Although E. W. Scripps despised the capitalist economic system that facilitated his publishing empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, he succeeded in the newspaper business. The sharp contrast between Scripps’ left-leaning views and his capitalist success is an intriguing contradiction in American journalism history. This study, based on an examination of Scripps’ 532 philosophical essays known as disquisitions, outlines the publisher’s political views over the course of his life. The disquisitions reveal that Scripps’ Progressive political views were in place early in life before he became a prominent publisher, and that his perspective did not change significantly over time as he achieved business success. The disquisitions also show that Scripps sympathized with the goals of socialism. Despite those sympathies, Scripps believed that socialism was fundamentally flawed and could not prevail in the America of his era, and he considered capitalism, with all its flaws, a necessary evil. This study shows that Scripps was, if nothing else, a pragmatic businessman rather than a left-wing ideologue, which helps explain the success of his newspaper company.

E.W. Scripps succeeded as a capitalist despite, or perhaps because of, his hatred of the very economic system that facilitated his rise as one of the great American newspaper publishers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The sharp contrast between Scripps’ left-leaning views and his capitalist business success is a great irony in American journalism history, and it raises intriguing questions about the precise nature of Scripps’ political beliefs, how those views came to be, and whether or not his views changed as his career progressed. By addressing these questions,

By Gerald L. Fetner

The article traces the early career of Charles Willis Thompson, New York Times’ Washington correspondent and political commentator during the first two decades of the twentieth century, a formative period in American politics, economy, and world affairs. Thompson stood out for his dogged reporting and colorful analysis, skills that were valued by Adolph Ochs, the Times’ new owner, and Carr Van Anda, its new managing editor. Thompson used these talents and relationships as he navigated between his responsibility as the “people’s lobby” and his obligation to those political leaders on whom he depended for information. He managed this challenge by appreciating the difficult job of public officials and conveying that understanding to readers, a formula for press and politics often wanting in today’s political coverage.

The period in American history from 1895 to 1913 witnessed a major shift in American politics, as a new generation of political leaders emerged to challenge the laissez-faire ideology that underwrote the economic revolution of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Old Guard Republican leaders and Bourbon Democrats struggled to retain the power they had acquired following the Civil War by their support of policies favorable to the growth of large industrial and business combines. Meanwhile, reform-minded politicians, inspired by the work of “public interest” lawyers such as Louis Brandeis and investigative journalists including Ida Tarbell, pressed for legislation to lower tariffs and promote free trade, and judicial action to curb efforts by monopolies to restrain competition. These domestic issues, along with the controversy over America’s role

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Wise Decisions: A Frontier Newspaper’s Coverage of the Dakota Conflict

By Charles Lewis

The Minnesota Dakota Conflict in 1862 was among the bloodiest American Indian wars. One of its last events took place in Mankato on December 26, 1862, when 38 Dakota men were hanged in the largest mass execution in US history. This work examines the coverage of the war and the hanging by frontier editor John Wise’s weekly newspaper, the Mankato Record. This research contributes to the history of US Indian-white relations and the frontier press, and it adds evidence to the guard-dog theory of the press. The idea is that mainstream media personnel will tolerate those outside the dominant group, but only until external threats appear. Thus, ultimately, a “free” press serves to perpetuate the status quo, not challenge it. This was especially true in 1860s frontier America, when newspapers, written by whites for whites, were key promoters of manifest destiny.

It was a mild morning in late December of 1862, and Mankato, a frontier town of around 1,500 in southern Minnesota, was packed. More than 1,400 soldiers working under a declaration of martial law helped keep order among the estimated 4,000 white spectators who filled the streets and crowded the stoops, outside stairways and rooftops of the town’s major buildings near the Minnesota River. Nearly two weeks earlier in the East, near the Virginia town of Fredericksburg, a major battle between Federals and Confederates had left thousands wounded or dead, but on that December morning the throngs in Mankato likely gave little thought to the Civil War’s increasing carnage. That was their other war. They had a more immediate war to conclude—the Dakota War—and not long after 10 a.m. December 26 that conflict, for them, came closer to ending with the mass hanging of 38 Dakota American Indian men. And Mankato, the seat of Minnesota’s Blue
Learning from the Trades: Public Relations, Journalism, and News Release Writing, 1945–2000

By Lisa Mullikin Parcell, Margot Opdycke Lamme, and Skye Chance Cooley

This study seeks to add insight into the historical relationship between journalism and public relations by asking how professional publications “taught” news release writing to public relations professionals between 1945, when journalism and public relations entered the postwar years confronted by challenges to their credibility, and 2000, when the Internet, the World Wide Web and, later, social media, began changing the tools and trade of journalism and public relations. The authors found that through trade and scholarly publications, the field of public relations maintained a lively conversation about writing during this period, with a focus on six overarching themes: matching angles with editors; the importance of structure; the importance of style; the importance of facts, honesty, and credibility; the importance of press relationships; and the importance of strategy. Overall, the discussions on basic writing angles, structure, and style remained consistent and in line with traditional journalism standards. Generally, however, the articles examined for this study failed to make a connection between good news release writing in the broader context of effective public relations strategy.

In the wake of World War II, newspapers in the United States faced a crisis of credibility and criticism that they had lost touch with their readers. Magazines, radio, and the advent of television threatened newspaper readership while internal operational challenges, such as the continued shortage of news-

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Newspaper Monopolies Under the Microscope: The Celler Hearings of 1963

By Stuart C. Babington

Early in 1963, United States Representative Emanuel Celler, chairman of the House Antitrust Subcommittee, took a bold step. As part of his committee’s long examination of monopolistic practices in major US industries, Celler called newspaper publishers to participate in a series of hearings about the concentration of ownership in the newspaper industry. Discontinued twice, the hearings have remained somewhat of a mystery, with no official documentation of the proceedings available among government records. This research sheds additional light on the Celler Hearings of 1963, characterizes the approaches congressmen and publishers used in the hearings, and contributes a new perspective on why the hearings were discontinued. The article uses press reports, the personal papers of Emanuel Celler, the files of the House Antitrust Subcommittee, government documents, and American Newspaper Publishers Association documents to piece together the narrative.

From the facts uncovered, the research concludes that publisher opposition to the hearings and Celler’s role in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 brought a premature end to government’s first attempt to curb the concentration of ownership in the newspaper industry.

The year 1963 was one of major challenges for a newspaper industry already beginning to lose its post-World War II momentum. It was a year in which television matured from its role as an entertainment medium to one that threatened the newspaper industry’s reign as America’s primary disseminator of news. The assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the arrest of an accused gunman, and the Kennedy funeral in late November 1963 enticed millions of Americans to television news content.1

Newspaper strikes and closures in 1963 challenged what had been the dominant communications industry. Just eight years be-