

institutions set the basic interpretive frames for the media. These practices raise *the* most important question about ideology and the news media: What counts as news? Or put another way: What *is* news? — something that BTLs doesn't even touch on.

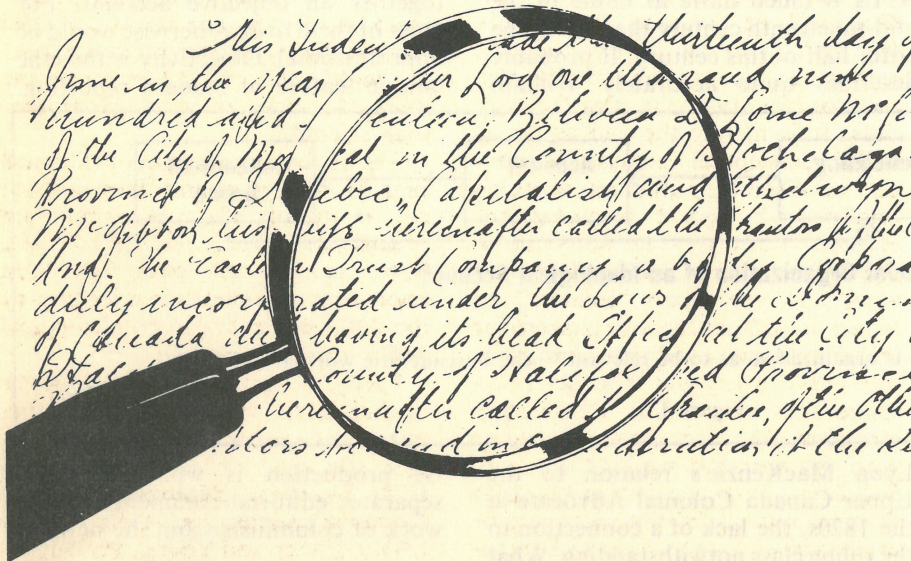
Even when dealing with ethnic minorities, working people, and the Women's Movement, for example, the media is only interested in talking to "the leadership". The label "community leader" guarantees credibility. This practice also means that the leadership of labour organizations, and of women's and minority groups some-

involves ordering the account so as to display two conflicting interpretive frames. In the recent visit of Jerry Falwell to Toronto, for example, the coalition opposed to his speaking appearance tried at its press conference to present Falwell in an 'outside agitator frame', as a carpet bagger, intent on interfering in the upcoming municipal elections. A spokesperson for Falwell, on the other hand, tried to 'frame' the coalition as akin to the Polish government with the Moral Majority having the role of the Solidarity unionists and Falwell, the role of the Pope. This could be called

carried a dateline? Balanced reports teach their readers how to read, and hence produce, objectivity. Almost everyone knows, as a result, the procedures for taking up events around them from a neutral standpoint. In this context, all political activity is seen as biased and somehow illegitimate — a perennial problem for the Left. What political organizer has not run across (or perhaps over) someone at a public meeting disorganizing the politics of the occasion by insisting on the use of procedures for the production of objectivity in developing a political analysis? Movement newspapers can also have the same kind of disorganizing effects on political organizations when they ape the objectivity practices of media that are part of a ruling apparatus, or otherwise allow their own organizational imperatives to dominate the construction of news.

The frames which the media use are often the stock-in-trade of journalists. They are not, however, necessarily developed by journalists themselves. More often than not, frames are produced by other parts of the ruling apparatus, like the police, and are essentially concerned with taking up the relevancies of the work of ruling. Here is a recent example. In the last couple of months, the media in their reportage of the growing economic depression have begun to file stories on "exhaustees" and their families. At first glance, the people they are talking about might seem to be exhausted from looking for work in a jobless world. But this is not the case. An exhaustee is someone looking for work who has exhausted her/his unemployment insurance benefits. Thus the way these people are framed up is not in terms of the social organization of their lives, but instead, in terms of the relevancies of a bureaucratic apparatus with which they have become enmeshed.

As a result of their work, the police in Toronto, for example, frame up gay people as a "criminal minority". Likewise, any incidence of crime in the Italian community is sure to produce the "organized crime" frame. The media depend, as well, on experts to frame events for them; experts who are able, as professionals, to take up the standpoint of ruling. A small number of gay men recently developed what is called Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) which has led to their contracting Kaposi's sarcoma, a form of cancer, and Pneumocystis carinii. Although AIDS is not restricted to gay men, the straight media with assistance from medical



times gets to provide the interpretive frames for understanding the lives of ordinary people. Two things are important here. First, such frames often only attend to the organizational imperatives of such groups and organizations. They are often seen by ordinary people, consequently, as not reflecting their lives. This only sets the scene, should the need arise, for cutting off this leadership from its constituency. And secondly, given the way frames work, these practices ordinarily turn out to be part of the articulation of the lives of ordinary people to a ruling apparatus.

When these kinds of groups come into direct conflict with the ruling apparatus, however, another practice of objectivity comes into play: balanced reporting. This is the classic practice of organizing an account in the interests of objectivity by giving both sides of the story, as though stories always come with two sides. What is required is to get some facts from one side, and then some from the other — generally following the procedures just described. This usually

the 'Solidarity frame'. The resulting newspaper and T.V. reports which concentrated on these frames were not concerned in any scientific way with giving an account of the Falwell visit. Rather, their "balanced reports" were concerned with protecting the objectivity and hence the credibility of the media. These were, consequently, grounded in the organizational imperatives of the media itself instead of in the social organization of that feature of everyday life being reported on. The various accounts, as a result, remained ideologically bound, divorced from the real world of the practices and activities of people.

The quest for neutrality

The practices and procedures for constructing the objectivity of media reports also provide instructions to the reader for the reading of the account. Think of the difference between reading fictional and non-fictional stories. What would happen if news stories began, "Once upon a time . . .", or the story of Little Red Riding Hood