. Since the ratings are fairly reasonable and they don't vary that much I don't really worry about them. It's somebody else's problem really. They'll tell me if they drop."

What points can we make from all this; what themes emerge from the numerous statements already referred to? I think one can make a number of fairly conclusive statements about the nature of the relationship between the producer and the audience.

1. Producers do not 'know' their audience in terms of their having either detailed knowledge or a clearly worked out impression. That is, the audience has neither an objective nor subjective presence for the producer.

2. Producers do have very general, loosely formed, vague impressions of the audience. This tends to be of the order, 'it's everybody', 'a cross-section' or 'we get a lot of women/elderly people/middle class etc.

3. This can be explained at a number of levels. There is the sheer scale of the audience - ranging from several hundred thousands to several million. There is a lack of meaningful 'feedback', so

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1 This was a point made by a number of producers, that a difficulty with the audience was its unpredictability. This offended their own professional status in the sense that items they were pleased with and which exemplified their craft went by without any response, when for a shoddy, hastily prepared item there would be a massive response.
much so that the implications of that concept do not fit the reality of the communications process as exemplified in political television. The organizational practices of the broadcasting organizations in emphasising the competitive basic of broadcasting in Britain inhibit attempts at the development of any in-depth concepts of the audience. The emphasis is on a quantified view of the audience rather than a qualitative one.

4. The general effect of this situation is to emphasise the inner world of the programme setting rather than the linkage with the audience which would be an essential prerequisite of any adequate political communications system. There could be no communication in situations in which the audience represents a series of ciphers and percentages.

This then is what the absent framework means. It means however that there is not only a vital 'missing link' in the communications process and that this derives largely from a number of features of the setting in which the programme originates, but also that this engenders an environment in which a number of processes are able to operate. These are the processes which operate on the production, shape it and fashion it, so that in part the content of political television derives from a number of internal requirements and propositions rather than from the conscious desire by programme makers to relate to the political information needs of the audience-electorate. The absence of a framework which embodies both the communicator and the audience is a cause and consequence of a distinctive internal social milieu from which political television
emerges. If, however, the absence of a framework of understanding is one powerful inhibition on political television as political communi-
cation, as we have seen a number of other frameworks complete the constituent parts of the production setting and provide equally powerful inhibitions. A discussion of their operation has been the basis for this chapter.
Conclusion

The late Richard Crossman in his much discussed Granada Lecture (1968) states that "The danger is that in the competition for the mass audience the discussion of live social and economic issues, which is the stuff of politics, will come to be treated as an inferior form of entertainment which has to be gimmicked up in order to be made palatable to an indifferent audience - the danger that Gresham's law will operate here as in economics, driving out the good currency, the thought provoking treatment in depth, and substitute it for the easily accepted popular stereotype." He also detects an overall trivialisation of politics through snippety and shallow coverage of the complex issues which form the stuff of the political process.

It should be clear from the whole tone of this chapter that I find little to disagree with in Crossman's analysis. What I have tried to show are the mechanics of this situation. By focussing on the way in which producers function within stylistic paradigms, handle an inhibiting technology, are bound by a rigorous legal framework, fail to encounter the audience as individuals and see them rather as aggregates whose value is as a statistic in a harsh competitive environment, are tied to the clock, in all these ways one can see the profundity of the problem which Crossman identified and sought to alter.

During the course of the research the major international news story was the Watergate controversy. There is perhaps no more profound index of the state of British political television, and in many ways the state of the Press as such, than the thought, readily acknowledged by every producer with whom it was discussed, that had Watergate happened in Britain the broadcast media would have been massively inhibited in covering it. The stony silence which pervaded the situation in Ulster for five decades
would more than likely have been repeated and the limitations would have been, as I think this chapter has shown, only partly political.

If one thinks of political television as political communication, the logical point to be drawn from this argument is that to remove the inhibitions which exist within political television, one would need to alter the whole nature of the internal context, most noticeably one would have to remove the competitive basis and the legal and political limitations on political television. It would be argued by some critics of the media that this is hopelessly naive, since the State has and must retain a firm grip on the broadcast media. This, however, begs the question of the nature of the relationship between the State and those responsible for political television. As I have argued, there are a number of important restrictions which derive from the State, but these only provide one factor among several. Can one pinpoint with more accuracy the nature of the relationship with the State, and outline the mechanics and consequences of the relationship. I have tried to do so by focussing on a number of specific cases. For this, one has to integrate discussion at the level of the producer with consideration of higher levels within the broadcasting organization since it is at that more rarified level that the relationship resides.
CHAPTER SIX

THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT OF POLITICAL BROADCASTING

That there is a perpetual battle between the worlds of politics and broadcasting is frequently heard and read. A key proposition is that broadcasters are subordinate to the political institutions in society and that therefore programme content made available by the broadcasting institutions reflects the nature of the pressure flowing from one to the other. It is clearly the case that a discussion of the internal consequences of external institutions must be an integral part of the discussion of the nature of the production of political television.

Two points need to be made however: one relating to method, the other to analysis. In terms of method there is always the danger of failing to distinguish between a pressure applied and a response made, an internal procedure and the exercise and operation of power. There is also the difficulty of taking as given 'facts' which are at best dubious. For example, a popular version of the BBC in the Suez crisis is that the BBC successfully warded off immense pressure from the government which, at one point, was planning to take over the Corporation. The story was aired in Harman Grisewood's autobiographical One Thing at a Time (1968) and was repeated wholesale by Smith (1973, 142) and in Hood's review of the book in The Listener (1968). The picture is not, however, quite so clear as these accounts would imply and, in an interesting article, F.R. MacKenzies (1969) has a rather thorough critique of this prevailing orthodoxy, and even goes so far as to imply that the problem with the BBC has always been that of too much immunity from scrutiny rather than

1 Because of the breadth of the issues under discussion here, it is necessary to employ the more inclusive view of broadcasting rather than the specific view of television.
too much pressure. The point here is simply that, as in many areas of
human activity, existing 'truths' are often ill-founded in fact.

**Analytically**, it is important to consider the view that while
political institutions may hold centre stage in any discussion, account
must be taken of the interlocking of production within organisations
that themselves are but constituents of industrial and commercial corp-
orations.

The whole question of this interaction between an external environ-
ment of political and commercial institutions and the internal programme-
making processes needs detailed examination, not in terms of statements
of assumed causal connections between external interest and internal
process, rather in terms of detailed study of particular instances of
those interests and processes actually interacting. In short, the
elucidation of the mechanics of these implied relationships. It would be
naive to assume that one could begin such a discussion without some kind
of latent common sense view of the significance of that external context.

There have been a number of major rows in the history of political broad-
casting, for example, and one might point to 'Suez' and the programme *The
Question of Ulster*¹ as two prominent examples. It would not be unreason-
able to assume some kind of connection between the 'row' and a response
from programme makers or their organisational superiors, though on the
superficial reading which is available it is in fact difficult to come to
any significant conclusions about these.

Having defined the external context of political television, and
indeed, one could include radio in this as well, as consisting of two
main components, the political and the commercial, it is perhaps incumbent
on me to define a little more precisely what I envisage. In particular,
it is necessary to explain the centrality of 'the State' which I see as

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¹ See Lamb (1974) for an 'official' and in fact, within its own terms,
fairly convincing defence of the BBC's record over these incidents.
embodying the institutions within which the significant political environment is found.

The State

The notion of a central and dominant political structure within society is a familiar feature of many discussions of the political process and is usually couched in terms of 'the State'. It is not so familiar to find that term defined so that one knows just what the writer has in mind. Indeed the terminology is so familiar that one is almost tempted to assume an understanding, and yet the details of the definition are important in the context of the discussion of political television.

I would acknowledge Weber's proposition that one needs to distinguish between the State, as one form of political association within society, from the innumerable other political associations by attention not to ends but to the means available to it to achieve those ends, and that the specific characteristics of those means is that they consist of the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within any given territory. This seems to me ultimately to be one of the more useful formulations, but it does still leave the need to root that monopoly within its institutional form: within what or whom does such power reside? From a fairly elaborate definition of the institutions of the State as "the government, the administration, the military and the police, the judicial branch, sub-central government and parliamentary assemblies" (Miliband, 1973, 50), one can extract what are the central political institutions for broadcasting: namely, the structure of government (with the governing party and the administrative agencies), the parliamentary structure, the legal structure. Resting on the assumption that these three structures form part of the wider network, it does seem clear that, on available evidence, they form the main points of connection between broadcasting in
general, political broadcasting in particular, and the State.

The Commercial Context

One has to make the rather obvious point that much of political television is produced within organisations that are themselves only constituents of larger industrial enterprises, the central function of which is the pursuit of profit (Murdock and Golding, 1974). The logical proposition here is that the micro goal of political communication is subsumed within the wider goal of the pursuit of profit.

These political associations within the State and the spirit of commercialism provided by a location within industrial corporations provide the context of political television. To illustrate the impact of this context on programme-making, four case studies are presented which confront empirically the main dimensions of the framework outlined above: the governmental structure, the parliamentary structure (notably in the form of a Leader of the main Opposition party in Parliament), the legal structure and the commercial environment.

The case studies are dealt with chronologically and a general conclusion is drawn at the end of the chapter bringing together the main themes and observations. The choice of case studies was, of course, not solely based on an assessment of the theoretical questions raised by consideration of the role of 'environment' in broadcasting today. The choice was also based on the intrinsic interest of the case studies and their availability for study. Nevertheless, they do allow consideration of the very important question of the extent to which the making of programmes is influenced by outside processes and interests.

The first case study is a familiar one and, while it does not involve television, its key importance in the history of political broadcasting
and the conceptual clarity it lends to any discussion renders it too important not to be discussed. This is the situation of the BBC and its news programmes in the General Strike of May 1926, and the questions that raises about the nature of impartiality within political broadcasting.
"(Reith) put his native guile to good use at the time of the General Strike of 1926, when he had to walk as delicately as Agag between asserting the independence of the BBC too strongly (and perhaps losing it for ever) and surrendering it on the spot. The compromises which he then accepted made it possible for his successors to be much more firm and uncompromising when they faced the anger of governments about the BBC's treatment of such crises as Suez 16 years ago and Northern Ireland today." (Greene, 1972)

"In times of national crisis the Government, as it did during the Strike, rightly takes over the conduct of broadcasting." (Morning Post, 26 May 1926)

The historical treatment of the concept of 'impartiality' - its initial formulation and subsequent utilisation - provides an insight into the precise meaning the social environment can have for the process of production. At no time was this more apparent than in the period of the General Strike in May 1926. At that time the fledgling British Broadcasting Company and its dominant and irascible General Manager, John Reith, made it clear to parliamentarians that their interpretation of 'impartiality' in 'controversial' broadcasting would not offend the established political orders.

Times of severe political crisis - the General Strike, Suez, Northern Ireland after 1969 - have created considerable problems for broadcasting in defining its position vis-a-vis the crisis, and have thrown into sharp relief the nature of the relationship with the State (Smith, 1972; Hill, 1974). The previous chapter indicated the continued importance, and difficulties of interpretation, of impartiality in the production activities of programme makers. As will become apparent from the present

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1 The Morning Post facilities were those used by Churchill to publish the British Gazette.

2 'The State' is here used in the generic sense of an amalgam of the governmental, administrative, judicial and policing institutions of British society.
discussion, the precise nature and elements of the concept of 'impartial broadcasting' were argued over and established in the very earliest days of broadcasting, but the importance for this discussion was the way in which the precise meaning of impartiality was clarified by the looming presence of Baldwin's government during the days of the Strike - most notably in the shape of Churchill.

When the British Broadcasting Company was formed in 1922, one of the main concerns was the possible danger of 'controversial broadcasting', though there is actually no specific reference to 'controversy' or to 'controversial broadcasting' in the original licence of January 1923. There is, in fact, a good deal of obscurity about the veto on controversial broadcasts and on the attitudes of different governments to it during the early years, and yet it was always assumed to exist during the period leading up to the General Strike of 1926. The Director of Telecommunications of the GPO told the Ullswater Committee in 1935 that from 1922 onwards, a general veto had been imposed by the Cabinet on all subjects of political and religious controversy. Despite protestations to the contrary by the Postmaster-General in the period 1923-6, the BBC was wise to act with circumspection even though, as far as can be detected, there were no specific instructions on the matter: "foolishness would be followed by withdrawal of the Licence" (Briggs, 1961: 170). The BBC's attitude was that a "broadcasting service which contained no reference to politics could not claim to be a balanced service, or an informative or educative one" (BP5).

Equally difficult in this period before the Strike was the question

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1 The following account is based mainly on the collection of General Strike Files which the BBC keeps at its Written Archives Centre, Reading, and on a number of secondary sources.

of news broadcasting. The Licence granted to the BBC on 18 January 1923 included a clause which said that the BBC should not broadcast any news or information except that obtained and paid for from the news agencies (Briggs, 1961: 133). It was the major newspaper interests in the shape of the Newspaper Proprietors' Association which was to be the severest baulk on the BBC's developing any kind of news organisation. From the beginning of the negotiations with the Companies which were to eventually form the BBC, the PMC had made it perfectly clear that the Press interest should in no way be alienated (Briggs, 1961) or financially embarrassed by the new organisation. Despite protracted negotiations during the 1923-6 period, and despite one or two minor concessions by the Press interests (see Briggs, 1961: 263), it was possible for Briggs (1961: 267) to sum up the situation by saying that "throughout the whole period when the BBC was a company .... it was subject to such severe restrictions on the broadcasting of news and outside events that the ordinary listener had only the remotest idea of what the shape of future broadcasting would be".

The subject of controversial broadcasting was first brought to a head in April 1923 when a question was raised in the House concerning a broadcast by the Editor of Building News in which he had asked that a threatened building strike be called off, appealing to the parties involved to accept arbitration. In reply to the concerned questions of various Labour MP's, the PMC, Sir William Joynson-Hicks, stated: "I think it is undesirable that the broadcasting services should be used for the dissemination of speeches on controversial matters, and I have had the attention of the BBC called to the incident" (Quoted in BP5) - something which Reith interpreted as a direct order. 1923 saw several attempts by the BBC to have controversial programmes broadcast; for example, a request was made for the BBC to be allowed to broadcast the King's speech at the opening of Parliament and for the leaders of the three main parties to broadcast during the forthcoming election. Both requests were
refused by the FMG.

The restrictions imposed on broadcasting in the years up to the General Strike were severe and wide ranging, news for example effectively being limited to a 7pm bulletin (when all the papers were deemed to have been sold) prepared by the news agencies. The restrictions reflected both the economic anxieties of the newspaper publishers and the political anxieties of the Government. As Briggs (1961: 267) puts it: "the Derby and political speeches alike were taboo". The BBC was pressed on both sides by the newspaper owners and the politicians, and it is in this context of a badly underdeveloped news service that the BBC found itself, in the May of 1926, as the major national source of news.

Prior to that, however, there were a number of events which were to highlight the position of the BBC, a sense of growing confidence in some circles that the BBC could to an extent be trusted politically even though it still could not be allowed to infringe the economic interests of the newspaper and news agency owners. In 1925 a Committee of Inquiry had been set up by the government under the chairmanship of Sir Frederick Sykes to examine all the issues of finance, organisation and control which remained unresolved. It reported on the question of controversial broadcasting and declared that the BBC should be allowed to broadcast on controversial affairs, particularly since there was really no subject on which controversy would not arise at some point.\(^\text{1}\) Following the Committee Report, a Broadcasting Board was established to "advise the Postmaster-General on matters connected with broadcasting" (Briggs, 1961: 247), and at the meeting of May 14, 1924 the question of the broadcasting of speeches on controversial matters was raised. Reith suggested that the exclusion of such matters tended to reduce the interest and value of broadcasting (EP5). He proposed that the BBC should be allowed to

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1 Gund 1951 (1923), Broadcasting Committee Report (The Sykes Committee Report).
broadcast speeches by members of each of the three main parties during important debates in the House or at the time of elections. The choice of the speakers was to be entirely a matter for the parties. Other members of the Board argued that this would create difficulties in that there would be too many requests to broadcast and that it would be difficult to know what should and should not be broadcast, impartiality would be difficult to sustain and the great danger would be the misuse of broadcasting by the party in power. In June 1924, the Board reported to the PMS, Vernon Hartshorn, that while the restrictions on political speeches should be retained, in other areas previously thought of as 'controversial' a more liberal attitude should be adopted (BP5).

The initial breach had been made then in the restrictions on content, but at the same time, the basic elements of the whole discussion about political broadcasting were also being developed. What I want to suggest is that the essence of the restrictive concern was rooted in the fact that no-one quite understood how things would work out in practice; they were politically unsure as to the consequences of granting permission to the BBC for 'controversial broadcasting', though among most MP's there was a remarkable lack of concern with the new medium (Briggs, 1961: 350-1).

In 1924, Reith entered the fray once more by seeking permission to broadcast a debate between the party leaders. Permission was not forthcoming, although Ramsay MacDonald, Baldwin and Asquith did in fact broadcast during the election of October 1924. 1925 saw the government as intransigent as ever, employing the excuse that as the Crawford Committee was to consider the whole issue, the making of a premature decision would be wrong. The BBC's memorandum to the Committee declared in passionate terms¹ that the restrictions on talks and political broadcasts be reduced. The memorandum argued that the BBC should be allowed to broadcast

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¹ For example, it referred to "the chains which now impede or nullify progress" in controversial broadcasting.
"controversial matters" always under the "adequate safeguards for impartiality" and added that "naturally there are certain subjects which the broadcasting authority would not desire to handle at all, but it is not difficult to draw the line".

Apart from the central argument of Reith that the BBC should be transformed from a commercially-based enterprise to a publicly-owned body (Briggs, 1961: 331-2), he was pressing for an expanded news service and greater freedom to cover controversial matters, and it was on these matters that the bulk of the opposition to the BBC rested. It came from the newspaper interests and from MP's (Briggs, 1961). When the Crawford Committee reported on 5 March 1926, its major recommendation was that the BBC become a public corporation, but it also recommended that there be a "moderate amount of controversial matter". The attitude in Parliament to 'controversial broadcasting' was that "each 'side' complained of the advantage given to the other, and both parties had to be reassured by the PGC (with only a few members expressing uneasiness) that all kinds of political broadcasting were being prohibited" (Briggs, 1961: 352). On the 14 July 1926, the Postmaster-General announced the main recommendations of Crawford were being accepted by the government. He was later to add on the 15 November 1926, in response to the expressed anxieties of many MP's, that "he had instructed the Corporation that, when it began its operations, it was not to broadcast its own opinions on matters of public policy nor was it to broadcast on matters of political, industrial or religious controversy" (Briggs, 1961: 359). To soothe the disappointed Reith the restrictions on news programming were removed. In the debate of 15 November on the BBC's new Charter, Lord Wolmer, the Assistant Postmaster-General declared: "I want to make this Service not a Department of State, and still less a creature of the Executive, but as far as is consistent

1 Cmd 2599 (1925), Report of the Broadcasting Committee, 14-15, para (o).
2 The statement to this effect was made in the Commons on 22 March 1926.
with ministerial responsibility, I wish to create an independent body of trustees operating the Service in the interests of the public as a whole" (quoted in Briggs, 1961: 360). That, however, was said in November 1926, nine months after the publication of the Crawford Report. In the meantime the BBC had been through the events of May. It is perhaps important to note that the inhibitions imposed on the broadcasting of political material seem to have derived not from a concept of the possible threat this would pose to State power but rather because of the touchy sensibilities of politicians concerning party advantage. It would be made clear, however, during the period 3-12 May that the central question in situations of that order would be the relationship of the BBC to the State and therefore to the political and moral order which that structure was deemed to represent. The BBC entered these events with a severely limited scope in what it could do, no experience of the news process and no proper news organisation. Nevertheless, Reith saw the Strike as a "stupendous opportunity to show what broadcasting could do in an emergency" (Reith, 1963).

Developments were not only afoot in broadcasting; drastic developments were taking place in the economics of mining which were to have almost as significant an effect on broadcasting as they were on the mining industry. From 1924 Britain had been governed by Baldwin's Conservative government. In the face of mounting economic difficulty the government had revalued the pound sterling. The coal industry had been particularly hard hit by this since the increase in the value of sterling increased the price of exports, unless the producer was willing to deliberately cut the price of his goods. Since the cost of labour was such a large part of the production of coal, the only way the owners saw of cutting prices was by reducing the wage bill and increasing the number of hours spent earning the smaller wage (Symon, 1957; Lloyd, 1970). On 31 July 1925 a Commission had been established under the chairmanship of Sir Herbert Samuel which reported on 11 March 1926. The Report
satisfied neither the miners nor the miners. In April 1926 negotiations within the industry broke down completely and led to renewed calls for the General Council of the TUC to organise for a general strike. During that month and into May, the government and the TUC were locked in negotiations over the dispute but when, on May 1, the government subsidy which had effectively underpinned the miners' wages ended, the Strike effectively began. The actual spark or signal that the General Strike was on was provided by the printers of the Daily Mail who, on the evening of 2-3 May, refused to print an anti-Strike editorial. On hearing the news in the early hours of May 3, Reith sent a message to the Prime Minister asking for a personal message to the people; "it came quickly: 'Keep steady; remember that peace on earth comes to men of goodwill'" (Reith, 1963).

Though the collapse of the newspapers was by no means as total as is sometimes imagined, particularly in the provinces where many papers operated almost as normal (Symons, 1957), the BBC became overnight the single most important source of national news. On May 3, Reith arranged with the Home Office that BBC property would be protected and got authorisation from Davidson for bulletins to be broadcast at any time; he also arranged an agreement by the news agencies that for the duration of the emergency copyright could be suspended. Reith also arranged for

1 J.C.C. Davidson, Financial Secretary to the Admiralty, ap pointed Deputy Chief Commissioner, who not only liaised with Reith to oversee the BBC's output but also had overall editorial control of the British Gazette - Churchill's propaganda sheet. He could and did overrule Churchill (James, 1969; Pelling, 1974).

2 They were in fact broadcast at 10am, 1pm, 4pm, 7pm and 9.30pm. It is of course difficult to capture the essence of what the programmes were like, but a report in The Times of 19 May 1926 gives some indication: "The bulletin began with special messages, followed by comments on the state of things, made by the BBC and official communications from government departments, after which a summary of the general situation of the country was broadcast, beginning with news from the Home Office and Civil Commissioners, then that received from agencies and winding up with information received by their own means. The second part of the bulletin consisted of a precis of the daily measures taken by Parliament, and news from home and abroad". 
all official news to come from the Headquarters of the Chief Civil Commissioner and from the ten government centres around the country.

Reith states: "I had the Chief Civil Commissioner and the Home Secretary and Davidson agree that the BBC should not be commandeered, meaning that it or I should be trusted to do what was right" (Reith, 1963). Reith’s self assurance that he could do what was right was aided by his overall view of the pros and cons of the Strike. Symons (1957) states: "Four years earlier he had written to Clynes, feeling that in the Labour Party there was most chance of finding the essence of his own beliefs about a practical application of Christian principle to national and international affairs. But although, like many other liberals, he might have supported the miners against the coal owners, he was certainly not prepared to support the strikers against the government". Reith’s position was in tune with that of Baldwin - the strike was a threat to constitutional government.

A three-shift system of BBC personnel was organised so that the newsroom, receiving most of its information from Reuters and from Davidson’s office at the Admiralty, was manned round the clock. The real question facing the BBC was not, however, whether it could function adequately during the strike but rather on whose side it would function.

The position adopted was that they were 'impartial' and 'objective'. For example, in the first news bulletin on May 4, having pointed to the difficulties which people would experience in turning from newspapers to the limited radio bulletin, the bulletin declared:

"The BBC fully realise the gravity of its responsibility to all sections of the public and will do its best to discharge it in the most impartial spirit that circumstances permit. In the last issue of the newspapers, allusion is principally made to the possibility of wholesale oscillations. As to that we express no opinion, but we would ask the public to take as serious a view as

1 Deliberate technical interference in radio reception.
we do ourselves of the necessity of plain objective news being audible to everybody .... We shall do our best to maintain our tradition of fairness, and we ask for fair play in return".

The question of the actual status and role of the BBC was, however, posed in the sharpest possible form and illuminates the details of the relationship with the State. Constitutionally the BBC's position was quite clear. Not only could the Minister order the BBC to broadcast particular messages, he could, if he so desired, take over the running of the organisation. There was a continuous debate within the Cabinet as to whether they should in fact commandeer the BBC for the duration of the Strike, Churchill, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, being the main advocate of such a move, Baldwin arguing that this would not be necessary. Reith first heard of Churchill's desire to take over the company on May 5, and on May 6 he sought a clarification from Baldwin who agreed to "leave the BBC with maximum autonomy and independence" (Reith, 1963). He meant well leave the affairs of the BBC in the capable hands of Reith since the clarity with which Reith and his senior personnel saw their position vis-a-vis the government is vividly portrayed in the internal documents of the period. A memo dated May 6 was entitled 'Suggestions for the Policy of the Broadcasting Service during the Emergency'. It states that the BBC has a "duty" to broadcast anything that the Civil Commissioners

1 Source: Transcripts of radio bulletins in BBC archives. In this situation the BBC which had previously been at the mercy of the newspapers was now the benevolent bestower of copy. On May 2, the BBC received a typical request from Northumberland and Berwickshire Newspapers Ltd, which asked "In view of the pending strike of the Printing Trade and the non-publication of newspapers, will you please inform us per return by wire if we have permission to publicly broadcast all items of news broadcast by the BBC stations. We understand that it is with a view to suppressing propaganda as news that the TUC has taken this step and no doubt it will prove of great use to the country if such permission is granted". Permission was granted.

2 News Arrangements File, General Strike, BBC Archives. Both Briggs (1961: 362) and Boyle (1972: 193) attribute this memo to Reith. The actual memo is in fact signed by Gainford, Chairman of the BBC.
or the government require, that they should "maintain an objective news service" and that "we should make a particular point of emphasising statements calculated to diminish the spirit of violence and hostility".

The memorandum made three main points: that consultations should be the basis for the relationship between the government and the BBC; that if the BBC were overtly partisan then the strikers could cripple the service; and that the BBC had a 'positive' conciliatory role to play (Briggs, 1961: 362-3). It is ridiculous to suggest that the BBC had no opinions in the Strike, apart from the obvious point that the very notion of conciliation is itself an opinion. The May 6 memo declared that they "try to convey to the minds of the people generally that the prolongation of the general stoppage is the one sure process calculated to reduce wages and the standards of living which it is the avowed endeavour of the Trade Unions to maintain and improve; and to try to make it clear that the sooner the General Strike is satisfactorily terminated the better for wage earners in all parts of the country". The memo concluded with the famous argument that

"As the government are sure that they are right both on the facts of the dispute and on the constitutional issues, any steps which we may take to communicate the truth dispassionately should be to the advantage of the Government."

Similar sentiments were echoed in a 'Note for Mr. Davidson: the BBC and the Emergency'¹. In this Reith argues that the value and virtue of the BBC lay in its being seen to be 'independent' from the government and that "if the government be strong and their cause right they need not adopt such measures". It continued:

"Assuming the BBC is for the people, and that the Government is for the people, it follows that the BBC must be for the Government in this crisis too."

The rest of the memo was of the same order as the May 6 memo, and it was

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¹ Source: the BBC and the General Strike: File 811 - BBC Archives. Briggs dates this May 6 whereas it is in fact dated May 8.
clearly the case that the overall policy, albeit in a sophisticated and oblique manner, was one with Baldwin's, though its general tone may have been slightly more conciliatory than the Prime Minister's. The position was made even clearer in the 'Managing Director's Report to the Board of Directors' dated May 18. In this, Reith declared:

"Under the Emergency Regulations Act the Government could have commandeered the BBC, but definite action of this kind was actually not necessary since a clause in our Licence made it obligatory on us to broadcast official announcements at any time. They could therefore use us to a considerable extent without definitely commandeering."

He continues:

"There could be no question about our supporting the Government generally, particularly since the General Strike had been declared illegal.... We could not therefore permit anything which was contrary to the spirit of that judgment, which might have prolonged or sought to justify the strike, but we were able to give authentic impartial news of the situation throughout. Apart from the clause in our Licence the broadcasting of official communiques would have been demanded irrespective of the political complexion of the Government." (BBC end General Strike, Archives, File 811)

This was similar in content and tone to a memo Reith sent to senior members of his staff on 15 May 1926. Reith's fervent acceptance of the 'illegality' ruling was rather hasty since it was subsequently shown that the precise validity of the ruling was in some doubt. At this stage, Reith felt that the BBC's position was one of being "neither commandeered nor free" but was adamant that the BBC could do nothing which would support the Strike (Reith, 1963).

By May 6 the connection between the BBC and the government had become a physical one in the sense that Reith and other staff, at Davidson's

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1 In the House of Commons on May 6, Sir John Simon, a Liberal lawyer declared that the General Strike was illegal because the Trade Disputes Act of 1906 did not cover it and that therefore the leaders of the Strike were liable for damages "to the utmost farthing" of their possessions. On May 11 a High Court judge, Mr. Justice Astbury, confirmed this opinion on the grounds that no trade dispute had been shown to exist in any of the unions involved except the Miners' Union (Hyde, 1973). This view was subsequently challenged - see footnote 2 in Briggs (1961: 366) and also Symons (1957).
request, moved into the Admiralty building on May 4. Gladstone Murray, Deputy Managing Director of the BBC, shared an office with Captain Gordon Munro, one of the Assistants to Davidson, where together they drafted news bulletins (James, 1969: 246).

What one can see in these internal documents is Reith-as-the-BBC defining quite clearly what he understands to be the bounds of legitimate political activity within which the impartiality of the BBC must fit. Given competing definitions of the situation offered by the Strikers and the State, the Reithian logic was to acknowledge the latter. The rationale behind that logic derived partly from the perilous position of the BBC and partly from a genuine attachment by Reith and his senior personnel to the Government's course.

There was a quite clear institutional imperative for the actions taken by Reith, which effectively meant that the ability of the Company to fulfill its function was only as great as Davidson (for the Government) was willing to allow. This resulted in the remarkable situation where the leader of the Official Opposition in Parliament and the Archbishop of Canterbury were refused permission to broadcast during the Strike.

On the morning of May 5, Reith had met a delegation of the Parliamentary Labour Party and on May 7 was approached by the Labour MP William Graham, who had served on the Crawford Committee, with a request that a Labour member be allowed to broadcast (Briggs, 1961: 376). The Labour Party became more adamant when on May 9 Viscount Grey broadcast on behalf of the Asquithian Liberals and "included some bitter strictures on the action of the trade unions (ibid.: 376). Ramsay MacDonalld, the Labour leader, approached Reith personally on May 10 and even sent a copy of the transcript of his proposed text. Reith's inclination was to allow the broadcast but Davidson and Baldwin refused the request, ostensibly on the grounds that it would set Churchill off again. Reith's diary indicates that he was rather disturbed at this, particularly since the BBC was "to a certain extent controlled" and following government policy
and decisions, while Reith had the unsavoury task of implementing the policy: "I do not think that they treat me altogether fairly".

On May 7 Reith received the text of a proposed broadcast by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The gist of the speech was conciliatory, proposing that the strike be cancelled, the government subsidy be renewed for a period and the mine-owners withdraw their suggested wage scales.

In other words, all the points of contention should be removed so that negotiations could then take place. Gainford, the BBC’s Chairman, replied to the Archbishop that various changes might be made but added that the decision was ultimately Reith’s. This was not true: Reith showed the text of the speech to Davidson who told him that it could not be broadcast, again arguing that this would set Churchill off on his attempts to commandeer the BBC. Reith informed the Archbishop of the decision and told him that they could broadcast nothing that would embarrass the government. On May 8 Reith received a letter from the Archbishop expressing surprise at the decision. On the letter Reith has pencilled: "I made it quite clear that (the broadcast) was dependent on what the message was" and that whatever the bishops and clergy wished to say, "it must not embarrass the government. The greater the authority the more the embarrassment" (Archbishop of Canterbury File). In his letter of May 8 to the Archbishop, part of which is quoted in Briggs (1961: 379), Reith makes the point that he felt justified in his decision not to permit the broadcast because "it was a great relief to me to find from you that he (Baldwin) had said that he would prefer the message not to be broadcast" on the basis of a respect for Baldwin’s judgment "not qua Prime Minister but qua himself" (A of C File).

Reith was later to write that both men should have been allowed to broadcast – "neither of them would have done the slightest harm to the

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1  Reith’s diary (May 10), quoted in Briggs (1961: 376)
position of the government". His rationale then for arguing that they should have been allowed to speak was on the grounds that their speeches would have made no difference to the situation. Thus his apparent liberal policy on this question rested on pragmatic considerations rather than on principle. He added: "...I was justified in not letting them speak in terms of what would have happened, or anyhow was likely to have happened, if I had. The BBC could not say, nor permit to be said, anything that might have helped to continue the General Strike, neither could it operate as a strike breaker. It was on the side of the Government, and should have been, and should be, to the extent of supporting the cause of law and order, and helping in the maintenance of essential services" (Reith, 1963).

It seems likely that the actual reason for the refusal of the request by the Archbishop was on the grounds that he was arguing that a compromise was necessary between the two sides, whereas Baldwin's policy, despite its latter more conciliatory tones, demanded nothing less than the total surrender by the TUC: "The issue is really quite simple", (Baldwin) remarked to Davidson. ...'This is an attempt to take over the function of the Government by a body that has not been elected. If they succeed it will be the end of parliamentary democracy which we have taken centuries to build. There can be no negotiations. It can only end in a complete surrender" (Quoted in Hyde, 1973: 269).

Briggs (1961: 379) describes this as the "low water mark" of the BBC because it was so clearly existing by "sufferance". It might be more correct to view it as exemplary, the starkest evidence of the general situation of the BBC vis-a-vis the government. Basic decisions on content were in effect being made by the Deputy Chief Civil Commissioner, Davidson, rather than by Reith. In later explaining his decisions, Davidson was to write that

"The publication of the Archbishop's statement was not in line either with the general view of the public or the policy of
the Government .... When the Archbishop suggested that negotiations should be started, I think he failed to realise that the contest was fundamentally a Constitutional struggle ...." (James, 1969: 249)

The commitment of the BBC to the government side was not just a function of the preservation of the 'organisation' - there was another dimension altogether. There was in effect a distinct ideological imperative to support the government - a genuinely held belief by Keith that the General Strike could under no circumstances be justified. Keith was a neighbour of Davidson's not only in their residences but also in their thinking about the Strike and the political crisis that it induced.

Davidson wrote in a memorandum after the events:

"... It has got to be made absolutely clear, in everything which is written about Baldwin and the General Strike, that his vision and his judgement were clear and decisive, and that he didn't waffle. The idea was always put about that he was under pressure. But there was no question of pressure; he saw the thing as clear as crystal. The decision he took was that there should be no parley ... the Constitution would not be safe until we had won the victory, and the victory depended on the surrender of the TUC. There were many people ... running about the streets like dogs, trying to do something about it, but nothing deflected the simple man - he was simple in this, having come to a decision on principle; he just said: 'No. I will not accept anything but the surrender of the TUC and the calling off of the strike.'" (in James, 1969: 232)

In the memo of May 15, quoted in Briggs (1961: 365), Keith states:

"... since the BBC was a national institution, and since the Government in this crisis was acting for the people, apart from any Emergency Powers or clause in our Licence, the BBC was for the government in the crisis too; and that we had to assist in maintaining the essential services of the country, the preservation of law and order, and of the life and liberty of the individual and the community.

... Had we been commandeered we could have done nothing in the nature of impartial news, nor could we have in any way helped inspire appreciation of the fact that a prolongation of the stoppage was a sure means of reducing the standard of living, which it was the avowed intention of the Trade Unions

1 Of their physical proximity during the Strike period, Keith stated: "We were often on the telephone, or meeting in his house or mine - near the Abbey and within a few yards of each other or in his office or mine, during the next ten days and nights" (Keith, 1963).
to improve. Nor could we have initiated or emphasised statements likely to counteract a spirit of violence and hostility. We felt we might contribute, perhaps decisively, to the attitude of understanding without which good will could not be restored."

What Reith was doing was defining the BBC as an "organisation within the Constitution", and thereby effectively defining impartiality - for specific institutional and ideological reasons - in such a way as to make it synonymous not with a particular Party line but with a particular political and moral order within which that line rested and which for the duration of the Strike was deemed to coexist with the Baldwin government.

He was clear as to the overall political implications of the situation:

"... if there had been broadcasting at the time of the French Revolution, there would have been no French Revolution; the Revolution came from Marseilles to Paris as a rumour. The function of the BBC was fully as much to kill falsehood as to announce truth; and the former can derive automatically from the latter" (Reith, 1963). The observation of the events of May 1926 by Reith and the BBC involved a distinction between the national interest as represented by the Government, and the 'threatening forces' of the strikers as represented by the TUC. Some would observe that that situation is not dissimilar from the situation today in which the general inflection of, for example, industrial coverage, is couched in an amorphous notion of the 'national interest' which operates as an absolute value in relation to which all else is subordinate.

At one level the subservience to the wishes and needs of one side was far from total. Messages from both sides were broadcast; reference was made to the British Worker as well as to the British Gazette; a conscious effort was made to distinguish between agency copy and government copy, and many of the items broadcast were objective in the sense that they were accurate reports of verifiable events. As Hood (1972: 417) points out though, "... accuracy is not in itself proof

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1 A phrase he was to use on a number of occasions: see Briggs (1961: 366: footnote 3).
of objectivity or neutrality”, and what was left out was often more important than what was included. There was the refusal to allow certain broadcasts, most notably the MacDonald and Canterbury ones, the failure to rectify factual errors, the broadcasting of requests for volunteers (ie. strike breakers) (Symons, 1957), and the general line of the news programmes as characterised, for instance, in a quite unique form of content, the Editorials, which were to lead to a description of the BBC as "2 LO-ocious". On April 26, Micholls, the Organiser of Programmes, wrote a memo to Reith and the Director of Educational broadcasting suggesting that "if the strike comes off we should make arrangements for some public person to give a short message each night, just three or four minutes, after the second general news, on the usual lines of appealing to people to keep their heads and so on, quite non-political". On May 4, the news announcer was to state: "Many of you will be missing the editorial chat in your favourite newspapers, and I hope you will not think we are presuming if we venture to supply in its place a few words of advice to the ordinary good citizen. You will not expect from us any comments on the merits of the present controversy". During the Strike they were bland and non-controversial but, after May 12, they were to be continued in a far more politicised form. The editorial broadcasts during the days of the Strike were "designed to have a soothing effect on the nation’s nerves and to reassure them" (Archives), and they dealt with such subjects as transport arrangements, how to keep calm, how to behave, and so on. They were largely written by Major Atkinson in his capacity as Assistant Director of Publicity and Head of the Emergency News Service.

1 For example, it was broadcast that enginemen and firemen were returning to work at Oxford, that the strike was breaking down at Salisbury and that foodships were being discharged at Grimsby. Even though these reports were false and were corrected by the unions, and even though the BBC was informed of these corrections, they were not broadcast (Briggs, 1961: 373).

2 News Arrangement File, General Strike, BBC Archives.
Whether the view that the effects of the BBC's broadcasts during the strike was actually to dispell rumours, spread intelligence and good cheer, is correct is necessarily in some doubt. What is beyond doubt is that this was the intended role of the BBC, the consequence of its relationship with the government. This was highlighted by the use of the editorials during the period immediately following the end of the Strike when the miners were still out. There was detailed cooperation between the government and the BBC to get the miners back to work. The interests served in this relationship worked both ways. While it was clearly necessary from the government's point of view to get the miners back by whatever means was available, it was also in the overall institutional interests of the BBC to have this new form of programme content developed. This was noted in a memo on May 19 from Murray to Atkinson in which Murray stated that the idea of having an identifiable editorial form was "to develop the new machinery gradually" which would help to sustain the influences which the BBC had developed during the Strike. Reith certainly saw the editorials as a means of furthering the BBC's interests, and in a letter on May 23 to one of the Governors, Binyon, he said that Press criticism of the editorials was "jealousy of the position we had to occupy during the Strike" and that the Press "object to anything which would seem to indicate an increasing importance on the part of Broadcasting" (News Arrangements File). On May 25, the FMG complained about the editorials whose title was therefore changed, first to Editorial Reviews and then to Just Reviews. The objections remained however and the FMG demanded to see the scripts before they were broadcast. As these then had a habit of piling up in his wastepaper basket the BBC took the hint and abandoned the whole idea of editorials.

Nevertheless, they were used by the government to 'get at' the miners. In a memo to Reith on May 21, Gladstone Murray outlined the details of a meeting he had had with Davidson who had requested that the BBC do an editorial on the miners' dispute. He wrote that Davidson had suggested
that the BBC

"... might do a valuable service in the holiday period by using our editorials to give an accurate and authoritative account of the exact position, explaining for instance that the present position in the mines is neither a strike nor a look-out and also giving some account of the statistics of the actual amount of wages paid in the mining industry, emphasising the very small proportion of miners who are on the lower scale. He thought that we might also go so far as to call attention to the sort of creeping paralysis which the continued mining deadlock had on the whole of the industry in the country."

He added that

"(the) government want to get at the miners over the heads of their leaders. We would only be justified in countenancing this kind of thing if we are convinced that the national interest demanded the short-circuiting of the miners' leaders. "

They (the government and Davidson) feel that we might do some good now by preaching the doctrine of cooperation, even ad nauseam." (News Arrangements File)

In a quite remarkably explicit document written about this meeting with the Deputy Chief Civil Commissioner and the implementation of his suggestions, Murray wrote on May 25:

"I took away from my interview with Mr. Davidson a very strong feeling that while we were to keep clear of controversy over Whitsum, we were nonetheless to establish the status of our editorial reviews and to get people into the habit of listening to them .... I agreed to a series of editorials commencing on Friday and including last night, which may be summarised as follows:

Friday 21 May. Lookout or Strike - A simple definition of the position for general information following the lines of my interview with Mr. Davidson. It should also be noted that Friday's editorial concluded with the following sentence: "The cold fact that we must deal with is the fact that somehow our basic industry has been allowed to come to a standstill and must be restarted".

Then on Saturday our editorial was entitled 'Coal and Country-side'. Herein we stressed the creeping paralysis point which I called attention to in the account of my interview with Mr. Davidson.

..... On Saturday night we linked our editorial with the topical spirit of the Feast of the Church of Whit Sunday. The whole idea in this was to convey the 'bring together' conception and to get people thinking of fundamental issues such as: 'More results for given coal, and more comfort for given wages!'. It should be noted that we keep constantly to the text of the Samuel Report, a point specifically emphasised by Mr. Davidson.

Then we come to the editorial last night, May 24. The underlying idea of this was to stimulate confidence in the miners.
We definitely set out so to construe the recent utterances of the leaders of the miners to give the impression that that they were moving in the direction of settlement ....
In pursuance of the atmosphere of restoring confidence, we camouflaged the interpretation of the miners' leaders utterances by suggesting on purely humanitarian grounds and apart from the immediate issues, a Government declaration of goodwill towards family allowances and both." (emphasis mine) (News Arrangements File)

The General Strike certainly left the BBC as a major news source, and it was during this period that the first significant definitions began to emerge from politicians of the power of the broadcast media. In his diary of May 4, Reith notes: "I went with the Admiralty Deputy Secretary to lunch at the Travellers Club .... the Prime Minister was there and immediately he saw me he left the people he had been talking with and came over. I mention this because it showed that he knew what was what, and who was who, at this time of crisis" (Reith, 1963). As we have seen in some detail Baldwin was not the only one who knew what was what and who was who. Reith further recognised that the crisis was a unique opportunity to make significant and irredeemable excursions into the news monopoly of the Press and into the realm of 'controversial broadcasting' - it was an opportunity he did not let slip by. More than anything through the May events of 1926 clarified the context within which 'impartiality' functions - involving an almost total, if oblique, accommodation to government needs and interests.

When the end of the Strike was announced on May 12, Reith read a message from the King and then the traditional hymn 'Jerusalem' was played. Nothing was more appropriate to the role of the BBC in the Strike than the manner of this announcement. To turn to such established features of an established order was a metaphorical sigh that the crisis had passed and that the political and moral order with which the BBC had identified throughout remained intact.

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1 On May 20 1926, a 'Service of Reconciliation' was held in the BBC studios. The Bishop of Southwark read the text and concluded with the thought that "the success of the Strike would have had quite inescapable results on the life and prosperity of the nation." (Report in The Guardian, 21 May 1926)
Appreciation of the BBC's role was quick to follow. There was much appreciation within government circles for the efforts of the BBC. On May 17, Reith received a letter from the Prime Minister which thanked him for his help during the Emergency and added: "you and all the members of your staff may rest assured that your loyal service has earned the warm appreciation of the government" (Letter in BBC Archives, File 311).

Davidson, the Civil Commissioner, wrote to Gladstone Murray that

"For myself I can only thank you again for your help without which our department could not have stood the strain that was imposed upon it throughout the Strike".

To which Murray replied:

"I feel very strongly that in the national interest it is more than desirable that your contact with our service, both official and unofficial, should become permanent"

(File 311, Archives)

Numerous newspapers expressed their own appreciation of the BBC: "For our news, for the dispelling of false rumour and for the pronouncements of great public men upon the situations we thank the Voice from the Air" (Herts and Essex Observer, 15 May 1926).

There were, one might add, no such appreciations from the TUC side.

The overall conclusion to be drawn from the General Strike as a case study is looked at in the light of the general conclusions to this chapter. There is, however, a very important point to be made about the role of the BBC. The BBC's claim was, and indeed still is, that it was impartial because it only related news and *ipso facto* told the 'truth'. This claim, anyhow, overstated with, for example, the failure to correct errors, the refusal to allow particular personalities to broadcast and the general line of the broadcasts and the editorial. It is also true, however, that telling 'the truth' via the straightforward relating of facts can have an important propaganda role to play. There is no doubt from reading through the various memos and numerous expressions of intent that the BBC's coverage was specifically aimed toward a particular end, which
was the defeat of the Strike. Hugh Greene (1969: 20) once defined propaganda as "an attempt to impose your own way of thinking, your own views of the situation, on the (opponents) .... and then, this having been achieved, lead them to behave in the way you desire". Greene was connected with propaganda against Germany, the Malayan communists and the Arabs. Crucially he adds: "There would not be much doubt either about the means to be used: to tell the truth within the limits of the information at our disposal and to tell it consistently and frankly" (Greene, 1969: 21). Illusions and allusions to concepts of truth and impartiality, far from indivisible concepts, have always figured prominently in British political propaganda. It is clearly wrong, however, to move from the appearance of impartial or balanced coverage to the argument that this somehow 'proves' that the organisation and the programmes it produces are pristine and unpolluted by the views and needs of particular interests within society. Clearly in wartime it would not be denied that the intent of broadcasting, whatever its form, was to serve a specific interest, that is the national interest. Yet in the context not of international peace but intranational strife the purpose and function of broadcasting was also to serve particular interests, the State, and therefore the interests which identified with or were represented by that structure. I think it is clear from the preceding account that the actual dynamics of broadcasting in a crisis throw into sharp relief the actual as opposed to the assumed meaning of 'impartiality'.

The potential for partiality within the broad framework of apparent impartiality was ably summed up by R.H.S. Crossman, one of Britain's foremost propagandists during the War:

"We discovered, after many experiments in Dr. Goebbels' technique, that the truth pays. It is a complete delusion to think of the brilliant propagandist as being a professional liar. The brilliant propagandist is the man who tells the

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1 In its white variety. The 'black' version is altogether more nefarious. On this see Delmar (1962) and Bennett (1966).
truth, or that selection of the truth which is requisite for his purpose, and tells it in such a way that the recipient does not realise that he is receiving any propaganda.

From what I am saying there arises this conclusion — if the art of propaganda is to conceal that you are doing propaganda then the central substance of propaganda is hard, correct information." (Grossman, 1952)
The Retiring of Hugh Greene

"The untimely death of Lord Normanbrook, on 15th June, meant that I had to nominate a new chairman of the BBC. My choice fell upon Lord Hill, a former Conservative Cabinet Minister, who had distinguished himself by the scrupulous fairness with which, as chairman of the Independent Television Authority he had administered the Television Act in respect of comment on Public Affairs. Memoirs later published suggested that certain BBC chiefs, dining with the Conservative Party chairman on the night of the announcement, 26th July, greeted the news with singular lack of enthusiasm. But then all change is painful and they endured to applaud the appointment."

(Harold Wilson, 1971, 423-4)

"I never saw Greene and if he'd ever seen me he wouldn't have recognised me at all, yet he impressed me far more than Charles Curran, who is always personally very civil to me. If I were to bump into him walking across the concourse, he would know who I was, he'd say hello and pause if he wasn't too busy and ask me how I was doing. He'd have watched my last few programmes and he'd offer me a bit of criticism, a bit of advice. But yet he doesn't match up as the great totem-pole figure that Sir Hugh was. Maybe he hasn't got enough charisma yet."

(BBC Producer, 15.7.73)

When Greene was appointed Director General (DG) of the BBC in July 1959 and again when he announced his decision to leave that post in July 1968 there was a quite remarkable level of praise and goodwill extended towards him. It seemed to many that he was the personification of the BBC's independence and that as Sir Robert Lusty was later to say, with his departure a curtain had fallen across the past. Harold Wilson's understanding of the concept of impartiality and that exercised by those under the tutelage of Greene did not, it seemed, correspond. The fact that one had vanquished the other seemed, to Greene's fellow journalists (Greene always describes himself as a journalist) to bode ill for the future of broadcasting.
In a fascinating piece in the *Sunday Pictorial* (26.7.59) about Greene's appointment, Malcolm Muggeridge pays glowing tribute to 'our man in the BBC'. Greene, Muggeridge declares,

"is on any showing a capital choice. He is a man of unusual intelligence and perception....tall, whimsical, adventurous and kindly. His attitude towards the established social order is well this side of idolatry."

He lists a number of actions which he wishes Greene to take, among which are that he get rid of

"in the kindest and most generous way possible......the many mandarins who have lingered on from the monopolistic sound broadcasting time"

for their repressive, irritating and muffling effect on the BBC. Also,

"There's really no need for the Director General to bother himself about the abounding protests which inevitably fall round his head."

Greene, he claims, can be indifferent to commercial and political pressures, needn't pursue a mass audience, needn't accept criticisms about programmes,

"What a chance for Greene! How devoutly I hope that he makes a great success of it."

*The Star* said that Greene

"does suggest the best kind of uncle - the kind who isn't stuffy, prefers chuckles to a frown; wants his nephews and nieces to treat serious things seriously, but doesn't wish to spoil anybody's fun."

The rest of the response to the appointment was of this order, an almost total enthusiasm for his accession to the Director Generalship.

When his retirement was announced, press comment was absorbed in the question 'why?', summed up in the *Guardian* leader of 16th July 1968, which asked 'did he jump or was
he pushed?" Most of the copy made much of the statement made by Greene at the press conference announcing his retirement that

"It is my personal decision. I do not regard myself as being kicked upstairs but rather as walking upstairs with pleasure."

However, it was widely believed that since Hill's appointment in 1967 there had been a good deal of conflict between the two men and the events of July 1968 were the culmination of a long drawn out battle.

The analyses of these events by later writers are dominated by the observation that during the 8½ years in which Greene was DG he had had a tremendous effect on the whole style and content of BBC programming.

Worsley (1970, 247) states that Greene

"Carried the BBC struggling and kicking out of its Auntie image into something much more relevant to the decade."

Black (1972, 210) talks about the 'Death of Auntie' and describes the period 1956-1966 as the golden era of BBC TV:

"It was the decade of the democratisation of the BBC, when it stopped being Auntie and became a man and a brother......That the BBC had been set free to mirror the changing times was the fact that Sir Hugh Greene grasped when he was appointed DG in 1959."

Bridson (1971, 288) in his autobiography declares:

"The BBC had entered the sixties with a new Director General.... and his leadership was soon to be felt throughout the organization .......In some ways he was to prove himself the ablest DG since Sir John Reith.......For the first time, under his leadership, broadcasting seemed to have caught up with the times; on occasion it even managed to pull slightly ahead of them."
Shulman (1973, 102) speaking of the position in 1967 when he feels that pressure began to build up on Greene, states,

"after 7 years as DG, Sir Hugh Greene could feel that he had helped push the BBC right into the centre of the swirling forces that were changing life in Britain, and that by its activities the BBC was not merely reflecting and recording these changes but was helping to agitate them as well."

In a discussion of 'the end of an era', Hood (Spectator 19th July 1968) argues that

"only the enemies of enlightenment, the narrow puritan, the grass roots censors, the petty minded (among them some politicians) will celebrate the end of his period in office."

Bernard Levin (1972) in his review of the whole decade of the sixties states that Hugh Carleton Greene

"sensed much earlier than most figures in positions of comparable responsibility which way the wind of the times was blowing, probably did more than any other individual in the BBC, before or since, to bury Auntie's Presbyterian ethic for ever."

(p. 319-320)

and that under

"the wily and on the whole most courageous leadership of Hugh Carleton Greene (the BBC) had right at the start of the decade struck out for the shores of the future."

(p. 335)

The favourable perception of Greene in the 1960's held by many of his fellow journalists and broadcasters is clear. Others however - most notably pressure groups and a number of politicians - did not see him in quite the same light. In the long run it was to be the crystallizing of the views of these oppositional forces within the person of Harold Wilson that lay behind Greene's retirement. A recent edition of The Viewer and
"If there were any one man who more than any other helped to shape and influence opinion in Britain in the sixties it must surely have been Hugh Greene. His operation was all the more effective because his anti-Establishment sallies were directed from a sure base. The BBC over the years had come to be regarded as a repository of truth and wisdom, so it followed for many folk that when they saw aspects of the Establishment and authority derided on BBC air then the shafts struck firmly home. It may not be just a coincidence that by the end of his nine and a half years in power this country was riven with doubts and anarchy was in the air."

The claims of this piece, for example the relationship between exposure to BBC material and a state of doubt and anarchy in the social fabric are to say the least somewhat far fetched. Nevertheless, that is not the point here, what is interesting is that it is quoted at all. Throughout the 11 years of her work for NVALA Mary Whitehouse has castigated the role played by Greene, and the inclusion of this quote 5 years after Greene ceased to have any kind of editorial connection with the BBC is evidence enough of the pervasive hostility felt towards him. Whitehouse is only the most persistent of his critics. The whole period of his Director Generalship was marked by a persistent carping from political circles. In January 1964 the political establishment awarded Greene a knighthood, but by March 1964 sections of that establishment were making serious attempts to effectively dethrone the new knight. In January 1964 the Chairman of the BBC, Sir Arthur Fforde resigned, and Sir James Duff was appointed Acting Chairman until July of that year. The
search for a new chairman provided Greene's opponents
with an opportunity to devalue his apparently dominating
role within the Corporation. On the 7th March an item
in the Daily Express declared:

"The DG of the BBC, Sir Hugh Greene, is getting
substantially too big for the dainty boots the
Government would prefer to see him wearing.
Sir, Hugh, they are saying at Westminster, is
beginning to behave as if he is the BBC. They
blame him for allowing much of the sex, sin and
sadism which they allege has crept into the
programmes. So now Postmaster General Mr.
Reginald Bevins and his terrier like assistant
Mr. Ray Mawby are looking for someone who can
cut him down to size. The man they are seeking
is a tough tycoon who can take over the chairmanship
of the BBC's Board of Governors next summer
and wrest some of the power levers back from
Sir Hugh.........Applicants for this James Bond
('licenced to kill') appointment should be good
with a paper knife and willing to risk their
professional lives for £4,000 a year and a guaranteed
knighthood."

Other reports spoke of 'curbing Greene's power' and
'Chairman of stature for the BBC sought'. Support for
Greene came from among others, the Express, the Observer,
from D. MacLachlan, a member of the General Advisory
Council, in an article in the Sunday Telegraph, and from
Harold Wilson. Bevins (1965) in his account of his years
in political life does not expressly relate to the
'curb Greene' campaign though he does detail his own
'analysis' of what was wrong during Greene's time. He
declares:

"The Chairman and the Governors are appointed by the
Prime Minister with the consent of the Queen. They
ought to be the governing body. It always seemed
to me that they were governed by the professionals.
In my time and before I am sure that the real power
was wielded by the Director General, Sir Hugh Greene,
and the top professionals. They knew all the answers.
The Director General is of course appointed not by
the Government but by the BBC and for all practical
purposes the other top men and women are recommended and appointed by the Director General. In the result the traditional independence of the BBC is stretched too far because the professionals are not really responsible to anyone but themselves."

(p.117)

The position adopted here by Bevin bears a remarkable resemblance to that adopted by the Labour Government in 1967. Greene himself denies that the 'curb Greene' campaign was in any way significant:

MT "How influential was the 'curb Greene' campaign of Tory Ministers. Was it an important feature of your life and did it have any bearing on what you did?"

HG "No, I learnt all about it. It was run at a low level in the Conservative Government by the then PMG and even more by the Assistant PMG, who talked to newspapers and so on. But it had no support higher up in the government at all. Macmillan was always very easy going in these matters, and I was on very good terms with Butler. So I never really felt threatened by it. Macmillan didn't mind all these satirical programmes and so on in the least. It wasn't in any way really serious. I had my sources of information and know that it was not a high level affair.

The difference between the events of the campaign in 1964 to debunk Greene and the appointment of Hill to achieve that feat lay only in the stature of those involved on the political side. It is interesting to speculate why the connections with the political elite were made in 1967 and not in 1964, and one can only draw the conclusion that the answer lies in the differing personalities of the political leaderships of that time, combined with the perhaps more difficult situation of the British polity and economy, though I must say that from the evidence available at this time the latter arguments are rather forced generalities.
In March 1965 calls for Greene's resignation from two MP's, James Dance and Sir Leslie Thomas followed a sketch on the satire programme *Not So Much A Programme* dealing with the question of Roman Catholic attitudes to birth control, though support for Greene came from a number of Labour MP's including Tom Driberg. In April 1965 the Church of Scotland attacked the BBC's coverage of religion and morals, attacked a speech by Greene in which he said that the BBC should be ahead of public opinion, and called for a Viewers Council. May 1965 saw another attack by James Dance, supported this time by Stratton Mills, and in the same month Whitehouse called yet again for his resignation. 1st June 1965 saw a headline in the *Telegraph*, 'BBC attacked by 'Fed Up' Tory MP's'.

There was then not only an assessment of Greene's role by other professional communicators, but also by a number of politicians and by moral reformists who argued that Greene was having an adverse effect on programme standards and therefore on the whole moral climate of the community. These attacks on Greene made not the slightest bit of difference to his attitudes. Indeed he quite forcefully counterattacked, and in a speech in Rome in February 1965 - this was the speech which received the rebuke from the Church of Scotland - he placed his opponents in the context of a discussion on the 'delicate

1. M. Whitehouse (1972) dedicates the book to James Dance: "This book is dedicated to James Dance, MP - 'Jimmy' - chairman of the National Viewers and Listeners Association (1966-1971) who died while this book was being written in appreciation of his courage in 'standing up to be counted' and as a token of my affection and gratitude."

2. Greene deals with this in Chapter 4 of his book (1969)
balance' between 'freedom and responsibility'. He stated to the assembled clergy,

"We have to resist attempts at censorship. As Professor Hoggart.......has noted recently, these attempts at censorship come not merely from what he describes as the 'old Guardians' (senior clergy, writers of leading articles in newspapers, presidents of national voluntary organizations) who like to think of themselves as upholders of cultural standards, although, in many cases, they lack the qualities of intellect and imagination to justify that claim. They come nowadays also from groups - Hoggart calls them the 'new Populists' - which do not claim to be 'Guardians' but claim to speak for 'ordinary decent people' and to be 'forced to take a stand against' unnecessary dirt, gratuitous sex, excessive violence, and so on. These 'new Populists' will attack whatever does not underwrite a set of prior assumptions, assumptions which are anti-intellectual and unimaginative. Superficially this seems like a 'grass-roots' movement. In practice it can threaten a dangerous form of censorship - censorship which works by causing artists and writers not to take risks, not to undertake those adventures of the spirit which must be at the heart of every truly new creative work."

(Greene, 1969, 100-1)

Greene always remained adamantly hostile to the moral reformists he saw seeking to undermine his position. It is clear that these urgings for Greene's resignation, while they may have caused one or two murmurs among Greene's Board of Governors were never particularly important because they were never linked to significant political groupings. They were not only beyond the mainstream of Greene's thought but were also beyond that of the dominant positions of the main parties. With the emergence of Harold Wilson's second administration in 1966 there began a period in which a gradual hostility to the BBC in general, and Greene in particular, began to crystallize in the Labour leader's mind. ¹ It is the

¹. For a useful discussion of the Labour leader's relations with broadcasters see Shulman (1973a).
intellectual perspectives of Harold Wilson, his response to the BBC's coverage of politics, particularly during the 1966 election, that lie behind the events of July 1967.

Relations between Greene and Wilson during the period 1963 (when Wilson became leader) to 1966 were described by the former as rather friendly and, as I indicated, Wilson defended Greene against the onslaughts of Tory MP's. Williams (1972, 233) states

"There is no doubt that Harold has been extremely angry with the BBC on a number of occasions over the years of the Labour Government and since. Before 1964 his relations were very amicable with all levels within the BBC."

In his memoirs, Hill (1974, 100) refers to a meeting with Wilson in which he gave 'examples of the Corporation's wickedness, many of which went back long before my time'.

In the 1966 election the BBC hired a whole carriage of Wilson's train from Liverpool to London and built a whole studio in the carriage, anticipating a 'victory interview'. Wilson refused to be interviewed by the BBC, despite their lavish preparations and instead granted an interview to ITN. Marcia Williams (1972) describes ITN as the epitome of impartiality and fairness.

"What there was (at ITN) that was missing elsewhere was the implicit protection against untrue bias, and where bias occurred, machinery for appeal." (p.232)

She contrasts this with the iniquities of the BBC coverage of elections:

"...anyone who watched the BBC coverage of the last election campaign with a fair eye can really be in little doubt over the selective editing of films, and the placing of coverage within a programme. The Tory case seemed to be put over clearly and successfully with Edward Heath's own personal coverage of the highest quality. Labour coverage was scrappy and uneven....."

(Williams, 1972, 233)
And the problem as she and Wilson both see it lies in the stupefaction of an oversized bureaucracy, a line of analysis which one finds rather curious. For example she states,

"just as in the Civil Service.....there is always a top tier of special people who appoint the same sort of special people to follow them, while just below there is a second tier of extremely imaginative competent people, who if only they could break through would alter the whole complexion and character of the Corporation."

(p.234)

Apart from the difficulties of knowing just who she means by 'special people' (though one might reasonably assume that Greene is one) it is necessary to point out that if Greene did anything at all he sought to give the 'extremely imaginative' their head, and indeed that he did so, that there was no control over zealous producers, was one of the charges laid against him. It may well be that the abilities of the producers working under him, particularly in the period 1962-4 were the very stuff upon which Greene's reputation and career fed. At the same time one can only draw the conclusion, as will become clear as this argument develops, that the events of July 1967 were specifically aimed at strengthening one section of the top tier within the BBC (i.e. the Governors) at the expense of another section (i.e. the Executive). That this was to be the specific intention, and that Williams realised this is made clear:

"Before we went off for our holiday that year, Harold appointed Lord Hill Chairman of the BBC. This was greeted with some bewilderment, though Harold had gone to great pains to consider all the people who were qualified to take on the job from within the organization itself. If one was going to have a
Conservative, he felt it was best to have the real thing, and a man who had already presided over an organization where impartiality had to be observed because of the Act under which the ITA operates. He felt Lord Hill might even be able to educate the BBC in how to operate a broadcasting system on these terms, rather than in the spirit of the independent empire they had preserved for themselves."

(Williams, 1972, 197-8)

There is a relatively widespread feeling within sections of the Labour Party that the BBC is a bastion of conservative rule - I was told by one very senior Labour Party member that what I should be doing in this research is drawing up a list of all the known Conservatives working in Broadcasting House and then comparing it to all the known Labour people there; he did not expect that I would find a balance. The irony is that a Conservative was chosen to dull the impact of the Corporation’s partiality. Thus, while criticisms of the BBC by politicians has always been a feature of broadcasting life, in the past ten years they have been particularly sharp and ably articulated by, for example, Wedgwood Benn and Richard Crossman, a feature of whose comments has been the particular emphasis placed on the iniquities of the BBC.

There is then a persistent attribution of a relationship between the presence of Hugh Greene in the BBC and the process of changing standards not only in broadcasting but throughout society. Greene himself, in a number of statements on the subject of broadcasting, makes it very clear that he specifically sought to institute change in programme standards. He frequently describes himself as a 'psychological warrior' consciously developing strategies
towards specific ends. In an interview in the *Guardian* with Terry Coleman (22.8.70) he was asked about his policy as Director General towards radio, and was asked about a series of statements he had made on the subject to which he declared: 'You must...remember that I am a psychological warrior. A great deal of what I said was said with a purpose in mind'.

There is no intention here to become involved in an assessment of Greene's career, nor is there a wish to begin to consider the convolutions and crevices of the intellectual framework he applied to broadcasting - that would require a lengthy and difficult work in itself. It is necessary however to make the point that the dominant perception of Greene's supporters and opponents is of his significance as a catalytic presence within broadcasting. It is at this level in the first instance that one can situate the events surrounding his retirement. What one needs to consider is the precise meaning the events of July 1967 have for programme content in political television and whether they tell us much about the nature of 'control' exercised by the State on the broadcasting organization and through that on the making of political broadcasts. One can in fact begin to detect certain influences and processes but the picture that emerges is not of a State machine riding roughshod over the broadcasting structure, rather it is one in which a redefinition of the overall purpose of the BBC was intended to flow from a marginal readjustment of the distribution of power and control at the very highest levels of the Corporation.
A Narrative

On the early morning of 15th June 1967 Lord Normanbrook, Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors since 1964, died. A month later on the evening of 25th July Lord Hill, Chairman of the ITA, was contacted at his home by Philip Philips, television correspondent of the Sun. He wanted to know if it was true that Hill was to become the DG of the BBC. Hill was surprised by this suggestion - as well the head of the BBC's competitor might be - and described it as 'a load of nonsense'. Hill, perplexed by the suggestion, contacted the Postmaster General, Edward Short, only to be informed that he had only heard a rumour 'from a Daily Mirror executive'. Shortly afterwards, however, Short returned the call asking Hill to meet Wilson at the House of Commons at 2.30 p.m. the following day. Hill describes the meeting:

"Punctually at 2.30 p.m. I was called in to find the Prime Minister in a relaxed mood and smoking a big cigar. Accompanied by Edward Short, the Postmaster General, he opened by saying that I had done a good job at Independent Television. The post of Chairman of the BBC was, as I knew, vacant following Lord Normanbrook's death. Would I go to the BBC in the office of the chairman of the governors? The press had got wind of what was in his mind and it would be convenient if I could give my answer forthwith with a view to an announcement at midnight."

(Hill, 1974, 69-70)

Hill then refers to a number of stories which appeared in the press over the next few days,

"suggesting that Harold Wilson had attached some strings to his invitation, that he had asked me to do a hatchet job on the BBC, that the whole thing was an anti-Greene move and so on. In fact nothing of the kind took place. What happened was that I received a straightforward invitation to take on a new job. I told the PM that in some quarters the
reaction to my appointment would be explosive, only to be told by him that over the years we had both been used to that sort of thing and that we would just have to put up with it: the prospect of criticism did not worry him." (Hill, 1974, 70)

Hill accepted the appointment, 'the invitation was irresistible'. This was to cause complete incredulity among many sections of the BBC since they could not understand how anyone could make such a move, could go over to the opposition at only a moment's notice. Hill informed Robert Fraser, the Director General of the ITA immediately upon leaving Wilson, and informed the Governors of the ITA that evening. Wilson and Short must have discussed the appointment, if only in the period immediately before Hill was summoned into the Prime Minister's room. Wilson was certainly aware that the appointment would cause a furore, and certainly, according to a number of statements, let it be known that this was so at an Economist function the evening before.

On the same day, 26th July, Sir Robert Lusty, acting Chairman of the BBC, received two phone calls from the Postmaster General. The first asked if he could call upon him at the Post Office on the afternoon of the following day. Shortly after, the PMG called again,

"this time with a note of urgency. Mr. Short was extremely sorry but an emergency had arisen. It was imperative that he should see me that Wednesday afternoon. Would I kindly be at the Post Office at half-past four?"

He was told by the PMG that their future plans for the BBC had 'leaked' and this was what had necessitated the urgent meeting. Lusty was informed that the name of the new chairman was Charles Hill, that the announcement
would be made that evening at 8.10 p.m. and that he would
take up the post on September 1st. Lusty's response to
this information was perhaps predictable:

"The full horror of the situation numbed my mind.
All I could wonder was how to break the news to
Hugh Greene and the others. It was the end of the
BBC as I knew it and the end of Hugh Greene too.
After 8 years I knew what was thought of Charles
Hill by the BBC....."

(Lusty, 1974)

Lusty returned straight to Broadcasting House and Hugh
Greene's room and in the doom-laden terms which were
beginning to characterise these events told him of the
appointment:

"'I am sorry but I bring you the worst possible
news. Charles Hill is being switched over to us.
He is to be our next Chairman.' I might just as
well have shot the DG."

Greene's immediate response was to phone Short and then
to resign. He did phone but was persuaded from resigning
by his assistant, Oliver Whitley, and by Lusty.

At 11 o'clock on the following day, Thursday 27th
July, the Board of Governors of the BBC met, by now
aware of the appointment from the morning papers. Lusty
describes the meeting:

"A shocked and numbed assembly met me there.
There was no contrary mood. Something akin to
despair prevailed and there was deep sympathy
for Hugh Greene. None that I can recall knew
Lord Hill personally and there was little
animosity towards him. But it was thought odd
that he should have felt able to accept the
translation - and odder still that he could
accomplish it overnight. The resentment and
mystification was towards an apparent act of
political malice.......As a Board we had not
been impressed by Lord Hill's chairmanship of
the ITA."

(Lusty, 1974)
The reaction within the BBC was then a mixture of sadness and anger. The dominant impression was that the end of a golden age had been heralded, that Greene was bound to go, 'that the curtain had fallen on the past'. Hill himself was very clear as to this mood and sought to explain it:

"Greene had seen that during my spell at Brompton Road I had strengthened the role of the Authority at the expense of the Director General and no doubt he feared that I would seek to do the same at Portland Place and as a result lose something of his public standing. Bearing in mind also that the Authority had actually lunched with and listened to Mrs. Whitehouse, he was wary of my approach to controversial programmes. This was part of the background of suspicion and animosity against which I began at the BBC. Not unnaturally I resented the mood of courteous hostility that greeted me and it was some time before my resentment died."

(1974, 141)

In his account of the period, Lusty (1974) describes the Corporation prior to Hill as being in 'good heart' under the direction of the 'brilliantly contentious' Greene. With the latter working in harmony with Normanbrook,

"The sixties had seen public service broadcasting in its finest hour of liberation and only a few were aware that distant signals were faintly ominous."

He tells us that there

"existed in Normanbrook's mind some anxieties that the forces aligning against the Director General were becoming more formidable, and that they derived from sources of much greater consequence than Mrs. Mary Whitehouse."

But precisely what were these forces and how did they perceive their connections with the appointment of Hill?

MT In the introductory paragraph to your article in the New Statesman you state "the sixties had seen public service broadcasting in its finest hour of liberation and only a few were aware that distant signals were faintly ominous." Who exactly were 'the few'?
RL Well I don’t think I was referring to any specific number of people. I think it was simply an impression one began to get that there were doubting voices being raised as to whether the BBC was going too far in Hugh Greene’s policy of opening windows and so on. It all seemed to be going very well and it engendered an excitement in broadcasting, particularly within the BBC. But part of the operation of the Governors so to speak is to pick up the climate outside, and I think that one was becoming aware that there were doubts being expressed by rather wider areas than Mary Whitehouse.

MT What were the particular signals that you picked up?

RL You can simply say that there was a general air about it, and of course they were nearly always engendered unfortunately by accidents and such programmes as TW3 and the Wednesday Play. It was nothing one could put one’s finger on.

MT You also mention a conversation with Normanbrook in which you suggest that he began to appreciate that difficulties would arise and you refer to his anxieties about forces of greater consequence than Mrs. Whitehouse. What were the anxieties and difficulties?

RL Well that was part of a lunchtime discussion we had. I was vice-chairman and he was chairman and we were covering the general scene and wondering what might happen if anything happened to Hugh Greene, if he were to walk under the proverbial bus, who might take over and so on. I think Lord Normanbrook was becoming a little worried by some of the complaints which were reaching him about what people regarded as BBC blunders in the field of religion and good taste and all the rest of it.

MT Presumably though, the reference to people more significant than Mary Whitehouse refers to senior politicians, people of that stature?

RL Well I don’t know about politicians, no I wouldn’t say it was particularly politicians, but the BBC is always news to an extent that the ITA certainly isn’t. Anything at all sensational, or less than sensational, with a BBC programme would be commented upon far in excess of any comment on any ITA programme. You just sense that there are certain anxieties or a certain lack of confidence, whatever it might be. Part of the Chairman’s job is to wonder about these things and to see whether the Director General is going in the right direction.”
The formulation of just what these pressures, anxieties etc. actually consisted of, is not particularly well articulated, to an extent that may lead one to believe that their formulation in the article was perhaps to a degree informed by post hoc reasoning. One must of course allow for the fading of memory over time and the protection of confidences, but Greene himself doubts the wisdom of placing too much emphasis on Normanbrook's signals:

MT  Sir Robert states that Normanbrook began to pick up signals, danger signals. Did Normanbrook ever intimate to you that things were happening, or that there were possible difficulties ahead? Did he ever discuss the dangers, the 'signals'?

HG  My own feeling is that Bob Lusty is perhaps exaggerating a bit there. I can remember one talk which you could regard as along those lines. You remember there was a White Paper under the Labour Government - it must have been in late '66 or early '67 - in which the decision was made about the BBC starting Radio One to deal with the pirates, and also to start local radio. I think there was some decision on the licence fee in the same White Paper. In a way it was everything that one had been fighting for, everything had gone one's way. I remember Lord Normanbrook saying to me rather gloomily, 'this is going to turn people against us, it's too good'. And I said to him, 'However that may be, when one's fighting for something, when one's trying to achieve victory, one can't try to achieve half a victory'. I think he may have felt that we had done too well and that was in my mind too, that somehow the BBC had done too well out of Pilkington for its own good.

MT  Did Normanbrook specify at all? Throughout your career as DG there were calls for your resignation. Was there something apart from that, pressure from a very high level which Normanbrook was beginning to pick up?

HG  I don't think so because I was on very good terms with Ted Short and he was an enormous improvement on Wedgy Benn as PMG. I don't know. I find it difficult to understand these signals."

1. The White Paper was in December 1966. It proposed the birth of Radio One and the establishment of local radio. The decision was not to increase the licence fee, though the Post Office was to make greater efforts to stamp out evasion.
There does not appear to be any clear sense in which one could point to events and personalities which would logically entail the feeling that the appointment was the logical culmination of a long process of incursion upon the 'independence' of the broadcasting organization. With the appointment of Hill, though, ill-formed and little articulated notions crystallized into an assumption that Wilson's motive was to destroy the confidence of the BBC and to force Greene to resign. David Haworth in The Observer (30th July 1967) wrote a piece with the title 'The Feud that brings Hill to the BBC'. He wrote,

"the Prime Minister with this appointment has given notice to the BBC that henceforward things cannot be the same again, and that the Corporation and the somewhat free-wheeling policies it has enjoyed under Sir Hugh will have to change."

On hearing of the appointment Greene and Lusty wrote a 'short formal letter' to the Postmaster General 'acquainting him with the BBC's anxieties in the matter'.

Following this, on the 9th August, Lusty had written to all the Governors stating that following an amicable lunch with Hill on the 8th August he now felt that

"many of the anxieties which we have been feeling become much less substantial and my own fears for the future are to an encouraging extent diminished."

He sent a copy of this 'new situation' letter to the PMG to balance the earlier 'anxiety' letter, only to receive a rebuke from Short for having had the anxieties in the first place,

"There is a clear implication that something was not right about Lord Hill's appointment."

(Short, in Lusty, 1974)
Lusty in turn replied to the rebuke using the argument that the apprehension did not arise from personal hostility to Lord Hill but rather from the fact that people in the BBC were aghast at the fact that the chief of their main broadcasting rival was suddenly transformed into their chief. What he did not mention in his letter to Short but what he certainly implies in his article was that the move was seen as a definite attempt to force Greene into resignation, and that this was Harold Wilson’s main motive.¹

In his article Lusty (1974) states:

"Our relationship with the Labour government had not been easy and had proved worrying to Lord Normanbrook. There seemed undue sensitivity...The appointment was certainly no act of charity or goodwill on Wilson’s part. But many continue to think that it was an act of premeditated malice. This I accepted for a while but later grew to doubt."

And what made him doubt it was the revelation that Wilson had first offered the post to Lord Aylestone (then Herbert Bowden). He had been told about this by sources in Ireland and having checked it he believes it to be the case,

"For various reasons I now believe it to be true and it demolishes the theory that Harold Wilson acted in pursuit of any long, deep laid plan."

Some of the confusion over this stems from the 'missing evidence' though Wilson does imply in his brief account that there was nothing unnatural in the appointment, though he does not mention the offer to Aylestone. When asked again about how he viewed Harold Wilson’s motives in light of the new evidence, Lusty was not quite as definite as he had been in the article:

1. Neither did he mention that much of the hostility was personal in the sense that Hill was regarded as not being of very high 'calibre' and other descriptions of his intellectual and social capacities!
"Well, I don't quite know, I've never been able to discover really what Wilson's motives were. I think Hugh Greene and Aylestone would probably have got along quite well, but I certainly believe that it was the appointment of Hill which capsized Greene. You've met him and he will say that it made no difference to his direction of the BBC, but I think it took the spirit out of him, I think he simply couldn't understand it and at that point he became bored. There were other things going on in his life too, it upset him. The association between himself and Hill could never be other than difficult because he had absolutely no respect for him, and the one thing that the BBC Director General must have for his Chairman, or Hugh Greene must have, is respect."

He added, however,

"There was complete bewilderment as to why the Government, and in particular Harold Wilson, had done this. What was the point, what was behind it all. If there was nothing behind it it was still a most extraordinary appointment, and I'm quite convinced in my own mind that a purpose was to dislodge Greene."

There is of course some contradiction here with the version in the article. What we can say is that on this point those involved were at a loss to really fathom the motivations of Wilson.

As I have already stated, subjective perceptions of what was happening and why were more important throughout this period than were any objectively accurate assessment of the underlying motives. From the point of view of understanding the relationship between the political and broadcasting spheres as exemplified by Hill's appointment, one cannot however, discuss only subjective perceptions. Greene's own perception of the motives is clear, and does provide enough evidence for one to believe that it is substantially accurate. He was interviewed for this thesis both before and after the publication of the Hill memoir and the Lusty article. During the first
interview he was asked about the circumstances and motivations of the appointment:

"It really revolves around the strange character of Harold Wilson, with whom I'd been on rather friendly terms when he was leader of the opposition, during his first administration between 1964 and 1966 - his touchiness, his belief that people are conspiring against him all the time. This reached its height during the '66 election when he felt that the BBC was slighting him and what not - and indeed the BBC did not behave in every way very sensibly in following protocol and making arrangements in the proper way for things like an interview by Harold Wilson on his way back to London after the results were out. So we brought this on ourselves to some extent, that period of difficulty. Harold Wilson did not have the tolerance of Macmillan about being made even gentle fun of. And I think it's quite clear that in his mind I became associated with all that he disliked. This was a long process. After all, Harold Wilson became Prime Minister in the autumn of '64, there was the spring election of '66. Normanbrook and I discussed these things quite frankly With Harold Wilson, one wasn't always to persuade him that he was wrong, but one could talk to him. Then came the death of Normanbrook in the spring of '67, and then in the late summer of that year the appointment of Charles Hill as Chairman. I think there is good reason to believe that one of Harold Wilson's motives was the expectation that I would resign immediately. It was not a direct attack on the output of the BBC or an attempt at political influence, because whatever one may say about Charles Hill's record as Chairman, so far as resisting political attempts at exerting influence from outside he was perfectly good at helping to resist those. Dick Crossman put it in a piece in the New Statesman that Wilson had two objectives: one, to get rid of me, and two, to break the self-confidence of the BBC.

Were they the same thing?

Well not quite the same thing. I think Dick said that one was achieved fairly quickly and the other took rather longer. You know these things are awfully difficult to handle with exactness and therefore tend to be over simplified. I wouldn't say that I knew the full background to this development myself.

What was your initial reaction upon hearing that Hill was to become the Chairman?
Of such a rage as I have never experienced about any other event in my life. I very nearly decided to resign but then I thought to myself, that's what Harold Wilson wants, so I decided not to."

When the Aylestone revelation was mentioned during the course of a second interview, he still affirmed his belief that the motive was his removal. He had been informed the morning after the appointment by a member of the BBC's political staff that 'excellent sources' revealed that one of the motives was the expectation that Greene would resign immediately. While there is some confusion over the precise details of the appointment, it is believed, most crucially by Greene, that the intention was to force his resignation, to weaken the post of the Director General and to strengthen that of the Chairman.

Hill had his first meeting with Lusty (at the latter's suggestion) at midday on the 8th August 1967, and with Greene (at Hill's instigation) on the evening of the same day. At the lunch with Lusty a number of issues were raised, Lusty suggesting that a social gathering be held with the Board of Management and an informal meeting with the Board of Governors, both of which Hill declined. Lusty

1. I have been able to check this out and it is indeed the case that these sources stated that Wilson made it known that one expectation of the appointment was that Greene would resign.

2. Hill felt that the meeting had been a success, having told Greene that 'As far as I knew there was no anti-Greene motive in the appointment; certainly there was none in my mind. He appeared to accept what I said and we parted on good terms....' (Hill, 1974, 74). When this quote was put to Greene he stated 'I accepted it (Hill's assurance) with a 'Let's wait and see' attitude'. Lusty certainly indicates that the two meetings went well.
then offered to take the chair at the first Board of
Governors meeting attended by Hill. Lusty states:

"Not only did Lord Hill reject that well intentioned
proposal out of hand, but it enabled him ever
afterwards to proclaim far and wide that I had
invited him to come along as 'an observer'."

(Lusty, 1974)

Hill describes Lusty's demeanour in this meeting as
'sadly contemptuous' (Hill, 1974, 75). At this meeting
Hill had also mentioned his wish that he had his own
secretary rather than having to share a secretarial pool
with the DG - which had always been the convention within
Broadcasting House. He tells us in his memoirs that
prior to the 6th August lunch he had had something of a
running battle with BBC officials over the question of
his secretary, over his use of a car other than that
provided by the BBC, and over the use of a colour television
set installed in his home (rent paid for a year) by the
ITA only a few weeks previously. The pettiness of these
squabbles was superceded by a later request that he have
a new room in Broadcasting House. This has come to hold
tremendous symbolic and real significance in the view of
those involved and needs to be detailed.

Hill states that soon after his arrival he raised
the matter of the office:

"The office traditionally used by the chairman was
on the third floor separated from the Director
General's office by the room occupied by his
secretaries. My secretary was a flight of stairs
away on the fourth floor on the grounds that there
was no room for her on the third floor. My office
I thought resembled an oak lined coffin, airless
and sunless, and after an hour or so the atmosphere
became heavy and stuffy. I asked for another and
more cheerful office, preferably one with an adjacent
room for my secretary. I did not ask for an office
on another floor, for I did not mind where it was, provided it was light and airy, with my secretary's room close at hand. Nothing happened for some time, as is the way in big organizations, and I asked that the search for a new office should be intensified. Once it was clear that I was serious, the Central Services Department got cracking and eventually I was offered two small offices, adjacent to my secretary's office on the fourth floor, which could be knocked into one... Those who have visited me at Broadcasting House know the modest but adequate office that resulted, but this did not prevent the press describing it as a penthouse on the top floor. I read too that I had deliberately moved to another floor to set up a chairman's establishment in competition with that of the director general. This was not my last experience of a pastime indulged in by some BBC staff of feeding the press with malicious tit-bits. The fact is that I would have stayed on the third floor if someone had been willing to move to give me houseroom."

(Hill, 1974, 80-1)

The words of a bitter man, and it is certainly true that the interpretation placed on the move to the fourth floor by Greene and other members of the BBC was that this was a conscious attempt to signify the changed relationship between the DG and the Chairman. Lusty told Hill that the question of the car and secretary weren't really important, but he did feel that the question of the room, when heard of it, was immensely important:

"What did seem to me to matter was the setting up of a chairman's department, and on the pretence of not liking the smell of wood - my wife was the first person to be told about this because she sat next to Hill at some function and he told her that he was going to move out of his office because he didn't like the smell of wood and it was a panelled office. When she told me this afterwards I was horrified, this was going to explode the BBC. I mean secretaries, cars, anything else, are minor matters but to blow up this arrangement which had gone on since the beginning of Broadcasting House and was very important, ought not to have been done, and he never consulted the Board at all, it was just done. Whether he realised what he was doing I don't know, I suspect he probably did, but this in a curious way blew up the traditional arrangement,"
the traditional relationship between the chairman and the DG. It destroyed a delicate set up which had worked, because instead of being able to to and fro and just chat to each other it had to be a formal thing between one floor and another, and one set of secretaries and another and so on. I think this was a deliberate, clever step in which to establish his authority." (Interview with Lusty)

Greene's response to the change of rooms, the administrative and ultimately policy implications of a structural change, is in a similar vein:

MT How do you view the changing of the rooms? Was it an incident that was blown up out of all proportion or was it of very significant symbolic importance?

HG Very significant, not just symbolic, but also practical importance because one could no longer have this informal relationship. With Hill it wasn't a case of walking in and out of each other's offices. If you had the same group of secretaries it meant that each knew what the other was doing, one saw copies of letters and so on, and so there was no chance of going off at a tangent, in different directions. I don't think that Hill liked that arrangement. The way he complained that he didn't like the smell of wood, well that seemed to me at the time to be pretty petty. He didn't give the real reason, he just gave a silly reason like he didn't like the smell of wood. And as for the office being small, it was smaller than the DG's but it was for a part-time chairman and Hill remained a part-time chairman. It had been used by all the previous chairmen before him. In fact Normanbrook when he became Chairman asked me if I'd mind if he regarded his office in the BBC as his headquarters - he'd got various other directorships and what not - and used it as such. I said of course not. Well Hill would have never asked a question like that, but if it was big enough for a big man like Normanbrook it ought to have been alright for Hill."

For those working within Broadcasting House these events seemed to clarify everything, it was as if this one move to a different room provided the final evidence of Hill's intentions. Wilson had installed Hill in order to force Greene to resign, thereby creating a power vacuum
in which Hill could easily function in his task of strengthening the Governors and thus ensuring for Wilson's peace of mind the future 'scrupulous fairness' of the BBC. So went the scenario, and as with many scenarios there would seem to be both truth and myth encased within it. What does begin to become clear when studying the Hill appointment is the actual subtlety of the relationships between the broadcasting and political spheres. Even acknowledging the crudity of the original appointment, there was no sense in which quick and harsh decisions were taken by Hill, riding roughshod over the wishes and policies of the BBC Executive. When at the end of his discussion of the 'shock' of his arrival at the BBC, Hill indulges in a little self pity, listing the possible fears of the BBC personnel which have accounted for the hostility he faced, he is perfectly correct when he asks rhetorically,

"Did I yield to lobbies, political, libertarian or other? Did I turn over the BBC professionals to the mercies of the layman? Did I argue for advertising on the BBC? The answers are to be found in the record."

(1974, 81)

The subtle inflections in the working relationship between Hill and Greene, the gradual 'easing out' of Greene, and Hill's slow assertion, the ill-defined consequences for programming ('blunting the edge of controversy') all indicate the gradualism which characterises the government-broadcaster relationship and is reflected in the appointment of Hill and the retirement of Greene.

Greene (1974) in his review of Hill and in an interview,
Lusty in article and interview both concur with Hill that he preserved the 'independence' of the BBC and sustained its form of finance (the twin pillars upon which, it is believed, the BBC and its reputation are founded). What they argue, however, is that Hill's points are not the ones that need to be discussed, they are irrelevant to their critique of him.

Hill took up his post in September 1967, and Greene announced his retirement on July 15th 1968, though his decision to retire was effectively made two months earlier. Charles Curran was appointed DG designate on 8th August 1968, and Greene finally left his post on 31st March 1969. He became a Governor on 11th July 1969 and told Hill of his decision to leave that post on 5th August 1971. The crucial period from the point of view of this discussion is then September 1967 to July 1968. One needs principally to consider two things: one, the nature of the working relationship between the DG and the Chairman, and particularly the question of whether Hill fostered and nurtured a distinctive Chairman's Department, and a distinctive Chairman's identity, counterposed in public and private to that of the Director General. Two, the precise reasons why Greene chose to retire.

The initial meeting of 8th August were felt to have been a notable success, but between that date and the first Board of Governors meeting in September, doubts began to set in. If nothing else, Hill set about his job with a great deal of energy ('I plunged into my job with energy and enthusiasm' p.77) and quickly established
that he intended to be not only a dominant force
within the BBC but the dominant force:

NT You said that you came away feeling much happier
than you did when you went to the lunch.

RL Well then I began to have my doubts as to whether
I should be quite as happy as that. This happened
during a period between Hill coming in on the
1st September and the first Board meeting he had
which was towards the end of September. Of course
the BBC was very much on edge at that time to
see what was going to happen. It was just little
things that I picked up, the rather underhand
way, well not underhand exactly, the quite different
way in which Hill approached the job compared to
what previous chairmen had done - seeing executives
without telling the DG, and burrowing around on
his own and so on in a way which would have been
utterly alien, because I was there when Normanbrook
came in so I knew how a traditional BBC chairman
would operate. You see he had turned down all
these suggestions I had made for getting to know
people informally before coming in, which I still
believe was a great mistake."

Hill believes that the Board of Governors are on
the horns of a dilemma, being both responsible to the
public and for the programmes transmitted. Greene
sees no dilemma so long as the former responsibility is
taken by the Governors and the latter is taken by the
full time executives, particularly the DG. Hill's diary
for 18th January 1972 declares:

"How long it has taken to strengthen the role of
the Governors! Wilson and Short may have expected
that my appointment would briskly lead to a more
effective Board. If they did, they have had to
wait an awful long time for it."

(Hill, 1974, 216)

In a conversation with Harman Grisewood, chief assistant
to the DG, Hill made his position very clear: Grisewood:

"talked about anxieties within the BBC since my
appointment. Was I really a dedicated BBC man?
Was I assuming a new and strengthened chairman's
role at the expense of the management? Was this
not creating tension? I told him that those who
assumed that I sought to strengthen the Governors' role in overall policy were right in their assumption. I did. But this did not involve taking over the proper role of management. This would be as undesirable as it would be difficult. Since Reith's days the Governors had for the most part been ciphers."

(Hill, 1974, 106)

In line with his policy of de-ciphering the governors, Hill instigated a number of changes and a number of new procedures. He introduced the use of voting on a frequent basis at Board meetings, a practice rarely used previously.

He introduced a committee system for the governors, placing particular emphasis on the finance sub-committee chaired by Sir Robert Bellinger. There was close scrutiny of the discussions and decisions of the Board of Management - Hill even has a chapter entitled 'Clashes with Management' which really involves a theme he develops throughout the book that the Board of Management dislike the Board of Governors arriving at its own decisions.

Hill carped at the limitations on discussion of editorial matters and on the inability of the governors to affect programme policy:

"On one occasion a governor raised the matter of reports of the party conferences. Why had it been decided, as he had read in the press, that there would be less reporting of the next conferences than in the previous year? That, said Greene, is an editorial matter. I intervened to point out that the governors could raise any question that they liked although I would always advise them not to raise questions of management.

The range of subjects discussed at the board were wide. There was the usual emphasis on current affairs, their balance, the observance of the requirement that there should be no editorializing, the methods of the interviewers, and so on. The Wednesday Play came up again and again for scrutiny, for both praise and criticism. Bad language, emphasis on sex, all these matters came up frequently
in one form or another. But there the matter seemed to end. We could talk but that was all. Policy was made by management." (1974, 94)

What Hill was doing, and what one might have expected him to do was to ask the question, like Mrs. Snowden and Lord Clarendon in Reith's day, and Beveridge and Lord Simon in later years, of just 'who is the BBC?'. The answer he came up with was the constitutional one that the Governors are the BBC. Hill's premise was that prior to his arrival the Governors had played only a nominal role, that they had been 'ciphers'. This Greene (1974) passionately denies, saying that Hill had 'fantasies of greatness', that he misrepresents the historical role of the Chairman and the Governors, that the habit of head counting introduced by Hill was mistaken and that the institution of the Governors Committee was 'a plain piece of administrative nonsense'. Greene's affirmation that the board played a much greater part in the history of the BBC is not particularly well supported in the literature, though he may be correct in establishing a degree of perspective by indicating that past boards were not quite the ineffectual dullards which Hill implies.

In the closing pages of his memoir, Hill poses two counterposed views, the Normanbrook position (Governors need to be dominant), and the Whitley position (the DG is effectively dominant), making perfectly clear that he identifies with the former position. He was, he says 'an active chairman and not a stooge' (p. 266). In adopting this position he transgressed a dearly held view
of the relationship between chairman and director general and in the eyes of the latter compromised the whole position of the BBC. Greene was asked about this:

MT In the review you did of Hill's book you argue that the governors were never ciphers as Hill claims. Do you feel that in saying that you are going against a popular description, a belief that ever since Keith's day the DG has in fact dominated the BBC, and that while the word 'cipher' may be inappropriate nevertheless the director general is and always has been the dominant character in the BBC.

HG I agree that that is the popular impression. I wouldn't put it like that, that the DG is the dominant character, the way I'd put it is that since Keith's day it had been the tradition that the DG was the main spokesman of the BBC, that he was the person known to the public as the personification of the BBC. 'Keith's BBC', 'Greene's BBC'. When there were quieter men like Haley and Jacob, it wasn't perhaps - well, no, I think 'Haley's BBC' would have been a fairly clear phrase. Jacob was a quieter man and didn't appear so much in public. Even so he would be, when necessary, the main spokesman. But it doesn't mean that the governors and particularly the chairman didn't play a very important role behind the scenes, even in Keith's day. And there are some remarks of Keith's which are quoted I think in Asa Briggs' second volume, indicating that he felt in the same way, that he was responsible to the Board, the Board were in the end the masters, that he was the public figure. It doesn't mean that the DG so dominated the Board that he always got his own way. It didn't mean that one didn't have to be very persuasive, argue strongly with the Board about one's attitudes and sometimes the Board wouldn't accept the things one wanted to do."

Greene begins to emerge as a Keith like figure imbued with a liberal imagination. In his history, Briggs refers to Keith's attitudes to the Board as follows,

"Keith had a very clear conception of what the relationship between himself as Director General and the Board of Governors should be. All de jure authority lay with them, while, by contrast, the Director General's power was de facto. Their
role, he thought, should be that of 'trustees' exercising neither executive nor administrative functions. They should not seek to be 'experts' certainly not experts in particular departments of broadcasting business. Their value lay in their 'general experience of men and affairs'. The Director General had to manage the BBC, to coordinate the various activities of broadcasting and take responsibility for the daily conduct of affairs."

(Briggs, 1965, 424)

Greene is clearly cast in this mould, but it is also true that on the occasions to which he refers in the interview he did not get his own way immediately. These two issues which he has quoted on a number of occasions were in fact the question of advertising alcoholic drinks in the Radio Times, and the question of giving the starting prices for horse racing! It was on the basis of its obscuring the traditional Board-DG relationship that Greene regarded the emergence of the Governors committee system not just as 'administrative nonsense' but also as a 'mixing up of the functions of a non-executive and an executive'. (Interview). The curious thing is however, that when one looks carefully at the events, the tensions of the working relationship of Hill and Greene derived not from Hill's becoming the overtly chief executive of the BBC but from Greene calls a 'lack of confidence' in the chairman:

MT You compare Hill unfavourably with Fforde and Duff and Normanbrook. In what way was your job made easier or did you function better under those three than you did under Hill?

HG Well, the main thing was confidence. Fforde, Duff for a short period and Normanbrook were all men in whom one could have absolute and complete confidence. One would know that in no circumstances would they ever go behind one's back, that they would always be completely frank with me and I would always be completely frank with them. That there was a genuine
friendship, an informal way of dealing with things, that they would walk into my office and I would walk into theirs because we were only separated by the secretaries’ office. So there was a complete sharing of minds even though, you know, not always complete agreement. But if I had something which I wanted to do which had to go before the Board of Governors, if I wasn’t able to persuade the chairman I would never go any further. And I don’t think the chairman, if he knew that I violently objected to something that he thought would be a good thing, would carry it further either. It was a consensus way of conducting things. With Hill all the informality and walking in and out of each other’s office went immediately. Partly through Hill moving his office, but even before he’d done that I think he only came into my office once, and you knew that he was acting behind your back all the time. I know from what was told to me when he was first chairman he was going around the Regional centres talking to everybody, talking to producers and so on and saying ‘I’m going to show who’s master; Hill not Greene’. He would see members of the staff without telling one that he was going to, or what had happened. He would see politicians and give them undertakings without telling one in advance.

So that is the fundamental thing. Boh Lusty says, and I suppose one says it out of politeness, that the objection to Hill was that he came from the ITA, not to him as a person. Really the fundamental objection was to Hill as a person.”

In analysing this situation one is caught in something of a dilemma, or rather is caught in a chicken and egg argument; which came first, the hostility to Hill at the personal level or the awareness that he was going to disturb the orthodoxy of the relationship between DG and chairman. A number of statements by a number of people who have known Greene suggest that he is a man who has a clear view of the intellectual calibre of individuals - Lusty for example describes Greene as being ‘intellectually contemptuous’ of Hill and it was stated in another context that Greene did not want Mary Whitehouse to broadcast, not through fear of her capacities but because
he was 'intellectually contemptuous' of her. Clearly
one can't be definite on this, but it does need to be
discussed in the sense that it is very clear that
Greene's reaction at least in part was hostility to Hill
as Hill. It is not unreasonable to argue that Wilson
clearly 'knew his men' - he was certainly well known
to Greene - and detected the incompatibility which
would eventually drive Greene from the BBC. It was not
however just a question of the usurping of the DG's
power and command of the organization; Greene made an
interesting point on this:

MT Did Hill at any point articulate his feelings to
you on the role of the Chairman, the role of the
DG? Did he ever say 'I want to be an executive
chairman'?

HG Oh no. In fact to do Hill justice I think that
Kenneth Adam has put around a lot of misleading
stuff about Hill in the articles in the Sunday
Times and in one or two reviews and things that
he's written. The objection to Hill is not that
he becomes an executive chairman, he didn't,
he didn't spend enough time on it to be an
executive chairman. The DG remained the chief
executive, but he destroyed the right sort of
relationship between the chairman and the DG.
He wanted to appear in public to be the man
running the BBC, but he didn't ever say it to
one, or indeed do it. It comes back really to
this question of confidence and the setting up of
a separate centre of power."

It is terribly difficult to pin down the precise
nature of 'the right sort of relationship' and one can
only conclude that what he means is the position described
by Briggs as the position articulated by Reith, and
given form in the Whitley document. Hill claims that
once he and Hugh Greene began to work with each other
the latter's fears were gradually allayed; Greene commented:
"That's not really true. He said that we behaved in a civilized way I think and part of the way of behaving in a civilized way is not to be quarrelling all the time. My fears were allayed to the extent that I saw he was not going to give way on political issues, and that he was not going to try to lead the BBC towards taking advertising. In that way my fears were allayed, not that they'd been very serious fears on either count. But it was his general influence on the relationship between DG and Board, on that my fears were not allayed at all. I thought that all the time he was doing damage that might be irreparable."

What were the circumstances surrounding the actual decision by Greene to retire. In his account of this, Hill makes much of Greene's divorce which was raised by Greene in December 1967, 'a matter which was to have important repercussions' (Hill, 1974, 85). He then refers to a 'remarkable letter' which he received from Hugh Greene,

"asking that the governors should publish forthwith that he would stay until the age of 60 and possibly thereafter and that his successor should come from inside the Corporation."

(p. 85)

1. The text of the letter actually read:

I am putting this on paper so that you can think the problem over at your leisure before our next talk.

I keep getting evidence that the stories about my impending departure from the BBC (the reports in the Observer on Sunday and in the Daily Mirror today are only the latest of a whole series) are causing some disquiet if not at the top levels in the BBC, at any rate at the middle and lower levels.

I wonder whether there might be something to be said in the interests of staff morale for an early public statement along the following lines:

"In view of recent press speculation the Board of Governors of the BBC wishes it to be known that it continues to be its assumption that Sir Hugh Greene will remain as Director-General at least until his sixtieth birthday on November 15th 1970. Any possibility of an extension beyond that date will be the subject of later discussion between the Board and Sir Hugh.

The Board believes in principle that the eventual successor to Sir Hugh should be found if possible from within the ranks of the BBC."

I have put in the second paragraph because I know that the speculation about an appointment from outside is bothering people at the top.

This, I know, would be an unusual step but it seems to me that it would clear the air once and for all.
He detected, he says, a changing 'demeanour' and the impression that he was 'clearly concerned about his future', Greene does not regard this as in any way a remarkable letter, and argues that he only wished to allay press speculation and that it was routine anyway for a member of the BBC on reaching 58 to discuss the future, whether they should retire earlier than 60 or stay on after 60. In May 1968, Hill and Greene discussed possible future senior appointments and the question of succession to him, 'Naturally we got round to his own future'. Greene, Hill felt, 'seemed to want to go early' though he detected also a 'nagging doubt' in his mind which derived from his fear that if he resigned and was divorced at the same time it would be assumed that he had been made to go because of his divorce, and it was then that he thought of offering Greene a seat on the Board. This would mean that he could retire 'with honour'. Hill put this to Greene, who eventually accepted, and Hill obtained Wilson's agreement to the 'deal', for deal it was. Greene was delighted, Hill states, because it solved the problem of retiring at the time of the divorce, because he would be the only governor ever to have been DG, and because it would mean less contact with Hill (1974, p.88). Lusty emphasises that Greene was particularly attracted to the thought of being 'one, if not two, up on Reith'. I think that the question of divorce and the superceding of Reith were relatively minor factors. It is difficult, if not impossible, to say why something happens at a particular moment, why this moment
was the time chosen for Greene to retire, but it does
seem fairly clear that an underlying force was the
realisation by Greene that Hill’s star was more firmly
in the ascendant than his own, that he had in a sense
been beaten and that the offer of the governorship was
a shrewdly placed peg upon which to hang his retirement.
He was asked, why retire then?

"Now let me try to get this clear in my own mind
as well. I wasn’t happy at that time as you
can imagine. My divorce really played no part
whatever. It wasn’t in my mind in the way that
Hill suggests at all. I regarded it as private
and nothing to do with one’s business life.

MT So Hill would be wrong in saying that you were
wary about the coincidence of your divorce and
the resignation?

HG Yes, as far as I remember I don’t think it ever
entered my head."

He then referred to the discussion in May about possible
successors, and then states:

HG "...one day Hill said to me ‘would you like to
become a Governor?’ Whether Hill had already
discussed it with Wilson at that time I do not
know. I said that I’d like to think about this
but the next time I saw him I said ‘Yes’. I
must say that it was a bribe, so to speak, well
attuned to my character, because it had never
happened before.

MT The one up on Reith?

HG I think Bob Lusty exaggerates that a little bit,
but I would put it certainly in the way of making
history. It had never happened before, whether
to Reith or anybody else. So I took that bait,
being quite clear in my own mind that it was bait,
but still, why not take it? But again whether
it had been fixed with Wilson before or after I
just do not know and I don’t suppose you would ever
find out.

MT At the time did you see this as the culmination of
a long process that had been taking place since
Hill was appointed?
No I didn't. It was the culmination of a series of conversations over a few weeks. I'd just imagined myself soldiering on till 60 and conceivably longer if they thought there wasn't a successor ready. But I must say that a lot of the pleasure of the job had gone."

An Analysis of the meaning of Charles Hill's appointment

In a rather perceptive remark in March 1964, Greene, in response to a question by Kenneth Harris as to what makes a good Director General, replied:

"God alone knows....But I can tell you one thing which makes a good BBC - it's a good relationship between the DG and the chairman of the Governors. However able and well intentioned a DG was, or a chairman, if they couldn't work together, the BBC would be in trouble." (Greene, 1969, 84)

Descriptions of the relationship between the DG and the Board of Governors are, to say the least, somewhat abstract. There is much talk of a delicate balance between roles but the hard details are rarely spelled out. Yet it was the nature of this relationship which Hill, and through him Wilson, sought to change. The logic can only have been that in this way the whole 'tone' of BBC political coverage would change. In his Granada Lecture (1972) Greene argued that the amicable relationship between himself, as DG, and Fforde, Duff, Normanbrook and Lusty was disturbed by Hill because the latter 'blurred' the division of functions which for the governors, Greene states, is the 'right to reprove and restrain'. Lusty

1. Compare this to a comment by Reith (quoted in Briggs, 1965, 431) about his amicable working relationship with Whitley, 'Free from internal strife, suspicion and distrust, one was able, undisturbed, to get on with the job'.

(1974) declares that "there disappeared in the time of Lord Hill elements of extreme importance to the relationship between the chairman and the DG and between the Governors and the management...."

but as to what those elements are, no word.

In law, the Governors are the BBC, paragraph 1 of the Charter states this clearly. Therefore, strictly speaking, the whole discussion of the DG-Chairman relationship is one of the merits or otherwise of a series of informal working arrangements. These arrangements were first given definition in 1931, following a struggle between Reith, the first Director General, and Clarendon, the first Chairman, over the very questions I have been discussing here. As Boyle (1972) describes it, the battle between Reith and Clarendon revolved around the question of the relationship of the DG to the Governors: were the latter the 'commander in chief' or did the former occupy that role? The 'problem' as far as Reith was concerned when in February 1930 the Prime Minister, Ramsay Macdonald, appointed Clarendon Governor General of South Africa, and subsequently appointed John Whitley, a former Speaker of the Commons, as Chairman of the Governors.

In response to the difficulties between Reith and Clarendon, Whitley the new Chairman and Reith worked together on a document detailing the relationships which were to exist between the Governors, the DG and the public. The Whitley document as it became known, effectively defined the Governors as trustees or
representatives of the public interest functioning within the Corporation. Their functions, the document states 'are not executive, their responsibilities are general and not particular' (Quoted in Smith, 1974, 60).

The document goes on:

"With the DG they discuss and then decide upon major matters of policy and finance, but they leave the execution of that policy and the general administration of the service in all its branches to the DG and his competent officers."

The position outlined here, with the emphasis on the centrality of the DG, was not challenged by the chairman or the governors until the appointment of Simon as chairman in 1947. Simon took the view that Reith's overpowering personality had fashioned not only his own career in the BBC, but had also generated the institutional impotence of the governors. Simon expressly denied the validity of the position adopted by the Whitley Document and told the Beveridge Committee so. The latter was in accord with Simon and reinterpreted the role of the governors from being analogous to trustees, as implied in Whitley, to being analogous to ministers of the crown.

The Committee Report (1949) stated that the governors must

"themselves undertake the function of the Minister, that of bringing outside opinion to bear upon all the activities of the permanent staff, of causing change where change is necessary, of preventing broadcasting from falling in any way whatsoever into the hands of a bureaucracy which is not controlled."

The Whitley Document was 'tacitly abolished when the revised charter of 1952 was granted' (Smith, 1974, 60).

A memorandum from the Labour government in 1951, in response to the recommendations of the Beveridge Committee stated:
"They (the Government) see no reason to dissent from the views of the Committee that the Whitley document should disappear and that the position of the Governors in future should be defined only by the charter. . . . . the government have no doubt that the governors will regulate their procedure so as to preserve, on the one hand, the recognised right of the chairman to take emergency decisions subject to report to the Board, and, on the other, the day to day executive responsibility of the Director General of the Corporation. In regard to this office, the Committee suggest that there is no need to specify a Director General in the Charter. While the government agree that the administrative and executive form of organization most suited to the Corporation should be decided by the Governors, they think it desirable to continue in the Charter the requirement that there should be a chief executive officer with the title of Director General." (Quoted in Smith, 1974, 99)

Thus as early as 1951 there is a serious attempt to redefine the role of the governors, but there is a definite reluctance to do this by directly deposing the stature of the DG, hence the insistence that the DG be specified in the Charter as the chief executive officer. It is therefore not surprising that despite the implicit attempt to reduce it, the 'executive supremacy' (Smith, 1973, 144) of the DG remained and was inherited by Greene. Wedell (1968, 113) describes it in the following way:

"Although, over the years since 1952 the balance of power between the Governors and the officials has varied according to the personalities concerned, there is little doubt that the ghost of the Whitley document lingers on."

As I have shown, Greene in fact denies the extent of the supremacy, arguing that such a view ignores the operation of a consensus prior to Hill - implying that the DG was only the foremost figure because the chairman and governors had been in accord on the whole with him, and because this was the way things were done: 'It is not necessarily
a sign of folly or weakness for a chairman to get on well with a director general' (Greene, 1974).

In 1965, Normanbrook, chairman of the governors, took up the question once more of the 'functions of the BBC governors', an interpretation of which Hill was later to make great play, 'I unhesitatingly accepted the Normanbrook definition of the Board's role....' (Hill, 1974, 263). He quotes with approval an extract from Normanbrook's paper in which he states,

"'within the BBC the ultimate level of decision, even executive decision on matters of first importance, lies in the Board of Governors or, in a matter of urgency, the chairman acting under the authority delegated to him by the Board'."

But Normanbrook does also add that this is the ultimate point of decision and that in practice it is very difficult to say where the making of policy ends and its execution begins. He also adds, as Hill would have known had he read Wedell (1968) for it is quoted there, that the control which the governors exercise:

"is mainly by retrospective review - by comment, whether praise or blame, after the event. It is of course easy to say that this is not enough, that there ought to be tighter control and a more strict enforcement of the views and attitudes of the Board. This is a matter to which I have myself given a good deal of thought, as I imagine my predecessors did before me. But I have come to the conclusion that, if one is speaking in terms of systems, there is no other system which could be operated successfully in relation to the enormous volume of programme output handled by the BBC.'" (Normanbrook, 1965, 15)

It is by no means clear then that Normanbrook took quite the line which Hill claims for him.

Hill did seek, and he acknowledges this, an actively interventionist role for his chairmanship, and takes up
the analogy of the Governors being the Minister and the
full time professionals the civil servants. Hill’s
interpretation of the governors task is explicit:

"The Board should decide the larger issues of
policy and finance, management questions coming to
it when the director general sought the Board’s
view. The Board should make the senior appointments
- perhaps its most important function - and
approve the command structure at its higher levels.
It should be generally responsible for major
exchanges with governments and outside bodies.
It should not intervene in the programme-making
process or, except in exceptional circumstances,
see or hear programmes before transmission. It
should be kept informed of proposed major programme
policy developments, of major expressions of public
and political opinion and of the advice of advisory
bodies. Before reaching decisions within its scope,
the Board should give the Director General and
any senior colleagues he may select, opportunity
to put views fully and frankly. Once decisions are
reached, the responsibility of their translation
into action rests on the DG."

(Hill, 1974, 264-5)

Such developments - though perfectly correct in law, and
only in keeping with a number of suggestions over the
years - were guaranteed to make Greene bridle. Since
Reith the relationship had been more of headmaster to
school governors than permanent secretary to Minister.
The intended reactivation of the role of the role of
the chairmen of both broadcasting authorities was pointed to
as being a desirable development in the White Paper on
Broadcasting of December 1966 (Wedell, 1968, 131). When
Hill chose to extend and develop the role of chairman
he was both reducing Greene’s power, if only by undermining
his sense of purpose, and also laying the seeds of future
difficulty by establishing a contradiction within the
BBC’s ruling body which would create more, not less, trouble.
It was clear that Hill did not, and indeed could not affect programming on a day by day basis, no more than could the DG. The volume of programme output is simply too great. Greene always 'led' by focussing on one or two particular programmes and programme makers, and shaped overall policy through their impact. He would be receptive to ideas which fitted within his particular conceptions, replying with the phrase 'why not?' to a programme suggestion. He also clearly articulated a position in a number of speeches dotted throughout the years of the early 1960's. He developed a distinctive presence which implied, if it didn't state, a programming philosophy. One has, then, to look to the ways in which Hill, and through him Wilson, by exerting the power of the Governors - that is, by denying the validity of the Whitley Document - sought to dismantle this 'presence' and sought to impose another, if we are to understand the significance of the appointment, because Hill did sustain a modicum of apparent independence and did not threaten the form of financing. One can argue that the presence implied by Greene, ill-defined, only loosely articulated but nevertheless critical, was that broadcasting was to be a force shaping and leading social events. It would clearly transgress dominant social codes, because if you didn't how could you lead? Greene's was a liberal imagination not shared by Hill. Hill's purpose was to reorient the programming policy back from the vanguard of the social process, into the position where it was keeping pace with orthodoxy whatever
it might be. There was nothing sharp or drastic about this, but it was crucially underpinned by the structural change in the moving of the office (which served notice that things would not be in the future as they had been in the past), by a strict constitutional reading of the Charter, and by Hill’s own idiosyncratic approach to chairmanship. These sustained Hill’s position, allowed it to develop and ultimately undermine that of Greene.

The contradiction lay in the fact that there was a basic incompatibility between the two roles of ‘minister’ and ‘trustee’ which Hill was trying to integrate within the same body. As is shown in the next discussion of *Yesterday’s Men* this was to undermine in many eyes the whole credibility of the BBC.

Greene clearly embodied in the Labour leader’s mind the rather rabid independence of the BBC, an overblown institution which he felt to be in need of deflation. The logical relationship then is between the removal of its embodiment, Greene, and a change in its rabid independence, or as Wilson puts it, the restoration of a ‘scrupulous fairness........in respect to comment on public affairs’ (see opening quote). It was clearly the intention that the readjustment of roles which followed Hill’s appointment would induce change from one view of broadcasting to another. Greene believed that programmes should flow from his own, and his subordinates’, imagination, and in this sense he was at one with Keith, though their views on the direction of that flow differed greatly.
Content should be born out of their intellectual perspectives, and these should not be a pale reflection of popular morality or political orthodoxy. This position was articulated clearly within the speech in Rome previously referred to, in which he stated

"the BBC should encourage the examination of views and opinions in an atmosphere of healthy scepticism. I say 'healthy scepticism' because I have a very strong personal conviction that scepticism is a most healthy state of mind in which to examine accepted attitudes and test views which in many cases, have hitherto been accepted too easily or too long."

(Greene, 1969, 95)

He added,

"that broadcasters have a duty not to be diverted by arguments in favour of what is, in fact, disguised censorship. I believe we have a duty to take account of the changes in society, to be ahead of public opinion rather than always to await upon it."

(p. 101)

Greene's is the liberal conscience of the convinced journalist. Hill's is that of the cautious conservative, a position reflected in a document for which he was largely responsible on Broadcasting and the Public Mood (July 1968), in which he steers a careful line between being too restrictive and too progressive.

Greene felt that broadcasters should lead public opinion, should be able to cast a critical eye over the political orthodoxies and institutions of the time, should in other words fulfil the role of the political journalist. Hill sought the comfortable pastures of a 'middle ground', neither ahead nor behind but comfortably entrenched within, more responsible than journalistic. Though he did not, and could not, find comfort in that role this was the real purpose and, to an extent, consequence of the appointment of July 1967.
YESTERDAY'S MEN

"The only occasion when Harold was extremely angry was after the 1970 election. It was the now famous David Dimbleby interview for a programme called Yesterday's Men which sparked it off."

(Marcia Williams, 1972, 234-5)

"It ill behoves those who live by the sword to bleat when they cut themselves shaving."

(Guardian Leader, 19.6.71)

The events surrounding Yesterday's Men — broadcast on 17th June 1971 — are difficult to disentangle, but once a degree of order is brought to the area one can quickly begin to throw into sharp relief the intentions of programme makers and the considerations of programme making, the nature of the effect which political pressure can have on programming, and also, and this is perhaps the most interesting, the curiously ambivalent attitude of the Labour Party to the media in general and to the BBC in particular.

A Narrative

On the day of Harold Wilson's defeat, 19th June 1970, David Dimbleby did an interview at 10 Downing Street with the deposed and surprised Prime Minister. It was at this time that the idea for Yesterday's Men began to crystallize in the mind of Dimbleby; 'the loss of power, what does it actually mean?' He describes how he was "struck by the general air of dismay and by the speed of dismissal", and how he couldn't quite see how people could readjust. I assumed there would be a very painful period of readjustment, which indeed there was, Mrs. Healey for instance saying that Dennis Healey 'was like having a sportscar in the garage and no petrol'.

1. Unless otherwise stated, quotes are from interviews with the author.
The idea for the programme occurred to Dimbleby in June 1970, but he did not prepare a programme synopsis until October. The original idea had been that they "quite simply make a film by following the Opposition around for a few weeks and see how they were getting on and settling down." By the time Dimbleby's proposal had been presented to Paul Fox (Controller BBC1) and John Grist (Head of Current Affairs Group (CAG)), several months had elapsed since the election and so the original intent of looking at the immediate impact of the loss of power was no longer attainable. No work could begin on making the programme until the idea had been accepted, a budget allocated and a producer (Angela Pope) appointed, by which time it was Christmas 1970, six months after the election and the loss of power.

Dimbleby's synopsis of the programme — incidentally presented under the title of *Yesterday's Men* — indicated that the film would describe the impact of defeat on the senior members of the Labour Government; would consider the role of the Opposition as seen by the ex-Ministers; would "cover inquiries as to what it was like to lose high office with its rewards suddenly and unexpectedly, and would include their comments on the 'secrets' that were being made public in memoirs" (Governors 1971). The appeal of such a programme, the synopsis argued, would be in showing the response of former public figures to a period of enforced relative anonymity. Having been granted permission to go ahead on this basis, letters were sent by Dimbleby to Wilson, Callaghan, Crossman, Healey, Jenkins and Castle explaining that he was "preparing a documentary film for the BBC on the Opposition. It would be about the political and personal nature of the job of Opposition." Crosland was approached in exactly the same terms on 8th December by Angela Pope, who also wrote to Castle on 14th January.
- a letter which is reproduced here:

"We are planning a documentary film about some of the leading members of the last Labour government during their first year in Opposition. We will want to talk to them about their view of the job of the Opposition and what they consider will be the important issues in the next four years. The film will also deal with their reactions to defeat in the short term, i.e. how they felt immediately afterwards, and how it has affected them personally in the long term: for example, what it is like to have power to make decisions withdrawn, the kind of facilities they now have in terms of research, secretaries and office space, how a cut in salary affects them and whether they need to find work outside their job as an MP. To do this we need both to film an interview with you and to film you in various situations which illustrate something of the life you now lead. For instance, we might like to film you in your home surroundings, or perhaps preparing single handed the debate on the Industrial Relations Bill. The tape recorded interview which I mentioned to you on the telephone would fill in areas which we have not discussed on film and would be used where we need only your voice. In the finished version of the film your voice would be used to run over pictures of yourself or events to which you have referred in the interview. We may, for example, ask you what you do, or do not, miss about the DEP and use your tape-recorded replies over pictures of you walking through St. James's Square.

An important consideration is that over the period of months which had elapsed since the idea was first broached the to and fro of party politics had been firmly re-established, and in particular the producers perceived two significant developments in the affairs of the Labour Party: the appearance of a schism over the Common Market, and a possible challenge to Harold Wilson as leader of the party. So, gradually, the passage of time and the movement of events implied a constant flux in the perspectives of what would be discussed, a fact which is implied in a letter from Grist to Grossman saying that he was pleased Grossman had

1. Pope was to note at the time: "It is claimed that the participants are being misled as to the context of the programme, that they expected that the film would be about the role of the Opposition and about its policies. At no time did I discuss a programme of this kind verbally or in my correspondence with the interviewees. Indeed, whilst I see this as an interesting area of British politics, it was not one which I felt I could project on television." She refers specifically to the Castle letter to support this argument.
agreed to take part and adding that "Since the producer first
discussed this item with me we have been able to fix a transmission
date in the middle of June ... This as you probably realise means that
we will postpone filming, although we may be doing some odd events we
won't be doing it over the whole year. I hope this will not change your
plans to participate in the programme."

Having been given notice in January that the programme would not be
broadcast until June, Dimbleby and Pope decided to leave the idea for two
or three months, both being involved in other programmes in the meantime.
Initial contact then had been made in the November 1970-January 1971 period,
and there was a lull in the programme until March 1971. During this
initial period there was a vital development which throws considerable
light on the later events. Dimbleby's original idea had been that the
programme would fill a Tuesday Documentary slot but he could not be given
permission to explore the possibilities for such a programme until the
whole idea had been ratified by his superiors in CAG. Having been given
permission and having talked to the intended participants he and Pope
"decided we didn't want to do it, too dull, too difficult, too boring".
Informing the BBC of this they were told in return that "you can't not
do it, because now you've been and talked to them they'll think it's the
BBC being hostile to the Labour Party if we don't put it out. So you've
got to do it, no question of dropping it". Eventually, late in the
programme's development, a compromise solution was arrived at. It would
no longer be a distinct documentary but would be broadcast under the
aegis of 24 Hours. The difficulty in the compromise was that the Editor
of this programme would not feel directly responsible for an item which
had been foisted on him, and this was to have some significant
consequences. Dimbleby and Pope had then been effectively locked into
a process from which a programme had to emerge and, a supreme irony,
the final turning of the key in the look had been the conceptions held by senior BBC personnel of the sensitivity of the Labour Party.

Dimbleby and Pope resumed work on the programme, assisted by one secretary, in March 1971, paying particular attention to the interviews with Wilson and the other Labour leaders which they regarded as the "absolute core of the film" and on which they worked "absolutely together". The organization and shooting of additional film was done principally under the direction of Angela Pope in her role as producer. The circumstances dictated by the passage of time were indicated in a letter to Wilson from Dimbleby written in April, in which he said that the film was "still conceived as it was when we talked about it in your office earlier this year. It will be both about the defeat and its impact in political and personal terms and about the problems Opposition poses ... Obviously the Opposition's handling of events in recent months now plays a bigger part than if the film had been made at the turn of the year. As far as you yourself are concerned, I think we have sufficient personal material from the sequences we shot in the Scillies in January." The particular formulation of this letter and of earlier ones is important in the light of the later accusations about 'deception'.

In April 1971 Dimbleby and Pope decided that the original synopsis title, *Yesterday's Men*, would be used and also contacted the Scaffold, with a view to their writing and singing a song for the film sound track. A contract was negotiated with them during May. The Governor's Report states that the title "was known and accepted by their superiors", but was never, in subsequent correspondence, communicated to the Labour Party people. At two points in the process editorial control could have been exercised: during the making of the programme, and after the film had been completed but prior to transmission. Three possible levels of

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1. In his account of this, Lord Hill (1974) has the sequence of events the wrong way round (p.178). The meeting between Angela Pope, Dimbleby and Wilson followed the first letter, and not the April letter.
editorial control were immediately relevant: The Editor of 24 Hours, the Assistant to the Head of CAG, the Head of CAG. In April 1971 Pope submitted to the Assistant Head of CAG a draft of a detailed account of the topics which they were going to discuss with the politicians, and details of the song which the Scaffold were being commissioned to do. To those who wished to know, it was clear that a "satirical, funny" song had been commissioned for the programme by May 1971. This much the Governor's Report acknowledged (see below p.421); what it did not acknowledge was the question of editorial control once the programme was being cut and put together in its final form. Three internal views of this predominate: one view is that the troika of editorial control knew about the content of the programme, but failed to take into account, indeed could not have known, the reactions of the Labour leaders over the period 16th–18th June. A second version has it that the editorial control was lax because of the commitment of Grist and Smith, the Editor of 24 Hours, to other concerns during this period which effectively meant that they weren't familiar with what was happening until it was too late. A third version is that they knew what was happening but refused to take responsibility for it. This latter is rather difficult to accept if only because they would clearly realise that any serious consequences would be bound to reflect back onto them. The role they adopted is much more understandable if the premise is that they did not perceive the serious consequences of the programme, since all that is called into question then is their judgement, and not their integrity.

Arrangements were made to film an interview between Wilson and Dimbleby at 6 p.m. on May 11th in the rooms of the Leader of the Opposition at the Commons. The interview covered numerous areas but when Dimbleby referred to the amount of money which Wilson received for his memoirs, the Labour
leader became rather agitated, and then extremely angry, demanding that all references to the memoirs be cut from the recording (the full text of the row is available in Hill (1974)). On the following day, May 12th, a telephone conversation took place between Joe Haines, Wilson’s Press Secretary, and John Crawley, MCA, which covered, as Lord Hill describes it and as is confirmed by a number of other sources, “the extent of the deletion promised to Mr. Wilson by David Dimbleby and Angela Pope” (Hill, 1974, 181). In fact the promise of a deletion is made by Pope, and Dimbleby promises that he will not leak the details of the extractions to the press. The central bone of contention is whether Crawley promised Haines that he would cut out the whole of the reference to the memoirs, or whether he only promised to delete part of it.

The Governor’s Report states (para 7) “Following a disagreement on the appropriateness of certain questions, an undertaking was given to Mr. Wilson on behalf of the BBC that a part of the film would be destroyed and all that was possible to be done to see that the story of the disagreement did not leak. There was a lack of agreement between the parties to this undertaking about the extent of the film which it covered.” Lord Hill claims that “John Crawley ... had no doubt that the assurance related only to the third question.” (Hill, 1974, 181). Dimbleby and Pope are unclear as to the precise implication of the statement in the transcript that an extraction would be made, though they do admit to fighting very hard to keep in the question about the money earnings and to keep in Wilson saying that “I’m not going to answer that” because they “thought it was revealing and quite important that it should be seen”. Haines in a

1. Editor News and Current Affairs - in overall charge of news and current affairs output and one of the Corporation’s most senior and prestigious posts.

2. This was Dimbleby’s effort to pursue the question of how much Wilson had been paid for the memoirs, at which Wilson became extremely angry.
piece in the Guardian (15.1.71) wrote that "On May 12, Mr. John Crawley, special assistant to Mr. Charles Curran, The Director General, telephoned me to say that he had 'no hesitation in saying that the whole of that section will be destroyed formally, lost sight of and forgotten'. I still possess my original shorthand note of that conversation." Reading this extract from Haines' article, it would still be possible to argue that the reference was to the second part of the conversation. When asked about this in an interview, Haines declared:

"There is no doubt in my mind, there is no doubt I am sure in John Crawley's mind, there was no doubt in Angela Pope's mind, there was no doubt in David Dimbleby's mind, what the objection was. You have to keep coming back to the point that this was a programme, a serious Tuesday Documentary about the workings of Her Majesty's loyal Opposition, and the whole of that section (in the Guardian) means simply that. He (Dimbleby) had gone from visits to America, relations with the Common Market, Africa and all that, - it was a long interview you see - he had gone from that suddenly to the question of Mr. Wilson's money. There can be no doubt what we are objecting to. The conversations that I had with Curran, with John Grist subsequently, with Crawley, with Dimbleby, with Pope, they had no doubt, none of them. If they try afterwards to justify a bad programme, that I understand. They may feel compelled to do so because the alternative is to admit that they were wholly in the wrong and I wouldn't expect them to do that. But there's no ambiguity, there was no doubt, none at all. In all the conversations we had with them I don't think there was ever any real possibility of doubt. They knew what I meant and I knew what John Crawley meant."

For a month then, from May 12th to June 16th, there is an apparent understanding between Wilson (via Haines) and the BBC (via Crawley). Even this, however, is not totally clear since Lord Hill, quoting from his diary of 17th June, declares: "When the incident in the programme, Yesterday's Men, concerning Harold Wilson's income from his memoirs was reported to me by the Director General two or three weeks ago, he told me that the questions on this subject were to come out, Wilson having been so assured. Today he said that the assurance given to Wilson - in fact it was given by John Crawley to Wilson's press adviser, Joe Haines, - was that it was only the third question that should come out, and that
the television people proposed to include the first two questions and the answers" (Hill, 1974, 181). What seems to have happened is that a precise interpretation of the Crawley-Haines conversation was established at this high administrative level, was in line with Haines' understanding as to the nature of the agreement, but that this was never transmitted to the "television people". When these latter were preparing a rough cut of the film they decided to leave the questions in - "We decided to put in this much of the question, 'Mr. Wilson, it has been said that you earned several figures (sic) from your book, is that true?' and he answered 'I don't know why that should be of any interest to the BBC', and then he went on. We realised obviously that the row could not be in, so we cut on 'It's no interest to the BBC'". One source argues that everyone in the hierarchy, effectively meaning the troika previously described, knew that the question and answer were left in and thought nothing of it, "none of us knew that it was going to blow like that", and they could not have known because the behaviour of the labour people was "totally irrational and unpredictable". Thus not only was no clear picture of the 'pledge' transmitted to Pope and Dimbleby, but also those in direct editorial control did not have a clear understanding of the extent of deletion promised to Wilson. It does seem though that Curran and his Assistant were aware that the understanding referred to all the questions relating to the memoir money.

What is crucial is that until Wednesday, 16th June, Wilson and Haines believed that the whole of the extract would be erased. On the 10th June news of the 11th May row was made public for the first time in the 'Londoners Diary' of the Evening Standard, and was repeated over the next three days in the rest of the press. By the 16th June Wilson and, particularly, Haines became aware that all was not as they thought it would be. Haines states:
"The first thing that alerted us was when we discovered that the programme was called *Yesterday's Men*, and we discovered that by looking in the *Radio Times*. We protested at this: I protested about this .... I had spoken to John Crist about this and almost in passing I said 'I take it that these other points, the house and more particularly this conversation, would not be in' and to my astonishment John Crist, who I knew very well, said that he could not help me on that, he would have to refer me to higher authority, and just went all stiff and formal, and when I questioned him he kept repeating that he couldn't help me. By this time we were getting alert, I think that what then happened was that I did refer it to Curran and then Curran told me, or told Wilson, that this part of the conversation was still in."

This was then the making of the second major row, which did not just revolve around the questions having been kept in, but also involved the fact that photographs had been included of Wilson's Buckinghamshire farm and a dislike of the tone of the title, *Yesterday's Men*. The history of the photographs was basically that Pope had wished to include film of the new farm but this had been rejected on the grounds of security. Instead of film a number of photographs had been included which was felt by Haines to have been another broken 'promise'. By the night of the 16th June the question of the programme had been taken out of the hands of Dimbleby and Pope, and was being dealt with at the very highest levels of the BBC. The central question was what assurance had been made to Wilson about the deletions from the programme. Hill's diary for 17th June notes:

"Last evening there were further talks between the Director General, Huw Wheldon and Wilson's advisers, including Lord Goodman". The meeting had taken place at Lord Goodman's flat. A particular point of contention was to be that in late May Charles Curran had sent Wilson what he described as the only copy of the tape in existence, along with a memo from Angela Pope to John Crist stating that this was indeed the contentious part of the conversation. On the 16th Wilson and Haines discovered that not only was it not the sole record but that part of it was to be broadcast nationally the following evening. The point was compounded on the 16th June when the whole of the conversation was leaked to the press."
Following the meeting of the evening of 16th/17th June, during which Goodman had hinted that an injunction might be sought to prevent the programme being broadcast, there followed a night in which Hill tried to avoid talking to the representatives of Wilson:

"I was staying at the flat at the BBC following a dinner and Mrs Marcia Williams tried to get me so that Wilson, accompanied by his solicitors, could speak with me. The telephone girl had already informed Mrs. Williams that I was on the telephone to Charles Curran and would ring her when I had finished. I had to indulge in the subterfuge of getting her to tell Mrs. Williams that I had gone home, whereupon Mrs. Williams said she would ring me at home in about an hour's time, which would have been about 1 a.m. I rang my wife straightaway and told her not to answer the telephone during the night. My purpose in all this was to avoid being put in the position of having pressure applied to me." (Hill, 1974, 182).

During the same night at some point Hill and Curran agreed that the Governors should see the film, but had great difficulty in obtaining it since the producer had the film reel and was not contacted until 6 a.m. on the morning of 17th June, transmission day. The demands of the Labour Party had crystallised into three: the title should be changed; the photographs of Grange Farm should be removed; the question and answer about the memoirs should be excluded. A press showing of the programme had been scheduled for 11 a.m. on the 17th, but since the Governors were to see the film this was delayed until noon. The Governor's meeting concentrated on two issues: the legitimacy of Dimbleby's question about the memoirs; the nature of the pledge made to Haines about the extent of the deletion. The question of the Grange Farm photograph and the title were also raised. The decision was made to delete all of the references to the memoir but to retain the title and the still photographs of Grange Farm.

Haines had initially intended to boycott the press showing on the grounds that they had been promised a separate showing of the film so that

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1. A report in the Evening News (19,6,71) argued that only 5 governors viewed the programme and decided on the cuts, Hill, Fulton, Dunleath, Dame Mary Green, Murray. I have not been able to confirm this from any other sources, and certainly Hill states in his memoirs that Greene was present (183).
they could comment on it but had then had their request for the separate showing turned down. Following the revelations of the night of the 16th, their discovery of the title and a telephone call to Transport House from someone within the BBC "warning how bad this was", Haines decided to attend. The press reaction was to be mixed but Haines' immediate reaction was that the whole programme was a send up and that given the fact that they had been assured that it would be a "serious documentary" there had been a "carefully calculated, deliberate, continuous deceit over a period of months". This then brings us to the third and perhaps most significant controversy, the question of the programme's intent - which was rapidly followed by two further points of contention: a statement in the film about Wilson having "privileged access" to government papers for writing his memoirs (which brought an immediate threat of libel); and then the leaking of the deletions by an anonymous caller to a number of newspapers. The press on the 18th June was full of the substance of the deletions. The Labour people were further annoyed when on the night of the 18th June, the same spot in 24 Hours carried a rather celebratory review of Heath's first year in office. Entitled 'The Quiet Revolution' it was described by Greene, among others, as a "programme of a very different character" from Yesterday's Men (Greene, 1972). Following the Governor's decision about the content of the programme, the final decision about its actual transmission at 10 p.m. that night seems to have been made by Grist, Head of CAG. He had another production team preparing an alternative programme in case the decision was not to broadcast Yesterday's Men, and it was only a very short time before the programme that the decision was finally made to go ahead.

Press comment on the programme dealt with both the details of the row and the critical appraisal of the programme. The accounts of the row were as one might expect shallow and unclear. Having gone through all the press
copy which sought to assess the merits of the programme I estimate that there was a 3:2 favourable comment ratio. The programme was variously described as "fascinating television" and "one of the most interesting (programmes on politics) ever shown on British television" (Telegraph). It was lauded for turning "yesterday's people of power into real people" (Express) and for refusing to "look on the touchy untouchables as stuffed penguins ... It was human, lively and interesting ... an entertaining and professional job" (Mirror). But it was also criticised for being "45 minutes of television gossip column" (Guardian). The Times editorial (19.6.71) attacked the programme for trivialisation (see below), the Telegraph editorial felt that both sides had cause for complaint and the Guardian thought it was a "night worth forgetting" (see below).

Following the transmission of the programme the controversy revolved around four main questions: had the Labour leaders been deceived; had the film been cut in such a way as to present a distorted view of the lives of the Labour leaders; had there been a breach of faith by the BBC; who had leaked the extracts to the press (Hill, 1974, 185)? These were to provide the central focus of the inquiry which was instituted by Lord Hill on the 21st June, and conducted by Maurice Tinniswood, the Director of Personnel, and Desmond Taylor, ENGA. The investigators' Report was delivered to a special meeting of the Governors on 7th July, along with a draft of a possible Governors' statement prepared by Hill. Published in The Listener on 15th July, the Governor's Report consisted

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1. Much was made in the press of one shot which purported to be Crosland's house, but which, in fact, showed a building occupied by five families.
of an amalgam of the investigators' Report and the Hill draft.

Between the 17th June and the 20th a large volume of press copy stemming mainly from the Labour party's briefing of the lobby, indicated that the Party was extremely annoyed and felt that its representatives had been deceived. This culminated in a speech by a senior Labour party man, Bob Mellish, in which he stated that there was "a limit to how much democracy can abuse, insult, sneer and jeer... If the BBC go on with this type of campaign, we must counter it by whatever activities we have at our disposal within the party publicity machine". It was in the context of this furore, particularly over the question of deceit, that the inquiry was instituted. It was amplified when Grossman in his other role as Editor of the New Statesman made a scathing attack (25th June 1971) on the programme makers sparking off a further wave of press comment and publicity.

The Governor's Report (Listener, 15th July 1971) was a detailed refutation of the principal charges. It poured forth facts and in doing so sought to swamp the Labour arguments. It showed that the ratio of transcript

1. An interesting and possibly revealing aside needs to be mentioned. Lord Goodman in behalf of Wilson prepared a memorandum, referred to in Hill's memoir. The context is a meeting between Curran and Goodman at which a possible libel action is discussed following the reference to Wilson's "privileged access". Hill states: "Then came a long memorandum from Goodman's firm addressed to the Governors in which the whole history of the programme was recited, and deception and misrepresentation were alleged in a wealth of detail" (Hill, 1974, 186). In point of fact it seems that the memorandum did not reach the Governors until the date of the 7th July meeting, that is some ten days after it had been despatched by Goodman's office. In reply to a written request for more information on this point Tinniswood who conducted the investigation would only say that "A full report on the Yesterday's Men programme was prepared and presented to the Board of Governors. It was a confidential report and I do not think that it is appropriate for me to enter into correspondence on this matter" (Letter 6th Dec, 1974). I had not asked to see the details of any confidential report, I had merely asked if the Governors had seen a memorandum which on my information was intended for them. In reply to the same request for information Lord Hill stated that the "Goodman, Derrick memorandum was dated June 24th and was reported to the Governors meeting...on July 7th. Arriving while an inquiry was being conducted by the Director of Personnel, Maurice Tinniswood, the memorandum was drawn into the process of investigation which culminated in the special meeting of July 7th" (Letter 25th Nov, 1974). The memo then was delivered only as part of another lengthy report and only at the time of the meeting when it would presumably have been at least difficult, if not impossible, to digest its content and meaning.
available to transcript used was for each of the participants on average 12:1. It provided details of the time (minutes and seconds) spent on the different areas, "Defeat and adapting to the idea of being an Opposition: 4 minutes 48 seconds," Financial consequences: 4 minutes ..." etc. It argues that of the 7 main areas of questioning "all the participants were questioned on nearly all of these matters." The Report then proceeds to "comment" on the programme and on this factual analysis. It argued that the question about the memoirs and the money were permissible, but that given the misunderstanding on the scope of the deletion it was only right to delete that area. The Report argued that on the whole the area of questioning "conformed to the description that the programme would be about the 'political and personal nature of the job of Opposition' and that no major area of interviewing was omitted. In any journalistic exercise, it argues, there is a need to edit and cut material down to a manageable size and that given their analysis (paras 5 and 6) "the material finally selected from the interviews for use in the transmitted programme was on the whole representative and fair", "there was no improper or inadequate intercutting". The title should have been transmitted to the participants, and the programme makers should have realised that the song used "represented a substantial change in the atmosphere in which the film would be interpreted by the participants from that which they might have expected from earlier descriptions of the programme." Certain aspects of the treatment were "too frivolous". The leaks are condemned but, the Report adds, there is no conclusive evidence as to where in the BBC they originated, but that there is some evidence that the BBC was not the only source of the leaks. The nature of the placing of Yesterday's Men and the Heath programme on the following night was an error. The Report ended on a flourish of principles about the fair and impartial nature of BBC news and current affairs coverage, embodied in a 'case law' of
'principles and practices'.

The Report was seen by the press as a defence by the Governors of their own staff, with only a mild rebuke for one or two misdemeanours, and there were such headlines as "BBC defends Dimbleby", "BBC Rejects Charges", "New Labour Fury", "Carry on Dimbleby". There is little doubt that in many ways the whole Report was a defensive exercise. Among those programme makers directly concerned there was a feeling that it was a "very shrewdly devised political exercise by Lord Hill to recover from a disastrous position". There is also a strong feeling that the firmness of the support for the programme makers in the Report was because a) the Governors had cleared the film for transmission on the 17th June and therefore could not, without severe loss of face, condemn the programme; b) to have condemned the programme would have been to imply that Pope and Dimbleby were without adequate supervision; c) to have argued that there was full editorial control would have made it even more difficult to take the programme to task since the whole editorial structure of the BBC current affairs would have been implicated.

In mid-July Hill was sent a letter from Wilson's solicitors "demanding an abject apology, trailed on the air and in the Radio Times, plus the payment of his costs and a contribution to a charity named by him. In short we were asked to grovel ..." (Hill, 1974, 190). The legal question was still over the use of the phrase "access to privileged documents". The BBC publicly apologised on Friday, 6th August, for the use of "certain words (which) might suggest that he had made advantageous use of privileged or secret documents in an unjustifiable fashion". The controversy of *Yesterday's Men* was ostensibly at an end.
A number of questions need to be considered, not the least of which is the possible light which the controversy throws on the nature of the relationships, and the consequences of the relationships, between broadcasters and politicians. We need to consider this in terms of the overall consequences of *Yesterday's Men* for programme making since 1971. There is, however, a third point which needs to be considered, and it is, on reflection, perhaps the most profound and significant of the three. This is the insight that an analysis of the making of the programme provides into the situation and intentions of the programme maker, and the way in which this is generated, not by political malice or bias but by a competitive institutional structure and a limited technology. Ironically, an analysis of the consequences of external structures leads back into the previous discussion of the internal processes of programme making. It may well emerge that the single most potent political act affecting broadcasting in the post-war world was not Suez, *Yesterday's Men* or any of the numerous overt clashes, but the decision in 1953 to establish a commercial service.

Hardcastle (1971) argued that conflict between broadcasters and politicians has been a recurring theme throughout the 50 year history of the medium, and that the first and most important consequence of the *Yesterday's Men* controversy was a "strong assertion by the BBC of its right of independent editorial judgement". Rejecting Labour Party notions that the programme exemplifies a general state of malaise and anti-Labour opinion within the BBC, Hardcastle's view is that there was, on this occasion, "an obvious lack of consistent editorial supervision". It was, he implies, an anomaly, a mistake. This view was put by two other individuals who were obliquely connected with the programme. That the Editor of *24 Hours* had been away for some of the time, that it wasn't 'really' part of *24 Hours*, that Grist was more concerned with programmes about the Common Market, and so on.
Unfortunately for this view, there is ample evidence that they were made aware throughout what the programme would be about, they knew of the song and even saw rough cuts of the actual programme.

If Hardcastle's tone was pro-BBC, anti-programme makers, support for the latter came from Kee (1971) who argued that the programme was a "vulgarily brilliant equivalent of the newspaper cartoon - a concentration on one point of truth to a near grotesque extreme, as is the way of cartoons". In his only full length public discussion of the programme to date, Dimbleby (1972) takes up this point. Detailing the problems of looking at the 'political and personal' problems of the new Opposition, he describes it as an ambitious aim which could only be achieved by using all "the facilities television afforded us". "In addition to interviews and commentary, there was to be music, cartoon and even a hint of satire. In this respect we took less liberty than the press does daily with its choice of headlines, its cartoons, its speculations, its editorials and its satirical comment". The initial spark to the controversy he states was an "extraordinary outburst" following a "question to the Leader of the Opposition ... put in a bantering fashion in full expectation of an equally bantering reply" (Dimbleby 1972). In similar terms Smith (1972) states that the problem arose because of "the smile which Mr. Wilson failed to see". Smith was not of course at the interview and it is difficult to see how he could have been aware of 'the smile'. Broadcasting, Dimbleby argues, has been characterised by a tradition in which not only has the professional broadcaster been excluded from the formulation of general policy, but is also excluded from the formulation of policy in areas where he is specifically and directly concerned, as for example over *Yesterday's Men* where "At no point during the *Yesterday's Men* affair did the Chairman or the Governors talk directly with the programme makers" and it is this "failure to consult", not only in the context of *Yesterday's Men* but "right across the board in current affairs broadcasting" which irks
Dimbleby greatly. Essentially, Dimbleby wishes the hierarchy to firmly identify with the professional broadcaster, and harks back to a golden age of Greene when a unity of interest between broadcaster and administration was deemed to exist. From this unity, the argument goes, there emerged a forthright and aggressive use of the medium. From that, however, emerged contention and so slowly the sharp edge of television journalism has been blunted and the world of broadcasting gone into retreat. Dimbleby's is an interesting piece in that *Yesterday's Men* becomes not a cause of events, not a unique example of pressure and its consequences, but rather exemplary of an already existing process. The walls as it were had already begun to crumble, *Yesterday's Men* merely served to weaken them further.

His article also touches on an area which is central to *Yesterday's Men* and which ultimately casts light on the whole changing role of broadcasting vis-à-vis the political sphere. This is the ambiguous and ultimately contradictory position adopted by the Governors of the BBC. To whom do the Governors owe their loyalty and responsibility, to the public interest or to the programme makers? The problem arose from the Governors not only vetting the programme, and therefore acting in an editorial role (the 17th June role), but also sitting in judgement on that editorial decision (the 15th July role). Hill is aware of the problems involved: "Reflecting on the sequence of events, a nagging question kept recurring in my mind. Whose role was it to protect those who believe they have been unfairly treated by the BBC? Strictly speaking, the answer is the Governors, for they represent the public. But, as in this case, it is often necessary and right for the Governors to defend the staff of the BBC when they have been unfairly attacked. The more we were seen in this defensive role, the more difficult it was to be seen to be, if not actually to be, the trustees for the public." (Hill, 1974, 189-90). Smith (1972) puts the point succinctly:
"what right had the Governors of the BBC to sit in judgement on a matter of editorial content which they had themselves viewed and sanctioned on the day of the transmission?" Given the inability of the governors, the argument goes, to exert any authority over the broadcasters, then somebody must be instituted to exert control and authority, via a Broadcasting Council. The Chairman and Governors could not occupy twin roles of senior executive and public guardian. The supreme irony in this debacle is that the initial step towards the establishment of an executive Board was made first of all by Wilson who, through the appointment of Lord Hill sought to supplant the authority of Greene. The process had in a sense begun with Normanbrook, and certainly at the time of his appointment as Chairman in April 1964, Normanbrook was thought to have been a 'tough' appointment.

As Greene indicates, however, in his role as Chairman, Normanbrook always refused requests for the Governors to vet programmes before transmission, deeming this an executive role and therefore not appropriate to them.

Hill clearly pursued an executive role as was indicated in the account of the 1967-1970 period. On this most important executive action by a non-executive Board the result was not to Wilson's liking.

The Times editorial thought the programme "utterly trivial", "the attitude of the gossip column or the political novelette", the view of "immature young people" (Grossman was to describe Dimbleby as a "cub reporter promoted above his station"). The Guardian (19.6.71) pitched in with a similar theme, saying that "Pope and her jump cutters produced a giggly, gossipy documentary full of snide visuals and engagingly crass questions of the would-you-stab-Harold-in-the-back-or-front variety.

Sometimes it looked like a breakfast food commercial, sometimes it echoed Butch Cassidy; always it steered away from issues or real problems or fundamental political judgements. Like so much other TV 'reportage',
it was, in fact, a technical entertainment job—a skilled blending of interview
snippets and scenes from life and lilting sound tracks by a team whose
commitment was to the blend and not necessarily to the issues involved.
Mr. Wilson chanting 'Through the night of Doubt and Sorrow', fumbling with
his golf clubs or parading against the sunset to a sardonic score may make
a splendid collage of emptily symbolic photographs, but are the judgements
they conveyed worth anything? Were they picked because they make a slick
little ... jab or a point". Contrasting the artificially slick "Wizard
Wilson" of a Labour Party broadcast, with the equally artificial "stumbling
derisory Wilson" of Yesterday's Men, the Guardian concludes that the problem
faced by the BBC is not the sustaining of its independence but whether "the
independence it seeks to defend is being used seriously by production teams
who care about getting it true and gritty. Is Miss Pope's Wilson any more
life-like than Transport House's? If not, why not?" In a perceptive piece
of writing in the Guardian (32.6.71) Peter Jenkins argued that the Labour
Party did have cause for complaint, that the treatment was trivial and
superficial but that this flowed from the nature of the medium, "film in
current affairs is all too frequently the enemy of content, and visibility is
itself inimical to the treatment of most serious subjects." The problem, it
is argued, lies in a contradiction between the use of the medium to entertain
and inform in a competitive situation.

There are a number of themes then in the public discourse over the
programme. The lack of editorial control; the impropriety of the
questions; the trivialisation of the subject matter; the bias of the BBC
against the Labour Party; the contradictions in the position occupied by
the Governors. The central theme of the attack by the Labour Party on the
programme was that they had been misled into expecting a serious programme
and been served with a send-up. The most forthright presentation of the
Labour Party case came from one of the participants, Grossman. Arguing that
they had been invited to do a serious programme, the participants, Crossman states, were interviewed at length on a number of issues, and no one doubted for "a moment that while the programme in which he was due to participate would provide lively television entertainment, its main concern would be to present a fair and objective picture of how the Labour Party ... had settled down to its role as Her Majesty’s Opposition" (Crossman, 1971). The actual programme "was grotesquely and indecently different" from the programme the ex-Ministers expected. The interview material was chopped away to leave only the 'spicy trimmings', 'distorted' impressions were created of what had been said, and apparently contradictory extracts were juxtaposed:

"the effect was achieved first through the deliberate fraud by which the politicians were persuaded to take part and, secondly, by the even greater fraud by which fragments were snipped out of the interviews they gave and juxtaposed in order to convey a false impression of what they had meant and even of what they had actually said."

The whole programme was "shallow and trivial", a "fraud" perpetrated by individuals with inadequate editorial supervision. Broadcasting House, through its negligence, effectively granted them "a licence to distort and misrepresent". In a recent interview, Haines described the programme as "disgraceful. It was never any attempt to be a serious film about the Opposition. It was a send up. Dennis Healey, I remember his contribution was cut in such a way as to make it appear as though he was bemoaning his loss of income. For example, I remember he said something like that his income had dropped from whatever it was, £10,000 to £9,000 p.a., to £8,000, and there it stopped, whereas what Dennis had in fact gone on to say was 'but I am not complaining - most of my constituents in Leeds are far worse off'. It was that sort of cutting ... the thing was generally a send up ... the intention all along was a send up. This was really our principal complaint - it was not the question that was asked but the deceit ..."
These various charges appear to be refuted by the Governors' Report. The 'facts' however do not speak as loudly as they were made to seem since "tone" does not lend itself to the type of quantification carried out in the Report: one can produce details of the distribution of question areas etc. but that tells one nothing about the overall character of the programme. The principal view which emerges from press comment on the programme is that it was a send up, though there was disagreement over the suitability of such a send up. Difficulty, of course, lies in assessing the impressions created in the minds of the participants by the programme makers, and in assessing the particular motives of the programme makers.

Two questions linger: did Dimbleby and Pope create the impression that it would be a 'serious' documentary; did they intend to create that impression? All the evidence points to 'yes' for the first question; a qualified 'no' for the second question. Yesterday's Men employed a number of unusual techniques which created the adverse reaction of the participants, but their employment did not flow from any commitment to an anti-Labour line. Indeed, it is possible to argue that the problem lay in a profound disinterest in the more traditional forms of politics and political television which led the programme makers to develop ideas of presentation, and this was to be the spring for the controversy.

To understand why Yesterday's Men turned out as it did, and to see the interaction between the political sphere and the act of making programmes, one has to consider very carefully the particular conceptions of current affairs television possessed by the programme makers. As described in the preceding narrative, Dimbleby and Pope, following their initial research for the programme, had doubts about the possibilities of the programme but, having informed the Labour people of their intentions, were forced to go ahead and produce a programme. Both wished to avoid what they regarded
as the more staid, and therefore boring, aspects of current affairs television. Pope declared, "I certainly wasn't going to make a film about the constitutional position of the Opposition." In addition, the producer felt that the views of the Labour leaders on their political role, as the official Opposition would not provide 50 minutes of television, and this in itself led to a focus on the more personal realm of individual adjustments to a new role:

"when you go and talk to someone about a programme, ideally it's a two way thing. I mean, you have a general idea and you go and see whether what they say bears out or is interesting and whether they have got anything to say. We certainly felt that they hadn't got anything really terribly interesting to say ... It was perfectly clear that they had got nothing to say about how the Labour Party was going to function over the whole five years of Opposition. So that area that we had thought out, i.e. "What are you going to do in Opposition?" in a very general sense wasn't worth including in the film."

In other words, she is arguing that because of the difficulties of discussing the more overtly political questions, they were thrown back onto discussing the more personal questions of the adjustment to the loss of power and status. It is, however, possible to argue that this developing perspective was never transmitted to the participants and, for example, the letter from Dimbleby to Wilson, quoted on p. , could be interpreted as meaning that there would be more, not less, attention paid to political questions.

Pope has a clear conception of herself as a programme maker who does not readily fit within the orbit and limitations of Current Affairs Group:

"I ought never to be in 'current affairs' and I think that's probably why I made the show the way I did because I'm interested really in - it sounds terribly phoney - in trying to engage, to put over a subject. I am really very interested in the techniques of filming for television - that's really what I get my buzz off. Had I been a straight current affairs man, I would never have conceived Yesterday's Men the way I did, but I think that up till then I have always been trying terribly hard to stretch myself on the medium,
to do things with it, to convey a message, and remember when I got the subject I thought: "Christ, however am I ever going to make anybody watch this?" because week after week I'd fallen off my seat with boredom watching them with Robin Day on Panorama. I genuinely thought 'these are the things I want to say, how can I use all the techniques which I know, how can I make sound work to say certain things, and how can I use pictures? What can I do?' Had it been straight current affairs I would never have done that. Really I oughtn't to be there, I ought to be in Features or something."

There is then a fascination with the nature and use of the medium and a rather despondent lack of concern with the ebb and flow of Parliamentary politics. The contrast is with current affairs people who are quite "fascinated with current politics, but don't really think about it being telly", "... current affairs output is very dreary, very safe, very unimaginative on the whole." The task then as seen by Pope was to deal with a serious subject in an entertaining way: "I knew I was making an edgy, biting and, I hoped, engaging programme and that's what I was about, I hoped that I was asking some serious and important questions and I hoped that I was answering them engagingly ..." The fascinating part here is that in Chapter 5 I indicated the way in which different definitions of programming and stylistic criteria derived from different departmental structures. Pope presents the image of an anomaly within a departmental structure, the basis for the friction thus being provided by her anomalous position within CAG.

The conceptions of the producer were allied to the very similar views held by Dimbleby. Discussing the way that Panorama tends to focus on subjects such as Willy Brandt's policy of Ostpolitik, he observed:

"... Now, Ostpolitik is a) extremely important, b) very complicated, c) not very televisonal in the sense that there is nothing to look at very much except the faces of German politicians rabbiting on, d) is therefore pretty dull on the screen. But some people believe that television has a duty to do these dull things because that is what life is like and all the rest of it.

I find that admirable but I'm not sure myself that it is a sensible view. I don't take the view that it's all got to be froth, at all, but I do think that one of the merits of the machine (TV) is that it can make subjects, which people otherwise would not be interested in, interesting and worth watching. You are involved with a constant,
almost paternalistic, activity of coaxing people to come and see, come and find out, come and watch."

The challenge in Dimbleby's mind is to take a subject which, though serious, has been done many times previously in a rather boring manner and to make that subject visually appealing. He chose the example of trade unions to illuminate the point.

"To most people in the audience trade unionism is something they've heard so much about, and they are so used to the same old union leaders rabbiting on, that if you are coming to make a film about how trade unionism works, one's first thing is to say 'Well, look, we all know what those people are going to say and the audience knows, let's not do that again, let's try and find some way, for instance, of explaining the grass roots strength, explaining the role of the shop steward. Now one way of doing it is we can do a sort of university of the air type programme about it, where you interview some shop stewards in a fairly solemn way and explain where they stand on the shop floor. That's one way.

The other thing you can try to do is to make a film which was about them as individuals as well as about them in their political role and which would become something which at an individual level was interesting. People you see work very well on television. Institutions, abstract concepts, don't work so well. And what people like about television - and in a way they are sensible because the abstract concepts come across much better in print - what they like is this feeling that you are actually being shown the man who's in this situation. Take the trade unionists, of course you can spend time explaining what the shop steward's role is, of course you can talk to the union or the management about the shop stewards and all that sort of thing. But in a funny way, unless you can also make the shop steward come alive as a person, it won't amount to much more than an awful lot of stuff that's been done already."

Dimbleby's proposition is that by focussing on the more personal aspects of a man's life you can in a sense "make him come alive" and, in doing so, throw light on the motivations of his political self as opposed to his private self. A key factor in this view of broadcasting and a key to the nature of *Yesterday's Men* was a belief - a theme in Chapter 5 - that "television is not the same kind of medium as books or newspapers, and it's not at heart an intellectual medium, though the process demands intellect of course, but it's not at heart something that appeals to the intellect. It's something that works on all sorts of different levels, much more emotional than intellectual." The premise is that the political broadcaster is
"an entertainer as well as a political journalist. And people who aren't become very quickly not watched." And, of the relevance of all this to the programme: "the idea of the song and the idea of the music and the idea of the cartoon weren't in our minds in the beginning. Those things gradually came in as you try to make a potentially very boring film into something that's watchable."

The most significant feature in all this and the most relevant to the accusations of the Labour Party was that in making the film the programme makers adopted and developed techniques which were incompatible with the more traditional political formulae of 24 Hours and Panorama which at the time of Yesterday's Men were the centre pieces of C4G output. This clearly did not fit with the expectations of the Labour politicians taking part who were used to the more ritualised aspects of the Robin Day-type interview. Whether they were deceived is difficult to say. The problem was described in the following way: "They may in a sense have felt that their expectations weren't fulfilled. Certainly their expectations weren't fulfilled but those expectations were based on their own assumptions and not on anything that we had told them." The fact also remains that at least two of the participants sent friendly, but secret, notes saying that they weren't particularly bothered about the programme.

Much acrimony was caused by the fact that the Labour leaders were not told of the programme title. Part of the problem was that they did not care to ask the title since in the normal course of events a title like Yesterday's Men would not have been used. The programme makers argue that at no point "were the participants led to believe that the programme would be called "Her Majesty's Opposition" or the "Loyal Opposition" or the "Labour Opposition". The Labour leaders argue that the term "Her Majesty's Opposition" was used in their correspondence and that they quite
naturally assumed that this would be the title of the programme. However, the two programme makers were clearly aware of the possible difficulties which such a title might engender. They argue that it is not journalistic practice to disclose 'headlines', "we treated the title as a headline in a sense and had we communicated the title they wouldn't have accepted it". Pope's notes from the time state: "The second point raised in arguments about the title is that even if the participants did not raise the question of the title, I should have done. I have never been required to do this in the past, nor have I ever heard of any producer being required to do so. As I understand it, it is standard and accepted practice for a producer to choose his title". There is then another ambiguity or twist in that the programme makers, having moved from the world of 'straight' broadcast journalism, on this point are firmly employing the principles and practices as laid down, albeit informally, within that world. They are commuting between two different explanations of current affairs television in accordance with particular circumstances and it is therefore not too surprising that problems would be induced by such an ambivalent position.

One might expect a clash between broadcasters and politicians of the scale of Yesterday's Men to have enormous consequences, at least at the level of the careers of those involved. The two directly involved, Pope and Dimbleby, are both still functioning, and Dimbleby has become the presenter of the programme which epitomised the formal, boring current affairs television that he opposed, Panorama. Angela Pope faced a number of difficulties when preparing a programme requiring the cooperation of the members of local authorities and it seems unlikely that she would be allowed near Wilson again. The principal casualty was undoubtedly the Head of CAG, who was transferred to Controller English Regions. In his
book Hill described a meeting of the Governors on 14th July 1971 at which
Curran proposed "a change in the headship of current affairs in television.
He had had this in mind for some time in order to give John Grist a new
area of activity after a long spell in current affairs. He also proposed
to strengthen the control exercised by the editor of news and current
affairs and to add to the team someone with recent knowledge and experience
in the parliamentary field." (Hill, 1974, 190). In September Curran
informed another Board meeting of the "fruits" of the changes, with Desmond
Taylor, BHCA, "having a closer and fuller responsibility for all current
affairs programmes, spending more of his time at Lime Grove." (my emphasis).
Curran "thought that the new appointments and the redrawing of the lines
of responsibility would have a visible and significant effect on
24 Hours." (Hill, 1974, 190).

A clearer statement of the tightening of organisational and editorial
control would be difficult to imagine. In fact the civil tones of this
piece hide a considerable furore over these events. Contrasted with the
placid description by Hill, there is a statement relating to a meeting
between Curran and Wilson in May 1971 at which "Curran said to Mr. Wilson
in May when we met him at a party, 'Heads will roll for this', and I guess
the heads that rolled was just John Grist's head."

1. It is perhaps not insignificant that in his article in the New Statesman,
Crossman states of Broadcasting House, "It is here that the Director
General and the Chairman, presumably following the Teithian tradition
of not recognising television, have their headquarters connected only
by the Westway and the Central Line to that glass doughnut which is
TV Centre and that dank tenement building which is Lime Grove" (NS,
25th June 1971). Clearly with BHCA's increased presence in Lime Grove,
Broadcasting House would have a more 'significant' presence. As I
indicated in the account of the Greene-Hill situation the actual
physical placement of offices tends to take on considerable symbolic
importance.
The kind of image presented by the Labour Party was, and still is, a posture of impotent rage against the misdemeanours of the BBC. Clearly though, the rage is attached to something far more potent than is implied by their public statements. This something more was, I think, the negative effect which Wilson's reaction had on an embryonic development in programme form and content. The effect was a restoration of conventionality, the return to known assured formats. While I think that mistakes of a diplomatic nature were made by the programme makers, and while one might wish to question their judgement on certain issues, the events of "Yesterday's Men" derive from their attempt to integrate a number of original practices into the making of political television. Why this was so and how it relates to a general situation in broadcasting are discussed in the general conclusions to the chapter. What is significant is that they sought to embed the new seeds in an institutional and political environment which was far from ready to accept them. One can't explain the actions of the programme makers in the rather strident tones, involving imputations of conspiracy, which were employed by the Labour Party at the time. The change and effects induced by Wilson's response to "Yesterday's Men", while subtle though profound, probably only represented an acceleration of a retrenchment which had been gathering pace over the previous four years. An interesting parallel is "T" which had a relatively brief and successful life within CAG but which was removed by Greene in the light of what he felt to be its declining standards, the increasing problems posed by its style in an election year (1964) and the increasing disquiet among the Board of Governors about its content. The conception by those involved of what the impact has been, the consequences for programming, are clear:

"... Under Hugh Greene we were still in a stage of trying to discover what television can do. Now I think we are on the retreat in that I don't think you can expect any fireworks for some time. I think everybody is too much aware now of the kind of trouble like this that
you get into to allow it to happen. But I think that is allied in many people's minds to a genuine doubt about what the role of television is, and a genuine feeling that perhaps all that was perhaps the wrong way to use it and that you shouldn't be challenging, investigating in quite that way. I don't myself subscribe to this. I think that it is the right way of using it and I think it's a great pity that it hasn't really had a chance. But these new audience participation programmes for instance. In theory they are an attempt at enlarging the access to the BBC, in practice they are as disciplined as any other sort of programme ..... So I detect a rather hideous softening. It's not got very bad yet it's true and you can still see fairly straightforward reports on Panorama and Midweek. You still have very hard interviews with politicians, but somehow the feeling that it was a medium with which one could experiment has gone. The feeling for for instance we had with Yesterday's Men, there was a chance to really try and do something different with a political film, try and make it different so that it explained things in an entertaining way. All that's gone."

The importance of the political pressure generated during and after the affair lies not so much in the destruction of careers or the persistent cowering of broadcasters in response to a phone-call from the chief whips of the parties (though 'phone calls do indeed occur on a frequent basis). Rather it is the establishment, or re-establishment, of conventional forms of television, the forcing of recalcitrant producers back into established production routines and practices and the generating of concern among a hierarchy that the boundaries of these forms not be breached again. The impact of the Labour Party protests on the process of production within the BBC current affairs department was part of a much wider process, tied up with the appointment of Hill, then the retirement of Greene, threats of Broadcasting Councils and the break up of the existing broadcasting institutions. Perhaps the most interesting perception of the impact of the Yesterday's Men affair lies in Pope's own conception of the new parameters of the permissible, of how her own programming will be affected. Yesterday's Men, she states, was "sharp and entertaining",

"and the kind of telly that politicians have never been part of. In retrospect I can see this much more strongly than I could then. I think that to an extent I have learned an awful lot about that from the whole episode and one of the worst things is that I would never try to do it again. I have had my fingers burnt. I wouldn't try it and no-one else would try it for a very long time ... Nobody must do Yesterday's Men again. You mustn't. Better be safe than be imaginative."
TELEVISION IN THE GENERAL ELECTION: A 1974 CASE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

The supreme event in the to and fro of party politics is the calling of a General Election. Massive efforts are made, both by the parties involved and by the media, to present to the media a 'full account' of 'what is happening' and what the 'whole thing is all about'. Few events in the broadcaster's calendar match in importance the coverage of the results of an election - perhaps a royal wedding, the death of a president, the peril of an astronaut or the fate and fortunes of 'our' representatives in the Olympics or the World Cup, evoke a similar kind of response from the broadcasting organization in terms of their allocation of broadcasting time, man hours and financial resources. It becomes a massive logistical exercise, characterized by large doses of computerology and punditry, 'latest news' and 'in-depth analysis'. The expressed commitment is to a 'full and exhaustive' coverage of the 'event', broadcasting displaying to the full its public service wares. This is an account of one piece of the overall mosaic of that process, a case study of the coverage of the election of 1974 by one commercial television station, Associated Television. The main part of the election campaign was spent in the company's news and current affairs department, observing the to and fro of newsroom activity, holding informal interviews and noting as much as possible - decisions, discussions, conversations, jokes, reading, phone calls (who to, what for, etc?) - everything. This is an account of those notes, digested over the months that passed since then and while it clearly cannot hope to tap the whole logic of the television process, the final result does provide at least an insight into the 'logic' within which broadcasting is encased.

Walter Gieber may have been a little severe in his observation that

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1. It was, for example, noted by the trade magazine Broadcast that between them the BBC and ITV would spend somewhere in the region of ½ million pounds during the election of 1974.
news consists of "a series of related symbols that can be manipulated in the damnedest sort of ways by the damnedest type of persons ..." (1964), but anyone who has spent time in a newsroom will surely acknowledge that it is the damnedest type of process to try and describe. That what happens in the newsroom is important is argued profusely by many, that what happens during the course of an election campaign is even more important is reflected both in the plethora of regulations and agreements that ostensibly control the whole affair, and also in the rigorous attempts by the parties to gear their campaign to the requirements of the broadcast media (the 'walkabout' and Mr Wilson's pipe are both part of the battery of campaign techniques, both blend with the need for 'pictures' the central fact of life in the tv process).

How did this particular news organization approach the election? What issues did they see as important, how did they cover these issues, and why did they cover them in the way they did? To these basic questions were attached a series of sub-questions: what decisions were made, by whom, for what reasons, with what effect on their interpretation and selection of the issues of the election campaign?

**ATV AND POLITICS: THE COVERAGE OF A GENERAL ELECTION**

**Political Images from ATV**

ATV's actual 'election coverage' began on Monday 18 February, the beginning of the second week of the election campaign. The centre piece of the coverage was *Midday Report*, a 20 minute programme that went out at 12 p.m. each lunch-time Monday to Friday. The format for each Report was a discussion between the members of a panel formed from candidates, or particular interests (unions, business, etc.) or 'ordinary' voters, and varying in number from 3 to 6 members. Candidates might also appear as spokesmen for their party rather than as "the candidates from X constituency". The panel discussion was never mixed in the sense that candidates were always 'pitted' against candidates, spokesmen against spokesmen, and voters against voters, and the
panel was always formed from adherents of the three main parties (in Britain), and of the major interests in the industrial sector. Strenuous efforts were made to maintain a 'balance' within each individual programme, and on the occasion when that balance couldn't be maintained the programme was abandoned. Where the discussion was with candidates they were always from the same constituency, the introduction by the interviewer/presenter taking the form of "And today we have the candidates from Constituency X, who are Mr A, Mr B, and Mr C . . ." Where candidates were appearing as spokesmen representing the general interest of their party rather than their own particular candidacies, they were named along with their party, but no mention was made of their constituency. So, for example, one particular MP could appear on the very first Report even though the three other candidates from his constituency did not appear.

In addition to the time allocated to the main parties, time was also allocated to the two main 'minority' parties, the Communist Party and the National Front, each being interviewed for a few minutes during one of the Report programmes. Prior to this there had been some discussion over what to do with the various small parties that were putting up candidates in the Midland region. The Editor decided that they must distinguish between the CP and NF, and other parties such as the Workers Revolutionary Party, the English National Party and Dick Tavener's Social Democrats. He felt that while they may be able to make time available to the first two, who were putting up a number of candidates, they could not allow time to the other three who were putting up only one or two candidates each. He was well aware of the kind of anomalies implicit in the equation 'number of candidates - time allocated', and pointed to the fact that if one allocated time strictly according to number of candidates and overall electoral strength, the Liberal Party in the region would not receive equal time with the Conservative and Labour Parties, "It all comes down in the end to using your common sense, there are no easy answers."

Within the actual newsroom the literature from the minor parties was
not taken particularly seriously, though this was not the criteria by which the right of access to time was judged. This was done solely on the grounds that they had not enough candidates to warrant time. There was, for example, a good deal of antipathy towards the policies of the National Front and the Communist Party, but it was felt by the Editor that they were sufficiently important to warrant at least some time on the screen to put their views forward, whereas the various other minnows of the electoral battle could not, it was felt, be given any time.

The actual interviewing of the representatives of the two minority parties was carried out by the more experienced of the two political reporters, mainly because of an ill-defined feeling that the interviews would 'prove difficult'. As an added 'safeguard' the interviews were pre-recorded since no-one was quite sure what the National Front and Communist Party spokesmen would actually say, so as long as the interviews were pre-recorded control remained firmly in editorial hands. Another argument used was that "We don't want to associate the Conservative and Labour parties with the NF and CP" by putting them on live together in the same programme. There was then this feeling that while they must take account of these two minority groups, it would be wrong to taint the purity of the prevailing orthodoxy by bringing them into too close a contact with the major parties. Another 'problem' with the minority parties was the difficulty of getting hold of someone 'good' to represent them in the interview. This was particularly the case with the National Front from whom they were particularly keen to have Martin Webster, their National Organizer and only acknowledged media figure. Interestingly enough, this was not just a problem for the minority party since the inability of the Liberals to produce anyone of broadcastable quality for the programmes was referred to frequently.

The senior reporter felt that the Liberals had done very badly in all the "candidate contests", and during the preparation for the final programme of the coverage he declared that he had been on to them to "pull out the
stops in getting someone good for the final programme" which was to be a debate between spokesmen for the leading parties, "I'm hoping", he declared, "to get someone really good."

The amount of time that the two minority parties were given was, in the end, felt to be about right, "... 7 or 8 minutes with the National Front and the Communist Party will give them about \( \frac{3}{4} \) of that programme, which is about right for the rightful proportional representation for the whole series."

Thus while the minority parties were not thought to be particularly relevant to the election two of them had, by their putting up a number of candidates, laid a claim to broadcast time.

The election coverage also consisted of three \textit{Election Specials}: three 45 minute programmes going out at about 11 p.m. on the three Mondays of the election campaign. These consisted of a panel of politicians, facing an audience of on the first programme young voters, on the second old age pensioners and on the final programme women voters. The intention originally had been to have this format of panel and audience every day at lunch time, but as that slot was only 20 minutes long it was felt impossible to involve an audience in such a short time. The Executive Producer and the Editor therefore decided that they would have only the three programmes.

These two programmes, the Report and the \textit{Election Specials} together constituted the election coverage offered by ATV during the 1974 general election. There was also the main news magazine programme that went out at 6 p.m. each week day for 30 minutes, \textit{ATV Today}, but this, for quite specific reasons, contained little or no political material during the period of the whole election.

The only other major unit of election coverage was the actual results coverage on the morning of Friday 29 February (referred to in the organization as Day 2, Day 1 being the day of the election) when there was approximately 150 minutes of election news and panel discussion.
The Setting of Election Television

Any television production emerges from a complex organizational network which is itself rooted in a series of economic, political and cultural systems. It is to this systemic rooting of the election coverage that we now turn.

The election coverage was organized as part of the activity of the News and Current Affairs Department - henceforth 'newsroom' - of ATV, the franchise holders for independent television broadcasting for the Midland region. While ATV is one of the five major companies of the ITV network, the output of the newsroom was strictly locally (i.e. Midlands) oriented, a geographical boundary that provided one of the essential news values underpinning the main news magazine programme.

The editorial staff of the newsroom hovered around the figure of 20, an indefinite figure since it allows for one or two reporters who, while being technically free-lance, are employed almost wholly by ATV. In addition - there is a large body of technical operatives - directors, film editors, videotape editors, camera crews, plus the secretarial staff permanently resident in the newsroom either as secretaries to the executive producer and the news editor, or as facilities clerks, copytakers, autocue typists, etc.

Of central interest to this study are the editorial staff, since it is they who ultimately formulated the content of the programmes produced by ATV.

Figure One represents the formal aspects of the decision making structure - the theoretical flow of authority from the Editor and Executive Producer down to the rest of the editorial staff.

Direct editorial control was the same for both processes, but the actual work for the election coverage was done solely by just two reporters, a much smaller staff than were working on the news magazine programme. The acknowledged political correspondent for ATV over the years had been responsible for the political content of their programmes, carrying out the main
The Structure of a Newsroom: ATV

Executive Producer

News Editor

Deputy Editor (Programme Organizer)

News Desk Editor  Features Desk Editor

Reporters  Reporters (17)

Secretarial/Clerical Assistance

Presenter

For the duration of the election there were two 'organizations' and 'processes' functioning within the newsroom at the same time: that responsible for the evening news magazine programme ATV Today, and that responsible for the election coverage, as in Figure 2.

FIG. 2

Organisation of the Election Coverage

Executive Producer

News Editor

Reporter  Reporter
political interviews etc. He was assisted for the election by a younger reporter who had, prior to the election, been concentrating on industrial stories for the 6 p.m. programmes, though not in any sense that he could be described as an "industrial correspondent". He did as he stated "stories on the day for the day".\(^1\) Which meant that when a likely story came up he went to do a short report for the programme.

It was rather difficult to assess why this particular reporter had been chosen to assist in the election coverage, though it would seem to be a combination of his industrial reportage (and at least one of the main parties was saying that industrial affairs were what the election was all about), his being a 'bright young man' (New College, Oxford, etc.), and his general availability. Neither of them, however, could be regarded as specialists, and both did non-political stories for the 6 p.m. programme before the election.

The political coverage was then but one part of the overall activity of the newsroom during the period of the election. Vast amounts of information are flowing into the newsroom all the time, from the wire service, from stringers, from newspapers, other programmes, calls from the public. The traditional view of the processes operating within the newsroom is that of the gatekeeper, where news is seen to flow along 'channels' that at various points are blocked by 'gatekeepers' who filter the flow according to particular criteria, often referred to as news values. The task here for the media sociologists is to define who and what those keepers and criteria are. While this concept is overly static, providing only the bare bones of an analysis, it is nevertheless of considerable heuristic value in the general discussion of media institutions. Figure 3 presents schematically the idea of news-flow and gatekeeper within the context of ATV's main news production, and Figure 4:

1. The idea of 'on the day for the day' was determined by an agreement with the unions known as the 'Ten Hour Rule' which effectively meant that unless films were shot on the day in which they were broadcast they had to have a full crew for the actual filming, even though the story only really required a camera man and a sound man, and is therefore a much more expensive process.
### FIGURE 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Story/idea</td>
<td>Stringers</td>
<td>N.B. Their selection and transaction of information is a whole process itself, each part constituting a 'gate', each being part of the overall production and dissemination of the informational environment within Britain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wire service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newspapers/radio (i.e. local mainly, some national)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Own personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HR output</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Editorial staff at morning conference</td>
<td>Suitability, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision to do or not to do</td>
<td>Executive Producer</td>
<td>Relevance - to programme, to region, to 'house style'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>News Editor</td>
<td>Feasibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General consensus</td>
<td>Is it interesting/boring/ amusing/important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment of reporter</td>
<td>News editor</td>
<td>Availability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deputy editor</td>
<td>Suitability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>News desk/features eds.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Research'</td>
<td>Reporter - newspaper cuttings, telephone contact with relevant individuals</td>
<td>Relevance to story Use of 'expert' opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information assembled, Script written</td>
<td>Reporter</td>
<td>'Time' allocated for the item. Normative style of writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Suitable illustrative shots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Construction of the item Style Quality Illustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>House style Orchestration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If film is involved, location shooting</td>
<td>Reporter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crew</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editing</td>
<td>Reporter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Editor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
applies the same schematic presentation to the election coverage. A is the basic unit for consideration (in the case of Fig. 3 a story or an idea for a feature, in the case of Fig. 4 the presentation of the issues of the election), B are the relevant 'decision makers', and C are the 'criteria of decision making'.

In essence one is here presenting the general 'decision context' of the newsroom activity. The particular context of the election coverage - what decisions were made, by whom, in relation to what criteria, with what effect on the coverage - is outlined in Fig. 4. One of the key features of Fig. 3 is the notion that concepts of particular 'styles' predominated. This emphasis on the style of items, the appearance of things, the dominance of the notions of visual and linguistic appropriateness is a significant feature of the production process. Fig. 4 looks at the decision context of the actual election coverage, though here one is not dealing with

![Figure 4](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resource allocation (time, budget, etc.)</td>
<td>Director of Programmes</td>
<td>Companies 'needs': requirements of the franchise, audience 'needs', broadcaster's responsibilities, commercial requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmes: format, subject areas, type of questions</td>
<td>Executive Producer</td>
<td>Conception of their role in the election. The need for 'neutrality' and 'circumspection'. Audience requirements. Resource limitations. Needs of ITN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment of personnel for election coverage</td>
<td>News Editor</td>
<td>Suitability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmes: decisions The two election about particular reporters, contributors, organization of participants. Formulation of questions.</td>
<td>News Editor</td>
<td>Brief laid down by the news editor. The need to involve relevant Groups/parties. House style. Use of known 'performers'. Available resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
particular stories but rather 'units' of the coverage whether at the level of a decision as to who to have on the programme or at the more fundamental level of whether to have a programme at all.

There were then four levels to the organization of the election coverage and four levels of decision making that parallel the general pattern of authority within ATV. In sheer quantitative terms the bulk of the activity took place at the fourth level, i.e. the activity of the two reporters who worked on the coverage full-time. This was however activity within a tightly prescribed brief that detailed the amount of time they would be allocated, the basic resources they had available and the types of questions they would ask. The four levels constitute the hierarchies of decision making within the organisation, but the centre of control lay with the Director of Programmes and the News Editor.

The Politics of Making Political Images

When the election was announced by Edward Heath, the Director of Programmes asked the News Editor whether they could make use of time if it was made available, and the Editor decided that they could. The original idea had been to have a 45 minute special every night, but this had been abandoned in favour of the format of 20 minutes at lunch-time and the three evening election specials. That this happened was a function of the lack of resources, though it was also felt that to have 45 minutes every day was a bit excessive — there was a strong belief that the audience would become bored by an excessive amount of political material, especially as the BBC and ITN were giving a good deal of coverage to the election.

The timing of the programmes was interesting and revealing. The three specials went out at 11 p.m., and the Report at 12 p.m. lunchtime. These are clearly off-peak viewing hours when the viewing audience is likely to be relatively small. The Editor, his deputy and the reporters involved, were aware of this and argued that politics was not something which
interested large numbers of people, and that ATV was ultimately in the business of obtaining large audiences for their programmes, "... when you come down to it, television really is a question of audience figures, you have to aim at satisfying the largest number of people possible." The election programmes were put on then when "interested people could watch if they liked, but (at a time when) we wouldn't be forcing people who weren't interested into watching." Clearly though 'interested people' - who presumably were partly defined by their access to a television at lunchtime and by their having the energy to stay up until a quarter to midnight - are not the only ones who decide the fate of governments in an election, and therefore are not the only ones requiring the information which was the raison d'être of the election coverage. At the same time, in adopting the assumption that people do not 'like' political material, one begins to deny the possibility that such taste might conceivably develop if given the opportunity to do so. Clearly the economic logic of ITV does not allow for such experimentation since the experiment would of necessity be long term, would require a good deal of subsiding with no guarantee of success, and this the economics of commercial television cannot allow. The principles of commercial broadcasting do not readily marry with the principles of political communication. I am not suggesting here that ATV was being particularly cynical about this. Serious political material has always been pushed to the fringes of the schedules, with one or two notable exceptions such as *This Week* and *World In Action* - witness the cri de coeur of the late Kenneth Allsop over the demise of *24 Hours*. (Allsop, 1972).

In the construction of this basic framework for the election coverage, we can see several interrelated factors - propositions about the nature and

1. Such arguments are familiar to anyone reading accounts of American broadcasting. Muriel Cantor in a recent book on Hollywood television producers, points out that the "basic philosophy of the three commercial networks in the United States, as publicly espoused, is 'cultural democracy', which is defined as giving the people what they want." (Cantor, 1971, p.116).
role of broadcasting that structured these decisions.

1. There was the initial feeling that they must do something during the election. It could be argued if ATV did nothing at all in the way of serious broadcasting that they were not fulfilling their franchise requirements. This however is tempered by -

2. The basic economic logic that underpins the commercial television system in Britain. This essentially requires large audience figures; political television rarely attracts large audiences and therefore such coverage cannot command peak viewing time.

There are then two goals, which tend to pull in opposite directions:

(a) A political goal which requires that the Company, in tune with the requirements of the Television Act (Section 1(4)(a)) shall disseminate "information, education and entertainment", and that responsibility for observing this and the various other provisions of the Act "should be taken by the companies themselves as part of their contractual obligations."

(b) An economic goal since ATV is a commercial enterprise seeking to make a profit.

Within this framework decisions reflected the attempt to balance the two competing interests, i.e. responsible/serious broadcasting vs commercial broadcasting. This had a whole series of consequences for the next level of decision making - what 'kinds' of programmes were to fit into the slots made available, how were they to be done, who was to do them?

The single most important person on the organization of the election coverage was the Editor. He it was who decided who, from those available in the newsroom, would be responsible for actually putting the election programmes together and getting them on the air. He it was who decided how each programme should be approached, what kinds of questions would be asked and the types of people to whom the questions would be put. That he held this position was not particularly surprising. The Editor is the principal figure in any newsroom, even though he might not be responsible for every aspect of the day-to-day
activity of programme making; at ATV the main responsibility for getting the programme on the air every night at 6 p.m. lay with the Deputy Editor; in other newsrooms the task is carried out by a senior news assistant acting as the producer-of-the-day. Always though it is the Editor who has ultimate responsibility for hiring and firing, for budgeting, for the administration of the newsroom, for deciding in particularly difficult or contentious matters and for establishing the whole tone and style of the output from that particular newsroom. Decisions about the main programmes content are taken at the morning conference, where the bulk of the editorial staff discuss with the Editor the possibilities for that day, both in terms of possible news stories and other material for the main programme. There are very few concrete decisions actually made at the meeting, and indeed the actual point at which hard and fast decisions are made is difficult to pinpoint. During the period of the election the two reporters directly responsible for election material did not attend the morning conference. Their days were planned well in advance, again testifying to the duality within the newsroom, the parallel structure of the 6 p.m. programme and the election programmes.

In the election, the Editor was particularly careful to attend to potentially controversial details of all newsroom output. He was, for example, insistent on the need to be careful in dealing with potentially political material in the 6 p.m. programme. There was a suggestion at one morning meeting that they do an item about a local screws factory. The work-force at this particular factory had gone on strike and the owner had brought in members of his family to continue the production until the strike was over. The Editor asked, "They (the owner and his family) are not Tories are they?", which the other members at the meeting thought was an amusing question, but to which he added, "... be very careful about election stuff." He was clearly aware that the general election was, for one side at least, about the whole question of strikes and industrial militancy, and therefore felt that any strike story had, necessarily, political implications and was therefore to be treated with great care.
Two major decisions were made by the Editor about the content of the election programmes. He it was who decided on the three areas that were to be covered in the three 45 minute election specials: these were young voters, women voters and old age pensioners. These particular areas were thought to be both interesting and relevant to the outcome of the election. The Women Voters programme seemed to be singled out as a particularly "good idea", a feeling which rested on the observation that in 1970 it was the response of women to (the cost of) inflation which had projected Heath into Number 10, and which might therefore be again decisive in the context of the 1974 inflationary spiral. The three areas were also chosen because it was felt that these were areas where they would not duplicate the national coverage offered by ITN and where they could do adequate programmes.

The Editor also decided the basic types of questions that were to be put in the midday programmes and in the specials. A particularly interesting and significant decision was that as far as possible the election programmes would avoid adopting any position on the issues of the election and would only provide a forum for the various contestants and their supporters to state what they felt the issues to be. There was, however, something of an ambivalence on this. One of the two reporters informed me that the general area of questioning "that is, to look at their positions on the two major issues of 'who governs' and 'prices' was decided by (the Editor)". The Deputy Editor said, in reply to a question on how they decided on which issues to cover, that "We have to cover them all and ask the questions that are being put by the parties ... Even though we may not think that they are the issues we have to cover them and ask questions about them because the parties are raising them and we must balance."

The Editor himself was very clear that the position he wanted their coverage to adopt was one of asking 'What are the issues?' rather than 'These are the issues, what do you think?'. He said that the specific aim
of the programmes was to allow the parties and the voters to define the issues, "It's not up to us to tell them what the issues are. They must tell us - always within, of course, the limitations of the various restrictions imposed upon us by the Act (the Representation of the People Act)". If they were going to ask questions then they would have to ask the sort of things that the audience would ask if they were given the change. This format for the programmes was generally held to and while the specific questions in the script were drawn up by the presenter (the two reporters alternated) it was always a variation of the form "What do you think the issues of this election are?", followed up by various supplementary questions. This was not without its problems and there was a clear desire by the two reporters to develop specific lines of questions. One Report, for example, was to be a discussion between a panel of four non-politicians, two businessmen and two trade unionists. (The composition of this group was interesting: they consisted of one representative of big business, one of small business, one blue collar trade unionist and one white collar trade unionist. They thus might be seen as representing one view, a miniature, of the essential components of the non-political social world.) Before this particular programme there was some discussion, between the two reporters, of what questions they should put: they were particularly keen to raise the question of nationalization and the question of the Common Market, both issues which they felt - from their reading of the newspapers - to be emerging as important, and ones which were particularly relevant for this panel. The younger of the two suggested that they did not use the opening question 'What are the issues?', but in the event they did stick to the prescribed formulae, and only attempted to raise these other questions as supplementary points. That specific issues were raised was more a function of the tendency of discussion to wander into other areas than the result of any preconceived plan.

The tensions implicit in such a situation stems very much from its conflict with the concept of the professional interviewer who, in terms of the
professional ideology, plays the key part in the 'construction' of an interview: for the course of the election the brief they had to operate was such as to render any 'construction' impossible since the course of the interview was to be determined by the participants. For example, there was a feeling among the two presenters that the Liberals could not be treated in the same way as the Labour and Conservative Parties since, "Whatever happens they are not going to win the election." It was therefore felt to be pointless to put the question "What do you think are the issues?" to the Liberals, since implied in this was the notion that that they said and what they proposed in the way of policies, were important in the sense that they might, after February 28th, have to implement those policies. It was felt that a more relevant question to put to the Liberals was "What will you do in the event of your holding the balance of Power in the new Parliament?": this was the question that was increasingly posed by the newspapers. The decision was not theirs to make, however, since the Editor had ultimate say over the lines of questioning. This is not to say that such questions weren't put to the Liberals at all, rather that they were not the main these or put in ways that the two presenters might have preferred. That the Editor was able to influence the questions in this way, though perhaps unusual (see Kuma (1974) for an excellent account of the role of the presenter in television), reflected his possession of the overall responsibility for the programme output of ATV's newsroom, a responsibility he took most seriously, as one journalist commented, "If anything goes wrong he's the one who goes to jail." Why the Editor took these decisions in the way that he did is central to the concerns of this paper since it throws light on the factors that influence and structure political television in general and election television in particular.

Editorial decision making within the election was rooted within three particular structures, each of which is closely interwound with the production of programmes: legal, professional and organizational.
1. The legal and constitutional framework is provided by the Independent Television Act, and by the Representation of the People Act.

2. The professional communicator possesses a series of definitions about his situation, his role, the needs of his audience, the nature of election television, the nature of politics, etc. In short, he possesses a political and occupational 'ideology'.

3. The television production is part of the general activity of a particular organization, which has its own needs, requirements, definitions of their purpose, resources, etc., each of which will have a bearing on the specific production.

The Law and the Election

The producer of political programmes has to work with a series of rulings, legally binding, as to what he can and cannot do.¹

The requirements of the law were very important in influencing what ATV did during the course of the election, not only within their election programmes but also within their other output such as the 6 p.m. news magazine programme. There was a strong feeling that the IBA would be closely scrutinizing their programming to see that it was 'balanced', 'fair', 'objective', 'impartial', all the qualities that the law demands of broadcasting, and time and time again was emphasized the need to 'be careful' and to make sure that 'ordinary stories' had no 'political implications'.

One of the developments in political broadcasting in recent years has been that the maintenance of 'balance' between the parties could be achieved over a series of programmes rather than within every programme. In the election period no such latitude was felt to be permissible and strenuous efforts were made to finely balance the three main parties - whether that was in terms of the film reports, the audience in the studio or the panellists —

¹ For a brief summary of these rulings see Ch. 4.
a political symmetry had to be maintained and be seen to be maintained. Several incidents were particularly revealing of this process. When Enoch Powell's ex-constituency nominated his successor there was some discussion as to whether they could actually cover this, and if they could, how they should do it. The Deputy Editor declared that,

"Had there not been an election on we would have gone and interviewed him. This time because there's an election we can mention his name and background, and then go through all the other candidates."

In point of fact they could have covered his nomination in terms of its obvious news value, without having to rigidly balance. But this, of course, led to a situation where one might be criticised for being biased. At the same time in using the 'excuse' of news-value for not balancing it was felt that they would be offending against the spirit of the RPA. For example, when the press secretary to William Whitelaw phoned to say that he would be on a walk-about in the city during which he would be willing to answer questions, there was some discussion about this and eventually the news desk editor, whose responsibility it was to present about ten minutes of news for the 6 p.m. programme, decided that they couldn't use it. This was interesting since here was a visit by one of the most powerful men in Britain, a senior Cabinet Minister who was seen as both the Prime Minister's most trusted colleague and likely successor as leader of the Conservative Party, who was offering his services for an interview, albeit an informal one, but who the news desk decided that they did not want to bother with. I asked why they had decided in this way. The argument used was that if they covered Whitelaw then they were morally obliged to balance this by showing some equally important Labour and Liberal leaders, and this they didn't want to commit themselves to. Thus a clear moral obligation to balance was evident, but to have followed it through to satisfy the 'spirit' of the RPA would have created a situation where they had to include material in their 6 p.m. programme which they did not want to include - i.e. items on other leading politicians - because their audience did not like such material. In order to avoid this latter
possibility, the first possibility had to be rejected.

Towards the end of the election coverage the need to 'balance' and the legal implications of not balancing were very clear. One edition of the Report was to be a panel discussion between the candidates from one particular constituency. The two reporters were using as their basic guide to the election the Daily Telegraph list of candidates. There had been a typographical error and one of the candidates from the chosen constituency had not been listed in the Telegraph's list. This mistake had not been noticed until 20 minutes before the programme was due to go out live. The senior of the two reporters having discovered the mistake was then faced with the choice of pretending that it hadn't happened, going ahead with the discussion and praying that no-one noticed and complained; or he could tell the Editor about the situation. Several minutes thought led him to choose the latter course and once that decision was made there was never any doubt that the programme as scheduled would be cancelled. At something like 11.50 a.m., with 10 minutes to transmission they had to put together another programme. As about 8 minutes of the programme was the taped interviews with the National Front and the Communist Party, they had something like 12 minutes to fill with live material; a slightly extended 'election news' introduction to the programme accounted for some of that time, and the rest was taken up by an impromptu discussion of the difficulties of broadcasting during elections!

After the programme, the senior reporter said that he had had to tell the Editor about the mistake since "I'd rather face his wrath than risk possible legal proceedings and a possible rocket from the IBA." Later I learned that following the programme this reporter had received something of a dressing down from the Editor, not because of the original mistake of failing to contact all the relevant people, but because they had explained this mistake to the viewers and had apologized for it. Ironically, the various people who had turned up for the programme but could not appear, and were naturally somewhat peeved at this, felt that the apology was very reasonable and all departed feeling that 'justice had been done'.
The election coverage was terminated on the Tuesday before the Thursday polling day on the grounds that "if we have a Report on the Wednesday and if we make a mistake, it's too late to rectify it" (Editor). From Tuesday lunchtime until the polls closed on polling day there was effectively no coverage or discussion of the election from ATV. In the morning conference on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, particular stress was laid on the need to be careful in the stories that they did for the 6 p.m. programme in order to make sure that they weren't "political". At the Thursday morning conference, that is polling day, the Editor declared that "Everyone must remember that we mustn't do anything that sounds as though we are persuading people to vote.", to which the news desk editor added "We are not even allowed to say that it's been a light poll", since it might be thought that by saying that they were encouraging people to go out and vote, and that, the IBA might argue, was contrary to the meaning of the Representation of the People Act.¹

The legal framework effectively defined what would and would not be regarded as "political". It was 'understood' that politics was about the activities, beliefs and fortunes of the three main parties, and that balance, objectivity and impartiality was conceived of within the party political framework and no more; any 'extra', the granting of time to the other groups, was a discretion within the gift of the organization. This situation provided a rule of thumb for the programme makers since so long as the three main parties were represented that constituted the correct form of election television, and so long as they were each given time to say what they thought the election was about, then that constituted the correct content of election television. That there may have been other definitions of what the election was about could not have been considered particularly seriously since

¹ In fact the provisions of Section 9 of the 1969 RPA specifically allow for reference to factual news about polling, but does not allow reference to election issues.
compliance with the basic legal criteria was of primary importance.

Such legal considerations not only structured the overall form of the coverage - a forum of the three parties - but also influenced the kind of material made available within that format. The potential sensitivity of the area (combined with a lack of resources) created the situation where it was felt that they should allow the parties themselves to 'do the talking'.

Two roles and two sets of ideology were available to the broadcast journalists: one that they be inquisitive, searching, questioning (to use a vogue word, investigative); or two, that they be the mere brokers or coiners of someone else's information. In the contentious context of an election, the former was impossible to operate and therefore the latter tended to dominate. The composite of restrictions and the implied definitions of the political process provided one important factor as to why the election coverage could be little more than a version of the party political broadcast.

It would, however, be wrong to create the impression that the legal requirements were the only determinants of the election coverage. Some importance must also be attached to the professional criteria applied to the making and judging of television, and the organizational arrangements within which these functioned. It would, of course, be nonsense to suggest that the professional criteria were somehow distinct from and uninfluenced by the organisation. Occupational values and professional ideologies are deeply influenced by the structures within which they exist. These are the second and third 'elements' of the production process.

The Professional Communicator and the Election

It is popularly held that television in general, and news and current affairs television in particular, are really 'about' the dispositions and ideologies of a small group of men who control the production of programmes. Such a view, however, implies that broadcasters bring to the organisations a stable set of beliefs which they are then able to translate into their
work. It avoids the possibility that, as argued by Simon (1957), beliefs are inherited from the organizational hierarchy (Epstein 1973). In a sense then the central question when studying the role of belief-structures in communications, is which way do values run in an organization. It would be disconcertingly easy to argue either of two polar points: a) programme makers are committed individuals who inject their own values into 'messages' in a purposive manner; b) programme makers are the passive receptors of an "organisational" view of reality, determined by senior officials. A further version placing itself somewhere along the continuum between the two points has emerged from the academic study of the operations of media communicators. In this view the communications process is about the conflict between the individual communicator and his organizational superiors (Breed 1955). Recent work, however, suggests that a more accurate description would look to the procedures by which conflict is avoided rather than created. In this view the key "to understanding bias lies not in conspiracies, not in conflict, but in cooperation and shared satisfactions" (Sigelman, 1973), implying that there is a basic compatibility within the media institution since newsmen tend to go to organizations whose policies they are in agreement with. The work which led to this formulation was carried out in the United States on newspapers which had overtly political leanings. The question addressed was how attachment to the institutional mythology of journalism (what we have termed the ideology of the 4th estate) was compatible with working in a newspaper where policy clearly reflected the political leanings of the publisher. The answer was seen to lie in an already existing compatibility between the publisher's 'line' and the newsmen's own belief structure. An integrated structure in which because publisher and reporter shared a common political ideology, the professional ideology of the reporter could operate with apparent efficiency.

The situation within the newsroom at ATV was of course, different in some important respects, the most important being the absence of any explicit editorial line. The observation did, however, provide an
opportunity to consider some of the lines of thought outlined above, to consider the role of the individual communicator in the context of a British media institution.

We have already seen that control resided in the Editor, and thus attention to the operation of professional and political ideologies leads, in the case at least, largely to an account of the dispositions of the Editor.

**Editorial Dispositions - the Practice of Passivity**

To the cynical ears of the academic observer there is much that sounds hollow in the editorial professions of broadcasting credo. Yet it would be wrong to leave the conclusion at that. Roger Brown (1969, 156), argued that the hollowness of public utterances by broadcasting personnel may "have more to do with the devitalised language which they borrow from the world of public relations than with an actual lack of faith in what they are doing." He continues, "a cynical division of mind between what is stated in public and believed in private turns out to be an exception, rather than the rule. It may be extremely difficult for literary intellectuals to believe that popular journalists really consider their work to be of social importance, yet there are grounds for suggesting that this is indeed the case". (1969, 156).

Three possible roles were open to the Editor: 1) the practitioner of commercial broadcasting ('show-biz'); 2) the practitioner of political journalism ('4th estate'); 3) the negotiator of political reality ('operator of objectivity'). It was the interaction of these three roles that induced a non-committal attitude to the coverage, the skeleton of election television with none of the meat. Twin themes characterized the Editor's view of the role and purpose of the election television for which he was responsible. There was a strong feeling of 'give them (the audience) what they want and don't give them what they don't want', a core belief in any commercial broadcasting organization.
He believed, for example, that the level of election coverage was "about right" in both the time-slot allocated to it (12 noon, and 11 p.m.) and in the length of particular programmes, "since most people are bored by politics and are avoiding political material. You can see this if you look at the audience figures for political programmes. The idea behind putting on our election was so that we didn't force people into watching it. If no-one watches because they are bored by politics it doesn't particularly matter." This position clearly involved a much broader organizational policy, that is, ATV's central purpose is to make profits, and small audiences do not produce profits. It would be wrong though to see the Editor's argument as merely a cynical rationalisation of this wider economic logic. There was a firm belief that ultimately television was about what people wanted (as reflected in the audience figures), that the people clearly didn't want politics and that therefore you didn't give the people politics, or at least you didn't give them politics when they might be watching.

The other dominant theme was that 'it is not our role to say anything that could be constructed as controversial or political, and we must do everything in our power to avoid these traps.' This, put briefly, and rather crudely, was the recurrent theme throughout the election campaign. In meetings and general conversation, 'safety' was encouraged and demanded.

The Editor was widely regarded within the newsroom as being 'very safe',

1. This clearly implies a problem very much bigger than any discussion of this particular case study. It does, however, reflect the central paradox of broadcasting in society: it seems that if you apply certain traditional criteria of good and bad programmes than the bulk of the programmes watched by the bulk of the audience is, if not 'bad', certainly not 'good'. Given such a situation certain options are available: you can put 'good' television on a separate channel - vis BBC 2, the 'minority channel', a euphemistic description of the cultural ghetto aspects of that channel - or you can force the main channels to broadcast 'good' television, in which case there is the strong possibility, as they will argue most vehemently, that they will no longer be the main channels. It is an interesting, but unavoidable, possibility that, in the present set of social relationships and cultural arrangements of British society, the idea of 'good' television is inherently undemocratic.
a phrase that was employed several times by different members of the
newsroom. One reporter said "He and I were raised in the same way and we
have a kind of built in caution. I think though that his is a little more
developed than mine." The style of questioning - "We must ask the questions
the audience would want us to ask" - was influenced, in part at least, by the
general feeling that television journalism should not preach, rather that it
should be the means by which the audience is allowed to receive information
untouched by the broadcaster's own disposition.

There was a strong sense then of the passive broker. The notion
followed from the position in which the Editor made decisions, a situation
that can perhaps best be described as 'structured autonomy', decisions made
within conditions laid down by the wider political and resource situations.
That this did not engender apparent conflict reflected the feeling that
passivity was the role of the broadcaster. Situated as he was within a
complex commercial and political setting, the concept of 'passivity' can
be seen as an adjustment to the limitation of that setting.

Reportorial Disposition - the Mechanics of Passivity

If the Editor's situation was constrained, even more so was that of
the two reporters. They worked within a tightly prescribed brief which left
little room for individual initiative or the injection of personal
preferences and bias. They could not easily pursue, as did Klumler's
subjects, (Klumler, 1969), topics which they felt should be pursued (for
element, the Common Market and nationalization), though they were by
implication able to exclude or limit topics which they felt should not be
covered on the grounds that they were not 'relevant', 'important' or
'suitable'; for example, in the Women Voters Election Special, a member of the
audience raised the question of women's liberation, to which the presenter
said "But surely that's not an issue in this election?", though he did allow
some discussion of the topic. They were able to develop one or two stories
and items which they felt were important; for example, the likely import-
ance of Enoch Powell's 'vote Labour' speech, and also the possible consequences of a balance of power situation in the Commons. These developments were, however, only a minor part of the general approach which as we have seen was strongly influenced by other considerations. The two reporters were in an essentially mechanical role, functionaries who made the programmes 'happen', but who ultimately were not creatively responsible for that happening. Operating with a brief over which they had had little control their main task was to make sure that each programme (a) went on the air, and (b) when on, went smoothly. They were therefore responsible for contacting panellists and participants, and for making sure that representative audiences were assembled at the right time. Logistics were the grist in their day-to-day activity. Two of the lunchtime programmes were to be a panel discussion between on one occasion the 'six best old age pensioners' and the 'six best young voters', and the two reporters were responsible for choosing the 'best'. They had some difficulty with the QAP's since there had been only one Liberal in the original programme who they liked, and she wasn't available. They therefore had to contact the Liberal Party to ask for two Liberal old age pensioners to take part in the panel discussion. The reporters were also responsible for preparing material (much of it culled from newspapers), the biographies and background of the candidates on their 'patch', photographs of the candidates and other information which it was felt might come in useful at some point.

The main source for the panels of candidates and the industrialists and trade unionists, was the proverbial list of contacts which the senior reporter, had accumulated during his years of broadcasting in the region. Many of the leading names of regional politics were known to him personally, and in particular it was his past use of, and admiration for, particular politicians which made them familiar participants in ATV's output. Where doubts arose, and particularly where the audiences of party supporters were being assembled, the parties themselves were contacted for help. There was a strong tendency to use, as participants in the programmes, individuals
who were known to be good performers, a process which has also been pointed to by Elliott (1972). This is not necessarily an adverse comment, but it does raise certain questions about the way in which routines of production within television tend to limit the range of opinions that television makes available. The litmus test for judging political importance was electoral size, and three main 'types' of political groups were readily discernible: the three main parties; the Communist Party and the National Front - who were fringe but warranted some attention; the other groups who were either 'idiots', 'too small to bother with', or both. The significance criteria applied followed electoral size, though not that closely since the relatively 'unimportant' Liberal vote in the Midlands was given equal billing with the Conservatives and the Labour Party, reflecting the overall national perspective that politics has within the British political cultures, rather than a focus on specific issues or topics. There was, however, a good deal of circumspection in the treatment of the CP and the NF, the senior reporter declaring that when interviewing he always tried to be perfectly objective but with these two groups his biases became clear. He clearly identified with the assumed middle position of the three main parties.

His statement that he felt himself to be overtly biased when interviewing fringe groups, raised the whole question of just what role they saw themselves as occupying when acting as an interviewer. They did not see themselves, in this election at least, as cast in the mould of "the Robin Day type", putting hard, thought provoking questions to the hapless victim, the politician. They were, in keeping with their prescribed brief, more intent on generating a discussion between those taking part, particularly among the non-politicians who took part in the programmes:

"We don't adopt the Robin Day-interviewing-Heath position. It would not be on in the type of programme that we have been doing. In the Midday Report what we are looking for is a discussion between the participants, and I'm there to put in a few points and questions when it begins to dry up. Obviously this is very different from what you would do with politicians."
In point of fact it wasn’t so very different from what they did with politicians, though there was less likelihood of politicians ‘drying up’. That they did want a lively discussion was clear, as for example was indicated after the lunch-time discussion between the six ’best of the young voters’. The presenter/interviewer for that particular programme, thought that it could have been better, that only three of the six were ‘any good’ and that they weren’t lively enough. Prior to the programme he had bought them all a beer and had been pleased to see that they immediately engaged in a lively, animated discussion about the election. He told them that once the programme began to forget about him and discuss among themselves, though he wanted to avoid a slanging match. Asked why he thought they were not lively enough, he reasoned that: 1) they would have been briefed to behave themselves, 2) they were nervous, 3) they were still young in their ideas, 4) the chairs were arranged in a line facing the presenter, instead of being in a semi-circle which would have been much more conducive to an animated discussion. The director of the programme and the other election reporter did not agree with him, and the director informed him that the Editor and the Executive Producer had been very pleased with it, and thought it looked very good - "They were especially pleased with the wide angle shots".

The two reporters were the means by which Editorial decisions - themselves reflecting more fundamental organizational and political criteria - were implemented. Their situation was akin to that of the reporters studied by Sigelman. Their "autonomy may realistically consist of little more than his freedom to manoeuvre within the constraining bounds of his assignment. But the reporter’s perception of his role is sufficiently narrow and technical that he does not feel that his functional autonomy is jeopardized. His task, as he sees it, consists of writing the best story he can within a given framework: his is more a feat of engineering than of architecture". (Sigelman, 1973). Theirs then was the professional
ideology of the servant. Decisions moved from the basic question of time, resources, areas of coverage, etc., down to detailed arrangements - making sure that a taxi is ordered to pick up an old lady who is to appear on the programme, etc. - and the two reporters come into their own in the latter rather than the former part of the process. Underpinning the early parts of the process were a series of organizational arrangements and considerations which provided the third crucial element in the decision making processes surrounding the coverage.

The Organizational Arrangements

ATV is a major commercial company with both a declared public responsibility and a private motive. It was widely acknowledged within the newsrooms that ATV was essentially a 'show biz' affair that sustained a large audience through the basic formula of providing the audience with the entertainment which they required. The election coverage of ATV at the same time as being characterized by the legal limitations, the preferences and attitudes of those directly responsible for the making of programmes, and by particular definitions of politics, was also characterized by a sense of the general 'ethos' within the ATV which was that of 'show-biz,' and intellectual framework of serving a mass audience with goods the way they wanted them, entertainingly. This was reflected in: a) the resources made available for the coverage; b) the expectations made of the coverage, that it be visually recognizable as political television. That it be visually appealing, lively, with the right people in attendance.

The news programme functioning within a commercial system of broadcasting not only has a responsibility to the idea of 'good broadcasting' contained within the Television Act, but also has a responsibility to the overall goals of the organization. These are essentially commercial and involve obtaining the maximum possible audience. News is no exception to this.
The commercial ethic which underpinned ATV (one cameraman declared, "It's all show biz here"), affected the election coverage in two ways. As we have seen, it determined the time that the election coverage went out and the amount of time made available. It also influenced the standards by which programmes were made and judged. This generally consisted of a notion of not only what their programmes did ('what are the issues?'), but also of what their programmes actually looked like. The process was one of composition, different parts are brought together to form a whole, 'a programme'. The programmes had to be entertaining and informative, because all television aims at that, one therefore looked for animated discussions, "a bloody good ding-dong", between the participants. This had to happen within a relatively short space of time, usually 20 minutes, and therefore there was the need to make as 'good a show as possible' within the time available. Thus each programme had a musical introduction over the opening caption, and the same music over the closing shots, the boundaries of the 'event', of the 'product' demarcated by an appropriate score. Each programme would then have a brief introduction, the latest news, and then a formalised discussion between the panellists in the studio. The whole, rehearsed and orchestrated by the director, is more important than the constituent parts, and the key to the process is to keep hidden the stitching that holds the object together - hence the need to keep camera booms and floor staff out of shot, because if they do appear then that becomes an indication that what is being presented as a natural happening is in reality a manufactured event, and that is deemed as being anathema to the audience.

What I am suggesting is that the limitations on programme making combined with the implicit definitions of what good television looked like created a situation where more emphasis had to be placed on the general appearance than on the substantive content of each particular programme.
That is not to say that nothing came out of the programme, but it is to say that what did come out wasn't the point: that the situation was created where something could come out and that the situation was seen to be created, was the point. The name of the game was form. In his book, The Illusion, David Caute (1971) argues that within literature content is primary, and form is a secondary factor, a 'vessel' to facilitate content. In television the roles are reversed. The form is primary and content is the medium through which the form is affirmed. Thus the communication of political information is prevented by inadequate resources and an emphasis on the appearance rather than the substance of programme content.

Let me illuminate these points further by giving a detailed account of one particular programme in which I think all the tendencies and trends indicated are clearly in evidence.

"The Female Vote": One Programme

On February 25th there was a 45 minute special on the female vote in the election. The premise was that the female vote had been crucial in deciding the election in 1970 and might well, in the context of an inflation-ridden economy, be crucial in this one. They therefore decided to devote one of their 45 minute slots to a discussion between an audience of 40 women and a panel of three female politicians. Having a female panel seemed to be assumed as obviously the correct type of people to have since they would best understand the questions and problems posed by an audience of 40 women.

Once the decision had been made to do such a programme the task of the two reporters was to decide on the panel and assemble the audience. The responsibility for this was mainly the senior reporter's who knew the MPs and knew how to assemble an audience. For the Conservatives he chose Sally Oppenheim, for Labour Betty Boothroyd, and for the Liberals he had to go to the House of Lords for Lady Sear.
The audience was assembled from two sources. The parties were approached and asked to send along party members to take part in the programme. On an earlier occasion one of the members of the editorial staff, when asked how the audience was chosen for such programmes, said that the parties were asked to send along 'bright sparks - well, you have to have bright sparks otherwise it makes a very bad programme with the panel dominating the discussion'. These committed members of the audience were expected to be the main participants in the programme. These constituted about half the audience. The other half were contacted through various sources that the newsroom staff use whenever they wish to get together an audience.

On the day the programme moved through several stages. During the morning the presenter worked on his script, the final checks were made about the availability of people and the actual camera shots for the programme were worked out. The programme was scheduled to be recorded at 3 p.m. for transmission at 11 p.m. Prior to the arrival of the audience and the panel at about 3.30 p.m., the presenter went along to the studio to test the positioning of the panel's seating and the voice levels, he also discussed the various opening camera shots. At about 3.30 p.m., the women began to arrive and, having been brought up to the studio by various members of the female staff of the newsroom, were met by the floor manager and the presenter. Rows of raised seats had been arranged and they were asked to sit according to their politics, the Labour women on the Left of the platform, the Conservatives on the Right, and the Liberals and Don't Knows together in the Middle, "... it's so we have some sort of balance", though it also served the function of allowing the presenter to know where to go to ask particular questions.

When all the women were assembled the 'warm-up' session commenced, with the presenter talking to them very generally - about what they had had for lunch and what they thought of dieting etc. This warm-up session
served three functions:
1. It provided the opportunity to test voice levels and camera positions;
2. It got the audience talking and removed nerves;
3. It allowed the presenter to outline the "rules of the game". He asked them when speaking to address either him or the panel and not the camera; to stick to the point under discussion and not to wander off into "irrelevant areas". Also "We've found in the past that there have been no questions for the Liberal member of the panel, and so if the Liberals among you could make sure that they get asked a few questions we would appreciate it". He told them that "my job is to keep things equal and make sure that there are questions from all sides". He also asked them to be reasonably brief in their points to the panel especially if they were coming back at a point that the panel had made - "Don't overdo coming back at statements from the panel. We want to be fair and get as many questions as possible in."

He then asked if there were any questions about the mechanics of the programme and some of the women asked if they could use notes they had brought along, to which he replied "You can use them if you really want to but we would prefer it if you didn't". Towards the end of the rehearsal he asked them to avoid mentioning individual candidates "because of the electoral laws" - that is, the panel were present as 'experts' rather than 'candidates'. One member of the Labour side of the audience had brought along a copy of Andrew Roth's book on the business background of MP's and indicated that she wanted to make a point about Sally Oppenheim's involvement with property companies. The presenter, when he noticed the book and discovered the intent, asked her not to refer to it as it was not "that kind of programme. We don't want personal attacks do we? I'm sure none of the ladies over there (the Conservative side) will raise that sort of thing. It's not in the spirit of the programme. Really we want to discuss issues". After the rehearsal I asked the presenter about this incident.
He pointed out that he didn’t want the woman to use Roth information as “it’s not that kind of programme. For her to use it would constitute a personal attack which wouldn’t fit in with what the programme was about. And moreover one would have to forewarn Sally Oppenheim if that kind of attack was going to be made”.

There was then a sense of what the programme was “all about”, and that was "issues" of which a statement about an MP's business interests was not one. It was also about issues as they related to the particular "type" of woman in the audience - aged about 20-40, "housewives" who had "decided the last election". A very old lady had come along to the studio with Oppenheim so that she could appear on the television. Unfortunately for her, they had already had a programme about old age pensioners and the election. It was felt that her appearance among a group of younger women would not fit in with this particular programme’s intention which was to allow younger women to have their say. The Conservatives asked if she could just sit in the audience and take no part in the actual discussion. This was considered but eventually rejected on the grounds that the camera would inevitably pick her up and if the presenter appeared to be ignoring her by asking her no questions, and if she took absolutely no part in the programme, then the viewers would notice this and assume that he was ignoring her on purpose (which would of course have been a perfectly accurate assumption to make); this would a) have annoyed them, and b) defeated the whole purpose of the programme which was to be audience participation.

Each of the programmes in the coverage employed a set of cliches laid down at the beginning of the election coverage: questions to electors about how they were going to vote, whether that involved a 'switch', and questions to electors and politicians about what they thought the issues of the election were? Systematically a 'representative' of each of the groups was asked what she thought the issues were. The plan of allowing them to define the issues for discussion was largely adhered to, even when the
presenter thought that they were not in fact the issues of the election. One Liberal said that the issue was "worker participation", to which the presenter replied "Is that the main issue?" "Surely not". This particular woman, however, pursued her point and said that the media put over 'housewives' issues in terms of prices whereas in fact there were many other women's issues, such as discrimination. He took up the point and asked the panelist about anti-discrimination legislation, and added "But surely anti-discrimination legislation is not a vote-getter?" Having allowed a discussion to take place on this area, he said "One more point and then we are moving on to inflation", this after all was what the programme had been all about. It seems that two important points can be made about this programme, and, through it, about the other election programmes. What was crucial in the context of the election was that while they had to produce some sort of coverage, they could not be seen to be overly involved in the political process. The editor and his assistants were to be the brokers rather than the makers of events. It therefore became a problem of making political television, but treading very carefully, and doing so with relatively limited resources. In the context of the programme then the important point was that the women and the politicians were seen to be discussing whatever they wished to discuss, and that the reporter as representative of the broadcasting organization, was seen to be a detached, neutral participant. If this formulation could be achieved then the programme would successfully affirm the much desired news organizations broker role, and therefore display for all the world to see its 'responsibility' by having produced neutral, stingless political television. It is as if the aim, if I might return to an earlier metaphor, was to convince themselves and the world outside that they were indeed "eunuchs in the harem of ideas".
ELECTION NIGHT - AND THE MORNING AFTER

ATV's election coverage was created within a series of ground rules which effectively transformed the coverage into a televisual event rather than a meaningful net of political communication. The same tendencies could be seen in the actual results coverage. ATV here had two functions: the provision of facilities for the Midlands part of the ITN national coverage; and the provision of their own results service on the morning of Friday 29 February.

The plans for the night's coverage were laid down in a series of meetings during the course of the election period. These were mainly involved with the technical, logistical and financial arrangements. (It was later said by one of those at the final meeting that it "deteriorated into a discussion of how to pay the technicians as little as possible"). In the meeting which finalized the plans there was discussion about the graphics (i.e. how best to show gains, losses, swing, etc.), canteen facilities, phone facilities, the availability of secretaries, the arrangements for crews, their meal times, the availability of VTR machines. Several times the need to meet the requirements of ITN was emphasized. This was not without its problems as far as their own coverage was concerned: for example, one of the reporters suggested that "ITN was not going to be interested in the fate of poor old "X" (a candidate of relatively 'minor' importance), but they are going to be interested in that of Jenkins and Hattersley, two leading politicians. And they'll want to do Jenkins before we do", to which the Editor replied that "We'll have to give ITN priority". The 'have to' aspect of this was not just because ITN is the major ITV news organization, but also because ITN were footing a substantial part of the results coverage bill which meant that ATV's budget was smaller than it might have been.

The studio facilities in the town hall were to be shared by ATV and ITN, always under the understanding that ITN had first choice. The ATV reporter was there to assemble a 'package' for the next morning's
results programme. The ITN reporter, a far more senior and prestigious personality, was there to present the results as they happened, and to do live interviews with successful candidates. The regional orientation of ATV's coverage implied an interest in MP's who ITN would not be interested in, and there were one or two problems in arriving at a mutual agreement as to who would be using the studio.

The actual decision as to who to interview was a combined decision between the ATV people and ITN. They plumped for a "big timer"; the winner of another contest, "because we know that's going to be a cliffhanger; a seat which has changed hands; and as these are likely to be Labour people, we'll have to do a Tory winner ..." There was therefore a set of criteria - "cliffhanger", "big name", "change", "balance", which determined the choice of interviews. The specific individuals to be interviewed, so long as they fell within these categories, were left to the discretion of the reporter, and the actual availability of people. One name in particular was repeatedly announced as "a must" for an interview, and that was Roy Jenkins.

The main problem was how to persuade him to come along and be interviewed. This was the responsibility of the two 'legmen' who were the assistants to the two reporters, providing them with results and getting the interviewees along to the studio. There was a great deal of confidence among the ATV staff in the professional expertise of the ITN people - "We know the ITN reporter, he's not going to lose Jenkins", though in the event he did lose him in the sense that Jenkins refused to be interviewed."

During the final planning meeting there was some feeling, expressed by one or two of those present, that their coverage on Day 2's results programme would over-emphasize the city area results to the exclusion of the rest of their region. It was suggested that "really we don't have to do all the results (from the city), just the dramatic, newswy ones." The Executive producer assured them that it didn't matter if it was top heavy since the city was the main area in their patch, "... What we really want
to make sure is that we use different people in different parts of the region to make it look better. We want as many different faces as possible. That would be good because we are moving around seeing lots of different faces and places."

The main aim of the actual results coverage was to get the results as quickly as possible to the ITN reporter in the studio in the town hall. The intention was to get the results to the reporter before they were officially declared so that 1) ITN declared the results before the BBC; and 2) so that the reporter knew what was happening beneath the hubbub of the actual declaration. Constantly the need for speed was mentioned, and success over the BBC was measured in seconds. The female reporter who was acting as legman for the ITN reporter said, "The name of the game is speed. At our briefing in London it was rammed into us that above all we must get the results first." As well as their own legman, ITN were served by a local news agency over an open-line direct to ITN House in London. This near obsession with speed was remarked upon by one of the ATV people who also felt that ATV were picking up the crumbs from ITN's table. A schematic representation of the results service is presented in Figure 5.

**Figure 5**

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  Results/Interviewees
  |   Agency   | 'Legmen' |
  |            |          |
  |  'Scanner' i.e. mobile control room | ATV Centre |
  |            | Network  |
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Studio in Town Hall

ATV reporter

ITN reporter
ATV had no specific results coverage for the Midlands region until the morning of Day 2. The first 'regional opt out' was to be at 7.30 a.m., and work on this commenced in earnest at about 4.30 p.m. The main package with the interviews was prepared throughout the night, a joint operation between the reporter conducting the interviews and the videotape editor. The results for the different parts of the region were divided up between different announcers, each announcer detailing the general pattern of results for his part of the region, using suggestions from the senior election reporter who looked at the results, picked out the interesting ones, the general trend within that area and placed his overall interpretation on the results. The announcer whose region it was, would take notes and then work on a script with the assistance of one of the newsdesk staff. It is an interesting fact that many of the people actually appearing on the screen with an account of the results from a section of the Midlands knew little or nothing about the politics of that area - I was told outright by one of them several days before that while he would be discussing the results from one area he actually knew "absolutely nothing about it".

Rehearsals were held at about 6.45 a.m., and the first opt out began at 7.30 a.m. This was taped so that it could be shown again at 8.30 a.m., but it was noticed that one of the shots during the recorded programme had the clock on it which would be confusing for those watching it at home. Later opt outs therefore had to go out live. It was a small point, but a revealing one, that when they had decided to go out live they were told by the Executive Producer to make sure that their scripts were up to date, and so, where in the original scripts they had said that "the results of 8 hours ago ..." they now had to say "the results of 9 hours (10 etc.) ago ..." By 9 p.m., the staff working on the main programme were beginning to arrive and gradually the momentum of the election activity died down to be replaced by the normal momentum of the main programme.
Conclusion

"... although the professional communicator has gradually emerged as a new style intellectual in society, the tendency is for him to be preoccupied with the form rather than the content of communication ..." (1972, 165).

The views of the election of February 1974 presented by ATV to the people of the Midlands was fashioned within a quadrangle of political, legal, professional and organizational considerations. Closely inter-related these four influences meant that what coverage there was had limited resources and was above all else 'safe'. Rather than employing the medium to cast a journalistic eye over the political questions of the election, studios and facilities were effectively given over to the propogation of the ideas and feelings of the three main parties. The central political commitment and belief during the three weeks of the election coverage was that to be seen to be defining issues was anathema and must therefore at all costs be avoided. By adopting the role of question master, where the question was the same refrain 'What do you think the issues are?', the coverage guaranteed the presence of legitimate respondents and therefore guaranteed its own legitimacy in the context of legal and political rulings.

The central professional commitment was to work within this severely truncated framework and present 'good television' which was entertaining and presentable. Programmes had to be coherent wholes, with a clear beginning, middle and end; with an opening and closing statement, music, wide-and-tight-shots of the participants locked in debate, an emphasis on speed and covering as many points as possible so long as they were
'relevant'. Variability, freshness, a change of face and pace. All were criteria geared to the very nature of the medium, and all this within a 20 minute or 45 minute slot.

The editorial conception of the role of the medium rested on an assumption, central to the ideology of commercial broadcasting, that 'good television' is by definition that which presents the audience with what it wants. As most people don't want politics, the assumption continues, programmes that are broadcast at peak viewing hours will not contain political material; those that must contain political material are put on at times when the bulk of the audience will not be watching, and are presented in such a way as to not 'bore' those few who do watch.

If this interpretation of the events of those three weeks at ATV is correct then the broadcast journalist in a commercial setting is looking in two directions at the same time. He looks at, worries about and is influenced by a number of particular audiences (the organizational hierarchy, the IBA, the future members of the Commons, the judiciary); and also looks to and considers the 'needs' and 'interests' of a general audience (the bulk of the people who watch television but who have no specific interest in the institutions of the media.) Thus at one level the politics of election broadcasting are important; at another level of transcendent importance is the need to satisfy a viewing audience, at which time the cosmetics of making 'good television' take over from the politics of making safe television.
Conclusion

While many of the conclusions to be drawn from these case studies are clearly implicit within the text, a number of general points emerge which throw light on the state of broadcasting.

A general inference throughout the chapter has been that the external context of political broadcasting involves interaction with the State. The specific purpose of the particular case studies was to examine, through the provision of detailed accounts, the nature of this relationship in what is a contentious but murky area. Can one say from these case studies that the broadcasting institutions and therefore the programmes produced by them are influenced to any extent by the various institutions subsumed within the total structure of the political and commercial exterior?

Within the political context, three themes or relationships emerged:

1. The broadcasting organisation and the Governing party;
2. Programme making and a non-Governing party;
3. The Legal System and Programming.

Thus the relationship with the political context operates at both a high organisational level and at a programme level. Within this one can see three mechanisms functioning - the definition of impartiality, the sustaining of conventional programme forms, and the legal system - through which the State is able to retain a level of control over what is produced. A fourth theme emerged from consideration of the influence of the environment of a commercial enterprise on programme making:


In other words, while any adequate consideration of the external context of political broadcasting must focus first and foremost on the political institutions of the State, it must also consider the impact of
a parallel structure, the institutions of commerce. At the same time, the case studies illuminate a number of specific questions within broadcasting, for example, the contentious issue of who is to exert control within the organisations. Should the legally constituted bodies exert control in a quasi-executive manner, or should they indulge in a rather post-hoc control. The case studies also touched on the question of programming practices, and particularly the way these relate not only to the expectations and anxieties of politicians, and the professional criteria of working journalists, but also the demands which a competitive system makes on programme content, even in the apparently non-commercial area of news and current affairs.

1. Broadcasting Organisations and the Governing Party

It has often been assumed that during the General Strike the BBC was able to sustain its independence, even though at times somewhat shakily. The study here shows that such a view is little more than fiction and that there was in effect a clear subservience to the wishes of the government. This is clearly of more than historical interest since it does show the way in which a central ambition of political broadcasting - that it be impartial - was interpreted in the light of the anxieties and needs of other, political, institutions.

The original decision to look at the events of the General Strike, even though it meant leaving the specific discussion of political television, was based on the observation that there were striking similarities between statements made in 1926 and those made in recent years with reference to coverage of, for example, Ulster.

Prior to the events of May 1926, there had been a good deal of doubt and discussion as to the permissibility of political broadcasting - either in its news form or as 'controversial' material which broadly
corresponds to what we would now understand as 'current affairs'.

Following the events there was something of a revolution in news broadcasting with, for example, a relaxation of the restrictions on news and the development of a separate News Section under the aegis of Stobart and the Education Department. What is particularly interesting is that when the restrictions on controversial broadcasting were lifted in March 1928 this was done on the understanding that the broadcasts were within the spirit of the Crawford Committee Report. That "spirit" was that the broadcasts be of 'scrupulous fairness'. This was the same phrase as used by Harold Wilson in explaining his rationale behind the appointment of Hill (see the opening quote of the Greene-Hill case study). There was a clear understanding of Reith's concept of 'impartiality' which was to be the embodiment of a "scrupulously fair" broadcasting system. The concept - defined within a conventional framework, structured by Constitutionally legitimate forces - was to be the main defence of the BBC's institutional integrity and the main governmental insurance against fears of what broadcasting might be capable of.

At the root, however, of such a conception of an impartial broadcasting service was a tension. This rested on the simple but all important fact that there would be occasions and types of coverage which did not readily meet the rules of the game implied in the initial formation of the concept. The meaning of impartiality as drawn from the model of the journalistic role in the fourth estate, implying divorce from attachments which might colour or prejudice reportage, did not fit, and in fact would inevitably clash with, the meaning as applied in political crises. In times of crisis the interpretation of impartiality by the broadcasting organisations becomes crucial in the eyes of Government: the evidence from the General Strike on this is overwhelming. The presentation of that impartiality, again as evidenced by the General Strike, so that it is in overall accord with Government policy has historically not been the broad-
casting of manifestly propagandist pieces, rather it has involved the
presentation of abstracted 'facts' which deal with the appearance of
sections of political events rather than the complexities and depth of
the total event. To illustrate this argument I would merely point to the
comparison between the views of the General Strike contained within the
news bulletins of the BBC and the views contained within later accounts;
or a more recent example, compare the glimpses of the Ulster situation
portrayed throughout the media and the different accounts of that same
situation from the same individuals who did the reporting in the field
(Simon Winchester's book on his time in Ulster is a good example of this¹).
The problem is of course that the construction of those facts is a
journalistic exercise and it is at the interface of the Government defining
what it sees as the situation (in the General Strike, or Suez, or Ulster)
and the broadcast journalist - whose profession is allegedly a fourth
estate - defining how he sees a situation, that a latent tension resides.
This is not to say or claim that in every political crisis every broad-
cast journalist is seeking to undermine the State by posing alternative
views of reality. Clearly this is not the case and large sections of
this thesis have sought to try and explain why that is unlikely to be
the case. In that sense, the reporting of any political crisis is not
just a function of the realities and pressures of political life. It
also involves the whole gamut of inhibitions on the use of the medium.
Nevertheless, the political dimension is important and the significance
is that it would always be likely to become increasingly important as
political crisis heightened since it is clear from the available
evidence that the Government is reluctant to allow the broadcast media
any latitude in the construction of 'alternative realities'. Given the
formal status of the Government vis-a-vis the broadcasting organisations

¹ Winchester, S. (1974) In Holy Terror: Reporting the Ulster Troubles
Faber.
(cf. Chapter 4) it can ultimately ensure that opposed realities do not arise by defining within what context impartiality will operate and thus within what context views of reality will be constructed - for example, to put it rather crudely, who will be quoted and who won't, who will be given air time and who won't, and the inflection and context of factual statement.

One can perhaps see the General Strike as exemplifying a penultimate point on a sliding scale of broadcasting-State relations, where the ultimate point is takeover of the organisations. One might also present it as a scale along which the latency of the formal context becomes gradually manifest in relation to a heightening crisis. One is not of course here talking about the transformation of an autonomous structure into a subordinate one, rather of the transformation from a latent to a manifest politicised structure, since broadcasting organisations as institutions within society have no actual autonomy and in that sense they have never possessed a legitimate membership of the 'fourth estate', the effect has always been illusory, in the sense that their presence on the terrain of the press has never actually been felt in political circles to be right and proper. That fundamental lack of legitimacy as autonomous entities has always underpinned the political reality of political broadcasting.

If one can extrapolate from the General Strike, the actual linkages between the broadcasting organisation and the Government of the day promote programme output which is compatible with the views of the dominant political institutions and in particular with government. This is clearly the message of the BBC's situation in the General Strike and its relationship with the strikers who were seen as threats not just to Baldwin's government but to the whole idea of the existing constitutional framework. It was in this context that Reith and the BBC were expected to identify with the Baldwin position not because of Baldwin as Tory Prime Minister
but because of Baldwin as constitutional leader.

This is the crucial link between Reith's proposition that as between the strikers and the government he could not be impartial and the almost exact same statement by Hill that as between the Ulster gunmen and the army there could be no impartiality. In both cases the strikers and the gunmen were identified as threats to a 'legitimate' order and therefore beyond the bounds of impartiality.

In the relations between the government and the broadcasting organisations what is at stake, and this is clear from not only the study of the General Strike but also the study of the appointment of Hill and the retirement of Greene, is the definition of an 'impartial' broadcasting service. That is, the different emphases of the two situations merely reflect the differential capacity and necessity to impose a government 'sponsored' line. Reith was left alone, in a sense, by Baldwin and Davidson because it was felt that he could be trusted to interpret impartiality in a 'responsible' manner and, as was seen in the case study, he did just that to their great satisfaction. Wilson, as he clearly states in his history of the 1964-70 Labour Government and as Marcia Williams indicates, placed Hill as Chairman of the BBC because it was felt that he would make the Corporation scrupulously fair and impartial, and because he clearly felt that Greene could not be left alone to guide the Corporation along the same lines. There was a confidence in Reith's intellectual and political orientation; there was no such confidence in that of Greene. The validity of Wilson's analysis notwithstanding, the phantom remains that definition of impartiality was his main concern.

The clarity of the issues involved in the General Strike, however, is far greater than the events surrounding Greene's retirement. This is partly a function of the unique circumstances of the Strike and the availability of a number of sources which are not yet available, if indeed they exist, for Greene's retirement. It is also undoubtedly related to the fact that
in 1926 the news service, and therefore the principles upon which it was to rest, were largely embryonic whereas by 1967 the practices within which those principles are formed - reference to established sources, balancing of spokesmen, detached comment, etc. - were well worked out and therefore the possible infringements which even Harold Wilson would be likely to detect were of a far more marginal nature. Baldwin's effort was a hefty shove to put the BBC in its place; Wilson's was a nudge back into its place.

The point about Reith and Hill and the point of their appeal to Baldwin and Wilson was that they both clearly recognised these implicit limitations within which political broadcasting was to function and both recognised an institutional and ideological rationale for accepting the validity of the limitations. It is interesting to note that the present Chairman of the BBC, Sir Michael Swann, in a recent statement, identifies with the necessity on institutional and ideological grounds of a commitment to the theses and conventions of the established social and political order. Pointing to the increased concern of the Governors under Lord Normanbrock and under Lord Hill to exert greater control of the output of the BBC, he states:

"I look on Lord Normanbrock's analysis of what the Board shall do, and Lord Hill's attempts to actually carry it out, not, as some people have naively imagined, as power seeking, but as an inevitable response to criticism, and the demands on every hand for measures to control the BBC .... Lord Hill and his Governor colleagues had no option but to strengthen their own hand, and it is surely to their credit that they did so, and in the doing fended off a series of threats to the BBC's autonomy. The fact of the matter is that inadequate as the Governors may be, they are in the last resort the BBC's only guarantee of autonomy .... If we move further into national crisis, and still more if a new government arises in due course which is further to the Left or Right than any past government, the pressures could become acute. The Governors' role will become more crucial even than it is now, if the BBC is not to be fettered. The trustees of of the national interest look like continuing to have alarming responsibility." (Swann, 1974)

This is as clear a view of an anxious response to an external political reality as one could imagine. The phraseology - the "trustees of the
national interest" - clearly echoes Reith, and for the reason that underlying the broadcasting organisation, and therefore indirectly the programme making process, is the fact that they are very much "institutions within the constitution". Within that context the operational feasibility of 'impartiality' is not difficult; that is in circumstances where there is a consensus that there is a consensus within society. The difficulty lies in situations where the coverage of the political process takes them outside the context of the legitimate constitutional structure. Where such situations of extra-constitutional political conflict arise, where the clear position of consensus becomes clouded by new circumstances, the central difficulty of broadcast journalism is in what relationship it stands to these circumstances. As an institution of the press it should presumably understand and explain the historical mood, as a citizen of the State it must give voice to the accredited definitions of reality posed by the State elite. In short, the definitions of political reality which are likely to be made available will derive from the response of organisational elites to the expressed concerns and wishes of the State elite, not therefore on the basis of their membership of the press, but on the basis of institutional and ideological commitment.

Such then is the nature of broadcasting's relationship with government. Clearly on the evidence of these case studies the intensity of the relationship varies such that one can locate the General Strike and the appointment of Hill at different points along a spectrum of - to revert to the more generic term - State-broadcasting organisation relations. To make the point rather crudely, unlike the level of political control achieved in the General Strike when the relationship between the Baldwin government and the BBC was almost direct, the manner of Greene's removal was oblique and tortuous and indicates the real inhibitions on the power of the government to act in the contemporary environment. The 'backdoor' politics of Hill's appointment not only indicates a concern for the
visible integrity of broadcasting but by implication also raises the
question of the social determination of political intervention. What
is it, in other words, that underpins the intensity of political inter-
vention; why were the relationships in 1926 more assertive of governmental
power than Wilson's rather limp efforts in the same direction in 1967?

What I wish to argue is that one really has to consider the relation-
ship between the intensity with which a government pursues and ensures
a broadcasting system which is 'responsibly impartial' and the approxim-
ation of a political system to a state of crisis. It is possible in
fact to bring together the main themes of this discussion and to schematise
the system of relationships involved. To this end it is necessary to
define 'crisis' for that provides one axis of the schema and to develop
the notion of an ideal-type of broadcasting-Government relationship since
that forms the other axis.

I would begin by adopting Gouldner's (1971) view that the central
implication of a system in crisis is that it "may, relatively soon,
become something quite different than it has been". His reference is to
a crisis he sees in Western sociology but the definition could equally
apply to any 'system'. The definitional distinction between change (a
constant feature of systems) and crisis (which is not) is that a crisis
"implies that taxing changes are proceeding at a relatively rapid rate;
that they entail relatively sharp conflict, great tensions, and heightened
costs for the system undergoing them; and, finally, it also implies the
possibility that the system may soon find itself in a significantly
different state than it had recently been" (Gouldner, 1971, 342). I
have in the schema taken 'crisis' as a given feature of a political
process and have therefore not sought to extend the point into a
discussion of the social bases of political crises. Briefly though the
description offered by Gouldner does seem to provide a useful shorthand
for the conceptualisation of the implications of the change from one
regime (say a liberal democracy) into another regime (say an authoritarian or even totalitarian structure).

The second axis is provided by consideration of the extent of real political control of broadcasting. In the preceding pages I described how the General Strike situation represented the penultimate point on a scale, the logical extension of which was direct State control of broadcasting. One can develop this and present that point as an ideal type against which to measure other institutions. Thus by placing it at the end of a spectrum of latent to manifest politicised broadcasting, it provides the requisite means of orientation and enables one to consider the approximation of contemporary relations between broadcasting and government to a theoretical type. One is in fact tempted to present the General Strike as the ideal type since the clarity of the relationships at that time is such as to offer a logical and conceptually unambiguous point of reference for discussion of existing relationships which are far from clear, logical or unambiguous.

A simple schematic representation of what I have in mind is presented below:
In this schema I am of course referring specifically to the British political system and more generally to those systems characterised as the industrial democracies. While one does not wish to be unnecessarily crude in the attribution of causality in the relationships between levels of politicised broadcasting systems and political crisis, the schema does reflect the general observation that on the evidence the greater the systemic crisis the closer the approximation to the ideal-type structure of YB. There is then a predictive element implied within this and I would certainly argue that the factor which ultimately governs the intensity of the governmental intervention is the level of political stability within the structure of the advanced industrial societies. The question is, of course, how would you know that a broadcasting system had been politicised or rather manifestly politicised? What criteria would one look for?

I do not wish to become involved in the detailed complexities of an all-encompassing schema, but the process of a transformation of latency into a manifestation of a government’s power can be judged by presenting the features of the theoretical ideal. Four main factors would be crucial:

1. Direct State control - institutionalised in terms of the creation of, for example, a Ministry of Information;

2. The direct appointment of senior personnel, not just at the level of controlling Boards but also at the level of senior administrative personnel.

3. Direct appointment of editorial personnel: that is, those who on a day to day basis are responsible for producing programmes.

4. Direct control of (3) by (2).

The politicised broadcasting organisation is then characterised by a deliberate and persistent control of the production of content by the State, and it is against this definitional point of reference that one must place any discussion of the relationships involved in broadcasting.

Viewing the relationships of broadcasting organisations and governments in this light, one can begin to locate the present state of relations
and place them in some kind of contextual perspective. By adopting such an overall view of the varied possibilities of governmental control one can readily understand how the appointment of Hill was a pale political act that reflects the existing inhibitions on governmental control. By extension one can argue further that the lower down the schematic scale one goes the more autonomous the organisations appear and the more significant are the programme making practices. Thus Wilson's relative 'success' in the controversy surrounding Yesterday's Men derives partly at least from the fact that there he related to programme practices at a time when historically those practices remained important.

The relationship between the broadcasting organisation and the government is then important for political broadcasting in that it involves the definition of the operational concept of impartiality, not directly at programme-making level but at the level of control over senior executive appointments and ultimate control over the organisation's institutional licence. Given the actual level of autonomy which is maintained at the present time though one has to refer to the details of programme making and the success of associations within the State structure in influencing not only the interpretation of impartiality but also the persistence of conventionality within programme making; this is shown in the capacity of a party out of power to exert considerable influences on conceptions of programme making.

2. Programme-Making and the Non-Governing Party

It is clear from the previous discussion of the capacity of government to act and influence broadcasting, and from the discussion in Chapter 5, that the producers of political television are left with a level of 'autonomy' or 'freedom'. Notwithstanding the clear prescriptions on impartiality, the government's holding the institutional licence and the
capacity to appoint the 'Controllers', producers do not work solely or mainly in response to directives from above or outside. Nevertheless the State does retain a residual power. In office Wilson sought to influence coverage of politics through appointees, and out of power he remained a central and powerful figure, evidence of the State's capacity to inject some influence into the production of programmes.

One irony of Yesterday's Men was the way in which the events of the programme undermined the purposes of his appointment of Hill. This had clearly been the strengthening of the Governors vis-a-vis the more "irresponsible" programme makers. That position was undermined by the emphasis the programme placed on the contradictions in the Governors' role. In short the duality of their position - trusteeship and activism - contained inherently incompatible elements. These contradictory elements suggest the real complexity and subtlety of the general state of broadcasting: that is the organisations are still "institutions within the constitution" (that after all is what their founding documents are all about) and also institutions that aspire to a level of independent political and social observation. One can readily see the likely difficulties that follow from an attachment to a "national interest" which ultimately is defined by the State (not the individual government, but the totality of Parliamentary, administrative and judicial institutions) and also an attachment to a defence of their employees against the potentially oppressive effects of that "national interest". Thus most broadcasters would see themselves as journalists (for example, the overwhelming percentage of my sample of producers were NUJ members - however lapsed) for whom there is not a national interest but merely a set of competing interests in society about whom they must provide information and description and between whom they must not choose. The problem is of course that the luxuries of detached comment and free provision of information are not so readily doled out to the practitioners of broadcast journalism. This for example is the relevance of the "formal context" that entails the
prescriptions on practice in what I would interchangeably define as broadcast journalism and political television.

Yesterday's Men, however, provides an interesting example of the limitations which exist on the capacity of one part of the State structure to intervene and influence (the Governors did not after all accept all of Wilson's demands) but at the same time to have certain small but significant, long term but not readily detectable influences. Examples are changes in personnel, the structural changes - the implications behind the observation that ENCA was to spend more time at Lime Grove - the effective ban on producers from producing in certain areas where they have previously trodden with unfortunate circumstances, etc. This is the stuff of influence but it is the marginality of the influence which is fascinating and it reflects the full complexity and subtlety of these relationships, the difficulties of their analysis, definition and apprehension in the present political context, which contrasts sharply with the real clarity and ready apprehension of the relationships in the General Strike. In terms of the original schema it is almost as if in discussing Yesterday's Men as an exemplar of current relationships one were marking out a central point at which the pull from polar points is relatively equal. Any move towards either extremity will then depend on external political events. This is certainly the point of Swann's statement quoted previously and I think his analysis is substantially correct. What one can add with certainty is that the movement or fate is out of the hands of Swann and his associates throughout broadcasting, and is within the control of the central characters of political life.

If the broad meaning of Yesterday's Men was the complex interaction of prescription and practice, the illumination of the present limits on political intervention, what then were the detectable consequences of the visible ire of leading State figures on programming? When Wilson had previously sought to influence broadcasting the political motivation was obvious, the method oblique. When he attacked what he thought was an
unjust programme the political element was oblique, the method direct —
phone calls, writs, press coverage, etc. — and the consequences significant.
The visible consequences of power, the manifest relationship between the
broadcasters and a key political figure such as Wilson, is not always
the most significant area for analysis since it misses the less obvious
and tangible aspects of power, what Bachrach and Baratz (1963) have called
the "invisible face of power". In effect it is inadequate to always look
for or to only consider the conspicuous manifestations of the impact of
the political associations and personalities within the State.

Thus the potential impact of the State as exemplified by Yesterday's
Men was not just on the previously mentioned structural changes but an
ill-defined feeling among programme makers themselves that such programmes
should not be repeated, thus fashioning an image of what in future would
be the most appropriate form of programme when dealing with politics. One
has therefore to consider the way in which outside pressure was able to
influence the largely unspoken assumptions about programme making.

The conception of the producer and the reporter on Yesterday's Men
echoed a persistent discussion in broadcasting of how one produces
programmes in a competitive environment with its emphasis on entertainment
and audience size using a medium which only with difficulty is able to
treat and discuss the political process. The initial problem with which
the programme maker wrestles is not political pressure but the whole
meaning of the medium for political communication. It was their attempt
to solve the problem by breaking out of traditional formulae that led to
the political controversy. What one can say then is that programmes which
stray from forms and practices that normally govern the television
coverage of politicians — that is, the formal interviews, studio
discussions, reportage of speeches, information about Parliamentary
affairs, etc. — is likely to provoke a sharp reaction. Wilson's success
was to ensure that these forms would remain intact, that there would be
no repitition of the Yesterday's Men programme.
In summary then, the interest of this case study has several dimensions:

1. It illuminates the real limitations on the ability of leading political figures to interfere with broadcasting at the present time.

2. It illuminates the consequences of earlier attempts by government to transcend the subtleties and complexities of the relationship with broadcasting in a relatively stable political environment by imposing a "political appointee".

3. It illustrates the problems of programme makers in political television in particular in producing what they would regard as meaningful content.

4. It illustrates the consequences of change from established processes of programme making.

5. It indicates that while a leading politician may not be capable of direct intervention he can, simply by his hostility, engender a number of consequences, the most significant of which is that types of content and format with which he is familiar and which are effectively conducive to his own needs (that is the electoral role, appearance being equated with popular appeal, and a political role, the opportunity to put forward views, information, etc.) are in fact maintained.

6. Since the programme was in parts reminiscent of a rather mild satirical cartoon, its being quashed exemplifies yet again not only the restrictions on form in television but also the perception that particular content is politically unacceptable, the biting edge of satire being the most notable example. I have in mind a comparable situation: That Was The Week That Was, produced by CaG, was unconventional and certainly aggressive. Greene removed it not in response to a direct order but rather in response to a loosely defined feeling that trouble "was brewing" and a conviction that should he not remove it a direct order would eventually emerge.

Wilson's ability then was to mould the 'appearance of things', maybe not as effectively as had he been in full political control, but surely effectively enough for us to define his role as the impact on programming of the external context.

3. The Legal System and Programming

The influence of associations and personalities within the State is not only their capacity to, as it were, define impartiality and ensure that the types of programme that are produced are to their liking, nor is it only embedded in practices; it is also firmly rooted in the laws relating to broadcasting. The point is straightforward, though important, and need
not be laboured or discussed at length. The study of one department's coverage of the General Election led to a number of conclusions about the framework for that coverage, and in particular emphasised the tremendous concern that producers have for the law relating to broadcasting, notably the emphasis that is placed on the strict adherence to 'impartiality' and 'fairness'. The simple truth of that body of law which relates to the coverage of politics is that rightly or wrongly by a) asserting the dominance of the main parties within British political life it b) ensures that the coverage of politics is tied to the transmission of public statements by leading representatives of the leading sectors of British political life. However worthwhile one considers those statements to be, it does lead one to conclude that this vital feature of the external context provides a crucial bracket within which discussion of political affairs has to take place.

The focus of the study of the coverage of the General Election was a discussion of the treatment of the issues of the election and the way in which decisions were made about that treatment. One of the benefits of such a perspective was that it became possible not only to describe the legal dynamics of election television but also to situate that coverage amid the various forces which influence it, and to assess the extent to which the main criteria are political, commercial or professional. From this one can begin to define the importance of a coexistent context, the commercial, which provides a fourth and final theme in these concluding remarks.

4. Programming and the Commercial Context

One can say conclusively that as important as the political reality of political television is the commercial reality. Where commercial television companies are locked into the wider structure of industrial
and commercial activity (ATV, for example, is part of ATC Ltd.) emphasis is placed on the consumption aspects of political broadcasting. The theme to emerge from the ATV study, and I have no reason to doubt its general applicability, was that the output of news and current affairs departments is as much a product for consumption as those advertised in the commercial breaks.

The effect of such an integration within an industrial enterprise does not lead one to a conspiratorial view of the processes of control involved. There is no direct pursuit of the ideals of big business or a studied support for the virtues of corporate capitalism. Rather the definition of political television as a product for consumption involves a view of what the right type of content will 'look like'.

Though the BBC is in no way a commercial organisation it does not avoid the logic of commercialism and is drawn into that logic through its competition for the same audience as commercial companies. The consequences of this structural relationship though perhaps less obvious than the would-be consequences of political pressure is, in my view, as insidious an influence on programme content.

To summarise the impact of the commercial context:

1. There is a disposition on the part of organisational controllers to allocate limited resources to the coverage of politics.

2. A tendency by programme makers to emphasise familiar 'symbols' with which the audience is felt to be accustomed and which therefore enable the 'correct' construction of a programme.

3. A disposition to treat with great respect the attitudes of judicial and political superiors on whom the franchise viability of the whole organisation rests. That is, the sustaining of a passivity which ensures the legitimacy and therefore viability of their activity.

4. A refusal to develop the medium, an attachment to existing modes and therefore a virtual veto on experimentation.

If a political context implies a locking in of programming to one system of controls so that the formation of content is compatible with the susceptibilities and anxieties of political figures, the commercial context controls a given form through its emphasis on the tricks of
technology and the formulae and cliches of production procedures. The net effect of these being a standardisation across the Network and a superficial glimpse of the political process.

To look at the relations between political broadcasting and the political and commercial environment in which it takes place is to view an affair of complexity, alternating moments of apparent autonomy and real subjection. There is no doubt that the external context of programme making functions at one level (the political) as a latent 'presence', the manifestation of which could take a number of forms: for the programme maker it could affect career, invoke close scrutiny by superiors or the sheer embarrassment of being 'carpeted'; for the organisation as a whole, there is the possible non-renewal of the franchise or a refusal to raise the licence fee, threats of dismemberment, the use of political appointees and the threat of stricter external control (Broadcasting Councils, direct Parliamentary control, etc.), general loosely defined hostility. These provide the crucial links between the realm of broadcasting and that of politics. Thus the capacity to influence, however obliquely, rests on both sides understanding the potential reality of the powers and consequences that yet remain latent. The necessary economic logic of continuing to exist, the capturing of the BBC by that logic, merely serves to lay the basis for the smoother implementation of that influence.

The direction that that influence has taken has been the defining of impartiality, the underpinning of conventional forms and a commitment to the productive and consumptive practices of a commercial process; these seem to me to be the themes upon which one must focus when considering the role of the external context of political television. They are far more important and influential than a phone call from the Chief Whip or the Prime Minister's office.

As I have indicated at a number of points throughout this thesis, broadcasters, usually at a senior level because they are the acknowledged
definers of the situation, frequently engage in a rather self-satisfied
back-slapping as to the virtues of their independence; Hill's memoirs,
for example, which have figured prominently in this thesis are dotted
with such allusions to the independence from the political structure.
While one might grant that there is a level of disassociation from the
party structure, the preceding account has, I think, pointed to a number
of linkages which do exist and which therefore tie production, in part,
to the dominant political institutions. The connection with the commercial
sector was also seen to be an important dilution of the 'independence'
argument.

There is however another important perspective on this argument. The
main parties themselves, through their political practices, their commit-
ment to welfare capitalism, embody, reproduce and sustain the hegemony of
a world of essentially bourgeois practices rooted in the ascendancy of
the urban middle class, an hegemony and ascendancy which, as Thompson
(1973, 91) states, is enclosed within a number of "fixities of concept":
property, the rights of money, innate human nature, political realisim, etc.
It is fundamentally that world from which political television is not
independent, which its practices reproduce and which its external context
ensures that it reproduces. It was Hill after all who, in praising to
the skies the BBC's fight for its independence, stated also of the
Question of Ulster, "in television terms the star was Bernadette Devlin,
with her captivating flow of oratory. Sir John Foster, almost like a
would-be lover, coyly demonstrated her irrelevance to the issues under
discussion, save under the heading of social reform" (1974, 226). This
is a remarkably patronising view of Devlin's argument that the solution
to the Ulster question lay in deep seated change in the social organisation
of British society. The adequacy or not of her arguments is unimportant
here, the dismissive treatment of them, not only by Foster but also
through implication by Hill, as irrelevant speaks volumes as to the under-
lying frame of mind which underpins large sections of broadcasting's
treatment of political and social issues. That Hill adopts such a position is not particularly surprising, it merely reflects a general theme in numerous other statements by him (in *Broadcasting and the Public Mood*, in relation to Ulster, throughout his book) and by other senior broadcasters, notably Greene. This general theme is that there exist a number of moral and political absolutes beyond which broadcasting will not and dare not go. In a clear exposition of this view, Greene states: "although in the day-to-day issues of public life the BBC tries to attain the highest standards of impartiality, there are some respects in which it is not neutral, unbiased or impartial. That is, when there are clashes for and against the basic moral values - truthfulness, justice, freedom, compassion, tolerance, for example. Nor do I believe that we should be impartial about certain things like racialism or extreme forms of political belief. Being too good 'democrats' in these matters could open the way to the destruction of our democracy itself. I believe a healthy democracy does not evade decisions about what it can never allow if it is to survive" (1969, 107).

This seems to me to reflect a commitment, however loosely defined, to those moral fixities of which Thompson wrote. What I think is clear from the case studies is that it is not a question of such "fixities of concept" being articulated by senior personnel and therefore being taken up by the lower echelons of those who actually make the programmes. Nor is it a function of the attachment of the lower echelons themselves to these fixities. Rather to understand the mechanics of their reproduction in political broadcasting - and by extension I would hypothesize, the rest of the media - one has to consider the fixities of practices which the programme maker derives from the total external context, but principally the governing parties, the legal system and the necessities of commercial life. These provide a backcloth, a 'check-list' of things to do, people to talk to, things to talk about; there is an attendance to the statements and perspectives of leading figures of the leading political
institutions (and here I would include the industrial sector). This position is underpinned by a clear perception of the relationships between commercial interests and political needs; by attendance to the superficial and readily observed features of politics because of the economic logic which limits resources; and because of the attendance to the familiar and recognisable based on an assessment of audience taste.

In short the external political and commercial context locks the programme making process into a cycle of dependency - in which the dependency is on established political imagery and established political figures.
CHAPTER SEVEN

PERSPECTIVE ON PRODUCTION

There have been a number of dimensions to this study. Through a discussion of opposed views on the situation of broadcasting within British political culture, an attempt was made to present the broadcasting of political material as one feature of political communication and, therefore, of political process and social order. An initial premise, supported by the research literature, was that one needed to consider both the internal and external context of programme making, and the institutional and intellectual frameworks which derive from those contexts.

In these concluding remarks, I want to consider how the general findings of this thesis relate to the differences in the argument about the situation of broadcasting in political communication, and to argue that the findings do allow one to begin to distinguish between the relative validities of the opposed positions. In this way one can begin to see how the perspectives on production begin to connect with descriptions of the political sociology of the British social and political structure since the connection and evidence do lead to the conclusion that at the core of the British political communications process is a politicised and commercialised production context.

We know that political broadcasting as such and political television in particular is an important form of political communication. On the evidence of this thesis we now know something about the processes which operate on it and shape it, and as such can begin to make a number of clarifying statements about the arguments discussed in Chapter Three. There it was asked whether television serves 'the people' and the 'political process' as is implicit in the view that the broadcasting
organisations are becoming more autonomous and therefore more important as agents of communication. Or does programme production, because the organisation as such is not autonomous, serve dominant interests by portraying their world-view, and thereby tacitly conspiring to sustain that dominance? The conclusion must be that the resolution of the question of autonomy-subordination really depends on the breadth of the perspective one applies to the discussion, since the production of political content exhibits varying commitments: serving 'the people' some of the time, political interests most of the time, itself all of the time.

The View from the Fourth Estate: Theory and Practice

The idea of a free and healthy 'press' is, of course, an integral component of the collective imagery of large sections of the cultures of advanced capitalist societies. An intriguing example of this has been the language and fervency of the recent fight by editors (including both electronic and print media) against the provisions of the Labour Government's Trade Union and Labour Relations (Amendment) Bill. This, they argue, would enable working journalists as members of a monopoly trade union to wrest control of content from the editorial chair, have control over what other journalists write, have control over access to the press by non-journalist contributors: in effect, have a possible controlling and censorship role which would be anathema to the British democratic system. A typical statement was contained in the editorial columns of the Sunday Times (19.1.75). The argument is familiar and revealing: "a union's interests are quite properly those of its members, while a news organisation's are those of its readers and listeners and viewers. These two groups of interest do not necessarily coincide; and it is the second which Parliament ought to prefer. An intelligent electorate needs the fullest possible flow of information from the widest
possible range of sources. 'A fundamental part of the freedom of the Press' declared the International Press Institute in Zurich last week in a comment on the Bill 'is the right of access to it of all citizens'.

Amendment No. 11 deserves to be adopted'. Such a position in the context of broadcasting, I would suggest, ignores the reality of the inhibitions which actively hamper the "fullest possible flow of information".

Analysis of programme making leads one to conclude that political and commercial realities undermine the arguments expressed in the Sunday Times. The dominant mode of political broadcasting in Britain when it is not an obsession with the form rather than the content of programmes, an emphasis on mere appearance, or when it is not a headlong pursuit of an audience rating at the expense of political content, or when it is not hidebound by a straitjacket of values as to what is and is not 'political' or 'current' or 'news', is essentially a process of discussion and critique within sanctioned areas. This is not to posit a conspiracy theory of the production process or to look for overt acts of repression (though these are not unknown); it is merely to say that these are the consequences of the routines and practices of programme making.

The study has shown that the view of an autonomous process fails to consider a number of features of the internal processes of making programmes which undermine and inhibit the fulfilment of a fourth estate role.

Four central mechanisms were outlined: one, the operation of programme 'paradigms' or historical legacies, what was termed the 'functioning of identity'; two, the important resource limitations on programmes (in terms of time, finance, technology); three, a number of legal restrictions; four, the absence of any meaningful concept of the audience. It also ignores the way in which these mechanisms reflect the political and commercial reality of political broadcasting, such that one has to greatly temper the

1 Amendment No. 11 was proposed by the Conservatives and stated that an employee be allowed to refuse to join a union on the grounds that his membership would hamper 'the discharge of any duties he may have in relation to the dissemination of news, opinion or information'.
view of the autonomous institution and consider the significance of the linkages between the programme production, the organisation and those political and commercial institutions which provide the environment or framework within which the production process has to fit.

The argument that structural alterations in the situation of the media organisations have endowed them with a critical and vital presence, an issue-defining capacity that is altering the face of British political life, involves a somewhat abstracted, not to say optimistic, view of the situation.

The central facts of life of political broadcasting in Britain and the facts which one must place against the arguments of the fourth estate role are the emphasis placed on a large audience (with all the attendant trivialisation and inhibition on experimentation), the inhibitions of a technology (though even here one needs to consider the social determination of a technology's potential in the sense that, for example, there have always been economic restrictions on the development of lightweight cameras, use of videotape, etc.) and the looming presence of a highly sensitive and potentially all-powerful political structure. These institutional inhibitions and the production procedures entailed by them - neatly summed up by one writer as the "conventions and necessities" of broadcasting (Golding, 1973) - indicate the gulf between the theory and the practice of a 'free press'. On the whole, the medium can be viewed not as a channel for the transmission of information and analysis but rather as a medium for the transmission of entertainment (for example, the package deal broadcasting of news magazines in which nuggets of political information are submerged within a heap of popular fare) or as a means of satisfying certain established political necessities, of which the ritualised interview between the leading politician and the leading broadcaster is only the most prominent example.

It is of course impossible to begin to 'weight' influences, one can
only hope to map out the main elements of the framework, to show the general setting of a process. In the context of this discussion, however, one can pinpoint one major influence historically and thus root a theme which has been a thread of explanation throughout this thesis. This was the decision to institute a commercial and therefore competitive television service.

Criticism of the impact of the commercial television service is far from novel, but one can now show how this broad framework of competition underpins the programme making process and the premises upon which political television rests. The use of particular types of programme which are known to be successful, the type of resource provision there is, the treatment of the audience as a statistic to be added to, all derive from the impact of competition. It would therefore be incorrect to view the inhibitions on political television as purely political. As important and in some ways possibly more important is the commercial context, and the practices of programme making reflect the commercial anxieties as much as the political anxieties.

In this context it is interesting to situate the ascendancy of news and news magazines, both highly successful formats. From their ascendancy one might predict either an absolute decline in the more serious, lengthy and involved political programmes or their injection with a more entertaining format and content or, and I feel this is the most likely, the 'ghettoisation' of serious political programmes. This would almost certainly be the case if ITV were to obtain the fourth channel. And all this would happen under the banner of cultural democracy.

The development of political television since 1954 is analogous to that of the popular press. Williams (1965, 200) distinguishes between the "newspaper" as embodied in The Times and the "miscellany" embodied by the Daily Mail. What Williams argues is that the late 18th and early 19th centuries witnessed the burgeoning of a press which tapped a different
social base from that upon which the "newspaper" thrived, that is, the urban middle class. The new taproot was the urban working class which wanted entertainment rather than information or edification or share prices. This new press was established through "the institution of the Sunday paper, which, particularly from the 1820’s took on a wholly different character and function from the daily press. Politically these papers were radical, but their main emphasis was not political, but a miscellany of material basically similar in type to the older forms of popular literature: ballads, chapbooks, almanacs, stories of murders and executions" (Williams, 1965, 198).

The emergence of this popular press was premised on the emergence of a new social order - the industrial society with its industrial mass, its increased productive forces, faster communications, etc. The press could develop along these new lines and could therefore establish these new content forms because the urban mass provided a unique economic viability. The central image of the established press was the urban middle class reader, that of the new populars was of an urban mass whose tastes ran to something very different indeed.

If one then looks at the situation in broadcasting, the pre-ITV period in terms of political broadcasting was characterised by the cultural ethos of the professional middle classes, and it was that cultural context which was shattered by the emergence of ITV. I am not saying that the changes involved were as fundamental as the changing social base which Williams describes in his analysis of the emergence of a popular press - he was after all referring there to the emergence of industrial society. Rather, I am arguing that while the social arrangements of society did not change on that kind of scale, the social and structural arrangements of broadcasting changed with a consequent 'rediscovery' of mass, urban man. The emergence of ITV laid the basis for an enforced recognition of the urban mass which though it had been
watching and listening to the refined tones of the BBC, had also been reading the *News of the World*. The consequence of this change of gear is of immense importance in any discussion of political television as political communication because the economic logic of commercial television necessarily involved the BBC and the result in terms of content has been remarkably similar to that involved in the change from the "newspaper" to the "miscellany", the social basis of which is the competitive broadcasting structure. It is within that situation that one can begin to explain the mechanics of the internal context. Thus, even though one might, in more optimistic moments, concur with the view that as institutions within the political process broadcasting has established a degree of autonomy from the party structure, an alternative set of restraints on 'autonomy' derive from the changed nature of the post-1955 broadcasting environment. Television in particular, during this period, discovered not so much a political role (which was seen as the corollary to the idea of autonomy) as an increasingly depoliticised popular role rooted in perceptions of mass taste. The trend is, and I think will necessarily continue to be, popularisation and not politicisation, always underpinned by the real political inhibitions which do exist. If there be a conspiracy it is as much one of the social arrangements as of the political arrangements of broadcasting, and the real social basis of the formation of much political television content is the social organisation of popular taste.

Thus the news programme with its emphasis on the style of presentation (headlines, signature tunes, pairs of newscasters, background imagery of the newsroom, use of by-line reports by reporters in the field); eye-catching tricks of technology; its emphasis on the visual, exciting and the drama of conflict; the structure and flow that resembles the fictive form of beginning, middle and end; the limitations specifically imposed on the length of time which any one story can expect to have; the focus on
prominent faces (in which 'the familiar' is constantly reproduced and therefore sustained in its familiarity); the limited geopolitical location of reporting (i.e., undue attention to a number of 'newsworthy' spots).

The news magazine with its limited resources, its mix of serious and light, political and non-political, with the emphasis on the light and the non-political, the emphasis as with news on the manifestation of technology (what one might call the "over to you Bristol/Edinburgh/Newcastle etc." syndrome), its reproduction of the values of the news (employing the 'stage army' for example), the dependence on newspapers, particularly in the regions. Even the apparently worthwhile developments such as phone-ins, politicians on the spot, participation, increase in consumer slots largely derive not from an altruistic wish to serve the greater public good, but rather rest on the fact that they are cheap, are enjoyed by politicians and are good for the public relations image of the organisation as such.

There is also the visual and lively documentary, the 'human affairs' orientation of much political television (a 'day in the life' of a striking miner, portraits of 'larger than life' politicians/businessmen/trade union leaders). Or where these formulae cannot operate and where, for example, it is necessary to have a 'talking head' in the studio for a lengthy discussion, the timing of that type of political content to coincide with low audience ratings slots (Sunday morning, late evening or the minority channel). All these exhibit not a desire to keep political content away from the audience, or a desire to deliberately skew the 'sample' of political actors represented within output, or a desire to glorify established political figures, but rather to cater to 'audience requirements'. They thus exhibit what Theodore Adorno (1969), in discussing the social basis of popular music, described as "the congealed results of public preferences".

The emergence of 'miscellanised' political programming provides an interesting insight into the manner in which developing practices become,
in the context of particular social arrangements, petrified and inhibit-
ing. It is useful here to briefly indulge the luxury of conclusion and
offer a few tentative thoughts as to how the process of transformation
of new programme forms into a rigid orthodoxy might be conceived. There
was, I would argue, a transition in the post-commercial period from a
Reithian view of the social responsibilities of broadcasting (which was
basically a commitment to a solidly traditional middle class world-view
emphasising restraint and institutionalised inhibition) to a view that
broadcasting had a responsibility to a more engaged, critical and lively
presence within British society: a view which was summed up by its arche-
typal representative, Donald Baverstock, as the destruction of cant.
Such a view rested on the assumption that the Britain in which programmes
were to be made was a society in which the end of ideology, the end of
real class division and conflict, was the new social truth (a mood
forever symbolised by the success of Anthony Crosland's belief that "it
is rather absurd to speak now of a capitalist ruling class" (1956, 35)),
and in which the remnants of a decayed social order suffocated the
potentially thriving classless society. It would then be at least
conceivable to begin to link this strong sense of intellectual 'retooling'
which does seem to have characterised sections of broadcasting in the years
of the late '50's and early '60's - most notably in the 'political'
departments of Granada and BBC Lime Grove - and the belief, summed up in
Wilson's 1964 vision of a "white hot technological revolution", that there
was an urgent need for an economic retooling and revitalisation throughout
the whole social fabric.

The structural alterations in broadcasting thus provided the necessary
basis for the assertion of an intellectual mood from which emerged the
kind of political television with which we are now familiar. Structured
within the political and economic context of broadcasting, however, what
was innovatory in its early stages became petrified as a cultural form and
inhibited by the economic logic of making a programme which obtains an audience and is therefore 'entertaining' - the transition from Tonight to every news magazine which is now produced, the popularised current affairs programme - and the political logic which engenders sanitised political content, these provide the social background to political television.

Looking at the formation of political television in this light is, I would argue, a more substantial view of the nature and situation of political television than the unreal formulations of the 'view from the fourth estate'. By focusing on the circumstances in which political television is made it is clear that rather than serving the 'electorate' or the 'people' as an information starved collective entity, and therefore acting out a role in a system of political communication, such television serves particular institutional and political interests.

New Perspectives on a Radical Orthodoxy

There is an affinity then between the broad conclusions of this thesis and the view that the broadcast media rather than being separate institutions are in fact bound by the needs and interests of institutions and groups within society. What I have tried to do, however, is to show that one cannot look at these relationships as consisting of the persistent imposition of interest, but rather at the way in which the development of the making of programmes effectively, but only occasionally purposively, serves those interests. For example, the programme makers limited finance and time to make 'good television' stems from the need for an economically viable service. At the same time, the lack of those resources, combined with a sense of political and legal sensitivities, can prevent the programme maker pursuing stories which are by any standards important and which the producer knows to be important. In this way different
interests, however incidentally, are served: the organisation benefits by controlling its expenditure and by avoiding political controversy, and political interests are served by leaving untouched issues and problems which could prove embarrassing or difficult. Within this context one can begin to explain the persistent failure of broadcasting to explain, for example, the Poulson case at a time when a number of small papers were pursuing the story and when many producers in the regions knew that the activities of that ubiquitous man required a very careful examination. Poulson, and that is but the most obvious example, is a classic case of the way in which a number of factors, not all political or legal, can operate to inhibit political broadcasting.

Miliband suggests four control mechanisms through which dominant social institutions, including the State, control the output of the mass media. The first, as was seen in the Introduction, is direct ownership and control. One can argue that it is more accurate to look at the kinds of perspectives and goals which the institution provides for its members than to think of the consciously political control of someone like Axel Springer. His second mechanism, the power of advertisers, does not involve a direct influence on specific content. In the context of television in general, and to a lesser extent political television, the significance of advertising is that it requires popular forms of television and thus is one factor accounting for the petrifcation of miscellanised forms and not, as Miliband suggests, because their financial importance leads to business being treated with "sympathetic understanding". It is important to note however that the effect is more likely to be significant in other areas of television rather than in the area of political television. As a general rule, anyhow, the power of advertisers to directly influence content in any area is not, on the available evidence, an important factor at all in British broadcasting - largely because of the system of spot rather than sponsored advertising. Miliband's third
mechanism consists of pressures from the state system and clearly there is a good deal of validity in this. His reference is to 'news management', pressures and blandishments' and 'threats'. While there is an acute sensitivity, for example to the need to always balance representatives of the three main parties, threats and blandishments and the capacity to manage news successfully have tended to vary in strength historically between the General Strike situation when the full potential of the State structure was clearly manifested, to the frequent but not noticeably successful basis on which they now operate. Political elites have sought to influence the perspectives which would be used in political broadcasting by defining how the broadcasting organisation should be impartial, and that is by transmitting images of the information which arises in the Whitehall-Westminster nexus. By defining the operational corollaries of this, that the coverage be balanced (the use of statements from both sides of the Commons/industry/etc.) and objective (rendition of available statements and information from politically established sources) it is clear that the State can ensure to an extent that the political images made available by broadcasting will be 'right and proper'. At another level the State provides a specific body of law which is massively inhibiting for the coverage of political issues. Ideological disposition of media personnel, which is Miliband's fourth factor, is significant only in the sense that ideological prescriptions are provided for the producer by the formal legal context and by historical practice. The proclivities of the individual ideologue are inhibited by strict adherence to the ground rules, by the concern of the organisational hierarchy with that adherence and by the routinised mechanics of programme making.

If part one of this conclusion has been an act of faith in what the thesis has been able to say, part two, as a brief statement, is a profession of humility as to what it has not been able to say and what it therefore might suggest as the possible basis for future research.
A number of aspects of the institutional context of the making of political television might be considered. A sharper focus on the linkage between that context, the programme and the political structure. The focus could be either at the level of relationships between senior executives and leading politicians ('the consequence and meaning of dinner at Chequers' comes to mind when reading Hill's memoirs) or the daily contact which politicians at all levels have with producers, reporters and researchers. The role and consequence of the upper echelons of the policy making process on the activity of making programmes needs a closer and sharper focus than has been available here.

One difficulty, however, would always be the problem of obtaining adequate data. It is actually difficult, if not impossible, to obtain any kind of access at the highest level apart from the occasional interview. On this basis I would suggest that a second area for development is historical research, informed by a sociological perspective. This would not only have analytic consequences by providing a long term perspective on the development of political broadcasting, but would also have methodological implications in that archival sources are more readily available, as are the reflections of past employees.

In the pursuit of an understanding of how those political images which people receive are actually produced there is ultimately no alternative, despite the benefits of historical and institutional research, to detailed accounts of the actual making of programmes, preferably based on the researcher's immersion into that process and with access to the requisite documentary sources. At the present time such a piece of research does not seem feasible, though one likely area is the increasing tendency for political television to take the form of politicized drama and dramatized politics. Given the emphasis on visually appealing material, one area in which there is urgent need for sociological analysis is the making and editing of film/tape items. A focus on the role of the director,
film crews and particularly on the film editor should provide the basis for any such discussion. In this way one could detail the technical construction of images and then link this to a discussion of the social context of an applied technology.

These constitute three areas which in the light of this thesis require further examination. The proposals within the three areas are only intended as examples of the kind of work that one might engage in and in no way exhaust the possibilities. However, while this research can detail the formation of content, and can say what political images and information are made available and why they are made available, it can only say that. It can logically say nothing about the relationships between political images and social consciousness of political questions. For that a much broader and total conception of production and consumption is required, and our understanding of both components is as yet only loosely formulated and hardly validated. It is hoped that this thesis has been a modest contribution to the formulation and validation of one part of that total process, the production of political television.
APPENDIX ONE

PROGRAMME SAMPLE

BBC

Man Alive: Ed. Adam Clapham
Westminster: Ed. Michael Payne

What did you learn from school today? Prod. Anthony Rowe (Documentary)
News Review: Ed. Bill Northwood
Nationwide: Ed. Michael Bunce

Regional BBC News: BBC Scotland, North East, South West, Wales, South, East Anglia, Midlands, North (Leeds), North West (Manchester), West

(In each of these cases the Regional News Editor was contacted)

Panorama: Ed. Robert Rowland
Midweek: Ed. Peter Pagnamenta

Friday Talk-In: Executive producer, G. Watts; Producer, C. Capron
The Sunday Debate: Producer, D. Kennard
Crosstalk: Producer, Elwyn Parry-Jones

The Quiet Revolutionary: Director, Gloria Wood
Opinion: Producer, Peter Carr; Executive Producer, Mike Pentiman
Edition: Producer, Will Wyatt; Executive Producer, M. Pentiman

Workers at Risk: Producer, Ian Wolf.

Real Time: Producer, Phil Speight, Executive Producer, Mike Pentiman

BBC TV News: Editor, D. Moore
The Money Programme: Producer, P. Dunkley; Editor, J. Decker.

ITV

Weekend World: Executive Producer, J. Birt
First Report: Producer, Barry Saley

Regional News: ATV Today

/cont...
Regional News (cont'd): About Anglia (2)
Newday (Granada)
Report West (HTV)
Report Wales (HTV)
Y Dydd (HTV)
Today (Thames) (2)
Day By Day (Southern)
Calendar (Yorkshire)
Grampian News (Grampian TV)
Border News and Look Around
Scotland Today (ITV)
Westward Diary (Westward TV)
Today at Six (Tyne Tees)

World in Action: Executive Producer, Gus MacDonald

This Week: Producer, John Edwards

Citizen's Rights: Executive Producer, A. Flanagan; Editor, Bob Gillman

ITN: Home News Editorial
Dear

I am writing to ask for your help in a research project studying the nature of production in news/current affairs broadcasting.

A considerable amount of time has gone into reviewing the available literature in this important area of social and sociological concern. Having done this, however, I was left with the impression that our knowledge of production is, to say the least, limited and that to increase that knowledge it is necessary to discuss the matter with people who are especially knowledgeable, i.e., those actually producing programmes.

This research is being carried out under the auspices of the Centre for Mass Communication Research whose brief is to further our understanding of the role of the media in society. I am convinced that such understanding will only come when we stop making statements 'from outside' and begin to tap the experiences of those actually involved in programme making. To this end, therefore, I have been interviewing producers in both the BBC and ITV. I would greatly appreciate it if you would allow me to interview you about your own work in this area of broadcasting.

If this is possible, perhaps you could let me know, either by phoning or writing, so that we can arrange a date for the interview. In this way I could also answer any queries you may have about the project. The interview would of course be treated with the strictest confidence.

I realise that your time is valuable, but given the importance of your experience in broadcasting I sincerely hope that you are able to accommodate my request.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Tracey
APPENDIX THREE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Topic one:
1. You were chosen as a possible interviewee for, among other reasons, the fact that you were listed in the (Radio Times/TV Times) as (executive producer/producer/editor) of (name the programme). Could you tell me more specifically what your duties were on this programme?
2. Was this your usual work?
3. Who else was involved? What were their duties?

Topic two: Details of career and present position
4. What is your present job?
5. What duties go with that position?
6. How long have you been in this job?
7. What did you do prior to it? Prompt for other jobs held? How normal is his type of background for a producer? Prompt for educational background, class background, etc.
8. What things do you like/dislike about working in television? Why?
9. How much say do you feel you have in what you produce?
10. Would you say that other producers felt this way? Why is this?
11. How important would you say that the producer/executive producer/editor are in tv?

Topic three: The production
12. How is the decision made to put on a new current affairs/news/documentary programme?
13. How is the subject area decided upon?
14. How are ideas for programmes developed?
15. Who is involved in the developing of these ideas?
16. How does the production of programmes actually take place? Are there definable stages? How is the format, script, film decided upon? How are interviews decided upon? How are interviews handled?
17. When you have finished the programme, do you begin to judge it? — do you consider if it is 'good', 'bad', 'successful', 'a failure' etc.?
18. Do other people in the organization, among your colleagues, among your family or friends ever pass comment?

19. If yes, how important are such comments? Do you consider them when next producing a programme?

**Topic four: patterns of relations**

20. How many people are involved in making this/these programme(s)? What do they do?

21. Of these would you regard some more important than others? Who? Why?

22. Who does the producer/editor/executive producer have most contact with during the production? Prompt: contact with production staff, with people higher up in the organization? With people outside the organization?

23. There has been some concern expressed over interference in programmes by executives or politicians for instance. How much pressure do you get from other sources during production? Can you give a few examples? How do you deal with these pressures?

**Topic five: organizational and legal arrangements**

24. How important is the law in your type of programming? Prompt for balance, impartiality, objectivity. How do you deal with these?

25. How important are organizational rules in your type of programming? What rules do you have to deal with? How are they made known to you? How do you deal with them?

26. It is often said that these rules are transformed into an 'ethos' which influences the way people function within television? How true do you think this is?

27. How do financial resources affect programme making? Who sets the budgets? Can you give me an indication of the sort of budget a programme like the ones you are involved with would have?

28. How important are technical factors in programme making?

**Topic six: audience**

29. What sort of people watch your programmes?

30. How do you know? Prompt for audience research, letters, phone calls, conversation with friends, etc.

31. How important do you feel the audience is in programme making?

32. If they are important, how do they affect the programme making?
Topic seven: comparison of television with other media

33. What advantages/disadvantages do you feel television has compared with other media?
34. Is it potentially more creative than film? radio? press?
35. Is it more secure in terms of jobs than the other media?
36. Is there more autonomy than in the other media?

Topic eight: communications behaviour

37. What newspapers/magazines do you read?
38. Is there any particular columnist that you like?
39. How much tv/radio do you watch/listen to? Hours per week.
40. What sort of programmes do you prefer? Why?
41. Do you visit the cinema much? How often?
42. What kind of films do you prefer? Why?

Topic nine: organization membership?

43. Do you belong to any guilds, political organisations, etc?
   If yes, list.
44. If yes:
   How active are you?
   Do you attend meetings, hold office, etc?
   If no:
   Have you ever been a member?
   If no: Why?

Topic ten: Are there any further comments you would like to make about the things we have discussed?
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ABSTRACT

The study had a number of dimensions. Through a discussion of opposed views of the situation and role of broadcasting within British political culture an attempt was made to locate the factors which frame the production of political television and which therefore need to be considered in any discussion of political television as political communication. An initial premiss, supported by the research literature was that one needed to consider both the internal and external context of programme making and the institutional and intellectual restraints which derive from those contexts.

Consideration of the internal context was based on interviews with those involved in making programmes and periods of observation with particular programmes. Consideration of the meaning of the political and commercial structures which surround programming was through analysis of four case studies.

Attention was drawn to a number of features of the internal context: the operation of 'identities' or stylistic paradigms; the limitations of resources; a number of ground rules; the absence of any adequate image of the audience. Consideration was also given to the role of the institutions of the State and of commerce in influencing programme production.