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**From Newspaper Guild to Multimedia Union:
A Study in Labour Convergence**

Catherine McKercher

**A Thesis
in
the Humanities Doctoral Program**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

April 2000

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ABSTRACT

From Newspaper Guild to Multimedia Union: A Study in Labour Convergence

**Catherine McKercher
Concordia University, 2000**

Since the 1960s, the unions representing newspaper workers in North America have confronted two interconnected forms of convergence that have dramatically altered the workplaces and the work of their members. Between them, corporate and technological convergence have transformed newspapers from community-based enterprises into minor holdings of massive empires, hollowed out the labour process and blurred the edges of previously distinct media forms. In response, the unions have undertaken a convergence of their own, transforming themselves through a series of mergers into unions that represent a broad spectrum of communications workers. This study, covering the period from the early 1960s to the late 1990s, focuses on The Newspaper Guild, the union of journalists and white-collar news workers, which merged with the Communications Workers of America in the mid-1990s. This act of convergence was accompanied by a parallel act of divergence/convergence, when a number of Canadian newswriters' locals chose instead to join the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada. Convergence reached new levels within one of those locals, when Pacific Press consolidated its seven bargaining units into one. This study finds that while labour convergence remains a work in progress, the converged unions are in a stronger position to assert their claim as unions for the information age.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the generous contributions of several people.

I am extremely grateful to the union leaders and members whose story is told here, and most especially to Gail Lem of the CEP and Linda Foley of the CWA. The union officials quoted in the following pages not only cleared time to talk with me but gave me access to documents and records that were essential to the research. I believe they did so in hopes that this thesis would tell the story of what has happened to the newspaper unions in recent years, and tell it fairly. I hope I have done it, and them, justice.

I would also like to thank Bill Buxton, Mary Vipond and Enn Raudsepp of Concordia University, who agreed in 1993 to serve as members of my PhD committee and went on to become mentors and friends. I could not have asked for a more generous committee, or one that would offer a better mix of insightful commentary and eagle-eyed editing.

Finally, I would like to thank Vincent Mosco, who has seen me through two graduate degrees, for his steadfast intellectual support and simple faith in my abilities. If I needed a reference, he had it at his fingertips. And he helped me believe not only that I could do the work, but that I would. I feel blessed to have him as my partner.

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Introduction

The big story in the Vancouver Sun of January 11, 1963, was the fallout from an inquest into the death of a twenty-six-year-old native woman, an alcoholic, who had been beaten to death a month earlier in what the newspaper called a “Skid Road” room. The coroner said the death was far from an isolated event: at least forty other native women had died in similar circumstances in the previous two years, and alcohol had been a contributing factor in almost all of the deaths. The mayor promised to clean up the squalid hotels and rooming houses in the area. Other stories on the front page described a fight by a mother to get back her 2 1/2-year-old son, who had been whisked away to England by the woman’s estranged husband. In international news, British and American sources were blaming France for throwing up roadblocks to Britain’s entry into the Common Market. The weather -- all sorts of weather -- also made the front page. Western Canada was caught in a cold snap that had killed three in Alberta and had frozen the milk delivered to people’s doorsteps in Vancouver. The main photograph on page 1 showed Mrs. Sharon Barrie holding a bottle of frozen milk. Meanwhile, the police were issuing a warning to people trying to warm up their cars: leaving parked cars with the engine running was illegal and could result in a ticket (Vancouver Sun, Jan. 11, 1963, 1).

On Friday, January 16, 1998, the main story on the front page of the Vancouver Sun dealt with another human vice: gambling, not alcohol. At issue was the degree of provincial government control of casinos that raise money for charities. Another story contained good news and bad news for British Columbia drivers. The good news was that car insurance rates wouldn't be going up; the bad news was that the province planned to increase its use of photo-radar to catch speeders. The main photograph showed a firefighter on the scene of a fire that had destroyed a Greek supermarket. An economic crisis in Indonesia, a major trading partner and the target of demonstrator anger at the previous year's Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation summit in Vancouver, was the top international story. And once again, the weather was on the front page -- this time, a story about how cleaning up after the ice storm that had recently devastated Eastern Ontario and Quebec would cost many millions of dollars (Vancouver Sun, Jan. 18, 1998, 1).

People from almost any culture that embraces reading would quickly identify the Suns from these dates in 1963 and 1998 as newspapers. Even if they couldn't read English, they would almost certainly recognize the pattern of ink on paper as written language, divided up into clusters representing separate stories or articles. The physical format of the Sun would also give clues as to its use. Printed with easily-smudged ink on soft, non-durable paper, and folded together rather than bound or stapled, the artifact suggests impermanence. So does the date (the masthead lists the

day and month as well as the year) and the price (ten cents in 1963; \$1.25 in 1998¹), well below the price of a book or most magazines. This is clearly something to be read and recycled, not saved and shelved.

People who read English would quickly identify the content of the stories as news, defined by Adam (1993, 24) as reports tracking a shift of things in the objective world, or the world beyond our senses. Adam says news takes the form of fact-based stories of the here and now (11), not invented stories of the might-have-been or never-was. The “now” in newspapers shifts with the hands of the clock, though as Carey notes in a thoughtful evaluation of the work of Harold Innis (1992, 163), it represents time telescoped into a one-day world. In the case of the Vancouver Sun, the “here” is relatively stable. The editions from 1963 and 1998 were full of local references, names and terms that may have been as plain as paint to Vancouver readers but opaque to people from another area.² From the focus and scope of the stories, it is clear that the newspaper was produced for people in Vancouver, not London or Sydney or Halifax.

Even the most casual reader would not mistake the Sun of either 1963 or 1998 for a hat, or a dog-training device, or fireplace kindling, or a hockey shin pad --

¹ The price for Monday to Thursday editions in January 1998 was 60 cents; the more expensive Friday paper also included the weekly TV guide

² Just try to find “Skid Road” on a 1963 map of Vancouver.

though the newspaper can be (and has been) used for all these purposes. No, the Sun is clearly a newspaper, “a printed account of timely and important information distributed within a specified market on a regular basis” (Sohn et al 1986, 3). As such, it is an icon of Western culture, part of the journalistic project of writing, in publisher Philip Graham’s often-quoted view, “the first rough draft of history” (see Halberstam 1979, 161). In Benedict Anderson’s terms, it is a “one-day best-seller” (1991, 35).

The similarities between the front pages of the two editions printed thirty-five years apart are far more striking than the differences.³ But this continuity in format masks a paradox. While the end product of the newspaper production process has remained remarkably stable and durable over the intervening decades, little else in the newspaper business has. If we draw on Raymond Williams’s metaphor of technology as representing congealed social relations (1992), the social relations that produce the newspaper have been melted down and reconstituted. This process of melting and congealing has occurred many times over the years, in all phases of the newspaper production plant. It has not, however, occurred at random, or as a series of accidents. Rather, the decades since the introduction of the first computer in the newspaper have

³ Though there are, indeed, differences. For example, the pictures in the 1963 version were black and white. Those in 1998 were in full colour. In addition, the front page from the 1963 paper contained more than twice the number of separate items as the 1998 version. This difference reflects an evolving pattern of front-page design, moving away from presenting a digest of the day’s news and toward using the front page to highlight a few stories and post signs about the contents of the rest of the paper.

been a time of convergence for news workers, defined at its most simple level as the coming together of previously separate entities and operations to create new patterns.

This project focuses on one form of convergence, the reconstitution of previously independent and at times competitive newspaper labour unions into unions that represent workers across the communication sector. Labour convergence has not occurred in isolation, however. This thesis argues that the labour convergences explored here occurred in reaction to convergences in two other areas: ownership and technology.

Again using the Vancouver Sun as an example, it is easy to sketch out some of the rough outlines of these convergences.

In 1963, the Sun was published by Donald R. Cromie, the third member of his family to run the paper. Cromie's father Robert got into the newspaper business during the First World War and, through a complex series of purchases, sales and amalgamations, created the newspaper in 1924 (Kesterton 1967, 100). When the elder Cromie retired in 1936, his son Robert Jr. took over for a while but soon gave up journalism. Robert's brother Donald worked his way up to managing editor and became publisher in 1944. In 1957, Donald signed an agreement with Southam's Vancouver Province to create Pacific Press Ltd., which printed both papers and handled all the bookkeeping. The newspaper's editorial page (Vancouver Sun, Jan. 11, 1963, 4) proudly described the paper as "controlled and operated by Vancouver people, . . . devoted to progress, democracy and freedom." Later in 1963, the paper

would be bought by FP Publications, becoming part of what was then the second largest newspaper chain in Canada (77-78).⁴ The sale of the Sun was part of a wave of mergers in the 1960s that prompted the appointment of a special Senate committee to study concentration of ownership in Canadian daily newspapers.

The Sun of 1998 was still owned by Pacific Press Ltd. By this time, Pacific Press was owned by Southam newspapers,⁵ which was in turn under majority control of Hollinger International. Between them, Hollinger and Southam operated about sixty of Canada's 105 daily newspapers in 1998,⁶ a situation exemplifying the extreme level of corporate concentration in the newspaper business in Canada. Media ownership in North America is not simply a matter of creating daisy chains of similar enterprises, however. The pattern for the last several years has been one of convergence into publicly traded corporations that operate across media, and at times across international borders.

If the pattern of newspaper ownership has changed, the technology of

⁴ FP became the largest chain in 1965 with its acquisition of The Globe and Mail (Kesterton 1967, 78). Southam surpassed FP in the 1970s (Royal Commission on Newspapers 1981, 12).

⁵ For a brief time in 1980, Thomson Newspapers gained control of the Vancouver Sun, through its purchase of FP publications. Thomson sold the Sun to Southam that same year (Fraser and Angel 1981, 30).

⁶ Hollinger and Southam also own about 160 weekly, biweekly or thrice-weekly community newspapers in Canada. Worldwide, Hollinger owns more than 400 newspapers (www.hollinger.com, 1999).

newspaper production has undergone an equally startling transformation. Hadley (1995, 5) describes the history of printing technology as one of “periodic, dramatic change” interspersed with long periods of stability. In the late nineteenth century, printing became mechanized and powered by electricity. After that, the basic processes and techniques of newspaper production endured largely unchanged until the 1960s, when computers began to trickle into the industry. Over the next few decades, that trickle became a flood that swept through the newspaper plant.

In 1963, John Diebold, president of The Diebold Group of consultants, told the annual convention of the American Newspaper Guild⁷ that its members were working in what was, in technological terms, “an archaic industry” (ANG Proceedings 1964, 141). He predicted that the development of computers and information technology would profoundly reshape the newspaper:

Now, it is not simply going to change the method you use; it is not simply going to be a procedural change, but it is going to change the core, the essence of publishing; it is going to change what the role of a paper is in society. Eventually it is going to change the physical form of the newspaper and it is going to materially change the corporate organization and the organizational form of papers and the role of publishing (Proceedings, 142).

Many of Diebold’s predictions have come true. Computers have become standard equipment in every phase of newspaper production, from selling ads to sending out bills, from reporting stories to laying out pages, from running the presses

⁷ This union later changed its name to The Newspaper Guild.

to bundling papers for home delivery. Along the way, the labour process has been dramatically altered. To borrow a metaphor from Neil Postman (1992, 18), the introduction of computers has had ecological consequences in the newspaper plant. Just as the addition of caterpillars to an ecosystem would result in an entirely new ecosystem, the application of computer technology to newspaper production has resulted in an entirely different plant, requiring an entirely different set of relationships among workers. In addition, through the convergence of computers and telecommunications, formerly separate media products are no longer as distinct from each other as they once were. Newspapers are no longer simply ink on paper: they are Web sites, online classified advertising operations and digital libraries whose contents can be downloaded for a fee.

The third strand of convergence -- and the one that is the main focus of this study -- has to do with the newspaper labour process.

In the 1960s, the Vancouver Sun's workers were represented by eight labour unions (Fraser and Angel 1981, 25). Five of these were printing craft unions.⁸ This meant their strength was based on their members' monopoly on technique, acquired through years of apprenticeship and work with specialized equipment designed to perform specific tasks. The unions at Pacific Press had a reputation for strength, grit

⁸ Two of the others, representing electricians and machinists, were not newspaper unions as such. The eighth, the Vancouver local of the American Newspaper Guild, was part of a union that had been an industrial union in newspapers since the 1930s.

and militancy. Nonetheless, the craft unions had bargained as a joint council since shortly after the formation of Pacific Press in the 1950s.

In 1998, there was one union at Pacific Press, representing all 1,200 workers at the Sun and Province. This union was created after the company filed an application for consolidation with the B.C. Labour Relations Board arguing that because of technological changes, the existing labour structure was dysfunctional. Though the consolidation was a shotgun marriage, leaders of several of the former bargaining units have said they are happy with the outcome. While the convergence of labour unions at Pacific Press is an extreme case, it is not an isolated one. Rather, it sits at the leading edge of a pattern of convergences among labour unions in the mass media. Workers from several formerly separate unions, including The Newspaper Guild, have joined the Communications Workers of America (CWA), a 600,000-member Washington-based union that began life as a telephone workers' union. This coming together has, perhaps paradoxically, also been a time of coming apart. A number of Canadian newspaper union locals have broken away from their U.S.-based parents. They have converged in the media sector of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP), a 140,000-member union headquartered in Ottawa whose roots also lie in the telephone industry (and, ironically, in part in the Communications Workers of America).

This thesis presents a historical study of the coming together of North American newspaper labour unions over a period of almost forty years, from the early

1960s to the end of the 1990s. The period coincides with the years since the introduction of computer technology in newspaper offices in the early 1960s. It argues that the labour union mergers examined here represent a distinct form of convergence, one that mirrors and responds to convergences in ownership and in technology. The mergers that have reshaped the newspaper unions are not simply the merger of like with like -- of unions that work in a single industry, or that represent workers in interconnected stages of an industrial production process. Instead, the newspaper unions of the 1990s have taken steps toward becoming multimedia unions, or unions that represent workers in the communications and information business. Just as the technology the workers use is, increasingly, multimedia technology; just as the corporations that own newspapers corporations are, increasingly, multimedia corporations; just as the previously distinct media of communications themselves are, increasingly, the products of convergence, so too are the unions.

This project focuses mainly on The Newspaper Guild, which represents reporters, editors and white-collar media workers in the United States and Canada. Since 1995, the Canadian contingent of this union has been split. The bulk of locals stayed with the parent union when it became a sector of the CWA, but three substantial Canadian locals decided to leave the Guild, two of them to join CEP. The workers represented by the two branches of the former Guild have a more complex relationship to technology and ownership than many of the craft unions, which have historically been concerned with skill. The fates of many craft unions -- the

stereotypers, for example -- have already been decided: new technologies and processes have deskilled these workers almost out of existence. But the Guild's story is still unfolding, and it is still unfolding in relation to the remaining craft unions that have joined the Guild in the CWA or CEP.

As this study shows, convergence on the labour side has not been a smooth process. Historical rivalries among the various unions, cultural differences between craft workers and the Guild as well as between journalists and union organizers, concerns about nationalism, suspicion and fear of betrayal at the bargaining table, and questions about power sharing have all thrown up roadblocks along the path to creating a single union. Nonetheless, the mergers that brought together newspaper workers into new types of unions in the 1990s have been remarkable accomplishments. This thesis argues that these convergences have put the labour unions in a stronger position to organize and protect their members than they have been at any time since publishers began installing computers in the composing room in the early 1960s.

The research methodology draws on a range of documentary sources, including merger documents and other archival material produced by the unions, scholarly and popular literature about newspapers, and the trade press that covers printing and publishing. It also draws on interviews with officials from a variety of unions in Canada and the United States. Though this study is both national and international in scope, it does not include unions or professional associations of journalists whose

memberships are restricted to workers in Quebec.

The first chapter reviews the literature from a number of disciplines, including journalism history, technology studies, labour history and communication studies. It finds that for a range of reasons, the study of labour in the newspaper has tended to fall into the cracks between the territories mapped by a range of disciplines.

The second chapter sets out the theoretical perspectives that inform the study, exploring in detail two key ideas: the notion of deskilling, drawn from labour process studies, and the notion of convergence, drawn from communication studies.

Chapters 3 and 4 track two streams of convergence that form the context within which to understand the union mergers. The first deals with corporate convergence, which has transformed the newspaper business from chains of newspapers into multimedia empires. The second traces technological convergence that has transformed the business of producing the daily newspaper. It begins with a look at the newspaper production process immediately before the introduction of the computer, then traces how the application of technology to work has affected not just the labour of news, but the labour unions of news workers.

Chapter 5 looks at early efforts by the printing trades unions to merge, beginning with a drive in the early 1960s to create “one big union” in printing and publishing. Although that drive failed, a number of mergers took place over the next two decades. In the 1980s, the Guild made a deal to merge with the International Typographical Union. When that failed, the Guild was left on its own.

Chapter 6 explores how The Newspaper Guild eventually wound up joining the ITU after all, though in a form neither had anticipated when their merger talks broke down. Both wound up as sectors in the Communications Workers of America, arguably the leading union in the information sector.

For some Canadian Guild members, however, joining a large U.S. union was an unacceptable choice. Chapter 7 explores how national identity and the desire for self-determination challenged the international union. Eventually, a few Canadian locals broke away from the Guild and, along with breakaway units from the ITU, found a home in the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada.

Finally, Chapter 8 shifts the focus away from the national and international structure of the unions and toward the newspaper workplace. It examines how Pacific Press successfully framed the case that technology has blurred the jurisdictional boundaries of unions and telescoped the production process, winning its fight to force a consolidation of all its unions into a single bargaining unit. It also looks at how the unions' response to consolidation evolved from flat-out opposition to a point where the unions are seeking further convergences on their own.

The study concludes with a discussion of the benefits and risks involved in labour convergence, and the prospects for future joint action among the unions. It argues that united action, whether through further mergers or increasing degrees of inter-union co-operation, is necessary if the unions are to retain (or regain) their bargaining power in the new millennium.

Chapter 1 - The labour of journalism

If news is made, to paraphrase Golding and Elliott (1979), then news workers make it. Like other workers, news workers participate in a labour process that shapes their professional lives, and impinges on their social roles and senses of self as well. In North America, this labour process has features that are unique to the practice of journalism but also reflect broader capitalist social relations. Hardt contends that the history of media work has been largely untold, “obscured by its precarious location among intellectual traditions and academic disciplines” (1995, 1). Mosco suggests that among communication scholars, “more attention has been directed to the labour of audiences than to the traditionally understood labour process in the media industries” (1997, 158).

If the history of media workers has been largely ignored, the history of media workers’ unions has also received little scholarly attention. A number of factors contribute to this. Key among them is the fact that the study of news workers’ unions exists on the fringes of a several areas of scholarship but occupies a central position in none of them.

For example, journalism scholars tend to be consumed with questions surrounding the role of media in society, the articulation of journalism and political

power, or the resolution of ethical issues. For these scholars, the study of the labour process of news or of individual unions is at best a matter of secondary interest.

At the same time, the study of news workers' unions, especially in North America, is an uncomfortable fit for scholars in the field of labour studies. Contemporary labour studies tends to concentrate on capitalist relations in the production of material goods or commodities, like textiles or cars or cigars. The commodity that journalists produce -- journalists call it news, while scholars have called it everything from ideology (Knight 1982) to the reproduction of social order (Hall et al 1978, Glasgow Media Group 1976, 1982) to a "free lunch" paid for by advertisers (Smythe 1981) -- is malleable and fleeting, but nonetheless powerful. In addition, the news production process is unlike most others. According to Kalleburg et al (1987) it's closest to small-batch manufacturing, repeated daily with a product whose form -- the daily newspaper, the hourly newscast -- remains constant but whose contents shift constantly. Finally, journalists relate to their unions in a complex and contradictory manner, constantly negotiating between the poles of solidarity and individual enterprise, trade unionism and professionalism, resistance to political pressure from employers and resistance to political activism of their Guild colleagues.¹

¹ Indeed, as Leab notes (1970), the decision by the founders of the American Newspaper Guild to call their organization a guild represented an attempt to distance themselves and their members from the trade union movement and position themselves instead as a professional organization.

With the advent of the computer, the tools journalists use have changed dramatically. The task of adapting to technological change has helped bring about changes in the structure of news workers' unions. But the articulation of technology and labour creates another uncomfortable fit, this time between labour-process studies and the field of technological history. The former tends to see technologies as expressions of social relations and technological development as having strong political, social and economic dimensions. The latter tends to look at technologies as things to be studied in their own right, and to equate the development of new technology with progress.

Finally, we come to the field of communication studies, centring around the impact of a broad range of communications practices on society. In the U.S., the field grew up on the Lasswellian mantra of "who said what to whom with what effect."² In Canada, the research tradition has drawn more heavily on the work of the Toronto school, and especially on Innis, who studied the dynamics by which media bind space or time. Contemporary communications research tends to be divided into what we might call sociological and culturological streams. The former tends to look at the construction of messages, including the social relations that go into producing them;

² Buxton (1994) has found that the phrase was originally devised by John Marshall, assistant director of the humanities division of the Rockefeller Foundation, as a chart to bring order to material presented at a seminar organized by the Foundation in 1939. Harold Lasswell, who took part in the seminar, likely adapted his formulation from the discussions that took place.

the latter at the deconstruction of messages, including the polysemic ways a single message can be read. While both streams are concerned with the labour of making and reading messages, the role of labour unions in producing messages has been peripheral to the sociological stream, and pretty well off the agenda in the culturological stream.

What all this means is that the study of news workers' unions runs the risk of slipping into the cracks between disciplines. At the same time, however, the fact that it teeters on the edges of so many disciplines offers scholars the advantage of being able to draw on ideas from a range of disciplines to understand the transformations that have occurred in the last few years in the main North American union of journalists, The Newspaper Guild.

This chapter reviews the literature from four fields -- journalism studies, technology studies, labour-process studies and communication studies -- in an attempt to map out places within those fields (and their sub-fields) that are relevant to the study of news work and news workers' unions. It in no way seeks to offer a comprehensive "map" of the terrain covered by these four disciplines. Rather, it focuses on a range of works that directly or indirectly address issues surrounding the labour of news. The next chapter sets out the theoretical perspectives that inform this study of trade union mergers in the North American newspaper business, examining in detail two key ideas that offer lenses for viewing the mergers. The first, drawn from labour-process studies, centres on the deskilling effects of technology. The

second, drawn from communication studies, is the notion of convergence.

Perspectives from Journalism studies

Journalism studies bridges many disciplinary boundaries, from sociology and history to professional education. Its defining trait is a focus on the practice of journalism, which may include how journalists go about their job and how news reaches the reading and viewing public.

Building on descriptive accounts of newsrooms such as those by Breed (1955) and Darnton (1975), a number of scholars have produced sociological examinations of news-making and newsrooms. Among others, Gans (1979), Epstein (1973), Fishman (1980) and Tuchman (1978) have looked at how newsroom management structures, definitions of newsworthiness, the resources available to journalists and the organization of news workers into “beats” influence what the American news media cover, and how and why they cover it. Golding and Elliott (1979) have studied similar questions regarding television broadcasters in Sweden, Nigeria and Ireland.

Several scholars -- among them Roshier (1973), Stone (1993), Graber (1980), Hall et al (1978), Fishman (1982), Cohen (1972, 1973), Voumvakis and Ericson (1984), Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1991), Wilson (1976), Koch (1980) and the Glasgow Media Group (1976, 1982) -- have focused on the particular form of news work known as police or crime reporting. These studies concentrate on the disproportionate amount of attention reporters pay to crime compared to other stories,

and on the role of crime reporting in building and reinforcing hegemony.

These studies pay attention, in varying degrees, to the workers who engage in news work: what they do, whom they talk to, how they collect information, why they see their jobs as turning events into stories, what myths they draw on in story telling, how they define professional activity, and so on. Many of these news workers, especially outside of the United States, belong to unions. But this aspect of their professional identity receives little attention in these studies. For example, Golding and Elliott (1979, 183-184) spend two pages discussing unions, noting that virtually all broadcast journalists in Sweden and Ireland belong to unions, while three-fifths of those in Nigeria are union members. “Swedish journalists were generally rather puzzled to be asked why. Their answer was simply, ‘it’s natural’ and so it was” (183). The authors note that this contrasts sharply with the situation in the U.S., where a 1972 national survey found union membership among journalists at 28.9 percent.

Unionized journalists in North America are certainly a minority, but they are a substantial and influential one.³ It’s worth considering, therefore, why the unions have received so little attention. One possibility is that, echoing Golding and Elliott,

³ In Canada, for example, unionized journalists include those at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, The Canadian Press and major dailies like the Toronto Star, The Globe and Mail, Ottawa Citizen, Montreal Gazette, and Vancouver’s Sun and Province. In the U.S., reporters at major outlets like the New York Times, Washington Post, Philadelphia Inquirer and Boston Globe are unionized, as are workers at The Associated Press wire service.

the unions are part of the taken-for-granted context of the workplaces where they operate. Another is that because union membership in the U.S. is comparatively low, researchers studying the U.S. media may be tempted to see the presence of a union as an anomaly -- or, perhaps, as worthy of attention only when labour peace breaks down. A more likely explanation, though, is that because such studies are mainly concerned with the role of journalism in constructing hegemony, or the related issue of journalistic bias (see, for example, Hackett 1984), scholars tend to limit their inquiry to identifying and understanding the professional ideology of the journalists, including how journalists define things like bias or objectivity. In doing so these scholars set aside the considerably more murky question of how journalists reconcile their position as middle-class professionals whose professional ideology emphasizes independence with their membership in a trade union.

Contemporary newsroom sociologists are not alone in their penchant to ignore unions, however. Journalism historians have also paid relatively little attention to the role of news workers in general, and of unions in particular. Hardt notes that media history emerged with the rise of the modern press as a formidable political institution. Early media historians produced a historical narrative that emphasized the activities of the media elite of owners, editors and star writers. They equated, at least implicitly, the labour of journalists with the press as a social institution: "(T)hey treated media institutions as representations of media workers. . . . As a result, biographies of famous journalists became welcome celebrations of media institutions rather than

reflections on the process of editorial labour” (1995, 7). Similarly, Nerone argues (1993, 38-39) that conventional media histories tend to emphasize success stories. This means they emphasize innovation and growth and concentrate on finding the ancestors of successful contemporary media forms rather than on exploring forms whose influence was greater in the past than present, like the weekly press.

Journalism history takes a number of forms: memoirs and biographies telling the stories of individual publishers, editors or star journalists;⁴ industry histories, focusing on a particular media form (newspapers; magazines) or a single outlet;⁵ and social histories, which seek to relate the development of journalism with the political, economic, cultural or technological events in the broader society (see Buxton and McKercher 1998). In general, biographies and memoirs are among the earliest and most popular forms;⁶ social histories among the newest.

Among social historians of the press, the development that has attracted the most sustained interest is the rise of the commercial press in the nineteenth century.

⁴ Library shelves are full of such books. Many are popular (or non-scholarly) stories of an individual's career; others are written by scholars who are interested in the context of their subject's lives. Among recent Canadian scholarly examples are Cumming 1992, 1997, Freeman 1989, Goldenberg 1984, Martin 1997, MacKenzie 1993, Nolan 1989.

⁵ See, for example, Bruce 1968, Fetherling 1993, Hayes 1992 and Sutherland 1989.

⁶ Hardt notes that institutional and personal biographies constituted the most significant category of historical research in journalism until the 1980s (1995, 7).

In his examination of the so-called penny press of the 1830s, Schudson (1978) describes changes in the financial base, organizational structure and content of the newspaper. He links the development of reporting based on facts to the rise of the “democratic market society” (30). Dan Schiller describes the same set of phenomena but offers a different explanation: “the transformation of the newspaper into a commodity” (1980, 4). Baldasty (1993) picks up the same theme. He contends that the business imperatives of the press -- based on keeping expenses low and revenues high -- turned news into a product to be shaped and marketed. This meant that as a commodity, news had two functions: to inform, and to earn profits.

In Britain, Lee found that the transformation of the press into a commercial mass medium “made it less suited as an institution for a liberal society of the classical sort, the logic of mass media being the extinction of differences, and not their perpetuation in a pluralist society” (1976, 19). Lee notes that in Britain, the U.S., Germany and elsewhere, the commercial model freed journalists from political control, but subjected them to the demands of business.

Thus, what critics regarded as a disastrous betrayal of the cause of the press in the 1880s and 1890s in England may be seen, in larger perspective, as part of a quite ‘normal’ development in the history of the newspaper in the industrial revolution (105).

Curran and Seaton (1991) counter the argument that advertising was the “midwife to press freedom,” providing the money to transform the formerly partisan press into a free and independent fourth estate. They found that working class or radical

newspapers were unable to attract sufficient advertising revenues to compete with the rapidly industrializing mainstream press and had to either compromise their content or face closure.

Rutherford (1982), Sotiron (1997), de Bonville (1988) and Walkom (1983) have examined the commercialization of the press in Canada, which occurred later than in the U.S. or Britain. Rutherford identifies a series of social factors that set the context for the rise of the commercial press in the late nineteenth century: urbanization, the development of the class structure and notions of community, the rise of literacy and a reading culture, and innovations in printing and papermaking technologies. He focuses on two types of daily papers -- the bourgeois press and the popular press -- both of which relied increasingly on advertising as an income source. He contends that vigorous competition for readers led to better content: "The true beneficiaries of a transformed journalism . . . were the readers" (110). Sotiron is somewhat less enthusiastic about this transformation. He argues that the increasing number of dailies entering the crowded newspaper markets of large Canadian cities in the 1890s forced publishers to collude and amalgamate as well as to compete. By 1920, he argues, the newspaper had changed to a concentrated, monopolistic form, one that was as subject to commercial pressures as any other business.

Rutherford notes that during these years, the Canadian newspaper retained its partisan connections, but party papers began to look more and more like independent papers. In a study of the Quebec press, de Bonville describes a similar series of

developments. He argues that the *journal d'information* did not replace the *journal d'opinion*, but instead grew up around it (1988, 355). Publishers increasingly saw their readers as consumers rather than citizens, and catered to them with a new range of products: local news, *faits divers*, entertainment and features. Walkom (1983) focuses on the economic forces at work in the late nineteenth century and concludes that the key factor for newspaper publishers was overhead costs. The cost of building large plants with expensive presses and complex machinery forced papers to look for additional sources of income beyond subscriptions. These included an emphasis on broadening both the readership base and the range of advertisers.

It is not surprising that journalism historians would concentrate on the rise of the commercial press in the nineteenth century. It was an event of enormous social, political and cultural significance in each country where it occurred. It was also an event that transcended national borders, and might best be seen as part of the transformation of Western society brought about through the rise of capitalism. In addition, the commercial pattern set in the nineteenth century endures today, and the commercialization of the print media presaged the development of broadcasting as a commercial form as well.

This was also the period, though, in which newspaper unions appeared on the scene: typographers in the 1850s, lithographers and printing pressmen in the 1880s, and photoengravers, bookbinders, stereotypers and electrotypers around the turn of the century. But the study of this unionization has not been a central thrust of the

social histories of journalism. In large part this may be due to the same kinds of patterns we have seen in newsroom sociologies: the focus of inquiry is on other issues, such as the link between the commercial press and democracy, or the role of the press in creating a consumer society, or the transformation of news into a commodity form.

This is not to say that the history of news writers or their unions has been ignored entirely by journalism scholars. For example, Emery and Emery (1978, 507-510) describe, briefly, the founding of The Newspaper Guild. Kesterton (1967, 166-167) offers a thumbnail description of the expansion of this union into Canada, the creation of the Syndicats des Journalistes and its affiliation with the Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux. He also makes note of the conflicts between publishers and craft unions in early in the 1960s over the introduction of computers (253-254). Rutherford says that the rise of organized labour in the last half of the nineteenth century did not pose a serious threat to the social order (1982, 21), though it did cause frustration among newspaper owners who complained about what they saw as the high cost of labour (95-96). Rutherford also notes the militancy of nineteenth century printers and contends that few enterprises were so vulnerable to strike action as the daily newspaper (95).

By contrast, Hardt and Brennan see news workers as the central object of study in their 1995 edited reader subtitled "Toward a history of the rank and file." It includes an article by Solomon, who links the growing hostility of the nineteenth

century commercial press to labour and working-class issues to an increasingly autocratic and hierarchical management style devoted to a single-minded pursuit of profit. Within the newsroom, this meant that jobs became divided and sub-divided. Copy editors were a new category of low-status news workers, subservient to editors (who held power and authority) and occupied with tasks that were less interesting than those done by reporters. Solomon notes that after the turn of the century, newsroom workers began to move toward collective behaviour. "Increasingly they were prepared to treat management as an opponent, more than as a colleague with whom one put out the paper" (130). In the same volume, Salcetti, drawing on Ellul's idea that *technique* induces order, identifies the 1880s as the time the "modern newspaper reached its mechanical stride" (49). In newsrooms, this meant a mechanized division of reporting work between reporters in the field and office-bound rewrite workers who took down the reporter's work by typewriter. Reporters came to be seen as "one widget" (59) in an increasingly mechanized project, and in spite of the stereotypes of "spirited individualism and work freedom," their lives were not all that different from the lives of other workers whose labour was increasingly driven by machines (59-60).

In addition to devoting attention to the development of capitalist social relations surrounding the news media, social histories of journalism also focus on the new technologies publishers used to creating the mass-market press -- things like the linotype machine, electric-powered presses and so on. According to Hardt,

Media historians responded to the agonies of modernization by translating their obsession with power into a fascination with technology as a social and economic determinant of society. They concentrated their efforts on describing the quick succession of media technologies since the mid-nineteenth century, while ignoring their profound effects on the nature and quality of professional journalism (1995, 3).

The scholarly study of contemporary journalism shows a similar fascination with technology. In large part, this is due to scope of technological change in the computer age. Anthony Smith (1980) contends that the invention of the computer represents a third revolution in communications technology, on a par with the invention of writing and the invention of the printing press. Koch argues that computers are not simply new tools for engaging in an old practice, but have the power to change the very essence of journalism, eventually redefining news in particular and “public information in general” (1991, xxiii).

Journalism scholars, especially in North America, have produced a wide range of studies on how journalists use computers, and on how computers are in turn reshaping journalism. In terms of reporting, Patten (1986) foresees the rise of the “technojournalist,” skilled in information retrieval, analysis and management as well as interviewing and writing. Endres (1985) has found that reporters at large-circulation newspapers were more likely to have access to computerized databases than those at small dailies. De Reimer (1992) reports that nine out of ten reporters use a database every week, though there is considerable ambivalence about how or whether database use related to quality and productivity in the newsroom. Hansen,

Ward and McLeod (1987, 1988), studying electronic libraries at newspapers, have found that while most reporters adapt to new electronic system, a significant minority do not. In addition, reporters receive minimal training and supervision when using electronic libraries. Ward and Hansen (1991) report that searches of expensive commercial databases tend to be controlled almost exclusively by newspaper librarians. McKercher (1995) finds that most reporters continue to use their computers mainly as word-processing machines. Kerr and Niebauer (1987) report that editorial writers seldom use computerized data bases. The reason: they don't have time. Writing in a more popular vein, Johnson (1990) enthusiastically describes a range of high-tech gadgets that give reporters a competitive edge, save time and allow them to communicate more efficiently with head office.

As for editors, Shipley and Gentry (1981) have found that editing by computer is slower but more accurate than editing by pencil and paper. On the whole, though, editors prefer electronic editing, rating it faster and cleaner (Linley 1988). Russial (1989) studied the introduction of electronic page makeup technology -- known as pagination -- and concludes that the job of editing now has two components: the traditional word-smithing task that focuses on content and a set of technical tasks formerly done by compositors that focuses on presentation. Standera (1987) reports that the centre of gravity of publishing is changing, with control moving closer to the editor and the author.

Turning to the impact of computers on news, Hansen (1990) has found that

articles nominated for Pulitzer Prizes contain a higher degree of “information richness” than other investigative reports. They draw on more diverse sources, better sources, more background and less interview material. Neuwirth et al (1988) have found that news releases delivered electronically to newspapers tend to be edited less than those sent in on paper. And Shipman (1986), in a study of job satisfaction, concludes that reporters and editors should be consulted about decisions on technological change.

These studies describe in substantial detail how reporters and editors adapt to and work with computer-based technology. As a group, they tend to be written from within a tradition that equates new technologies with progress and sees job losses as the inevitable -- for some, even unproblematic -- result of innovation. Though many of these studies express concerns about how editors in particular are put under stress by new equipment, they tend to concentrate on strategies of adaptation rather than strategies of resistance. The assumption seems to be that resistance is inappropriate behaviour for “professional” journalists. Thus, it is telling that Byerly and Warren (1996) locate their study of organized protest in the newsroom as occurring “at the margins of the centre.” This study concentrates on reporters as “actors” in power struggles with management, struggles which run counter to the professional value system and traditions of journalistic objectivity. They find an apparent relationship between the presence of unions at a newspaper and the likelihood that reporters would organize themselves around issues such as

combatting racial or sexual discrimination in the newsroom. Barwis (1981), in a survey of newspaper unions, describes a recurring pattern of membership loss due to automation, followed by merger. She concludes that publishers will gain increasing economic advantage by substituting machines for employees and predicts that the percentage of operating costs devoted to wages will decline.

Perspectives from Technology Studies

Journalism scholars are, of course, not alone in their fascination with computers or other mechanical devices as objects of study. Nor are they alone in seeing such devices as symbols of progress, or as part of an inevitable advance of Ellul's *technique*. Staudenmaier (1990), surveying articles published in Technology and Culture,⁷ finds that technological historians tend to fall into three camps. The oldest and largest contains the internalists, whose primary concern is the machinery itself. In recent years, these have been overtaken by the contextualists, who attempt to integrate a technology's design characteristics with its historical setting. The newest group, which he calls the externalists, includes scholars who show little interest in the issues of technological design. Instead, their focus is on the social, political, economic and cultural forces at work in the introduction of new technologies.

⁷ The journal is published by the Society for the History of Technology.

These divisions among technological historians are connected to differences in how scholars define technology. The internalists and, to a lesser degree, the contextualists, view technologies as objects, to be studied in their own right. The externalists see technology as an expressions of social relations. Indeed, for these latter scholars, technology need not be a physical “thing” at all: Beniger, for example, defines technology as “that which can be done” outside the natural processes of living systems (1986, 9). He views history as presenting a never-ending series of crises of control, which are resolved by a continuing series of technological advances, only some of which are mechanical in nature.

In addition to differences of definition, historians of technology tend to hold different views on two ideological positions that have formed the bedrock of North American scholarship on technological history: the linked ideas of technological progress and technological determinism. The former refers to the notion that technology aids humanity in its conquest over nature, following, in Heilbroner's words, “one and only one grand avenue of advance” (1967, 336). The latter idea is that technology operates as a quasi-independent force which, again to quote Heilbroner, “makes history.” He argues that the question is not whether technology drives history, but how (1994). Merritt Roe Smith (1994) notes that as far back as the seventeenth century, an adversary culture began to rise in the U.S. to challenge this kind of technocratic thought. Ironically, he adds, some of the leading critics “have endowed modern technics with a degree of agency and influence that often goes

beyond even what its most enthusiastic advocates claim" (34).

Staudenmaier's internalists tend to work from within the philosophical tradition of equating technology with progress. The contextualists are more ambivalent. Many concentrate on telling success stories of technology -- a format Staudenmaier, writing elsewhere, describes as most compatible with technological determinism (1985). Others, he says, look for the losers in technological change as well as the winners. But by studying technology as things, both groups tend to pay relatively little attention to the workers who have to work with those things, or the political, economic, social and cultural forces that push and pull the innovators and engineers who develop the technologies.

For the purposes of this study, the strand of technological history that offers the most insight comes from the externalists -- those who pay a minimum amount of attention to gadgetry and a maximum amount of attention to the study of technology as representing social relations. Much of this work in turn draws on the Marxist notion that capital is not an economic category but a relation between human beings.

Among others, Noble (1984) and Goldhaber (1986) argue that technological development should be seen as a social construct, one that reflects the values and dominant interests of the society within which it develops. Noble says the mainstream view of technological development draws on the Darwinian idea of survival of the fittest. This view assumes that all technological alternatives are always considered, that they are evaluated strictly on their technical merits, and that they are then

launched into a free and competitive market.

Any successful technology, therefore -- one which becomes the dominant and ultimately the only solution to a given problem -- must, by definition, be the best, for it alone survived the rigours of engineering experimentation and the trials of the competitive marketplace. And as the best, it has become the latest, and necessary, step along the unilinear path of progress (144).

But this assumes too much, Noble argues. The “experts” who develop the gadgets are as prejudiced as the next person. In addition, they are constrained by their cultural habits, career considerations and intellectual enthusiasms, as well as by the technical climate, institutional incentives, the weight of prior and parallel developments and the performance specifications of project managers. The business owner carries a similar load of political, cultural and economic baggage. And the market, which is assumed to correct for distortions or deceptions at the earlier stages, “is too easily overwhelmed by the forces of monopoly and the state” (145). Therefore, he concludes, the economic and technical tests a new technology is supposed to pass are political and cultural, not economic and technical at all.

Marvin (1988) introduces the idea that technology is subject to a continuing set of negotiations and renegotiations among producers, promoters, experts, users, consumers and workers. In her view, innovation forces a negotiated accommodation between the device and the existing class, family and professional structure. This is a far more nuanced -- and messier -- process than the sweep of crisis and resolution described by Beniger. Douglas (1987) contributes the idea that much of this

negotiation goes on in public, where journalists' portrayals of innovation (her study concentrated on radio) influence the course of technical adaptation.

A number of externalist works on technology have looked at the promises accompanying the initial presentation of a new technology. The printing press was seen by contemporaries as a way of bringing God's word to all who sought it (Marvin 1988, Nord 1984); the telegraph and radio as tools for instantaneous, person-to-person communication (Czitrom 1992, Douglas 1987); the electric light as a way of getting messages to the multitudes (Marvin 1988, Nye, 1990); the Internet as part of a global information revolution offering instantaneous communication and access to knowledge (Mosco 1996). Almost without exception, these claims have turned out to be, if not entirely false, at least overblown. Mosco argues that these claims should be seen as myths.⁸ As such, they are important both for what they reveal (a genuine desire for community and democracy) and for what they conceal (in the case of the computer, the growing concentration of communication power in a handful of transnational media businesses). Drawing on Marvin, we might also see them as opening positions in the complex negotiation process that surrounds technological change.

⁸ By myth, Mosco means more than the everyday notion of falsehood. He draws on Claude Levi-Strauss's idea (1978 and 1987) of myth as a way of helping people deal with contradictions in social life that can never be fully resolved, and Alisdair MacIntyre's idea (1970) that myths should be viewed not as true or false, but living or dead.

Externalist works also show how the diffusion of technological innovation into the broader society does not necessarily follow a straight and tidy path: indeed, there is often a significant gap between original form and eventual use. Radio, for example, was introduced and promoted as a tool for point-to-point communication, not broadcasting (Douglas 1987); the first films were viewed through a peephole, by one person at a time, not projected on a screen for a broader audience (Czitrom 1992); telegraphy was introduced as a medium for carrying messages for and by ordinary people, not as a means of giving companies monopolies over news and information (Czitrom 1992); the computer was developed as a machine for handling numbers, not texts (Smith 1980); the Internet as a tool for the defence industry to share information privately and safely, not as commercial space (Reddick and King 1995, Mosco 1996). Marvin offers an insightful explanation for how the uses of a new technology develop: “New practices do not so much flow directly from technologies that inspire them as they are improvised out of old practices that no longer work in new setting” (5). In other words, a new technology tends to intrude from the edges of social life, prompting a process of accommodation between the new device and the existing social structures of class and family. New technologies, therefore, provide “new platforms on which old groups confront one another” (5).

The study of technology by the externalists offers a considerably more sophisticated exploration of the process of innovation and technological change than the work of the internalists. It also allows for study that focuses on how various

groups within society relate to technology differently. A growing body of feminist work has made connections between technology and patriarchy, finding that the gender expectations of society are reproduced in the production and consumption of technology.⁹ Cowan argues (1979) that the absence of female topics in histories of technology reflects the limitations of the historians, not historical reality.

With the exception of scholars like Noble,¹⁰ whose work is situated in the analysis of technology and the labour-process studies, technological historians have tended to be more interested in the intersection between new technologies and inventors and new technologies and consumers. They have shown less interest in the labourers who use new technologies in the workplace. For that kind of research, we must turn our attention to scholars working on the labour process.

Perspectives from Labour-Process Studies

Scranton (1988), noting the “none-too-porous boundaries” between labour

⁹ For example, Pedersen and Phemister (1990) found that photography helped reinforce the gender stereotypes of society, where men were seen as serious photographers and women as either consumers or models. They note that when cameras appeared on the mass market, they were advertised as being so simple to operate a woman or child could use them. This perpetuated traditional stereotypes about women's natures and capabilities.

¹⁰ His study of the machine tool industry (1984) argued that the reason numerical control became the dominant technology was that it left less power in the hands of workers than competing technologies.

history and the history of technology, says the roots of labour history as a discipline are found in the Midwest, where John R. Commons and his followers devoted themselves to chronicling American craft unionism as an institution that worked in concert with other institutions in society. Scranton notes that this tradition “viewed conflict as an occasional accessory to compromise, not as an intimate component of labour’s experience within capitalist industry” (723). A second body of research, carried forward largely by people who were not necessarily formally trained labour historians, moved beyond the institution of the union and into families and communities, the world of women’s labour, and the unemployed. A third stream, starting in the 1970s and drawing on a neo-Marxist analysis, concentrated on what scholars have seen as the inherently exploitative condition of labour relations under capitalism.

The next chapter explores in depth the question of deskilling as a consequence of the application of machinery to work. This idea has been a crucial strand in Marxist-inspired labour studies. It has also been a place where technology studies and labour-process studies have overlapped.

Scholars who study newspaper unions have paid the most consistent attention to printers, identified by Hobsbawm (1968) as among the aristocracy of labour.¹¹

¹¹ Hobsbawm uses the phrase to describe a distinctive upper stratum of the working class: better paid, better treated and generally regarded as more “respectable” and politically moderate than the mass of the proletariat (1968, 272).

Printers' organizations were founded in London and New York in 1795 and in the Canadian city of York in 1832 (Zerker 1982, 3-6). During the nineteenth century, printers emerged as leaders of the labour movement. In the early 1850s they organized the first successful trade federation on a national scale in the U.S. (Zerker 66). Following the addition of Canadian locals, the organization renamed itself the International Typographical Union in 1869 (76).

In part, the success of the printers' union had to do with literacy. Printers were able to read and write at a time when most people could do neither.¹² In addition, they were exposed to the world of ideas through their work. Many went on to become publishers, editors and politicians. A number of scholars have examined the rise of powerful printers' unions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, their successful adaptation to industrialization, and their ultimate collapse in the computer age.

Barnett (1926), in an early but sophisticated look at the problem of displacement of skill by machinery, describes the introduction of the linotype in North American newspapers as a success story, a case where a thoughtful union managed to stay on top of its trade, and where technology created employment rather than displacing it. The transition from hand to machine occurred with stunning speed in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Barnett estimates that in 1904, 7,500

¹² Zerker notes that marriage registers in England in the first half of the nineteenth century show that one-third of men and half the women were unable to sign their own names (9).

linotypes were in operation in Canada and the U.S. (4), up from less than 100 in 1888 (9). Because the machines could set type four to five times faster than a compositor working by hand, Barnett calculated that linotypes could have potentially displaced up to 36,000 workers (5). But that didn't happen, for a number of reasons. Some were technical: the machines, at first, didn't operate as quickly or as smoothly as their manufacturers predicted, and could not, as some newspaper managers hoped, be run by lower-paid women and children. Some of the reasons were economic: linotypes and other mechanical innovations allowed for the development of bigger newspapers, sold to broader audiences, and eventually requiring more printers. But the printers' union also helped make the linotype a success story. In 1888, the ITU's annual convention adopted a resolution urging locals to recognize the linotype machines and work to "secure their operation by union men upon a scale of wages which shall secure compensation equal to that paid hand compositors" (9). Some locals bought or rented machines, so their members could practise (15). In 1891, the union recommended a change in payment for members, to a weekly scale rather than on a piece basis. It also recommended that the locals negotiate a shorter work day of eight hours. Both were seen as ways of protecting the wages and jobs of a maximum number of printers.

Kealey sees these victories as "at best ambiguous triumphs" for the ITU (1986, 91). They occurred at a time when employers were beginning to form their own associations with anti-union agendas, when labour negotiations were becoming

more formal, and when the autonomy of locals began to erode. “In their wake came a vastly more centralized, bureaucratized ITU -- a union that increasingly defied rank-and-file control” (91). Nonetheless, Kealey concludes that the printers entered the twentieth century with much of their power intact. They combined craft customs with vigorous trade unionism to assert control over their work. At the same time they gained jurisdiction over the new machines by “cleverly acceding to a process of reskilling” (93).

Burr (1993), drawing on feminist research probing the links between class and patriarchy, studied how the early printing unions in North America treated women. She found that the precursor to the ITU, the U.S.-based National Typographical Union, decided in 1854 that the union would not encourage the employment of women as compositors (52). In the late 1860s it decided to permit women printers to create their own locals, but only if by the male local in the area agreed (53). A few years later it stopped granting charters to women's locals, instead allowing women printers to join the men's locals. Burr argues that one of the reasons the ITU moved so quickly to establish jurisdiction over linotype machines was to prevent publishers from displacing male hand compositors with female typists at the machine's keyboard (55-56). She found that the International Printing Pressmen's and Assistants' Union,¹³

¹³ This was originally known as the International Printing Pressmen's Union. The name changed in 1896 to recognize the inclusion of press assistants or feeders. (Burr, 60)

which broke away from the ITU in 1889, was also unwelcoming to women. The union made a strong link between craft and social role: men were seen as destined to become breadwinners, women were not (62). She concludes that the male craft unions used exclusionary strategies to defend their status, helping to perpetuate a gender division of labour in all the printing trades.

By the time Lipset et al wrote their groundbreaking study of the ITU's distinctive two-party electoral system in 1956, the ITU's power had peaked. The authors describe the union as “one of the most powerful unions for its size in the nation” (1956, 23), successful in asserting control over machinery and in sustaining its image as the elite of the working class. They felt, however, that this image might be eroding. “A number of printers stated that the prestige of printer is lower than it was in the past. This is probably true” (110). In addition, Lipset and his team found that the printer's six-year apprenticeship period “is as much a product of the union's power as of the actual skill requirements of the trade” (30). The traditional difference between printers and other workers had steadily narrowed, they found (31).

Zerker's history of the Toronto Typographical Union (1982) concludes with an analysis of how the Toronto newspaper publishers broke the union in the 1960s. Zerker presents the story as a case of foreign domination: the international union's leaders wanted a test case for asserting jurisdiction over computers, and Toronto was it. Indeed, the union raised the issue of jurisdiction over computers “before any Toronto publisher had ordered a multi-purpose computer for his plant” (264). Three

times the publishers and the local typographical union came to a tentative agreement on a contract; three times the international union's contracts committee -- which had to sign off on all contracts negotiated by locals -- refused to accept it. Zerker contends that the publishers did not initially set out to destroy the union, but eventually decided, either separately or together, that they didn't want to deal with the ITU any more and would try to get rid of it. They did so by provoking a strike in July, 1964. The strike was never settled.

Zerker also notes that when the negotiations began, the craft unions in Toronto were bargaining as a joint council.¹⁴ The other unions decided to sign contracts before talks with the printers concluded. When the printers struck, only one union, the mailers, joined them. The others crossed the picket line and went in to work.

Zimbalist's study (1979) of the labour process in printing in the late 1970s found the unions in a weakened position. The historical pattern of unionism in North American printing had been one of division and sub-division, with crafts breaking away from the ITU to form their own unions. The unions were now paying the price. Zimbalist writes: "More energy has been devoted to delineating craft and union boundaries than to fashioning craft and union solidarity" (124). He concludes that while the unions had won some struggles over the timing of the introduction of

¹⁴ The Guild, which represented reporters, editors and business office staff, was not part of the council, but agreed to co-operate with the other unions.

computer technology, these victories were short-lived. “New printing technology . . . has enabled capital to assert control over the labour process” (125).

Walsh (1985) picks up the story of the printers in the 1970s and 1980s in her examination of a failed attempt at merging the ITU with The Newspaper Guild. Drawing on industrial relations research on union mergers (see, for example, Chaison 1986 and Chitayat 1979), she finds that the shape of the proposed union shifted during the 10-year period of negotiations. At the beginning, it seemed that the ITU would absorb the Guild, which was half its size. Over the next several years, the perception of the merger shifted to an amalgamation of two roughly equal partners. By the time the merger document was complete, the deal looked like an absorption again -- but this time of the ITU by the Guild. One of the key reasons for this shift was that during these years, the ITU was feeling the catastrophic effects of technological change.

Across the Atlantic, Cockburn (1983) studied how the same technological events that were undermining North American unions were affecting printers in Britain. She concludes that employers saw computerized typesetting as the tool to smash the printing unions, whose monopoly over the craft enabled them to earn high wages and exert a substantial degree of control over the labour process. At the same time, she writes, the craft identity of the printing unions was distinctly masculine. The unions sought to exclude women where possible, or to marginalize them where they could not shut them out entirely. “There is no doubt that, in the last resort, the

craft work of composition for print was men's work *because men said it was*" (152, emphasis in the original).

These studies of the rise and fall of printers' unions draw on a number of theoretical positions. Barnett works from within the nineteenth century tradition equating machinery with progress; Walsh from within a mainstream industrial relations tradition that sees capitalist relations as essentially stable; Kealey and Zimbalist from within labour-process studies inspired by a neo-Marxist analysis of deskilling and the inherently exploitative nature of capitalist relations. Zerker connects labour-process studies with nationalism, a connection which, as we will see in Chapter 7, some Canadian news workers continue to stress. Burr and Cockburn work from within a "dual systems" approach that attempts to disentangle capitalist social relations and patriarchal social relations.

No doubt part of the attraction of the printers has been the clarity of their story: few groups of workers attained such high status in the industrial age; even fewer fell so quickly to the deskilling effects of the computer.

The scholarly research on The Newspaper Guild is, by comparison, considerably less rich and nuanced. Leab's serviceable history of the founding of The Newspaper Guild (1970) is essentially a work of institutional research. It traces the beginnings of the union to the Depression-era U.S. National Recovery Administration, which required industries to write codes that would enable them to promote wide re-employment when the economy improved, and which guaranteed

employees the right to organize. Newspaper publishers wanted to have journalists declared as professionals, thus making them exempt from some aspects of the legislation (39). When New York columnist Heywood Broun suggested in a 1933 column that reporters should form a union, he sparked an enormous response (45). A number of locals quickly formed and by December of that year, a national organization had been launched as the American Newspaper Guild.

In its early days, the Guild saw itself as a professional body for reporters, not as a trade union. Over the next few years, however, the Guild realized that neither the NRA nor a professional model of organization would improve working conditions for members. In 1935, it adopted a resolution favouring its reconstitution as an industrial union in the newspaper industry, though it held off for a year on extending its jurisdiction to non-editorial workers in the business, clerical, circulation and promotion departments. The most difficult question was whether the Guild should affiliate with the craft-based American Federation of Labour. It did so in 1936, then left the AFL for the Council of Industrial Organizations in 1937, joining as a full industrial union. Leab notes that within just three years, the organization had transformed itself from a loose association of local groups of news workers into a centralized union with a “rudimentary but broad collective bargaining program” (281) and a membership in organized labour.

Salcetti (1992) studied how the Guild and the publishers contested for control of news work and news workers in 1937 and 1938. She found that the publishers'

association sought to contain the Guild as much as possible, circulating advice on how to outmanoeuvre the union on the Wages and Hours Act, severance pay and the question of an open or closed shop. Brasch (1991) edited a collection of readings that offer a contemporary look at The Newspaper Guild. Among them is a piece by Daniel Lazare, former president of a New Jersey local, who says the Guild is in an enviable position compared to other unions. "Its industry -- essentially the information industry -- is not in decline and, as an editorial union open to everyone from reporters to keypunch operators, its fortunes are not bound up with any single craft" (338).

While these works on the Guild are useful, none of them engages in the kind of labour-process research scholars have applied to printers' unions. In part this may be because the Guild's story is considerably more complex. As an industrial union almost from the beginning, it cannot lay claim to a monopoly on skill like that asserted by the ITU and other craft unions. Instead, it represents workers with a range of skills, from news writers and copy editors to ad takers and circulation clerks.¹⁵ On the whole, Guild members in newsrooms have been less affected by the deskilling effects of technology than printers, though some types of work, such as copy editing, have been much more deeply altered than others, such as court reporting. Finally, as a union dominated by news workers, it is, to use Leab's term, a union of individuals, constantly confronted by the contradictions between the need for trade union

¹⁵ Nonetheless, Guild culture tends to be dominated by news workers, not clerical workers (Linda Foley interview, 1998).

solidarity and the journalistic impulse toward non-participation and objectivity.

Research focusing on the labour process is enormously useful in providing a framework for studying newspaper unions. But it's important to remember that while newspaper unions are increasingly integrated within the larger, North American labour movement, there are some unique features about news workers that must be addressed. These include the fact that while news workers produce newspapers, nightly TV shows and magazines, they also produce meaning. To round out this survey of the literature on news workers, therefore, it's necessary to look at one more field: communication studies.

Perspectives from Communication Studies

In the United States, empirical research in communication grew up around answering the question of who said what to whom, and with what effect. This formulation contains echoes of the famous "five Ws" question of practical journalism -- the idea that reporters convey who said what, when, where, why and how. Notably absent from the communications formula is the "why" question. Czitrom argues that this omission "reflected an unwillingness to investigate issues concerning which social groups controlled the messages communicated through the media" (1982, 132). It also showed how "a basic acceptance of the organization and commercial basis of the American media was an obvious given for most researchers working in this tradition" (132). Czitrom notes that empirical communication research has focused

on areas that answer parts (or all) of the question. This means it has embraced areas as diverse as public opinion analysis and propaganda analysis, marketing research and the social/psychological impact on televised violence on children.

Communication studies has also drawn on another tradition which sees the processes of communication as fundamental to history and the development of societies. Innis, one of the foundational thinkers in this stream, argued (1951) that the appearance of writing brought about radical changes in social organization, including a shift toward secular authority and the replacement of traditional time-based codes of oral culture by knowledge based on the administrative and technical needs of the present and future empire (see Carey 1998, Czitrom 1982). While Innis is best known as a media theorist, he also looked specifically at the newspaper industry, linking the rise of the American newspaper to the decline in public life. Buxton (1998), drawing on unpublished work by Innis, notes that his specific concerns about printing and modernity underpinned his general reflections about time- and space-binding communications.

In recent years, two areas of communication study have attracted the interest of an increasing number of scholars. One is the stream broadly known as cultural studies, which focuses mainly on the content of communication messages, as opposed to their production. Among the defining characteristics of this approach is its resistance to being defined -- or confined -- by disciplinary boundaries. Grossberg, Nelson and Treichler characterize it as not merely interdisciplinary but “actively and

aggressively anti-disciplinary” (1992, 1-2). This approach to communication draws on a wide range of tools -- among them semiotics, deconstruction, ethnography, psychoanalysis and feminist theory -- to understand culture as both a set of practices and a way of life. When scholars from this field approach news,¹⁶ their main interest lies in examining how audiences, both as a collectivity and as a collection of individuals, make sense of what they see and read. Scholars working in the cultural studies tradition tend to see the task of making sense of messages communicated by the media as labour. In general, however, they are less interested in the labour process that produces these messages.

The second stream of research draws on the critical political economy tradition, focusing on the context of communication and drawing, in varying degrees, on a Marxist analysis of class relations under capital. According to Garnham, a political economy of communications “links the analysis of capitalism, both as an overall social formation and as a specific mode of production, to the normative definition and realization of human liberation” (1990, 5). Golding and Murdoch see the task of political economists as attempting “to show how different ways of financing and organizing cultural production have traceable consequences for the range of discourses and representations in the public domain and for audiences' access

¹⁶ See, for example, Hartley 1982; Glasgow Media Group, 1976, 1982; Koch, 1990.

to them" (1991, 15). Mosco (1996) offers two definitions of political economy. One is "the study of the social relations, particularly the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution and consumption of resources" (25). A second -- and as Mosco characterizes it, a more ambitious -- definition is "the study of control and survival in social life" (26). Control processes, he argues, are broadly political in that they involve the social organization of relationships within the community. Survival processes are fundamentally economic, concentrating on production and reproduction.

The political economy approach to communications study, therefore, tends to be more concerned with the social relations that produce the messages carried by the media and the ideology they convey than with the deconstruction of messages by the reader or viewer. Indeed, Smythe (1981) argues that the messages themselves are irrelevant: the commodity produced by the media, he argues, is the audience.¹⁷

Like critical scholarship in labour studies or social history, the political economy approach attempts to look at events in their historical and social contexts. This means it tries to take into account the broad range of actors -- in the case of newspapers this might include publishers' groups, corporations, the state and labour

¹⁷ In a critique of the political economy tradition, Schudson complains that too much of the work is grounded in "conspiracy theory" or based on "a rather simple-minded notion that there is a ruling directorate of the capitalist class that dictates to editors and reporters what to run in the newspapers." He says this approach treats everything between ownership and the final product as "a black box that need not be examined" (1989, 266-267).

unions as well as individual journalists and citizens -- that have a stake in the matter under study. Applied to communication, the goal is to interrogate the structures and social relations underlying what Smythe (1981) calls the Consciousness Industry.

Scholars working in the political economy of communication may focus on specific industries such as telecommunications (Babe 1990, Melody 1986, Mosco 1989, Mansell 1990, Dan Schiller 1982, 1993, Winseck 1998), film (Pendakur 1990, Wasko 1982, 1994) and advertising (Matellart 1991). Another group of works focuses on the implications of the creation of a global communications infrastructure. (See, for example, H.I. Schiller 1969, 1996; Nordenstrang and Schiller 1979; Traber and Nordenstrang 1992.)

As for newspapers, works drawing on the political economy tradition have tended to centre on the problem of concentration of ownership and on the impact of corporate control on news. In a qualitative study of a handful of major news stories, Winter (1992) finds that the media fall far short of presenting an accurate accounting of events. Instead, the stories presented reflect the interests of the corporations that own the newspapers and, at times, the state, which is linked with the corporations into an oligarchy. For example, in a chapter on the coverage of the debate over free trade Winter points out the connections between an oligarchy of media owners, the Business Council on National Issues and the corporate-backed political parties that run the government. All three share common goals, he says, including a desire for “greater competitiveness, which translates into rationalization, efficiency and

ultimately profits” (105). He also points to a number of columnists as “media conduit(s) for the ideology and policies of the Canadian corporate establishment.”

Winter picks up on the same theme again in 1997, though this time his emphasis is on “who ‘owns’ the news” (1997, xv). He seeks to examine how the ideology and ambitions of the owners, the extent of concentration, the role of management and other factors reinforce the arguments of his earlier work (xv). The book includes a detailed account of the transformation of Southam from a family firm into a corporation controlled by Conrad Black. One of the consequences has been significant declines in employment. The number of people working in Southam’s newspaper division dropped by one-third between 1992 and 1995, and the total number of Southam employees declined by 50 percent between 1988 and 1995 (31). At the same time, after a loss in 1992, profits were on the rise.

Winter also examines how those cuts ordered at the corporate level show up in individual newspapers. He notes that at the Windsor Star, the newsroom was restructured. A number of beats were eliminated and more of the remaining reporters were required to be generalists rather than specialists (94). Reporters had less time for followup stories and were required to do more stories each day. The newspaper had to rely more on freelance copy (95). The quality of the printed product declined as proofreaders were eliminated, resulting in more grammatical and typographical errors (94). He notes that not surprisingly, newsroom morale plummeted.

Miller, though not sharing Winter’s views on the oligopolistic nature of the

Canadian state and corporate elite, similarly decries “the folly of corporate journalism” (1998, 15) which has moved away from the principle of informing the community and toward treating news as “a cheap consumer product that must be packaged and sold, like dishwashing detergent” (14). Like Winter, Miller examines how Conrad Black’s drive to acquire newspapers has played out in the newsroom, examining the mass firings in Regina and Saskatoon that followed Black’s acquisition of the Regina Leader Post and Saskatoon Star Phoenix. The impact, he says, was predictable: “Having fewer journalists to gather the news meant that there was a visible decline in editorial quality” (94). He adds that the so-called Black Saturday in Saskatchewan is not an isolated incident. “Make no mistake about it: Conrad Black is one of corporate Canada’s true believers in the merits of downsizing to create value for shareholders” (95).

Underwood (1993) examines how the phenomenon of corporate control has translated into a new emphasis on marketing and management in the daily newspaper. He characterizes this as the rise of “MBA journalism,” or journalism dominated by the marketers who hold degrees in business administration and are interested more in selling than informing. One consequence of this has been a decline in coverage of government (19).

But what of the workers coping with this new corporate environment? Again, we must turn to scholars like Russial (1989), whose work bridges journalism studies and political economy. He situates his investigation in a particular corner of the

newsroom -- the copy-editing desk where technology has dramatically altered not just how editors do their work, but what that work involves. The traditional job of copy editor focused on the content of news stories. This meant checking for basic components like grammar and spelling, but also going over stories closely to check for accuracy, flow, completeness of the reporting and the quality of the story-telling. The job also included writing headlines, which compositors set in type. Russial finds that with pagination -- the word refers to computerized page-layout systems -- the editor's job now embraces a range of technical layout tasks previously handled by compositors. While editors still are in charge of content, they must also carry out a range of "must-do" tasks that put news in the newspaper. This means that when pressed for time, they have no choice but to forego editing for content in favour of layout. He worries that this may "deprofessionalize" editors (260).

Sussman and Lent, in an edited set of case studies that articulate the labour process with globalization, note the creation of a new international division of labour which has mobilized workers into a "low-wage, segmented and flexible global production force" who produce commodities they will never have the purchasing power to buy (1998, 2). They argue that workers must find new means for "internationalizing their potential collective strength" (11). This work fits with Lipsig-Mummé's idea (1995, 197-198) that the political economy tradition critically re-examines three key assumptions that underlie the mainstream approach to industrial relations. The first is the notion of labour relations as a system that tends toward

equilibrium. While mainstream labour-relations theorists see labour relations as a co-operative system that sets rules for regulating relationships, political economists believe each of the parties represents fundamentally different interests. The second assumption has to do with the idea of level playing fields and the neutrality of the state. She points to work by Panitch and Swartz (1988) underlining the dual nature of the state as both employer and articulator of the policies of the political party in power. Finally, political economists challenge the idea that the key actors in labour relations choose their strategies rationally and act only after evaluating all relevant costs and benefits. Organizational memory, cultures of militancy, styles of leadership and inter-union rivalry all play significant roles, she says.

This brief survey has attempted to map out places within the literatures of journalism studies, technology studies, labour-process research and communication studies that inform a study of newspaper unions in North America. It shows that while the research tradition in a range of disciplines has addressed pieces of the labour puzzle, none sees the labour of making news as the central problem. The next chapter sets out a theoretical framework for the current project, a study of convergence in North American newspaper unions in the late twentieth century.

Chapter 2 - Deskillling and convergence

This project is a study of convergence -- of the coming together (and at the same time, the coming apart as a prelude to coming together) of unions in the North American newspaper business. It argues that in transforming themselves in the 1980s and 1990s, the unions have acted in response to a linked set of pressures. One of these has to do with the continuous -- we might even say relentless -- application of technology to work. The second has to do with changes in the newspaper business itself, a business that is, perhaps paradoxically, both a series of local enterprises and a part of the national and global information business.

This research falls within the broad field of political economy, a research tradition that emphasizes the social relations of capitalism reverberating beneath the daily rumble of the newspaper presses in cities and towns across Canada and the United States. In doing so, it employs two theoretical lenses. The first, developed by scholars of the labour process, has to do with the effect of automation on work and workers' skill. The second, developed in communication studies, has to do with the notion of convergence.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the deskillling thesis proposed by Braverman (1974) and critiqued and modified by a generation of specialists in labour

research. It then examines the concept of convergence, an idea that has become increasingly central in communication studies. It concludes by examining how these two ideas interact and may be useful in explaining not just the extraordinary changes that have taken place in the labour process of newspapers over the last thirty-five years but the challenges facing labour unions representing workers in the broader information business.

Skill and technology

The mainstream approach to labour and technology developed in the 1950s and 1960s by scholars like Blauner (1964), Woodward (1958, 1970) and Dunlop (1958) started from a position that sees capitalist social relations as competitive and subject to change but fundamentally stable. Scholars working in this tradition argued, though this simplifies matters to a great extent, that new technology would require changes in the labour process, but would lead to a broadening of worker skills and an upgrading of skills compared to the limited requirements of the assembly line. We can see links in this position to the notions of technologically driven progress put forth by what Leo Marx (1965) calls the dreamers of the technological sublime and summarized in Chapter 1.

Much of the scholarship on industrial relations has struck similar themes. Dunlop (1958) presents an industrial-relations system as composed of three actors -- labour, employers and government -- interacting within market, technological and

power contexts, and bound together by an ideology to establish a web of rules of the workplace. Later work has modified this model. But as Gunderson and Ponak explain (1995, 9-14), these modifications are all characterized by the idea of balance: scholars working within the institutional perspective see unions as a mechanism to counterbalance the influence of employers; neoclassical scholars see the marketplace as mechanism for correcting imbalances; human resource management theorists emphasize management techniques to create a happy workplace in which unions are not necessary; strategic-choice theorists focus on management as the initiators of change, but recognize collective bargaining as an instrument through which employers may pursue their interests.

Braverman and succeeding generations of radical labour-process scholars start from a different point of view. Drawing on Karl Marx, they see capitalist relations as fundamentally exploitative and unstable, as the site of a continuing class struggle. They also see technology not just as something that produces social relations -- as scholars like Woodward would have it¹ -- but as the product of social relations.

Braverman begins by defining the fundamental and structurally determined conflict underlying the relationship of capital and labour: the effort by capital to gain increasing control over the labour process. What workers sell to managers is neither

¹ Woodward (1970) argues that technology is the most significant contingency affecting organizational structure and behaviour, concluding that specific technologies require managements to adopt particular forms of organization.

themselves nor their services, but their labour power, or their capacity to work. The task of the managers is to figure out how to transform this labour power into labour. This is essentially a problem of control (170). For Braverman, labour has two distinct components: the conception of a task, which is a uniquely human ability, and its execution. Other species work -- spiders spin webs, birds build nests -- but they do so following a biological imperative, and they cannot delegate the task of spinning webs or building nests to other spiders or birds. In humans, instinctual patterns of work have been subsumed by social relations. "Thus in humans as distinguished from animals, the motive force of labour and the labour itself is not inviolable. The unity of conception and execution may be dissolved" (50-51).

Braverman contends that the capitalist system of manufacturing uses increasingly sophisticated machinery² and administrative techniques to break the link between conception and execution. The conception of a task becomes the job of management; the workers are left with the execution. In addition, management breaks up the execution stage into a number of component parts or motions, each requiring a minimum level of skill. Management asserts that the work must be done in a particular way, regardless of how the workers might see it. And once management has identified the individual component parts or motions to carrying out a task, it uses

² He does not, however, take a technological determinist position that machinery is the cause of the problem. "It is not the productive strength of machinery that weakens the human race, but the manner in which it is employed in capitalist social relations" (229).

machinery to automate them. As a result, worker skills fall, in both an absolute sense through the loss of craft of traditional skills, and in a relative sense, in terms of understanding how to control increasingly complex and sophisticated machinery. He refers to this process as deskilling.

Again citing Marx, Braverman describes machinery as embodying “dead labour” -- or the skills and knowledge of the workers who did the task before automation. “The ideal toward which capitalism strives is the domination of dead labour over living labour” (227). In the nineteenth century, a series of mechanical innovations replaced the physical force of workers. By the start of the twentieth century, however, the mechanical possibilities of the industrial revolution were pretty well exhausted. The owners of the forces of production looked to science, “the last -- and after labour the most important -- social property to be turned into an adjunct of capital” (156). The result had been a scientific-technical revolution which has characterized the twentieth century.

The unity of thought and action, conception and execution, hand and mind, which capitalism threatened from its beginnings, is now attacked by a systematic dissolution employing all the resources of science and the various engineering disciplines based upon it. The subjective factor of the labour process is removed to a place among its inanimate objective factors (171).

For Braverman, the system of scientific management developed by Frederick Taylor (1911) is the epitome of capitalist intrusion into the labour process. Scientific management conceives of the worker as “a general-purpose machine operated by

management” (180). Workers are thus stripped not just of their skills but of their subjectivity and, ultimately, their dignity.

Braverman's deskilling thesis prompted a wide range of commentary, criticism, debate and scholarly research on the nature of work. (For a summary of the strands of criticism, see McLoughlin and Clark 1994.) One strong thread of criticism centres on his tendency to see capital as homogeneous, to imbue the forces of capital with omniscience, and to see the implementation of management strategies as largely unproblematic. This fails to take into account the resistance of labour to deskilling or its efforts at the bargaining table to modify management strategies. As Edwards puts it (1979), the workplace is contested terrain, a phrase implying that struggle is a constant factor. In addition, seeing capital as a unified force obscures the very real clashes and conflicts among enterprises and their managers. For example, Zimbalist's study of the printing industry (1979) found that labour's hand in bargaining over technological change was strengthened by disunity among the newspaper publishers. Though newspaper publishers may share goals and interests, they are far from homogeneous and at times can be ferociously competitive.

A second thread of criticism has to do with Braverman's view of Taylorism as capital's preferred strategy for transforming the labour process. Friedman (1977, 1990) argues that while this may work for unskilled or semi-skilled workers, other choices are appropriate for skilled workers. Edwards (1979) sees Taylorism as a failed experiment in control, and one of many such experiments managers have

applied over the years. He argues that more recent control strategies combine technical control with bureaucratic control. The former is embedded in the physical and technological aspects of production; the latter in the social and organizational structure of the firm. Bureaucratic control -- work rules, promotion procedures, discipline, wage scales and the like -- routinizes the functions of managing. "Above all else, bureaucratic control institutionalizes the exercise of capitalist power, making power appear to emanate from the formal organization itself" (145).

Burawoy rejects the idea that relations between management and workers are on all levels conflictual. He draws on the Gramscian refinement of Marxist theory that sees the capitalist state and industry as exercising control not through coercion but through hegemony, or the creation of consent to being ruled. Burawoy also argues (1979, 94) that in identifying the separation of conception and execution, the expropriation of skill and the narrowing of the scope of discretion as the key features of the capitalist labour process, Braverman misses an important parallel tendency toward an expansion of choices within those narrower limits. In addition, he argues that groups of workers actively create the conditions for consent by informal networks and practices at work. He offers the metaphor of playing a game as a way of creating consent:

The rise of rules and, with them, constraints on managerial intervention, have opened up an area of choice within which workers can constitute work as a game. Workers are sucked into the game as a way of reducing the level of deprivation. But participation has the consequence of generating consent to the rules, which define both the

conditions of choice and the limits of managerial discretion (1979, 199).³

Burawoy says the forms of hegemonic control of labour vary. In the old core industries with entrenched unions, the form is hegemonic despotism, where collective bargaining becomes a means of extracting concessions from workers by threatening them with plant closings or layoffs (1985, 264). In newer industries like electronics, the tendency is toward the growth of non-union, temporary or part-time work, where workers relate to employers as individuals and are lulled by the promise of “freedom” to set their own hours and work from their homes or cars rather than in an office. But freedom is an illusion for part-time or temporary workers:

Capital’s attraction to temporary or part-time work, as well as to various forms of subcontracting, does not stem merely from the cheapening of labour costs. Through the creation of an atomized and vulnerable work force, the conditions of an advanced capitalist economy intensify subordination without struggle to the whims of management (1985, 265).

A feminist critique of Braverman’s thesis argues that technology should be seen not just as a means by which management controls labour, but as a means by which men control women. Scholarship in this area, including the work by Cockburn (1983) and Burr (1993) on newspaper unions, draws on a so-called dual systems theory which sees social relations as constructed not only by capitalism but also by

³ Like Edwards, he sees collective bargaining and grievance procedures as examples of these rules (1985, 10). But where Edwards sees them as mainly coercive, Burawoy sees them as means of negotiating consent.

patriarchy.

Among those who study skilled workers, the sharpest criticism of Braverman's thesis has to do with the question of how technology affects skill. Braverman sees this as moving relentlessly and steadily in a single direction -- from skilled work requiring a unity of head and hand to deskilled work in which the intellectual component of work is stripped away and the physical component is routinized and, eventually, mechanized. But does technology only deplete skill? How can this thesis explain that new technology can lead to a reskilling -- or perhaps even an upskilling -- of work? Paul Thompson argues that deskilling should be seen as the major "*tendential* force" (1989 118, emphasis in the original) in the labour process under capitalism. But he argues for a more nuanced model which recognizes sources of variation and constraint on management's drive to deskill. These include the state of the product and labour markets and the strength of labour unions (111-117). Gordon, Edwards and Reich (1982) fault Braverman for ignoring reskilling due to technological change and take issue with his implied conclusion that workers are becoming homogenous. They argue that long swings in the economy in the U.S. have created a segmented workforce, not a unified one. They identify three distinct labour markets in the United States: a primary sector that features large-scale, largely unionized manufacturing; a subordinate primary sector of independent, mid-sized and frequently non-unionized manufacturers, and a secondary sector of unskilled, transient jobs (2-5; chapter 5). Piore and Sabel (1984) argue that mass production did not obliterate craft production,

but rather arose alongside it. They conclude that we are now seeing a return to craft production through “flexible specialization,” a regime that embraces constant change, relies on flexible, multi-use equipment and skilled workers, and is helping create a new industrial community for whom innovation is a defining characteristic (17).

None of the criticism of Braverman succeeds in undermining one of the central tenets of his thesis: the notion that the goal of capital is to replace living labour with dead labour by transferring human skills to machinery. This argument is elegantly simple -- and enormously powerful in helping explain what has happened to the newspaper unions. My research on newspaper unions, therefore, draws on a modified deskilling thesis. It sees deskilling as the broad, overarching intent and effect of technological change. The fight to preserve skill has been the key contest among the labour unions in the business, both in dealing with managers and in fighting with each other over jurisdiction. Echoing Paul Thompson, I argue that the pace of deskilling is variable and depends on a number of factors: the strength of the unions, the firmness of management intent, the state of the technology available, the ease and speed with which a change can be carried out, the pressure put on individual outlets by head office, and so on. In addition, Zimbalist's point about the lack of homogeneity among capital is important. The newspaper business is competitive, on a number of levels. Individual newspaper compete for advertisements and readers as well as for news; their owners compete for the hearts and wallets of the shareholders. Depending on the state of the competition, this may give unions leverage in asserting

control over skill.

I also draw on Edwards' conception of the workplace as contested terrain, with unions as one of the combatants, as a factor affecting the depth, breadth and pace and of deskilling. In addition, Burawoy's ideas on consent are crucial to understanding the unions' response to technology. Perhaps more than in any other area of activity, unions are invested in playing "the game," or working out the rules in the workplace. This creates a paradox. On the one hand, they see the rules as one of their main tools for maintaining power and defending their members. On the other, by consenting to playing by a set of rules, they are "ruled" by them.

These refinements on Braverman's thesis help us understand why some of the newspaper unions have been subject to much stronger pressures toward deskilling than others. The compositors union, the ITU, had to confront deskilling in the 1960s and 1970s.⁴ The pressmen escaped largely unscathed until the 1990s. Still others, including many members of The Newspaper Guild, have so far experienced technological change as a matter of reskilling or even upskilling. As we saw in the previous chapter, Russial found that computerized layout systems resulted in both a reskilling and a degradation or deprofessionalization of copy editing work (1989, 259-260). He concludes that Braverman's deskilling thesis is inadequate to address this

⁴ As one of my ITU printer friends joked when looking around a nearly empty composing room at the Kingston Whig-Standard, "We've been deskilled all right -- deskilled right out de door."

paradox. He is probably right. But it remains to be seen whether the reskilling he captured in his snapshot of a particular technology at its early stage of implementation will turn out to be permanent, temporary or illusory.

Im (1997), in one of a very few attempts at applying a labour-process approach to news work, says printers and copy editors represent cases in which technology has undermined long-inherited workplace relations and the cultural integrity of the occupational groups. The picture for other news workers is considerably less clear: "A long-term view of the changes in the labour process does not necessarily substantiate a simplistic picture of the incessant degradation of newswriters" (37).

Im says shifts in news work are difficult to evaluate because the work does not lend itself to the kind of mechanization seen in other crafts. But since Braverman was interested in changes in the subjective elements of skill and discretion, Im says the deskilling thesis could be used for the study of white-collar workers too. To do so, however, technology has to be defined broadly, as including principles such as rationality, efficiency and accuracy. Im attempts to apply these ideas to the development of professional reporters in the nineteenth century. He notes that James Carey has argued (1969) that the professionalization of journalists meant a "conversion downwards" from the role of social critic, interpreter and contemporary historian to a species of technical writer. The rise of objective reporting and its emphasis on separating facts from values, Im says, diminished the discretion of the journalists. The control of reporters over the news became more invisible. Compared

to the journalists of earlier generations, reporters lacked voice and discretion -- skills, in Braverman's sense of the word. Quoting Charles Derber (1990) on the "technicalization" of professions, Im suggests that white-collar workers like journalists do not experience the loss of physical control over their work, as manual labourers do. Instead, they lose control over the goals and social purposes of their work. Their professional identity, then, becomes connected to technical expertise, not to distinctive values and moral objectives.

Im's attempt to apply labour-process theory to news work is interesting and worth attention, though it has its weak spots. One is the notion that technical expertise is the polar opposite of professional values. Most journalists would argue that their work embraces both.⁵ The key difficulty, however, is that he does not take into account the broad reshaping of the newspaper that was going on in North America during the time reporters became professionalized. This is because labour-process theory is of most use in studying relations between workers and managers, not in tracking trends within a broader industry or set of industries.

Clearly, an understanding of the labour process under capitalism and the nature of deskilling is critical to understanding the transformation of the labour unions in the

⁵ A look at the textbooks used to teach would-be journalists the skills of the job offers insights into this. The leading U.S. reporting textbook, by Mencher (1991), concludes with a chapter on journalism ethics. So does the leading Canadian text, McKercher and Cumming (1994, 1998). Both books offer detailed instruction in technical aspects of news work. At the same time, though, they emphasize qualities like judgment and the need for a strong moral purpose.

newspaper business that is the focus of this study. But deskilling tells only part of the story. It does not help us to understand what is happening to the newspaper business as a whole. A second and equally strong lens is needed for studying this change: the notion of convergence.

Convergence

Much of the scholarship in communication in recent years has centred on convergence, a term generally used to refer to the integration of or interface between and among different media systems and organizations (Dennis and Pavlik 1993, 2). Convergence does not simply mean an increase in size, however. Rather, the word implies that integration or interface involves a transformation of some sort.

The key technology that allows for convergence is the computer, which digitizes messages, converting them into patterns of electric pulses based on the digits 1 and 0 (or “on” and “off”). With convergence, a host of previously separate communication forms -- newspapers, television, radio, video, still photography and telecommunications -- now share a common digital language. A digital photograph, therefore, is no different from a paragraph of text: both can be rendered in digital language, and both can be “edited” using the same tool -- the computer terminal and mouse. With the convergence of telecommunications and computers, the digital package of images and text (or voice or video) can be transmitted across town, to the other end of the country, or around the world.

The term convergence is often used descriptively, to refer to the series of changes brought about as a result of digital technology. (See for example Dennis and Pavlik, 1993). But convergence can -- and should -- also be used theoretically, as a tool for understanding not simply what these developments are, but why these developments have taken place and what they mean. Babe (1996) warns against a technological-determinist strand in communication work on convergence, expressed in research that privileges technical developments and sees changes in the communication systems as being driven by technology.⁶ Like deskilling, convergence in North American newspapers is related to the social, political and economic relations of capitalism. In other words, it is not the computer itself that brings together text and pictures into an electronic version of the Toronto Star on the World Wide Web; it is the social relations that underlie the technology.

Therefore, it's important to see convergence as part of the strategy of capitalist accumulation, in which owners and managers use computers as new means for achieving old ends -- the acquisition of profits and the deepening and extension of control over relations of production, reproduction and consumption. As Marvin notes (1988, 5), new technologies offer "new platforms on which old groups confront one another." Convergence is not simply a matter of mechanics. As Wicklein warns in a study of the social consequences of technological convergence,

⁶ He cites as examples the work by de Sola Pool (1990) and Irwin (1984).

All modes of communication we humans have devised since the beginnings of our humanity are coming together now into a single electronic system, driven by computers. Although this new communications system will bring us many benefits, it will also put us in danger of losing our individual freedom (1981, 1).

Dennis and Pavlik (1993) say it is not clear when the term convergence was first used to characterize the communications revolution occurring during the last half of the twentieth century. "It's likely the term was used early on by people in the computing industry and was later picked up by media executives and scholars looking for convenient ways to describe the phenomenal changes that were occurring in the communications industry" (1-2). Babe (1996) quotes the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development as identifying technical, functional and corporate dimensions to convergence. This project deals with another dimension: convergence among labour unions working within an industry that has itself seen waves of convergence.

Babe quotes the OECD as using the term technical convergence to identify the phenomenon by which a single mode of transmission -- a coaxial or fibre optic cable -- is able to simultaneously transmit a diversity of discrete messages. Functional convergence refers to new or hybrid services that combine previously discrete communication forms -- voice, data, text and image. Technical and functional convergence are clearly linked: they are treated here as various elements of what I will refer to as technological convergence.

Corporate convergence is a somewhat more complex idea. For one, it takes

many forms. Dennis and Pavlik (1993, 3) say that in the 1980s, media companies acted as though “convergence was an idea whose time had . . . come.” Corporations like Capital Cities or Disney or Time-Warner began to buy up newspapers, magazines, radio stations, TV networks, book publishing firms -- any form of the communication business they could acquire. They began increasingly to use market research to develop their plans and more effectively sell their products to consumers and advertisers. For example, Dow Jones, publisher of the Wall Street Journal and owner of a business wire service, has begun repackaging its material to sell to TV or on databases (Dennis and Pavlik 1993, 3).

Converged corporations are not simply large companies with a set of similar properties. Rather, their holdings may blend or integrate previously distinct media forms. Unlike an old-fashioned newspaper chain, the holdings of converged corporations may be linked not just horizontally or vertically but perhaps even diagonally as well. These holdings may cross the lines between media forms (newspapers, television stations) and media products (news, advertising and entertainment). The next chapter explores the impact of technological convergence in the newspaper workplace. Suffice it to say here, though, that with corporate convergence, the lines between previously separate media products have blurred, as have the lines between previously separate media enterprises. In other words, corporate convergence hastens and encourages technological convergence (be it technical and functional) and is itself hastened and encouraged by it.

Corporate and technological convergence also feed into the push toward globalization, most often seen in discussions about the so-called information superhighway. Industry Canada describes this highway as a means to meld diverse communication systems into “a seamless Canadian information and communications infrastructure . . . linked and integrated with the networks of our trading partners as part of a seamless, global information infrastructure” (Industry Canada 1994, 13, 25, quoted in Babe 1996, 283).

Dennis and Pavlik note that convergence alters communication enterprises that have traditionally been nation-bound, like newspapers.

Nationhood has largely been reinforced by communication systems that were at first essentially parochial because they had to be, but increasingly challenged by newly available technology to move outside their once-constraining strictures (3).

They point to Rupert Murdoch's Sky Channel as betting on the convergence of communication systems and the ability of a corporation to marshal an audience from several countries. We might also point to Conrad Black's Hollinger International, which offers its newspaper publishers in Canada, the U.S., Britain and Israel access to the news produced by each other, creating new and largely proprietary links in the international news web.⁷

⁷ Hence we have the phenomenon of the National Post drawing on U.S.-based reporters working for the British Daily Telegraph for news out of Washington or Los Angeles.

In the newspaper workplace, the convergence of technologies has blurred the lines between previously separate steps in the production process. In the process it has compressed or eliminated some steps, feeding into deskilling. Chapter 4 describes this development in depth. At the same time, however, it has opened up some forms of work, especially for reporters.

For media managers, convergence meant a whole array of convenient work-saving devices that allowed reporters to use computers for research, analysis and writing; editors to edit and paginate electronically; and the advertising department to create ads and do billings with dispatch, thanks to the computer (Dennis and Pavlik 1993, 3).

Convergence has also meant a blurring of various media functions, seen, for example, in the rise of what Dennis and Pavlik call the “entertainmentization of news” (4).

There are few ideas more powerful in the 1990s than convergence. It has given us a united state of media, powerful for its integrative force, but confusing because it blurs old distinctions. The process of convergence is in its formative stages, but serious students will want to watch it carefully if they hope to understand and participate in the information society (4).

But what of the social consequences? Wicklein (1981) expresses concerns about the possibility of state control over a newly converged communication system and its contents. “An agency that gained such control, if left to operate it without adequate restraints, could dictate its contents and decide its political, economic and social applications” (8). He adds that this could have an adverse impact on democracy. “It could give a future administration power over the electorate little dreamed of by Charles de Gaulle when he used the government-monopoly television

system of France to exclude opposition candidates from the air" (10). A broad range of scholars, including Aksoy and Robins (1992), Bagdikian (1983, 1987, 1990), Underwood (1993), Webster and Robins (1986) and H.I. Schiller (1976), have identified growing corporate power as the primary cause for concern.

As with deskilling, convergence is most usefully seen as an overarching tendency in capitalist social relations. Corporations seek to deepen their control within an industry, and to broaden their power and control over what is becoming known as the information sector -- to transform themselves from, say, nationally based newspaper chains into global media corporations. Convergence has also brought new players into the field. For example, Microsoft has grown from a software company into a conglomerate that seeks not just to control access to the information highway through its software but, increasingly, to provide content. Again as with deskilling, however, the pace of convergence is variable and depends on a number of factors. These include the state of the technology, the ease and speed with which a change can be carried out, the strength of the unions, the firmness of management intent and so on.

In addition, as Babe notes (1996), the state has played a significant role in hastening some forms of convergence and in preventing others. He contends that the convergences of the late twentieth century should properly be seen as reconvergences of enterprises that were separated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Babe notes that communication has been traditionally thought to embrace three

discrete sectors: publishing, telecommunications and broadcasting.

These three sectors, although distinct for decades, did not however arise as singular entities. Nor did an inherent technological imperative dictate their segregation. Rather, the three sectors were initially conjoined, and segregation was effected through conscious acts by corporate players and government officials (285).

Babe says the daily press and the telegraph emerged together in the 1840s, but were separated in Canada and the U.S. by government regulators responding to concerns about concentration. Similarly, before the 1920s strong corporate, functional and technical links existed between broadcasting and telephony. These were broken for a number of reasons, including a patent dispute among telephone, radio equipment manufacturing and radio transmitting interests. The same kinds of competitive forces are at play today.

It is also important to note that technological convergence has resulted in an opening up of communication channels at the same time as corporate convergence has pushed toward tightening of control and a narrowing of channels. Drawing a parallel with labour-process research, this may be seen as roughly equivalent to the reskilling and upskilling of some workers that accompany a technological change which deskills others. Convergence has resulted in a host of new businesses built around information management and dissemination. It has also resulted in new categories of jobs within existing communication enterprises, including in newspapers.⁸ At the same time,

⁸ For example, a weekly digest of employment opportunities distributed through Journet, an Internet discussion group, frequently lists newspaper job categories that

convergence has also compressed the newspaper production process and threatened craft workers.

Convergence and deskilling together

This thesis argues that understanding what has happened to the newspaper unions requires us to work within the context of two broad tendencies in twentieth-century capitalism: the drive of managers to control the labour process by a variety of mechanical or bureaucratic tools which tend to deskill workers; the drive within the broader political economy of the communications industry toward convergence as a strategy for control and accumulation. Neither of these operates in simple or absolute terms. Workers may respond with strategies of resistance or accommodation (or both), technology may result in an increase of skills for some workers at the same time as it decreases skills for others, and corporate enterprises may compete with each other with deadly intensity even as they grow and prosper. But seen as tendential forces, deskilling and convergence offer ways of understanding the transformation of the workplace. But how do these ideas connect?

Zuboff (1984) has attempted to wrestle with the question of what distinguishes computers and information-processing technology from other technological innovations. She concludes that automated technology essentially translates human

didn't exist ten years ago. These include titles like web master, interactive system coordinator, multimedia designer, or manager of online content.

agency into mechanical action. Information technology goes one step farther: it not only automates but “informs.” In other words, it not only translates information into action, but registers data about those actions, generating new streams of information. This provides “a deeper level of transparency to activities that had been either partially or completely opaque” (9).⁹

Zuboff's concern is not with craft workers but with white-collar workers and managers. She argues that while blue-collar jobs have been gutted by mechanization, information technology has enriched white-collar work. Elements of management work that are most easily subjected to rationalization can be “carved out (of management), pushed downward, and used to create wholly new lower-level jobs” (98). This does not mean higher-level positions are eliminated. “On the contrary, they (come) to be seen more than ever as the depository of the organization's skills” (98). Zuboff offers a cozy vision of an “informed” workplace.

(It is) a group of people gathered around a central core that is the electronic text. Individuals take up their relationship toward that text according to their responsibilities and information needs. In such a scenario, work is, in large measure, the creation of meaning, and the methods of work involve the application of intellectual skills to data (394).

Menzies (1996) offers a less comforting picture. She contends that the development of the microchip brought computer intelligence to every conceivable line of industrial and bureaucratic activity, setting the stage for a restructuring that has

⁹ Several scholars, including Menzies (1996) and Webster and Robins (1986), note that this feature offers management another means to monitor and control workers.

“hollowed out” clerical, administrative and middle-management work and integrated production work into almost cybernetic modules (30). In almost every sector, work is transformed into extensions of management’s information system. This helps bring about a new form of Taylorism, extending management control and creating “a universal technologic with a monopoly on workplace knowledge and operating procedures” (112). Her version of Zuboff’s informed workplace would see workers steadily being shifted toward the fringes of the electronic hearth and finally out the door, their skills consumed by the fires of that hearth.

Writing in a similar vein, Aronowitz and DiFazio (1994) argue that the application of information technology to work has moved the deskilling trend up the occupational ladder. Deskilling is no longer a feature of manual labour but of scientific and technical labour as well. For an ever smaller number of people in virtually all occupations, the installation of computers in the workplace has created new opportunities for satisfying and well-paid work. But for the immense majority, it has meant subordination, displacement or irrelevance. They conclude, “What could not be accomplished by Taylorism was finally achieved by computerization” (27).

Convergence and deskilling must be seen, therefore, as two linked aspects of capitalism in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In the newspaper business, new technology encourages deskilling by offering managers the promise of greater control of the labour process. Converged technologies blur the lines between stages of the production processes, undermining craft (and union) culture

along the way. The steady push toward using what Dennis and Pavlik call “work-saving devices” is accompanied by a steady push to reduce the number of workers. We must ask, whose “work” is being “saved”? Who is doing the saving? The digitization of tasks means that the remaining workers are using fewer of the tools and skills that were once distinctive to their craft. At the same time, they work in an industry that is itself becoming less distinctive: their employers are national or multinational corporations, not publishers whose roots are sunk deep in the local community. In addition, the deskilling potential of computer technology feeds into the push toward convergence and helps explain why technical change in the workplace, once seen as episodic (and occasionally spasmodic) has become routinized and unrelenting.

The next two chapters describe two critical changes in the newspaper business since the early 1960s that have created enormous challenges for the unions representing newspaper workers. The first deals with the transformation of newspaper ownership; the second with the steady application of computer technology to the production process. These are the central forces that have driven the unions to respond with a form of convergence of their own, through the movement toward unions that operate across the information sector.

Chapter 3 - Convergence and corporate control

North American newspapers trumpet their local nature in large type on the front page. The typical daily's nameplate gives not just the title of the publication but emphasizes place as well -- the Ottawa Citizen, the Chicago Tribune, the Montreal Gazette, the Los Angeles Times. Even the name of the leading U.S. business daily, whose motto is "the daily diary of the American dream," appeals to place: the Wall Street Journal, set in the heart of the financial district in New York.

Unlike in Britain, where the press is divided into national and regional dailies, the pattern in North America is one of local newspapers, tied to a particular city or town. Only two "national" newspapers operate in the United States and Canada: USA Today, founded in 1982 by the Gannett Co. Inc., and National Post, launched in 1998 by Hollinger International Inc. Other dailies, including the New York Times and The Globe and Mail, publish national editions and have national (or international) circulation lists.¹ However, these editions are extensions of the New York or Toronto papers, not freestanding dailies.

The local nature of the North American newspaper business is the product of its history. As Rutherford notes (1982, 36) newspapers were founded by local

¹ Indeed, the front page of The Globe and Mail proclaims itself "Canada's national newspaper."

entrepreneurs who “seized the main chance, sometimes aided by political overseers or inspired by foreign examples.” The U.S. press moved to a commercial model and to a daily publication cycle in the nineteenth century (Emery and Emery 1978). Canadian newspapers followed a few decades later (Rutherford 1982, Sotiron 1997, de Bonville 1988).² In both countries, daily newspapers flourished in cities and towns, attracting advertisers and readers alike.

The notion that the North American newspaper is a local newspaper is not merely descriptive: it has an ideological component as well. This is grounded in the idea that the newspaper is as integral to the social, political and economic life of a community as the local town hall or the fire department. Journalism, produced and circulated locally, is seen as providing a service to local citizens, and newspaper publishers as servants of that community.

Finally, it is worth noting that the view of the newspaper as a local enterprise resonates comfortably with the system that governs labour relations in Canada and the United States. Trade unions gain the right to represent workers by winning a majority of votes in certification elections. They do so workplace by workplace, then bargain collectively with the employer on a contract covering things like wages, hours of

² The point at which commercialization occurs is most usefully defined as the point at which the newspaper’s most substantial revenue source comes from advertising instead of subscriptions or party funds. In the 1870s, advertising in Canadian papers accounted for less than 50 percent of revenue. By 1918, this had risen to 75 percent (Sotiron, 1997, 58, 62).

work or vacation time. The fact that a union represents workers at a daily newspaper in one city or town is no guarantee that workers doing the same jobs in the next town will be represented by a union.

This chapter argues that the traditional view of the North American newspaper as a local enterprise is becoming less and less useful as a means for understanding the business within which the newspaper unions operate. It sketches out the pattern of increasing concentration of ownership that has transformed the daily newspaper from a publication rooted in its own community and subject primarily to local market forces into a product produced by conglomerates and subject to the disciplines of national and global markets.

The next chapter examines the impact of technological convergence within the newspaper plant. Together, corporate and technological convergence have concentrated more and more power in the hands of management, requiring labour unions to come up with new ways to respond.

Links in the chain

Although the history of the press in North America has generally been told as the story of independent, local enterprises springing up in cities and towns, concentration of ownership has been a factor for a long time, at least since the middle of the nineteenth century. Many of the early newspaper chains were family

enterprises.³ Others were part of empires being built by ambitious publishers who wanted to play a role in national affairs.⁴ But for much of this century, the majority of newspapers were owned by individual publishers.

Jacobson (1960, 26) notes that when the American Newspaper Guild formed in 1933, there were 1,911 daily newspapers and 506 Sunday newspapers in the United States. Some sixty-three national and regional chains owned and operated 361 dailies, mainly in the larger centres of population. Together, the chains controlled about 37 percent of national daily circulation and about 46 percent of Sunday circulation. The six biggest chains -- Hearst, Patterson-McCormick, Scripps-Howard, Paul Block, Ridder and Gannett -- accounted for 26 percent of daily and 35 percent of Sunday circulation. At the same time in Canada, 99 publishers controlled the country's 116 dailies (Kesterton 1967, 76). By 1953, the number of Canadian dailies had dropped to eighty-nine, and the number of publishers controlling them to fifty-seven. Eleven companies accounted for forty-two dailies, or nearly half the total.

³ By 1880, the Scripps family owned newspapers in Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Buffalo and St. Louis (Emery and Emery 1978, 209). The Southam company began in the 1880s as a family business with newspapers in Hamilton and then Ottawa, and printing plants in Toronto and Montreal. By 1923 it owned daily newspapers in Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg and Vancouver (Kesterton 1967, 78). As Vipond notes (1992, 44), cross-media ownership appeared as early as the 1920s in Canada, when newspapers opened radio stations in most of the major cities across the country.

⁴ For example, William Randolph Hearst's political and economic ambitions were too large to be satisfied by his San Francisco Examiner and led him to purchase newspapers in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles (Emery and Emery, 266)

By the early 1960s, chain ownership was a significant feature on the newspaper landscape in both countries. But while some critics -- inside government and out -- expressed alarm about the growing power of newspaper publishers,⁵ the ownership issue attracted relatively little attention from policy-makers in North America until the appointment in Canada of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Communication, known as the Davey committee, in 1969.⁶

Scholars and analysts have offered a number of explanations for the lack of critical analysis of the ownership issue. Bagdikian points to the strong business orientation of the daily press, identifying a “peculiar American belief (ironically created more by the media than by any other source) that to criticize big business is to attack American democracy” (1997, 54). This applies equally to public self-criticism by publishers. He also notes that prior to the 1960s, individual newspapers and newspaper chains were for the most part privately owned. This meant that their owners did not have to disclose their considerable earnings. They used that fact to their advantage.

⁵ Concern about concentration of ownership and decreased newspaper competition resulted in the appointment of a Royal Commission on the Press in Britain in 1947. A few countries, including Sweden and the Netherlands, experimented with subsidies to keep competitive newspapers alive (Desbarats 1996, 64).

⁶ In fact, the committee’s report found that “strangely enough, no exhaustive comprehensive study” of media ownership had been conducted in Canada until it took up the question (Davey report 1970, 15).

For decades American newspaper publishers cultivated the impression that they presided over an impoverished institution maintained only through sacrificial devotion to the First Amendment. The image helped reduce demands for advertisers for lower rates and agitation by media employees for higher wages (11).

Successive waves of newspaper mergers or closings seemed to support the publishers' stance. After peaking in 1909 in the U.S. (Adams and McKercher 1991, 320) and in 1913 in Canada (Kesterton 1967, 64), the number of daily newspapers declined steadily. The Davey committee saw this as a natural process, if a regrettable one: "The big trouble with . . . the notion that media diversity equals a higher polity, is that it happens to be in flat defiance of economics. More voices may be healthier, but fewer voices are cheaper" (Report 1970, 3).

Meanwhile, the owners of the newspaper chains tended to justify their existence by portraying them as mutual-aid societies.

The argument in favour of chain ownership, advanced most energetically by chain owners, rested on a delicate principle called 'cross-subsidization.' In theory, all member papers benefited from a strong, centralized head office that gave them access to the human and financial resources of the chain and independence from the influence of powerful local advertisers. If one paper was losing money, it could be supported by profits from the others (Hayes 1992, 134-135).

In his history of the Southam chain from the 1870s to the 1960s, Bruce makes similar points about the ability of the chains to fend off advertiser influence and help member papers weather tough times. He also argues that chain ownership is not incompatible with local autonomy. Indeed, he says, Southam publishers run their papers their own way.

The Southam company picks its local publisher and tells him to run the show. As far as editorial and news treatment go, its action as a company stops there. The publisher picks his staff and takes responsibility for how the show is run; for what the paper says (1968, 404).

Finally, it must be noted that independent and chain publishers, particularly in the U.S. but also in Canada, responded aggressively -- and often on constitutional grounds -- to criticism or suggestions they change their ways. When the Hutchins Commission on the press issued its 1947 report reflecting public distaste for powerful media owners, Henry Luce, the publisher who founded (and funded) the commission, derided its findings for an "appalling lack of even high school logic" (Hamilton and Krinsky 1996, 134). Writes Bagdikian:

In the past, newspaper owners, their private finances known largely to themselves and their local banks, publicly pictured themselves as penniless keepers of freedom of the press. They cried poverty and the First Amendment to fend off antitrust indictments, child labour and wages-and-hours laws, unions, workers' appeals for higher wages, advertisers' complaints of high rates and politicians' accusations of monopoly bias. Each newspaper failure was reported as proof of the imminent collapse of the industry (1997, 73).

The Davey committee began its examination of media ownership from a frankly stated point of view: "The purpose of this committee was not to ascertain whether concentration of media ownership is a Good Thing or a Bad Thing. *Of course* it is a bad thing . . ." (Davey report 1970, 4, emphasis in the original). But the committee conceded that in the real world, the task is to strike a balance. In other words, even though its members might not like concentration of ownership, the challenge was to figure out at what point it becomes more harmful than the

alternatives, such as government control on further expansion of the chains.

The Davey committee's count of newspaper ownership in 1968 found that newspaper groups owned seventy-seven of 116 Canadian dailies, or 66.4 percent (16), and controlled 76.9 percent of total daily circulation (21). It also found that while some newspapers were struggling, on the whole the industry was highly profitable. Overall after-tax profits between 1958 and 1968 averaged between 12.3 and 17.5 percent, well above the 10.4 percent profit of manufacturing industries and the 9.2 percent earned by retailing industries (46). Newspaper companies were not plowing those profits back into their publications, however. "They weren't spending much of it on new buildings and new equipment . . . What they *were* doing was investing in other companies" (47, emphasis in the original). Often, this meant buying up each other's assets. "The logical (but wholly improbable) outcome of this process is that one man or one corporation could own every media outlet in the country except the CBC" (6).

Some corporations were making genuine efforts to deliver quality newspapers and broadcast programming, the report found.

But the general pattern, we regret to say, is of newspapers and broadcasting stations that are pulling the maximum out of their communities, and giving back the minimum in return. That is what, in contemporary parlance, is called a rip-off (63).

Faced with figuring out what to do about the problem, the committee came up with a modest set of policy recommendations and a wish list for media owners. The most

significant recommendation was the establishment of a press ownership review board that would screen all future newspaper takeovers. It would have no power to act retroactively, but would ensure that concentration of ownership would not progress beyond the current level. This recommendation was ignored by government. As a result, “members of the committee had the dubious satisfaction in subsequent years of seeing their forecast of increasing newspaper concentration become a reality” (Desbarats 1996, 65).

From chain to conglomerate

Over the next decade, concentration of ownership intensified in both Canada and the U.S. By the time the Royal Commission on Newspapers reported on the problem in 1981, the share of English-language circulation controlled by newspaper chains had risen to 74.3 percent from 69.4 percent ten years earlier (Royal Commission report 1981, 2). More shockingly, the share of French-language circulation controlled by chains had almost doubled, from 49.2 percent in 1970 to 90 percent by 1980 (3). The commission also found that eight daily newspapers, which together accounted for 15 percent of total circulation in 1970, had disappeared (1).

At the same time, ownership was concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. FP Publications, the largest chain at the time of the Davey study, was gone, absorbed by Thomson. Some other, smaller family-owned chains had also disappeared. Meanwhile, the Thomson company had grown to forty dailies, up from thirty a

decade earlier (90), and Southam owned fourteen dailies, up from eleven (92).

The newspaper corporations had not simply expanded, the commission found. Rather, they were increasingly turning themselves into diversified corporations, not daisy chains of newspapers. The Royal Commission report described Thomson newspapers as part of a much larger group of corporations controlled by the Thomson family. Together, they formed

. . . a multi-national mixed conglomerate engaged in many other kinds of business, including wholesaling and retailing, real estate, oil and gas, insurance, travel and tourism, financial and management services, high technology communication, trucking and so on, many of which have no direct relationship with newspaper publishing (90-91).

As for Southam, the report summed up the company's goal during the 1970s as diversification (93). Southam's 1976 annual report described the company's business as "'communications' -- both mass communications and products aimed at small, select segments of the mass market" (quoted in the Royal Commission report, 93). Southam had expanded steadily into non-newspaper holdings, "from Coles Book Stores Ltd. to Videosurgery Ltd" (93). Sterling Newspapers, controlled by newcomer Conrad Black, was the third-largest Canadian chain in 1980 in numbers of newspapers (eleven dailies and seven weeklies) though not in circulation. The report identified Sterling as "a minor holding" in an "impressive conglomerate" (94). It was a division of Western Dominion Investments Co. Ltd., controlled by Warspite Securities Ltd., the main holding company of the Black group. Financial statements for Sterling were not public; however, public data were available on some of the

companies Western Dominion controlled, including Hollinger Argus Ltd. and Argus Corp. Ltd. These two companies had gross assets of more than \$900 million in 1980 and their 1980 revenues exceeded \$90 million (94).

One thing that had not changed between 1970 and 1980 was the fact that newspapers earned substantial profits. The Royal Commission used a different index for measuring earnings than the Davey committee: returns on net assets rather than after-tax profit on equity (84). Newspaper returns were 37 percent in 1975 and 25 percent in 1978. By comparison, returns in the food industry were 7 percent in 1975 and 10 percent in 1978; returns in retail trade were 25 and 21 percent respectively; and in wholesale trade they were 6 and 5 percent (84).

Like the Davey committee, the Royal Commission proposed a relatively modest set of solutions to the problem of ownership concentration. The key recommendation was legislation that would prohibit significant further concentration of ownership of newspapers (and across other media), and correct “the very worst cases of concentration that now exist” (237) by requiring some corporations to sell some of their holdings. Like the Davey recommendations, these went nowhere.

Although the Royal Commission studied the result of concentration of ownership, its economic analysis of newspapers focused on the internal operations of the dailies rather than on the corporations that owned them. It described the daily newspaper business in Canada as a series of local monopolies. In markets with more than one local newspaper, the pattern was oligopolistic, with different newspapers

aiming at different market segments (87). This approach fit with the ideological conception of the press as local businesses, subject to the demands and opportunities of the local market. It did not, however, tell the whole story. While the pressures and revenue possibilities in a newspaper's circulation area were indeed crucial to its survival, it is clear that something else had been going on in the 1960s and 1970s -- something that promoted not simply consolidation of ownership but diversification into other media (and sometimes, non-media) products.

A number of authors (including Bogart 1991, Bagdikian 1983, 1987, 1990, 1992, 1997, and Squires 1993) argue that the crucial development between the 1960s and 1980s was the stock market's discovery of newspapers. Bogart attributes the growth of media companies in recent decades to a coincidence of two factors: the difficulties inheritance laws posed to passing along a newspaper to the next generation, and "an incredible escalation in the market value of newspapers and television stations" (1991, 49). Bagdikian says this escalation occurred because Wall Street discovered "the best-kept secret in American newspapering" -- the impressively high profits newspapers earned (1997, 11). Wall Street did not have to work very hard to uncover this secret: Al Neuharth, then president of Gannett, proclaimed it loudly. Squires writes that when Neuharth took Gannett stock public in 1967, "he presented the newspaper business in general and Gannett in particular to Wall Street in a way it had never been presented to anyone before: he billed it as 'a dependable profit machine in good times or bad'" (21). More than anyone else, he contends, Neuharth

shattered the illusion of newspapers as poverty-stricken enterprises kept alive only through devotion to the principle of free speech.

The approach worked. When Gannett offered its stock for public sale, it had twenty-eight newspapers and \$250 million in annual revenue. By 1986, when Neuharth stepped down, Gannett owned ninety-three dailies, forty weeklies, fifteen radio and eight television stations, 40,000 billboards, the Lou Harris Public Opinion Poll, television productions, a half-interest in McNeil-Lehrer Productions for television and cable, satellite operations in thirty-six states. It also earned more than \$2 billion in annual revenues (Bagdikian 1997, 73). In 1998, Gannett had operating revenues of \$5.1 billion, up from \$4.7 billion in 1997 (Company profiles, posted on www.gannett.com, 1998, 1999). The company, which describes itself as “a large diversified news and information company in the USA,” owned seventy-four daily newspapers in the U.S. in 1999. It also owned a variety of non-daily publications, including USA Weekend, a weekly magazine with 21.9 million circulation. With its acquisition of Newsquest plc in 1999, Gannett had become the largest regional newspaper publisher in England. In broadcasting, Gannett owned twenty-one television stations covering 17.3 percent of the U.S., as well as cable systems in major U.S. markets. Other ventures included a news service, telemarketing and direct marketing companies, a commercial printing operation, a media technology firm, a retail advertising group and USATODAY.com, an Internet news and marketing company (www.gannett.com).

Gannett has also had what Bagdikian calls a “spectacular record of ever-increasing quarterly earnings” (73). For eighteen straight years, from 1967 to 1985, each quarterly profit was higher than the one before. “Even to hard-boiled investors, the profit margin on some Gannett papers was astonishing -- 30 to 50 percent a year” (74). At the 1999 annual meeting, company president Douglas McCorkindale reported that the company had reached record revenues, record net income and record earnings per share in 1998. He added: “Since Gannett became a public company in 1967 we’ve reported record earnings in thirty of those thirty-two years” (Highlights of annual meeting, posted on www.gannett.com, May 5, 1999).

Publicly traded companies must disclose information about their earnings, unlike privately owned newspapers. The measure of their success lies not so much in the quality of the news they put in their papers, or even the amount of advertising the papers attracted, but in the price a share of their stock fetches on Wall Street or Bay Street. In general, the higher the profits, the higher the share price.

This means, however, that publicly owned newspapers no longer operate within the context (or the confines) of a local market, in which the business of running a newspaper involves selling ads to local advertisers and delivering news to local citizens. Instead, they are subjected to the disciplines of national and international stock markets, where success demands ever-increasing growth.

In terms of company structure, the trends among media companies in the 1980s and 1990s have been toward larger enterprises, and toward enterprises that operate

across a number of previously distinct media forms. Conrad Black's Hollinger International, which owned or controlled sixty of Canada's 105 daily newspapers in 1999 ("Trivia," Canadian Newspaper Association Web site, www.cna-acj.ca, 1999) exemplifies the former trend. Hollinger's expansion in Canada during the 1980s and 1990s has brought the country close to what the Davey committee saw as the "wholly improbable" outcome of the pattern of concentration it identified in the late 1960s: the possibility that "one man or one corporation could own every media outlet in the country except the CBC" (Report 1970, 6).

Hollinger's earnings rose from \$12 million in 1996 to \$72.6 million in 1997 and \$95.8 million in 1998 (Chairman's letter, 1998 Annual Report, posted on www.hollinger.com March 9, 1999). The company is not strictly Canadian: through subsidiaries and affiliates, it owns or controls newspapers in the U.S., Britain and Israel as well as Canada. And although Hollinger produces a large number of newspapers -- in 1999, its 296 daily and weekly newspapers had a total daily paid circulation of 4.1 million (www.hollinger.com, 1999) -- the company has been moving into areas that have little to do with the traditional definition of the newspaper. The chairman's annual letter to shareholders in 1998 described some "promising ventures" by Hollinger Digital, owned by Southam, which Hollinger controls (Chairman's letter, 1997 annual report, posted on www.hollinger.com, 1998). The first was American Interactive Media, which rents or sells boxes that adapt television sets to simultaneous broadcast reception and Internet use. The letter noted,

This fits conveniently into this Company's view of convergence between all telecast and Internet-transmitted images on the same screen, at which point newspaper companies such as ours will be able to initiate their own programming without the expense or regulatory problems of license purchases or applications. The newspapers and associated Internet programming could then cross-promote (www.hollinger.com).

Other digital products Black highlighted in the letter included Trip.com, an electronic travel service, and Canada.com, a search engine and gateway Internet site with a broad array of informational and commercial content. A year later, Black noted the company's "increasing presence in the transactional Internet business." Canada.com, he reported, was one of the leading sites in Canada. A British gateway Internet site, UKMax, "in the process of a gradual soft launch, shows much promise" (Chairman's letter, www.hollinger.com, 1999).

Company news releases posted on the Hollinger Web site offer glimpses of a wide range of non-newspaper activities that occupied a degree of the company's attention in 1999. These included an agreement with the Bank of Montreal to introduce the Canada.com Mastercard (Oct. 20, 1999); the launch a few days later of a new and improved Canada.com⁷ Web site (Oct. 25, 1999); an investment in

⁷ According to the news release (Oct. 25, 1999), Canada.com users can personalize their news, sports, stocks, weather, lottery and horoscope information. They can also shop online at the Canada.com book store, the Canada.com CD store and toy.boutique.com -- presumably using their new Canada.com Mastercard. They can look for cars on carclick.com, or a job on careerclick.com, or for movie showtimes (and reviews, including a parents' guide). Canada.com also provides full e-mail service and a new directory search feature.

COVENTUS Inc., an electronic service for business travellers (Oct. 19, 1999); a joint venture with Boots pharmacies to create a new Internet site, handbag.com, aimed at British women (Sept. 15, 1999); an agreement with two newspaper publishers in the Chicago area to collaborate on regional classified advertising Web site powered by InfiNet, the joint new-media venture of Gannett, Knight-Ridder and Landmark Communications (Oct. 20, 1999); an investment in StockHouse Media Corp., an Internet financial media group with offices in the U.S., Canada, Australia and Hong Kong (Sept. 28, 1999); and an alliance between Hollinger's Chicago Sun-Times and ApexMail to provide subscribers with free e-mail service (Aug. 17, 1999).

The chairman's statements and the material posted on the Hollinger Web site paint a picture of a company that is very far removed from the traditional conception of a daily newspaper publisher. Hollinger's reach extends not only beyond the local markets in which its papers circulate, but beyond national borders as well. And rather than acting as an old-fashioned mutual-aid society -- where profits from one paper may go toward helping out another experiencing hard times (Hayes 1992, 134-135) -- Hollinger uses profits from individual properties to feed expansion or to boost its share price, which Black identified in his 1999 statement to shareholders as "the one area that has been a substantial and largely inexplicable disappointment."⁸

⁸ The statement said Hollinger fell victim to short sellers in 1997 and, "despite the excellent results described and an unbroken series of analysts' recommendations, languishes somewhat below where it was a year ago" (www.hollinger.com, March 9, 1999).

Hollinger is, however, primarily a newspaper company. In that respect, it contrasts sharply with many other converged media corporations, including the Thomson organization which Hollinger supplanted as the largest newspaper owner in Canada.

The Thomson story began in Northern Ontario, with Roy Thomson's purchase of the licence for Iroquois Falls radio station CFCH in 1930⁹ (Vipond 1992, 121) and the Timmins Daily Press in 1934 (Kesterton, 79). Over the next three decades Thomson purchased a string of mostly small papers. In 1965 he added The Globe and Mail to his holdings, which included magazines, radio and television stations, as well as a chain of twenty-five Canadian dailies (Kesterton, 79). By 1980 Thomson owned forty Canadian daily newspapers -- the largest chain in terms of numbers and the second-largest in terms of circulation (Royal Commission report 1981, 90). By the late 1990s, Thomson no longer described itself as a newspaper company. Its 1998 annual report calls Thomson "one of the world's leading information companies" with annual revenues of more than \$6 billion (U.S.) in 1997 and a business that consisted of "delivering information-based services and tools to support principally the activities of professionals in private practice, industry, government and academia" (1998 Annual Report, posted on www.thomcorp.com). Indeed, newspaper publishing was just one of five Thomson divisions in 1999. Its legal and regulatory group

⁹ He quickly moved it to North Bay (Vipond, 121).

provided information and software to law, tax, accounting, corporate finance and human resource experts. Thomson Financial served retail and investment banks, institutional investment firms, securities brokers and dealers, and underwriters of municipal bonds and syndicated loans. The Learning division provided books, software and multimedia products, mainly for the education market, through subsidiaries like Wadsworth Publishing Company and Brooks/Cole Publishing. The Reference, Scientific and Healthcare division provided clinical and economic information to customers working in the health area (including pharmaceuticals and veterinary medicine), as well as to those in academia, science, business and governments. Among its holdings were the Gale Group of publishers, which operates in literature and the humanities, and the Jane's Information Group, specializing in military matters. The Newspaper division described itself in non-newspaper terms -- as "a marketing and communication company which provides a wide spectrum of information-based products and services in twenty-one national and regional marketplaces in the U.S. and Canada" (1998 Annual Report, posted on www.thomcorp.com). The division included fifty-five daily newspapers, more than fifty non-daily newspapers and more than 300 advertising and specialty channels. Thomson also owned a 50 percent interest in a newsprint mill in Augusta, Georgia (www.thomcorp.com).

The bulk of Thomson's business goes on outside Canada. More than 84 percent of 1998 sales by the Legal and Regulatory division were to U.S. customers.

Thomson Financial, Thomson Reference, Scientific and Healthcare, and Thomson Learning all see their primary marketplace as North American, not as Canada: each reported that more than 80 percent of their 1998 sales were to North American customers (www.thomcorp.com). In the early 1990s, Thomson began selling the Canadian dailies that were once the heart of its business. By 1999, it was down to nine ("Trivia," Canadian Newspaper Association Web site, www.cna-acj.ca). These sales -- many of them to Hollinger -- prompted press analysts to speculate about the company's long-term plans: "Among the theories are that Thomson is in the early throes of getting out of the newspaper business altogether so it can concentrate on electronic information and delivery" (Cobb, Ottawa Citizen, May 13, 1995). Thomson ended such speculation in February, 2000, when it put all its newspapers except for The Globe and Mail up for sale (www.thomcorp.com).

While Hollinger is primarily a newspaper company and Thomson is primarily an information company, they are both relatively small players compared to the giant corporations that have been steadily buying properties across the media sector in the United States. In recent years Capital Cities merged with ABC, and the resulting conglomerate was absorbed by Disney. With 1997 revenues of \$22.5 billion, Disney's holdings included five movie studios, twenty-six radio stations reaching almost one in four U.S. households, ten TV stations (including outlets in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Houston) also reaching one in four U.S. households, ten daily newspapers, three magazines, a professional hockey

team, Disney resorts (in California, Florida, Paris and Tokyo), a cruise line, a planned housing development in Florida, three record labels, the ESPN network (co-owned with Hearst) and four TV production companies. (The Nation, June 8, 1998.)

In September, 1999, the U.S. broadcaster CBS and Viacom, already one of the world's largest entertainment companies, announced that their boards had agreed to a \$50 billion merger, which Viacom described as the largest media transaction ever (Press release, posted on www.viacom.com, Sept. 7, 1999). The resulting company would include cable TV networks (MTV, VH1, TNN, CMT, Nickelodeon) and pay channels (The Movie Channel, Showtime, FLIX); a majority interest in Infinity Broadcasting; the largest television group in the U.S., including the CBS Television Network; Paramount Pictures; syndication and production operations (CBS Productions, Paramount Television, Viacom Productions and, subject to CBS's pending acquisition, King World Productions); Simon and Schuster publishers; Blockbuster video; five theme parks; and a "significant and growing" Internet presence.

Enormous though it was, that merger paled in comparison with a deal announced in January, 2000, when America Online Inc. announced plans to acquire Time Warner Inc. for roughly \$182 billion in stock and debt. The deal brought together the top Internet service provider in the U.S. with the world's largest media conglomerate (Johnson, CNNfn, Jan. 10 2000). Time Warner, with 1997 revenues of \$13.3 billion, owned or controlled three movie studios in 1998, along with 625

screens in seven countries, CNN radio, thirty magazines (including Time, Life and People), four book publishers, CNN International (operating in 210 countries and territories), cable franchises serving 20 percent of U.S. households and three sports teams (The Nation, June 8, 1998). America Online boasted more than 20 million subscribers through its AOL and Compuserve Internet services. The merger would give it broadband access to more than 13 million Time Warner cable subscribers (Johnson, CNNfc, Jan. 10, 2000).

Bagdikian, who has spent much of his career tracking media concentration,¹⁰ sees these corporate giants as forming a communications cartel that has emerged mainly in the 1990s (1997, ix). In the past, he says, it was possible to describe the dominant firms in each separate medium. That is no longer the case.

With each passing year and each new edition of this book, the number of controlling firms in all these media has shrunk: from fifty corporations in 1984 to twenty-six in 1987, followed by twenty-three in 1990, and then, as the borders between the different media began to blur, to less than twenty in 1993. In 1996 the number of media corporations with dominant power in society is closer to ten (xii-xiii).

These corporations have acquired “more public communications power -- including ownership of the news -- than any private businesses have ever before possessed in world history” (ix). He argues that through digital technology and the purchase of subsidiaries, or what I call technological and corporate convergence, the media cartel can exert power at every step in the communication process, from the creation of

¹⁰ His book The Media Monopoly has gone through five editions since 1983.

content to the delivery of content into the home.

Pressure for profits

Much of the debate about these new converged corporations has centred on whether (or how) they have altered the practice of journalism, and what that means for a democratic society. Scholars and critics have pointed with concern to the spread of entertainment values to news, the blurring of the lines between reportage and promotion, the way ownership may affect decisions about which stories to cover, and the narrowing of channels of public communication. The question of how convergence affects the labour (and the labour unions) of news workers has received comparatively less attention.

Corporate growth requires resources, and there is no doubt that part of what makes newspapers attractive to investors is the potential for high profits. But this in turn means that newspaper managers face constant pressure to produce ever-higher profits. Bogart writes that in the 1980s, “corporate managements were impelled to maximize current earnings as a way of boosting the price of the stock” (1991, 52). He explains that part of the reason for optimizing profit was “the corporate owner's many and varied cash needs -- not the least of which in many instances is huge debt incurred by companies caught up in the acquisition mania of the 1980s” (93). This meant that newspapers bought by expanding groups “were immediately pressed into service to finance the next deal” (93).

Growth targets could be set and achieved in a variety of ways: “by acquiring additional properties, expanding sales, cutting costs, and raising prices” (52). Bogart notes that newspaper advertising rates rose almost automatically starting in the mid-1970s, and at a rate that outpaced inflation. Between 1965 and 1975, newspaper ad rates in the U.S. went up 67 percent while consumer prices went up 74 percent. Between 1975 and 1990, ad rates rose 253 percent, while consumer prices rose 141 percent (53). Production costs, meanwhile, showed a different pattern. Between 1965 and 1975, they rose 94 percent, or more quickly than both advertising rates and inflation. Between 1975 and 1990, production costs rose 163 percent, higher than inflation but well below the 253 percent hike in ad rates. He concludes, “In practice rate increases were in many cases being set by the publishers’ profit objectives” (53).

Because public companies report their earnings quarterly, Bogart argues that their management focus tends to be on the short term and the bottom line.

Publishers who worked for publicly owned companies felt the fire at their fannies at every moment. One, faced with a serious local business recession, told his group management, ‘I’m not going to be able to meet my profits goal this quarter.’ He was told, ‘That’s not one of your options.’ (53).

One way to increase profits is to use new management techniques to wring the maximum amount of profit out of each enterprise. This has led to a phenomenon described by Underwood (1993) as “MBA Journalism,” referring to the growing influence of marketers and managers -- people with master’s degrees in business administration rather than backgrounds in journalism -- on the news. Underwood

contends that local newspaper publishers have had little choice but to go along with the trend.

(T)he new capital-conscious, market-driven newspaper companies have found they aren't in a position to just sit on their riches. . . . Wall Street, as publishers have learned, can be insatiable in the demand for earnings growth and unmerciful in hammering a stock if earnings drop (41).

Underwood notes that one result of this phenomenon has been an emphasis on "reader-friendly" journalism, supported by marketing programs and management systems that see readers as customers and news as another product in the consumer society. In some cases, this has breached what journalists call the wall between church and state -- the separation between the newsroom and the business departments of the newspaper.¹¹ For example, reporters at the Los Angeles Times, have been divided into teams, each headed by a business-side executive. For journalists, this has resulted in an uncomfortably close relationship with people who normally would stay out of the newsroom.

Throughout the paper, editors are sitting down with delegates from circulation, marketing, research and advertising to develop new sections and new offerings within sections, to establish targets and goals for revenue and readership, and to search for new ways to achieve overall increases in circulation, advertising and profit (Rappleye 1998, 20).

While Los Angeles is an extreme case, Underwood notes (1998) that the pattern is also found at other U.S. newspapers. He quotes newspaper executives as saying that

¹¹ Journalists see this as crucial to the public service mandate of journalism: it lets them do their work without thinking about commercial considerations.

this kind of practice makes business sense in an era where newspapers are under intense competitive pressure (24). Given that most U.S. newspapers operate in monopolistic or oligopolistic markets, it seems clear that these executives are not referring to competition in the traditional sense of a newspaper war for the readers in a local community. Instead, the competition is for profits, which boost corporate earnings and share prices on Wall Street and Bay Street.

In part because they earned comfortable profits for their owners, the old privately held newspapers often had what can only be termed as quirky business practices. Hayes writes that before Roy Megarry became publisher of The Globe and Mail in 1978, the business side of the newspaper lagged far behind those of other Canadian businesses. “Financial record keeping was primitive. A dated IBM 360/30 churned out reams of raw data that were later summarized by the business manager and hand-written onto a one-page spreadsheet. *Hand-written!*” (1992, 143, emphasis in the original). The editorial department was run entirely separately from the commercial side of the paper. “(Editor-in-chief) Dic Doyle didn’t even have a budget; he simply spent carefully until the year ended or the publisher came to him and told him he had run out of money, whichever came first” (143).

Bogart says the best of the independent newspaper owners “exemplified all the classic virtues of a hereditary aristocracy” (50). At times this meant foregoing profits. He cites the well-known case of the New York Times turning down advertisements during Second World War newsprint rationing so it could print more news. In

Canada, Michael Davies, owner and publisher of the Kingston Whig-Standard, came up with an innovative strategy when faced with a major drop in advertising in the 1982 recession. According to Fetherling (1993, 293), a number of Southam newspapers jettisoned between 4 and 9 percent of their workforce that spring. Davies called his 170 employees together for a meeting and asked them to take part in a nine-week campaign of donating personal time to generate additional revenue. The employees were given a choice: face fifteen layoffs, or sell 3,000 new subscriptions and as much additional advertising as possible. The employees agreed to pitch in on the subscription and ad sales campaign. It worked. There were no layoffs that year. Two years later, Davies, a reformed smoker, decided to refuse to accept any more cigarette ads. That decision cost the company \$50,000 a year (300).

It would be a mistake to see independent local publishers as philanthropists first, and business people second. As Bogart notes, the independent publisher was as eager as any other business operator to earn a profit.

(B)ut generally he was not in need of ready money. To preserve the institution he could afford to think long range. Besides, an improvement in quality might provide the publisher with deeper, non-financial satisfactions: an awareness of accomplishment, the admiration of associates and of the public (52).

Those other satisfactions have become less significant with the move to publicly traded corporations. The odds are that the publisher of a local newspaper has been sent there by head office, has few personal ties to the community the newspaper serves, and may not stay there for long anyway. In addition, the publisher is likely to

concentrate on carrying out business strategies established at corporate headquarters, with an eye to extracting profits, rather than exploring the particular needs and concerns of the community.

Bagdikian describes the typical Gannett takeover of an independent daily as beginning with “the standard speech with which chain owners bless each new acquisition, telling the new community they admire and respect the existing papers and would never think of telling editors how to operate in this special and wonderful city” (78). After the speeches end, “there is, typically, a quiet state of events” (78). If the owners had two papers, one morning and one afternoon, one is quietly folded into the other. If the paper lacked a Sunday edition – “produced mostly for its masses of ads” (78) – one may be started without a proportional increase in news reporting. Reporters who leave or retire are not replaced. But the most important and least visible changes are the financial expectations the chain imposes. The publisher is told exactly how much the paper must produce in each three-month period. This quota has nothing to do with the local market, and everything to do with the company’s position on Wall Street. Local publishers who meet their quotas have considerable freedom. “Those who don’t are punished. They either lose their jobs or relinquish control to Gannett’s regional or national headquarters” (78). Those who succeed also have a shot at rising within the corporation, moving to a bigger paper or perhaps within the national organization. “In either case, the reward is far from their current local community, their ‘commitment’ to whose future is so often the subject of the full-

page ads” (79).

Pohle (1984), describing Thomson’s takeover of the Lethbridge Herald in Alberta, sees a similar pattern. He says the company demanded a stream of paperwork from editors and paid very close attention to budgets. Head office constantly made suggestions on how to keep things tight. The corporation also used cross-chain, bottom-line figures as guides for the Lethbridge paper, regardless of whether this was appropriate in the local market. Within the newspaper, power was concentrated in the hands of the publisher and managing editor, who were appointed by head office and led a steady campaign to scale down editorial expenses.

Hollinger also vigorously applies cost-cutting calculations to its purchases. As the company’s president, David Radler, told Maclean’s magazine in 1992,

I visit the office of each prospective property at night and count the desks. That tells me how many people work there. If the place has, say, forty-two desks, I know I can put the paper out with thirty people, and that means a dozen people will be leaving the payroll even though I haven’t seen their faces yet. (Quoted in Barlow and Winter, 1997, 95.)

When Hollinger bought the Regina Leader-Post and Saskatoon StarPhoenix in February, 1996, it immediately laid off 170 people, or more than one-third of its workforce (Miller 1998, 93). When Hollinger bought the independent St. Catharines Standard from the Burgoyne family in 1996, it cut newsroom staff by 25 percent. Newsroom workers at the paper quickly unionized. As they headed into negotiations for a first contract, the paper’s new owners claimed that salaries in St. Catharines were out of step with industry standards and demanded wage concessions. Union

officials could not help but point out the irony of Hollinger insisting on a wage cut for St. Catharines workers at a time when Southam's profits were up 31 percent. Such comparisons assume, however, that there's a direct connection between profits and wages -- a connection that may have held when newspapers were local enterprises, under the control of an independent publisher. The connection is much weaker today. As Underwood notes,

Not only does the substance of the newspaper become secondary to the planning, prettifying, and promoting of the newspaper, but newspaper executives often must institute tough newsroom management systems in order to bring along newswriters reluctant to buy into the philosophy of market-oriented journalism (1993, 27).

This chapter has argued that one of the consequences of the growth of newspaper corporations has been the decline in the newspaper as a distinctly local enterprise. The new "local" press has lost many of the elements that once marked it as a product of its own particular community. Newspapers still hire their own reporters, sell ads to local businesses and offer home delivery. But instead of being owned by people with ties to their communities, newspapers are owned by corporations whose loyalties and responsibilities lie with their stockholders rather than with local readers. Increasingly, they enforce company-wide targets on how many people to hire; how much (or how little) to pay them; how much (or how little) room to set aside for news and for ads; what kinds of equipment to purchase¹² and so

¹² In the 1980s, for example, a number of Thomson newspapers switched to a particular computer system to handle electronic layout of pages. The reason:

on. Increasingly, they see readers as customers or consumers, rather than as neighbours and fellow citizens. As for workers, former Calgary Herald managing editor Gillian Steward says the emphasis on padding the bottom line means managers view reporters and photographers “as expendable costs rather than valuable resources” (Steward, The Globe and Mail, Nov. 10, 1999).¹³

It should come as no surprise that Linda Foley, president of The Newspaper Guild sector of the Communication Workers of America, sees consolidation of ownership has the “number one worry” for her union.

It’s happening so rapidly and on such a large scale, it’s like ten freight trains coming at you. There’s no way you’ll stop it. What we have to figure out is how can we maintain a voice, how we can maintain power within the context of what’s happening (Interview, February 1998).

This chapter has shown how the phenomenon of corporate convergence has changed the business in which newspaper labour unions operate. But it is not the only form of convergence that has forced unions to rethink what they do and how they do it. The next chapter looks at technological convergence, a development that has occurred concurrently with corporate convergence, and one that cuts to the heart of the jurisdictional grounds on which a number of newspaper unions built their power.

Thomson head office decided this was the best system to use. (McKercher, 1991)

¹³ Steward wrote her column to help explain why Calgary Herald workers went on strike in November, 1999, after attempts to negotiate with Hollinger failed. Ironically, the main issue in the dispute was not wages but job security. Hollinger immediately brought in replacement workers and continued to publish the newspaper. At the time of writing, the strike was continuing.

Chapter 4 - Convergence, technology and labour

This study argues that convergence has challenged the pattern around which labour relations in the newspaper industry have been organized, requiring the unions that represent workers in newspapers to re-examine not just what they do but how they define themselves.

The previous chapter dealt with one form of convergence -- that among the corporations that own daily newspapers. It shows that the daily press in North America is no longer a series of independent, local enterprises. Instead, newspapers are part of corporate empires that have grown not just within the newspaper business itself but across the communications sector, and not just within national borders but across international boundaries as well. In addition to redrawing the broad outlines of the industry, corporate convergence has had an impact on workers at individual newspapers: they are subject not just to the demands of their publishers, but to the requirements of corporations for ever-increasing profits, and to demands to meet corporate-wide targets on things like staffing and salaries. Corporate convergence has also blurred the edges of what was once relatively easy to define as the daily newspaper business -- the production of "a printed account of timely and important information distributed within a specified market on a regular basis" (Sohn et al 1986,

3). Many corporate owners of daily newspapers now stake out claims to the production and distribution of “information,” an elastic term that covers everything from Thomson’s specialized publications for physicians and veterinarians to Disney’s movies (which in turn create spinoffs of toys, games and music sold in Disney retail outlets), to Gannett’s telemarketing and retail advertising groups and its cable television business.

But while convergence of ownership has dramatically redrawn the broad outlines of the newspaper business, a second form of convergence has had a sharper and more direct impact on the newspaper workplace. This is technological convergence, brought about through the application of digital technology to the labour process. Within the daily newspaper, this has meant a blurring of the lines between what were once distinct and discrete steps in the production process. Many of these steps have been collapsed into each other. As Pacific Press expressed it in its application to the British Columbia Labour Relations Board to consolidate its seven bargaining units into one, “the skills needed in many areas of the operation (have) converged and met on the computer” (Pacific Press Inc., Application to the B.C. Labour Relations Board, June 12 1995, 27).

This chapter describes and analyses how technological convergence has reshaped the labour process of the daily newspaper since the 1960s. In addition to changing how a newspaper is put together, technological convergence has posed a fundamental and philosophical challenge to the labour unions representing newspaper

workers. Pretty well since their inception, these unions have operated along jurisdictional lines that reflect specific and distinct sets of skills. In the days before the computer, the newspaper unions had relatively little difficulty identifying appropriate bargaining units, a process which, as Murray notes (1995, 171), is the cornerstone of union structures. Though they sometimes competed with each other over which union would represent which group of workers, the division of labour within the newspaper plant was tied to the use of distinctive skills -- and sometimes, distinctive tools -- to perform specific tasks.

To understand why the computer represents such a powerful challenge to the unions, it is important to place the new technology in its historical context. Therefore, this chapter begins with a brief history of the newspaper production process and the formation of unions representing news workers. It then examines how the introduction of the computer in the newspaper began to bring about changes in the labour process, and how those changes spread, eventually, to all areas of production.

The chapter points out that although technological convergence is inextricably linked to the process of deskilling, technological innovations have presented differing challenges to the various unions at different times. For some craft unions, the introduction of new technology raised the spectre of imminent extinction. For other unions, especially those representing reporters and editors, digital technology has offered a more complex set of possibilities: expansion of skill in some areas; contraction in others. As we shall see in the following chapters, the responses of the

unions to technological change have also varied substantially -- at times promoting inter-union co-operation and discussion of merger, and at other times creating mutual suspicion that throws up substantial impediments to solidarity and joint action.

Newspaper labour in the pre-computer age

As Hadley notes (1995, 5), the history of technological innovation in the printing trades has been one of periodic, sudden upsets, followed by decades of relative stability. Not surprisingly, the history of unions in the printing trades has followed a similar pattern.

The task of turning written material into type was accomplished in the early years of printing by skilled, literate craft workers. Letter by letter, they set lines of type into a composing stick, then used blank slugs to “justify” each line, or make it the same length as all the others. The lines of type were transferred into a galley. Printers made a “proof” or a preliminary impression of the galley so they could read it over and correct for errors in spelling, typography or spacing. Once the corrections were made, the type was set into page form and locked into place in a metal frame on a hard, smooth surface known as the “stone.” Because the type was hand-cast and of varying age and quality, printers had to do a great deal of “make-ready” work, fixing and adjusting forms and plates to ensure a clear, uniform impression. Printers then applied ink to the type, and, using substantial force, squeezed a single sheet of paper against the form to make the final impression. (Described by Baker 1974, 2-5.)

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a series of mechanical advances altered the work of printing. These included the invention of rotary presses and the use of steam (and later electricity) to power the presses, the invention of machines that set lines of type mechanically, and the invention of photoengraving, which allowed for improved illustrations. This era was also marked by two linked developments: the transformation of the newspaper into a commercial model with a large industrial plant and the accompanying rise of a diverse range of unions to represent newspaper workers.

Newspaper unions trace their roots to the original printers' unions, which began in North America in the eighteenth century. Most of the early printing trades unions were short-lived: they either disappeared after a few years or became benevolent associations (Lipset et al 1956, 18). In the 1830s and 1840s -- the time when the American factory system was taking root (Baker, 49), and a new "penny press" was bringing newspapers to a large but previously neglected public of working-class readers (Emery and Emery 1978, Schudson 1989, D. Schiller 1982) -- printers' locals began to organize in major U.S. cities. They joined together in 1850 to form a national typographical workers union, which became the International Typographical Union in 1869 with the addition of Canadian locals.

The early ITU was extremely decentralized, operating as a "loose confederation of co-operating but wholly autonomous locals" (Lipset et al, 18). It had two major functions: providing mutual aid to locals in distress, and preventing the

importation of strikebreakers into cities where printers were on strike. Aside from that, the national union had almost nothing to do with the locals, which operated as virtually autonomous unions.

During most of the nineteenth century, no distinction was made between newspaper printing and commercial printing. Craft workers belonged to one class of “practical printers.” In the larger workplaces, however, the job of printing began to become specialized into two distinct types of work: composing the type and running the presses. Of the two, composing work had higher status.

The fact that the typesetters possessed the parent craft which had stood unchallenged for centuries and that they had a knowledge of words and some understanding of sentence structure and subject matter were conditions that quite naturally placed them in a position of power over the more recently arrived pressmen (Baker, 59).

In some printers’ locals, she adds, pressmen “found themselves no more welcome than women” (61).¹

The division of the craft of printing led to the formation of separate interest groups within the ITU. The union as a whole, however, was dominated in the late nineteenth century by the compositors, who were still working largely by hand. The pressmen, by contrast, had been operating powered machines since the 1830s (Baker, 28). In addition, the union was dominated by one group of compositors -- those who worked for newspapers. This drew protests from book and job craftsmen, compositors

¹ Women, it must be recalled, were actively discouraged by the unions from becoming printers. (See Cockburn 1983, Burr 1993.)

and pressmen alike, who felt they were treated as second-class citizens in their own association (Baker, 60). The most serious challenge to the ITU compositors came, however, from the newspaper pressmen, who began to demand separate charters.

In 1889, 13 pressmen's locals seceded from the ITU and set up their own national union. "Right behind them came the bookbinders, stereotypers and electrotypers, type founders and photoengravers" (Walsh 1985, 33). These groups set up their own unions, then affiliated with the ITU in an international allied printing trades association to pursue shared goals. By 1910, "the ITU was a craft union of composing-room workers plus a small minority of newspaper mailers and an even smaller group of journalists" (Lipset et al, 20).²

During much of this period, the ITU was focused on the transition from hand-set type to the linotype machine. Between 1890 and 1903, the newspaper industry converted almost entirely to machine-set type (Barnett 1926, 4-9). The ITU had anticipated the event. At its 1888 annual meeting, delegates adopted a resolution favouring the recognition of linotypes and recommending that locals "take speedy action looking to their recognition and regulation, endeavouring everywhere to secure their operation by union men upon a scale of wages which shall secure compensation

² The ITU began organizing news writers locals in the late nineteenth century, largely to prevent journalists from acting as scabs in ITU strikes. Between 1892 and 1923 it organized 59 such locals. Only four survived (Jacobson 1960, 10). The ITU decided in May, 1923, to surrender jurisdiction over editorial workers to the American Federation of Labor.

equal to that paid by hand compositors” (Convention Proceedings, quoted in Barnett, 9). The union recommended a change in the payment scheme for members, proposing a weekly wage rather than a piece rate, and a shorter work day. It also claimed jurisdiction over the work, and experimented with changes in apprentice rules to cope with the transition. Some locals bought or rented linotypes, so their members could practise. “Of direct opposition to the introduction of the machine, there was practically none. Occasionally a small union refused for a time to make a scale for machines, but the international union steadily discountenanced such a policy” (Barnett, 17).

Once the linotype was in place, the job of composing type was further subdivided into machine operators, machine tenders, operator-machinists, straight-matter compositors, ad compositors, proofreaders and makeup specialists. By 1925, a survey of the printing trades found that printers were grouped into several distinct crafts: stereotyping, electrotyping, photoengraving, presswork and binding. Each of these was divided into separate skills totalling more than 50 (Loft 1944).

By the early days of the twentieth century, newspaper production workers belonged to a broad range of unions, each with a clear -- and narrowly defined -- jurisdiction based on the technology their members used to pursue their craft. At the same time, the unions themselves had centralized their power, including setting rules on collective bargaining at the local level. This combination of fragmentation and centralization served many of the individual unions well for many years. As Lipset

et al note, the craft solidarity of printers allowed them to resist government-imposed boundaries -- even international borders. Individual printers owed their craft status to their union, which certified their skills. Printers could travel from one country to another, using membership cards that remained interchangeable until the 1950s (Walsh, 35). The ITU philosophy was that the job belonged to the individual printer, not the foreman (who often was an ITU member as well) or the employer. And the union, not the employer, decided which printers would work, and when. As Walsh notes, "no union ever had the extent of job control that the ITU did" (35). Lipset et al point out that ITU "laws" determining conditions of employment, maximum length of the work week or work day, control of composing room work and so on were non-negotiable in local contracts and strictly enforced (24). This meant that to a considerable extent, the workers ran the composing room.

The production process of newspapers established in the early twentieth century endured with remarkably few changes until the introduction of the computer. So did the union structure -- with one notable exception. That was the arrival of a national union for editorial workers, the American Newspaper Guild, in the 1933. Just four years later, it moved to become an industrial union, which meant it would represent previously unorganized white-collar workers in addition to reporters and editors. After the Second World War, it became an international union through the addition of Canadian locals.

Producing a newspaper in the pre-computer age took many steps and required

many different kinds of skilled work (and skilled workers). The London Free Press, in a special publication marking the opening of its new plant,³ offered a detailed description of its production cycle. This publication, Communication in the Community, was a limited souvenir edition produced in May, 1966.⁴ In addition to text, it contains photographs of its old and new plants. Although the book focuses entirely on the Free Press, the processes it describes were followed in more or less the same pattern by newspapers across Canada and the U.S.

The new Free Press building cost \$6.5 million and housed the newspaper and CFPL Radio, both owned by the Blackburn family. In trumpeting how modern and up-to-date the facility was, the commemorative book emphasizes speed of production:

The most important single advantage gained by this capital outlay is time -- measured in minutes. News is highly perishable. Publishing a newspaper is a never-ending race against time. This big (160,000 square feet) building was designed with that in mind -- no wasted motion -- no wasted time.

It says “valuable minutes have been gained here and there” in the entire production cycle, highlighting in particular the construction of a “modern” composing room, improvements in casting of printing plates, and a \$1.5 million high-speed press. But while the plant and equipment were indeed new, fast and efficient, the technology in which the Free Press invested in 1965 was not. Instead, it represented refinements on

³ The publication of souvenir editions marking major developments in a company has been a fairly common practice in the newspaper business.

⁴ Its pages are not numbered.

innovations that had appeared much earlier, around the turn of the century. Although a number of newspapers had begun investing in computers in the early 1960s, the word “computer” does not appear in the text of the commemorative edition and none of the photographs shows a computer terminal. The Free Press of 1966, therefore, is a good example of the newspaper production process in the pre-computer age. It thus offers a base line from which to sketch out the extent and shape of change.

The production process in the 1960s began in the newsroom, where reporters phoned in stories to the rewrite desk or wrote them on typewriters. In doing so, they used essentially the same technology as their predecessors, shown in a 1923 newsroom photograph, though they used more of it. (In the 1920s, the telephone was in a booth; by the 1960s, reporters had their own phones and the rewrite desk staff used phones with headsets.) Reporters did their research in person or by phone, and drew background material from clipping files in the newspaper library, where by 1966 librarians had 12,000 files on people and 25,000 on subjects. The newspaper also kept all its back issues on microfilm -- and, according to the book, was the first Canadian newspaper to do so. Some reporters sent in news by teletype from bureaus at city hall and the police station. News from the wire services also came in by teletype.⁵

Once written, a news story went to the editors on the news desk. The job of editors is to “sort and scan the written stories, selecting and evaluating, trimming

⁵ Teletype machines were introduced in Canadian newspapers in the 1920s (Kesterton 1967, 120).

some and seeking more information on others. Checking, checking and re-checking.” The editors did this work by pencil on paper. Other editors decided where the story would go in the newspaper and what headline it would carry.⁶ As they finished with a story, the editors put it on a conveyer belt that ran along the newsroom ceiling. This took copy to the composing room.

Meanwhile, Free Press photographers stayed in contact with their editors by two-way radio. They took pictures on film and most photographers developed their own film in the newspaper's darkroom. Prints selected for publication went to the engraving department, where they were rephotographed by special cameras through screens which broke up the picture into a pattern of dots. The screened negative was placed on a coated, light-sensitive magnesium plate and exposed to high-intensity light. The exposed plate was then etched in an acid bath, washed and dried. This process, a variation on half-tone photographic printing, had been around since the 1860s,⁷ though the full impact of pictorial journalism was not felt until the 1920s (Emery and Emery, 235). The Free Press's engraving department was also equipped to handle colour reproduction, a later refinement on the half-tone process. The

⁶ Editors of the pre-computer era memorized an elaborate counting system that made sure the headlines would fit their allocated space, and would appear in the type size and font the editors desired.

⁷ In 1869, Quebec publisher Georges-Edouard Desbarats helped found the weekly Canadian Illustrated News, believed to be the first periodical in the world to carry half-tone photographs (Phillipson, 1988, 587).

newspaper had been printing some elements in colour since the late 1930s.

Advertisements for the paper came through two departments: display and classified. In the display department, advertising sales people signed up clients and made sure they got what they wanted in the final ad. The advertisements themselves were put together by copy service specialists -- artists, ad layout and typographical design staff -- shown in a photograph as working by hand with pencil on paper. A department known as "dispatch control" kept track of advertisements, acting as "an important production liaison between advertising and composing room, keep(ing) record of ad insertion dates, colour positions and maintain(ing) extensive files of ad illustrations." The photograph of this department shows rows of metal filing cabinets, suggesting this clerical work was also done on paper.

The process of placing the ads in the paper was done by ad layout people working with a "dummy," or a plan for the next edition. The layout people drew boxes on the dummy showing where the ads would go. Leftover space was the "news hole," to be filled by the editors. Some display ads came in as "mats" -- thick, soft cardboard sheets carrying the impression of the advertisement's typography and illustrations. These were used to make metal casts for the press.

Classified ads were handled by ad-takers in a separate department, who recorded by hand the name, address and phone number of the advertiser, plus the classification, price and code for each ad. The ad moved by conveyor belt from the ad-takers to a control room to be checked. It then sped by pneumatic tube to the

composing room to be set in type. The commemorative book notes that in addition to the ad-takers, classified staff included “street salesmen, telephone salesgirls, paper marker, clerk, secretary, copy service person, two supervisors and manager.”

Ads and news met in the composing room, described as “the biggest and busiest staging area in the newspaper production line.” The book compares the composing room to “a big funnel through which everything must flow to get into the next edition.” The caption for a photograph of the composing room in 1912 points out five linotype machines along the back wall, the first such machines the newspaper purchased. By contrast, the “spacious new composing room” had two dozen typesetting machines. Six of these contained a feature that was an innovation in Canada in the 1950s (Kesterton 121): they were equipped to operate from pre-punched perforated tape. The rest were operated by a compositor who sat at a keyboard and retyped the news or advertising copy, casting it into metal type.

Once a story was set in type, it went into a tray at a central point in the composing room that was known as the “dump.” Here it was proofread and errors corrected. Stories were then matched with their headlines, which were cast on different machines, and moved to page forms. Compositors putting together pages put the ads in first, then filled the rest of the space with news and pictures, following a directions sketched on the “dummy” by the editors.

When a page was full and the frame locked, it went to the stereotyping department, where a cardboard mat was placed over the form and squeezed in a press

that exerted 400 tons of pressure. The mat, which now bore the impression of the page, was put in a semi-cylindrical casting box and used to make a curved printing plate that would fit on the press. The plates -- each weighing forty-seven pounds -- were sent to the press room along a roller-track conveyer belt, where pressmen picked them up and attached them to the press.⁸

The pressmen had two other important jobs: they adjusted by hand the control valves on pipelines that fed ink to the press, and they prepared the rolls of newsprint for the press. The printing process that combined stereotyping and the rotary press was developed in London and spread to the U.S. in the 1860s (Emery and Emery, 145). By the time the Free Press bought its first electrically powered rotary press in 1905, it was standard newspaper technology. The new presses the newspaper purchased in 1966 were bigger and faster and had refinements like automatic web-break detectors and sophisticated switches for controlling ink flow, but used essentially the same processes as those built almost 100 years earlier.

When the presses began to roll, the inked printing plates applied type to rolls of blank paper threaded through the presses. The pages were folded and cut, and finished newspapers rolled off the press and into the mailroom. The caption for a picture of the Free Press mailroom in 1934 says it took stamina and strong backs to

⁸ After the day's papers were completed, the plates went back on the roller-track belt and were sent to the basement, where they were melted down. The molten metal was pumped up to the stereocasting pot for re-use.

move the papers from the conveyer belt to the mailing tables where they were counted in bundles, hand-wrapped and tied and carried out to waiting trucks. The modern mailroom of 1966, by contrast, was “highly mechanized.” Conveyer belts kicked out every twenty-fifth paper, to make it easier to count bundles. Mailers made up bundles and steered them onto conveyer tables running down the sides of the room. At the far end, machines tied the bundles, and mailers then slid them down spiral chutes into waiting trucks. (Another machine stuck mailing labels on individual newspapers with mail subscriptions.) The trucks took the bundles to drop-off points. There, “carrier boys, independent young businessmen who are the vital final link in the newspaper distribution system,” broke up the bundles and delivered papers to readers’ doorsteps. Home delivery was co-ordinated by the circulation department, which kept track of customers and created small plates to print address labels for carriers, news dealers and individual mail subscribers.

As this description shows, the production process of newspapers in the pre-computer era was labour-intensive, complex and required many separate steps. The task of putting words and images on newsprint required a lot of repetitive action: stories were typed on paper and retyped as they were cast into metal; photographs were rephotographed to be turned into engravings. Making the printing plate meant converting flat pages of metal type to cardboard mats and back to metal again, this time as curved plates that fit on the press. All these tasks were carried out by skilled workers, each responsible for a small piece of the action that led to the final product.

Most of the tools and machinery Free Press workers used had been around for many years. The most innovative pieces of equipment were six linotypes modified to set type from perforated tape. These offered the potential of eliminating a step in the production process, particularly for copy from the wire services. "One reporter could write a story, and one operator could transmit the message, which automatically perforated as many teletypesetters as were linked to the point of origin" (Zerker 1982, 246). Zerker adds that although teletypesetters reduced labour costs for typesetting, skilled compositors were still needed to monitor and maintain the linotype machines and to see that the printed product had the expected quality. The Free Press commemorative book makes a similar point: "Advances in printing machinery have made the human skills of printers even more important in the daily operation."

Though cumbersome, the production process of 1966 was efficient and successful: the newspaper printed 124,000 copies a day in five editions, serving readers throughout southwestern Ontario. It had deep roots in its community:⁹ the newspaper had been around since 1849 and marked its 100th anniversary in 1949 with a 232-page edition, which it claimed was "the largest ever printed in Canada up to that time." By the 1960s, the company had outgrown its existing plant, which it had occupied since 1931 when its circulation was 38,850.

⁹ Kesterton includes the newspaper on a list of eight Ontario newspapers founded prior to 1858 that are "probably the ones most deserving of mention." These papers enjoyed long lives, were pioneers in their communities, and played a prominent role in the political and social movements of the day (1967, 11).

With hindsight -- which is always twenty-twenty -- it is clear that the printing process which the Free Press trumpeted as new and improved used new equipment but not new technology. The Free Press of 1966 was a bigger and faster version of the Free Press of 1956, and one with a few more bells and a few louder whistles than the Free Press of 1946. Indeed, a compositor trained in the 1920s on linotype machines would probably have had little difficulty adapting to the linotype machines installed at the new plant in the 1960s.

The one exception was the use of perforated tape, and what was most exceptional about this device was its potential use, not its actual one. As Zerker writes (248), “the use of tape, paper or magnetic, makes all typesetting machines compatible with computers.” But while the London Free Press was not integrating computer technology in its production process in the mid-1960s, other North American newspapers were. They were experimenting with technologies that over the next few decades would radically transform the production process for newspapers -- and represent major challenges to the unions representing newspaper workers.

Cold type and computers

In the early 1960s, a series of innovations began to offer new ways of producing the daily newspaper. The first of these was the development of what is known as “cold type,” defined by Zerker as “the replacement of a mould of a letter type for a photograph of the desired letter” (246). Cumbersome phototypesetters were

displayed at a Chicago graphic arts show in 1950.¹⁰ More sophisticated models appeared quickly. The second major innovation was the application of computer to newspaper work. By the 1990s, these two innovations had changed every facet of newspaper production -- from reporting and editing to selling (and billing for) ads to running the presses to managing the mailroom.

These changes did not happen at once, and they did not occur in every newspaper at the same time. Some newspapers leapt at new technologies; others proceeded very slowly indeed. Swartz and Swimmer (1981) point out that in Ottawa, two competing broadsheets, the Ottawa Journal and Ottawa Citizen, faced some major decisions in the late 1960s: whether to shift from “hot” to “cold” type; whether to move to an offset printing press, and whether to move out of their downtown offices to a spot with better highway access.

Both papers made these decisions in 1968, with the Citizen making all the right choices -- a suburban location with ready access to the Queensway expressway, ‘cold’ type and an offset press -- and the Journal making exactly the opposite, and erroneous, choices (107).

Nine years later, in 1974, the Journal still had not installed computer video display terminals, known as VDTs, for writing, editing and typesetting (111). Instead, it negotiated a technology package with its ITU compositors that gave them complete

¹⁰ According to Zerker, these worked by assembling and justifying a line of type matrices, as in metal casting. The letters in the matrix were lifted from their storage position so that a beam of light could be projected through film and onto the matrix, producing a negative of the characters (246-247).

jurisdiction over VDTs if they were ever introduced, and offered protection against layoffs. Two years later, after the newspaper decided to install VDTs after all, it asked for massive changes in the ITU agreement, including the elimination of the 1974 technological change clause (113). Over months of difficult negotiations, the ITU eventually agreed to relinquish its jurisdiction over VDT use by reporters, editors and the classified ad department, though not over VDT use for wire copy. On Oct. 25, 1976, the newspaper locked out all its unions. The other unions -- stereotypers, pressmen, mailers and Guild clerical workers -- eventually settled; the ITU never did. Swartz and Swimmer describe the case as "a failure of management,"¹¹ and suggest the troubled labour relations were part of a broader pattern of weak management that eventually contributed to the failure of the Journal (126-127).¹²

Between the 1960s and 1990s, newspapers took different routes toward technological change, but almost all of them ended up at more or less the same place: with production plants in which the dominant technology is digital, and in which the multiple steps between editor's desk and mailroom have been collapsed into each other. Rather than summarizing the changes across the industry, I will look at one

¹¹ This is the title of their chapter in the Royal Commission on Newspapers volume on labour relations in the newspaper business.

¹² Thomson newspapers, which bought the Journal in 1980 through its acquisition of FP publications, shut it down in August, 1980, on the same day Southam shut down the Winnipeg Tribune. The move, which left Thomson with a monopoly in Winnipeg and Southam with a monopoly in Ottawa, precipitated the appointment of the Royal Commission on Newspapers.

plant: Pacific Press, which publishes the daily Vancouver Sun and Vancouver Province. As with the London Free Press example from 1966, the Pacific Press story, though unique, offers a template for the broad pattern of technological change occurring across the industry.

In applying to the B.C. Labour Relations Board for an order to consolidate its seven bargaining units into one -- an action that will be explored in depth in Chapter 8 -- Pacific Press offered a detailed chronology of how new technology has led to a convergence of skills across bargaining units, “blur(ring) and obliterate(ing) traditional jurisdictional boundaries” (Application 1995, 32).

Pacific Press installed its first computers in the composing room in the 1960s.¹³ These allowed the compositors to input text, producing a perforated tape which drove the linotype machines. In addition, stock market information from the wire services (such as The Canadian Press) came into the composing room electronically, where it was reproduced as computer tape, again fed into the linotype machines. These developments reduced the amount of keyboarding done by compositors. During this decade, Pacific Press also set up a data centre to operate a mainframe computer that formatted classified ads, produced labels and distribution information for the mailroom and produced bills and payroll cheques. Because the data centre’s activities covered work under the jurisdiction of three unions -- the Guild, the compositors and

¹³ The application does not give the precise year.

the mailers -- its staff was drawn on a proportional basis from these three groups of workers (32).

In the early 1970s, Pacific Press introduced a number of innovations aimed at automating and digitizing an increasing proportion of the work. In the classified ad department, it installed IBM Selectric typewriters. Optical character readers installed in the composing room “read” the text produced on these typewriters and converted it to perforated tape. This meant that compositors no longer retyped classified ads; instead, they used the perforated tape to drive the linotype machines (33).

The newspapers also began moving from hot metal production to cold type. Pacific Press installed a phototypesetter which converted characters input by the optical character scanners into columns of text, which were then printed out on photographic paper. This meant that compositors no longer set this material in metal type. Instead, they were given the job of pasting the columns of type onto forms known as layout boards. The Pacific Press application describes the job of paste-up as “very labour intensive” (33). A new computer brought into the composing room, replacing the one installed in the 1960s, eliminated some of that labour-intensive work. This one produced “full-page pagination” (33) of classified ads. The computer-driven phototypesetter now printed out entire pages of ads on photographic paper. This meant that while the compositors still had to paste up display ads, news pages and other parts of the paper, they did not have to do so any longer on the classified pages (33).

In the engraving room, the change to cold type meant that engravers no longer needed to etch plates of photographs and illustrations. Instead, they produced screened photographic images which were then pasted on the layout board (33).

The change to cold type also changed the procedure for making printing plates. Pasted pages of cold type were converted into a plate using a photographic process which printed a raised image of the page on a photosensitive polymer plate. From there, the plate went to the stereotype department where it was used to make the cardboard mat, from which the curved metal printing plate was cast. According to the Pacific Press application, these developments eliminated the need for certain skills formerly used by stereotypers and engravers (34). This prompted jurisdictional disputes among the unions. The case eventually went to arbitration.

Between 1972 and 1976, Pacific Press and the unions negotiated a number of items designed to simplify the process of technological change and lessen the potential damage to the unions. The first was a job protection agreement negotiated in the round of bargaining in 1972, ensuring that no regular employees would lose their jobs as a result of technological change. At the same time, the employer agreed to conditions on reducing its labour force by attrition (34). In 1976, the unions, bargaining as a joint council, came up with a mechanism for resolving jurisdictional disputes (34).

Technological change moved into the newsroom in 1975, with the installation of a Talstar mainframe computer with a series of video display terminals. Reporters

wrote their stories on the computer instead of on a typewriter. Editors worked by computer too, correcting copy written by local reporters and working with wire-service stories that came directly into the mainframe. Once the editors were finished with a story, it went electronically to the composing room, where it was printed out on photographic paper, cut and pasted on the layout sheet by the compositors. The Pacific Press application notes that the Talstar computer eliminated the need for compositors to type a considerable amount of material into the computer. "The compositors responded with a wildcat strike and a grievance claiming jurisdiction over work being performed by editorial staff" (35).¹⁴

The final major technological change of the decade signalled the end of one form of craft work at the newspaper: the job of stereotyping, which had been carried out by members of Local 885 of the International Printing and Graphic Communications Union. Starting about 1976, Pacific Press began to invest in technology that enabled it to place polymer plastic plates directly on the press. It did this in two steps: first installing di-litho plates, which converted a letter press to a form of offset press, then moving to a process that used plastic printing plates. This meant that the newspaper no longer needed to use the combination of stereotype mats

¹⁴ The arbitrator, drawing on a similar case affecting the Victoria Times-Colonist, ruled in 1977 that where the predominant focus of the VDT work was to develop and edit editorial copy, that work belonged to the Guild. Where the predominant focus was the accurate transcription of hard copy received from outside, that work belonged to the composing room. The compositors also fought the direct connection of wire service material to the composing room computer. They lost that case in 1978 (36).

and curved, cast metal plates. Pacific Press assigned the new technology to the engravers. The stereotypers challenged it, and eventually lost. The application adds, “This led to the demise of the stereotypers at Pacific Press” (37).

By the start of the 1980s, the production process was remarkably different from what it had been 10 years earlier. A compositor trained in the 1920s, who would have adapted quickly to the London Free Press of 1966, would be completely baffled by the Vancouver Sun just a dozen years later. He would have found that the printers, whose craft had been to produce a remarkable volume of metal type at high speed, now produced very little type indeed, and none of it in metal. Instead of operating linotype machines, they worked with razor blades, slicing sheets of computer-generated type into columns and sticking the columns on a layout sheet with a wax-like glue. But while the work of compositors had undergone a radical shift, they were by no means the only workers affected by new technology: the number of tasks performed (and skills required of) engravers had also been reduced. The stereotypers had been eliminated.

Though it occurred fairly swiftly, this conversion did not happen easily. It produced a significant amount of labour strife. Between 1967 and 1978, there were seven rounds of collective bargaining. Four of these resulted in strike-lockouts: a three-day strike by the Guild in 1967; a twelve-week shutdown in 1970; a three-day shutdown in 1972, and a lengthy strike/lockout that lasted from November 1978 through late June 1979 (Application, 60-62; Fraser and Angel 1981, 32). Not all of

these were the direct result of technological change, though the disruptions brought about by new technology played a role in many of them. According to Fraser and Angel's research for the Royal Commission on Newspapers, technological change was the key factor in 1972. Jurisdictional disputes arising from technological change caused a brief shutdown in 1975. The question of manning -- or how many people were needed to run the presses -- was a critical factor in 1978. Manning is related to technological change. Indeed, between 1970 and 1980, "there was almost continuous conflict at Pacific Press" (Fraser and Angel, 32).

In the early 1980s, Pacific Press decided to move more of its display advertising work to the computer. It installed a Xenotron computer and terminals in the composing room, where compositors entered display ads. The computer was hooked up to the phototypesetter, which printed out the completed ad for pasteup. Pacific Press also replaced its Talstar mainframe with a centralized CSI data processing system. According to the company, none of these changes affected employee numbers, though they did provoke more jurisdictional disputes (Application, 38). The compositors claimed jurisdiction over creating and using computerized formats, classified pagination, display ads and "longhanding," or typing codes into a computer system to direct the output of text. The arbitrator who handled the complaint ruled that the employer could assign creation of formats as it saw fit. Because the Guild classified ad staff determined where ads should be placed, paginating those ads should be assigned to the Guild. On the display ad question, the

arbitrator said that both the Guild and ITU units had a claim to input the ads, but because of the creative element involved, the task was awarded to the Guild. As for longhanding, the arbitrator ruled that this should be assigned to whoever input the original keystroke (38-39). The composers took the case to the B.C. Court of Appeal, seeking a judicial review, and to the Industrial Relations Council, asking that the arbitration award be set aside. Neither succeeded (39).

In 1985, Pacific Press began to take advantage of desktop publishing technology which made it possible to carry out a wide assortment of publishing functions on a single computer. With desktop publishing, an employee working at an Apple Macintosh computer¹⁵ could receive electronic text and images over a network, combine them and send them to the phototypesetter, again over the network, to be printed as a single unit. By the end of the decade, Macintoshes replaced all the Xenotrons in the composing room. Desktop units were installed in the editorial department starting in 1987, producing graphics for designated newspaper pages. They were used in the advertising department to create display ads, and in the promotions department (40).

In the engraving department, a Howtek system was installed that could speed the processing of colour pages. Colour pictures could be scanned or electronically entered into the Howtek, which separated colour photographs into four colours and

¹⁵ Macintosh computers emerged in the 1980s as the favoured tool for desktop publishing in North American dailies.

output the result on film. This allows editorial department staff to see low-resolution versions of the photographs on their computers for page layout purposes. When the page is “printed” to the Howtek, the computer substitutes high-resolution images and exposes the separation onto film.

The company notes that Howtek “relies on manual intervention in the process, and a certain degree of knowledge is required to operate the system. Other systems are now available which automate the entire separation process” (40). Nonetheless, the Howtek cut another step in the production process, eliminating the need for engravers to shoot four separate films on a camera to create a colour plate. In the late 1980s, the company added Autokon scanners to replace the large cameras previously used to create screened, half-tone images. These scanners also require manual operation but can scale, correct and screen photographs. “Since their introduction more simple scanners and software eliminate much of the manual steps required” (40).

In 1990, the company installed an ethernet communications network that linked the mainframe and stand-alone computers. This allowed for movement of electronic text and images back and forth among the various computers at Pacific Press, and to laser printers and phototypesetters. By 1991, all the Macintoshes in the composing room and the phototypesetters were on the network. (The Macintoshes were also linked to scanners and laser printers.) Promotions went on the network in 1991-92, editorial graphics in 1991, and creative artists in 1992-93. At about the same

time, the mainframe computers serving the classified department, reader sales and services, business offices and editorial systems were also linked to the network (41).

In 1991, Pacific Press opened a satellite production plant in Surrey. This was part of a long-term plan to move all press work to the suburbs, and non-press work to new quarters in downtown Vancouver. At first, the Surrey plant printed just the Province; the Sun was still printed in downtown Vancouver. Staff working in Vancouver transmitted images of the pasted-up photocomposed pages electronically to Surrey, where they were made into printing plates. The plant used Flexo presses, which have “a more efficient inking system” and require lower manning levels on each press. The company assigned some maintenance work on this new system to the pressmen’s union. The machinists union challenged this assignment, prompting another jurisdictional dispute (41).

In 1993, the company installed 100 Macintosh computers -- equipped for desktop publishing and connected to the ethernet -- in the editorial department (43). These allowed editorial workers to edit and position editorial material on a partially paginated page and send it directly to the phototypesetter. Editors worked from an electronic dummy produced by the advertising department, filling spaces around the spots slotted for the ads. The pages went to the phototypesetter, which printed them as laid out. Compositors then pasted in the ads and the photographs. This system eliminated the cutting and pasting of news and editorial material that had been handled by the compositors.

Also in 1993, the company installed a VAX mainframe computer in the mailroom to control stacking and bundling. This system gets daily reports from the reader sales and service department about the number of papers, routes, loads and bundle sizes, and informs the mailers of the number of inserts that must go in the paper. It also co-ordinates the loading of each truck. "Before these technological changes, the mailers manually coded the stacker and built the loads. The VAX system eliminated the last vestiges of hand-tied bundling, as the computer can direct the stacker to build irregular bundles" (44). Pacific Press planned to assign the work of instructing the computer to build loads for a specific truck to the driver of that truck. The mailers filed -- and won -- a jurisdictional claim (44).

Another jurisdictional dispute around this same time centred on the use of ad control scanners. This one involved three unions: the Guild, the compositors and the engravers (44). Compositors and Guild staffers were also involved in a more complicated dispute: over creating mockups of ads -- known as "spec ads" -- that Guild sales representatives could take to potential advertisers as a way of drumming up business. If the advertiser bought it, the ad would appear in the paper. The compositors claimed that making up ads was their job, and they refused to handle Guild-generated ads that had been sold "on spec." The labour relations board called this an illegal strike (45).

In 1993, Pacific Press decided to consolidate all its production operations at Surrey, selling off its Granville Street plant and installing new presses in Surrey to

print both newspapers. The presses the company would eventually buy could read data encoded in photocomposed images electronically, and pre-set ink and water levels. This means that fewer pressmen would be needed to run the press (Application, 46). But in order to use the presses, Pacific Press said, the partial pagination system then in use had to be upgraded to a full pagination system: in other words, to one that would produce completed pages of text, photos and ads to be sent to a single phototypesetter.

In 1994, the newspaper began buying electronic cameras for news photographers. These store an image on a disk, rather than on film, which means there is no longer any need for film processing and half-tone production. The combination of full pagination and electronic cameras affects the work of three unions. The Guild-staffed photo lab was closed in 1995 and the nine people who worked there were reassigned (47). The compositors no longer have to paste up photographs or display ads. For engravers, work with the Howtek system, installed less than 10 years earlier, would also be eliminated.

In early 1996, Don Ross, vice-president of financing for Pacific Press, gave the B.C. Labour Relations Board an update on technological developments in the year following the filing of the consolidation application. He said that full pagination of colour pictures would occur by the spring of that year. Plans also called for a new ad tracking system in February, 1996, a new ad billing system in March, 1996, and a new classified system in March 1996. (Testimony, Feb. 6, 1996, 5). He predicted that

the number of composers at Pacific Press would likely to drop to fifty once full pagination was installed (79). This compared with 450 people in the composing room in the 1960s. (Testimony, Oct. 11, 1995, 51). The number of engravers -- twenty-two at time of the hearing on the application -- was expected to drop to twelve with full pagination (Testimony, Feb. 6, 1996, 85). In 1978, the newspaper had thirty-three engravers (Fraser and Angel, 26).

Though the story of technological change at Pacific Press is specific to that company, several of the chords it strikes resonate with what has gone on at other newspapers. The strongest of these is the steady, relentless push to compress and eliminate steps in the production process, and to shed the workers who once made their living carrying out these tasks. Where the London Free Press of the 1960s opened a new plant with the goal of shaving minutes off the time it took at each stage in the production cycle, the newspapers of the 1990s -- in Vancouver and elsewhere -- sought to transfer as much work as possible to the computer. This has not happened easily: the unions at Pacific Press, which already had a reputation for solidarity and toughness, fought hard at almost every step. But the net effect of their struggle was to temporarily dampen or slow down technological change, not to halt it. Since the 1970s, Pacific Press employees have had job guarantees protecting them against layoffs brought about by technical change. These should be seen as the price the company had to pay to buy workers' consent, grudging though it may be at times, to technological change. In addition, the existence of job guarantees does not alter the

long-term plan of using new technology to replace production workers.

Braverman would see the changes at Pacific Press as striving toward the capitalist ideal: the domination of “living labour” by “dead labour,” or the skills and knowledge of the workers who did the task before automation (227). The last 30 years at Pacific Press have seen the steady transfer of skills to computers, and the concurrent deskilling of several groups of workers. The stereotypers are no more. The compositors, once the powerhouse of newspaper unions, have been steadily and severely affected. The remaining compositors are now clustered in the advertising department, where they compose display advertisements. The engravers have seen their skills (and their numbers) reduced. Some of the functions formerly done by mailers have been automated. New presses include electronic devices that mean fewer pressmen will be required.

In the newsroom, new technology has had more mixed results. Digital cameras have eliminated the photo lab and the jobs of photo technicians, and reduced the requirement for photographers to master the skills of developing film. At the same time, online databases and the Internet have given new tools to reporters. As Koch notes (1991), reporters now have access to information that may be equal to or greater than that possessed by their sources. With word-processing programs, they have gained enormous flexibility in self-editing or rewriting stories without having to retype them in full. The news desk, meanwhile, has become the production hub of the newspaper. According to Russial, editors have been simultaneously reskilled and

deprofessionalized, a term he defines as “the white-collar analogue of deskilling” (1995, 15). Editors retain their professional knowledge and their monopoly in its application, he argues, but lose much of their discretionary capability in the face of production imperatives.

In a 1985 guide produced by the Associated Press Managing Editors (APME), an editor with the Aiken (S.C.) Standard describes “the ideal situation” for newspapers: a computer system in which completed pages “go directly from editor to the press” (Hunter, APME, 3). This, he adds, is “the logical extension” of the so-called front-end computers installed in newsrooms in the 1970s. Hunter and other authors in the publication express disappointment that it has taken longer than initially expected to get to this ideal situation.¹⁶ APME reports in 1987 and 1988 are more optimistic. The 1987 report is called Meet the Future: A Report on Pagination and Other Mystical Things, a title ascribing semi-divine qualities to new technology. The headlines of articles in this report mix reportage and outright promotion: “New roles

¹⁶ Hunter says a number of factors slowed the process. Direct-to-plate production requires expensive new central computers and sub-systems, some of which had not been fully developed. Digital pictures require an enormous amount of storage space, which in 1985 was expensive. Finally, the key attraction -- the savings on labour costs -- has been slow in coming. He notes that many newspapers justified the cost of computer systems in the 1970s by showing the resulting reduction in back shop or composing room costs. “But pagination has been coming along in stages, and savings in the back shop have not seemed as apparent as with front-end systems.” It’s only when newspapers reach the final stage of pagination -- the point at which entire pages of pictures, ads and text go directly to the printing plate -- that substantial labour savings are produced (3).

for editors: new jobs, shifts with pagination” (4); “Training for success” (5); “Does pagination mean savings? Papers say yes” (8); “Photo editing's new age” (9); “Here's what electronic picture desks can do ... and more ... and more” (12-14). One editor is quoted as describing pagination as “the most revolutionary production change since the introduction of the linotype” (4). These handbooks, produced by and for the newspaper industry, set out very clearly the direction of production in the coming decades: more computers, more convergence; fewer production workers. With the news desk as the centre of production, the composing room and engraving department converge in cyberspace -- and wither away in the real world.

Beyond the printing press

In concluding this examination of the application of computer technology to newspaper work, it's worth noting that the Pacific Press case and the newspapers described in the APME reports are still grounded in the conception of newspapers as editions produced on paper by companies that run their own presses. In an age of convergence, however, both these ideas -- the newspaper as words on paper; the newspaper as the product of the printing press -- are being interrogated.

A large number of newspapers in North American and abroad have launched online editions that offer readers the potential of the “paperless” newspaper -- or, perhaps more accurately, the “press-less” newspaper. In late 1998, the Canadian Newspaper Association's Web site (www.cna-acj.ca) contained links to 89 Canadian

daily newspapers with some sort of online presence -- indicating that almost nine out of 10 dailies have Web sites. These ranged from fairly simple offerings designed mainly to stake out a small patch of "turf" in cyberspace to large and complex Web sites, complete with electronic versions of classified ads or searchable archives of back issues. For the most part, the editorial content of the online dailies is material written for the regular newspaper.¹⁷

Electronic publications take the vision of the ideal newspaper as going "directly from editor to the press" (Hunter, APME 1995, 3) one step farther: they go directly from editor to reader, bypassing the presses altogether. Indeed, the "labour" of receiving the electronic newspaper is done by the reader, who uses his or her own home computer and printer as a private, non-union printing press. In doing so, the end user of the information -- rather than the producer of it -- pays the costs of converting the electronic text to real paper. In conventional newspapers, by contrast, this cost is born by the publisher. The question of how electronic newspapers will affect unionized press workers is, for the moment, largely philosophical. So far, newspapers are offering electronic versions of themselves largely as an adjunct to the paper edition, not as a replacement of it. But that may change.

A second area of concern for unions deals with the question of whether people who run the electronic services should be covered by existing collective bargaining

¹⁷ This is known in journalistic lingo as "shovelware" because it is pushed onto the Web site in essentially the same form as in the daily newspaper.

agreements. At The Globe and Mail, management and the union that represents editorial, advertising and circulation workers have agreed to disagree on this question, negotiating a letter of understanding attached to the collective agreement concerning workers in the Globe Information Services Division. The letter stresses that the understandings and undertakings it contains do not prejudice the employer's position that people who work in this division are not covered under the scope of the collective agreement. Nor do they prejudice CEP 87-M's position that these workers are covered.¹⁸ In 1999, the local, which also represents workers at the Toronto Star, won a first contract for online workers at Torstar.com, the newspaper's Web site (www.song.on.ca). Since 1998 it has been engaged in a fight before the Ontario Labour Relations Board over extending its right to represent workers to those hired by three new electronic subsidiaries of the Toronto Star: Toronto Star Television, a 24-hour cable channel; T-O Online, a collection of Web sites on the Internet; and Toronto Star Citysearch, an electronic classified ad service. The union contends that these ventures exist in a "symbiotic relationship" with the newspaper and are a

¹⁸ The two sides have agreed to meet at least twice a year to discuss developments in electronic publication. The employer agrees to provide full disclosure to the union about how new electronic products will be produced and staffed, to post any job vacancies at the Globe Information Services Division throughout the newspaper office, and to provide copies of these openings to the union. It also guarantees that no members of the bargaining unit will be laid off as a direct result of the introduction or growth of electronic products. ("Re: Globe Information Services." Letter attached to collective agreement, 17-18, distributed at an Inter-Union Newspaper Council Conference, Ottawa, February, 1998).

“related and integral business to the Star’s traditional business of publishing a newspaper” (CEP Local 87-M, Application to the Ontario Labour Relations Board, Jan. 9, 1998, 34). The union contends that the newspaper should recognize it as having bargaining rights for employees at these new ventures, and that the employees should be covered by the terms and conditions of the newspaper’s collective agreement with the union. The newspaper rejects the claim. As of this writing, the case was still before the board (OLRB, File No. 3695-97-U).

The Toronto cases point to an organizing concern raised by technological convergence: how to extend jurisdiction to workers in occupations that have never existed before, and that are undergoing rapid technological change. Since the late 1930s, Guild contracts have worked under a series of departmental designations: a Guild local that wins a certification drive to represent newsroom workers must win a separate certification drive to represent, say, advertising workers. In addition, for the most part workers in different departments have different contracts. Jacobson points out that the decision to create separate departmental units was intended to ease journalists’ fears of being overwhelmed by clerical workers when the union transformed itself from an organization strictly for journalists into an industrial union for white-collar newspaper workers in the late 1930s (1960, 93). Ironically, what started as a protection has now become a constraint.

Finally, the convergence of newspapers and telecommunications offers newspapers a new way of reducing labour costs: sharing presses. Alan Tate of the

Graphic Communications International Union told the an Inter-Union Newspaper Council Conference in Ottawa in February, 1998, that this trend began at Ottawa's Le Droit and has spread to other newspapers. Le Droit, which had been losing money, underwent a dramatic restructuring in 1989: it installed a new pagination system, which eliminated its composing room, and contracted out its printing, which eliminated its press room¹⁹ (Pane 1994, 138). This reduced the paper's staff by half. Tate noted that in Ontario, some of the smaller Southam/Hollinger dailies were sharing printing plants: the Brantford paper was being printed at the Hamilton Spectator; printing of the St. Catharines Standard has gone to Welland.²⁰ In the Maritimes, he said, the Irving family decided in early 1998 to print both Saint John newspapers in Moncton. But the "big shock" for the union was The Globe and Mail's decision in the mid-1990s to contract out its printing to a commercial printer rather than invest in new presses. "Other papers figure if The Globe and Mail can do it, they should look at their own press rooms," he said.

In conclusion, this chapter and the preceding one have attempted to untangle two strands of convergence that have transformed the labour process at the North American newspaper between the 1960s and 1990s. Convergence of ownership has significantly altered the balance of power in the relationship between bargaining unit

¹⁹ The paper's printing plates are transmitted electronically to a plant in Quebec.

²⁰ The most striking example of the phenomenon of shared presses is the National Post, which is printed at selected Southam plants across Canada.

and employer, tilting the scale in favour of the company. Technological convergence, meanwhile, has not only hollowed out the production process but challenged the link between union representation and skill.

The challenges of corporate and technological convergence have affected different unions at different times, however. In response, they have undertaken a convergence of their own, merging with each other and with other communications workers' unions. This did not occur overnight. Nor did it occur smoothly.

The next chapter examines the major movements toward merger undertaken by the unions between 1960 and the early 1980s. Some were stunningly successful; others left behind a residue of bitterness and betrayal. By the mid-1980s, however, most of the craft unions in the newspaper business, including the ITU, had found merger partners -- joining with each other or with a leading U.S. communications union. As we will see in Chapter 6, the Guild would eventually find a partner too. But as it marked its fiftieth anniversary in 1983, the union found itself standing alone.

Chapter 5 - Mergers and more mergers

In November 1959, fifty-six stereotypers went on strike at the Portland Oregonian and the Oregon Journal. The immediate cause of the strike was technological change: the Newhouse-owned Oregonian planned to install a new, German-made plate-casting machine that would reduce the number of stereotypers needed to make printing plates (Walsh 1985, 39). The Portland action was noteworthy in several respects. The other unions at the newspapers joined the strike. Newhouse, which bought the Journal in the midst of the strike, brought in out-of-state strikebreakers and continued publishing, an action that helped solidify the union opposition.¹ Before the end of the 1959, the unions had set up their own newspaper, the Portland Reporter, which endured for almost five years.² But perhaps the most significant action was taken in early 1960, when the unions set up an inter-union newspaper strike committee headed by the International Typographical Union's Rene Valentine (Guild Reporter, May 27, 1960). This committee brought together the so-

¹ Newhouse had purchased the Oregonian in 1950. He paid \$8 million for the Oregon Journal in 1961 (Kuczun 1970, 280).

² It began as an eight-page weekly (Guild Reporter, May 27, 1960). The International Typographical Union provided most of the mechanical equipment to produce it and owned almost a quarter of its stock. In February, 1961, the paper became a daily and stayed in business until September, 1964 (Kuczun, 280-281).

called mechanical or craft unions³ and the American Newspaper Guild, which represented newsroom workers at the papers (Kuczun, 281).⁴ The Guild had a tendency to remain somewhat apart from other newspaper unions: in Walsh's words it was "kind of a lone star union" (40). In part this had to do with the character of its membership. Guild members saw themselves as white-collar intellectuals, who shared little in common with the blue-collar "mechanicals." But in Portland, Guild leaders felt it was impossible to stay detached, and imperative to work with the other unions.

In March, 1960, the leadership of the unions came together for a meeting of the Allied Printing Trades Association of Phoenix. Though it was not a member of this group, the Guild was invited to attend. The meeting produced an extraordinary result: an agreement among the international presidents to pursue closer ties through some sort of federated organization (Walsh, 42). This raised the prospect of creating "one big union" in the printing trades. It was an idea that was both breathtakingly simple and enormously radical, reversing seventy years of labour history that had seen

³ These included stereotypers, compositors, pressmen, photoengravers, and, somewhat later, paper handlers, who belonged to a separate local of the pressmen's union (Walsh, 39).

⁴ The Guild's officers later pointed out that the Portland strike contained an object lesson on the weakness of editorial-only units. Their report to the 1961 convention said, "If the Portland local had been organized over its entire jurisdiction, greater success in halting publication of the struck papers would have resulted. And if the local had contained representatives from circulation, advertising, commercial, etc., production of a strike newspaper unquestionably would have been simplified and expedited" (Officers' report to the twenty-eighth annual American Newspaper Guild convention, quoted in Kuczun, 281).

the creation of more and more unions, specializing in smaller and smaller portions of the production process.

There had been earlier instances of co-operation between the Guild and the craft unions, and some talk of unity. Jacobson (1960) says the Guild harvested the fruits of inter-union co-operation in 1950, in its seventy-one-day strike against Scripps Howard's New York World Telegram and Sun. The Guild got some financial help from the Council of Industrial Organizations and the United Mine Workers. More crucially, members of the craft unions refused to cross Guild picket lines in New York, claiming that their safety would be endangered by going to work. This effectively shut down the paper. This strike, Jacobson concludes, taught the Guild a lesson about “the paralysing force of labour unity” (164). According to Walsh (42-43), the Guild and the printing trades unions talked informally about unity later in the 1950s: at AFL-CIO conventions in 1957 and 1959, and at a 1959 meeting of the Allied Printing Trades Association. But no formal action was taken, and the Guild leaders portrayed these talks to their members as discussions of mutual problems.

In 1960, however, the idea of “one big union” took centre stage. Leaders of the Guild and the ITU met in April and released a joint statement committing themselves to the principle of unity. It read in part, “A unified organization of all workers in the printing, publishing and related trades, we believe, would create a strong force for the ultimate progress of employees and the industry which employs them.” Significantly, the statement was less clear on exactly what unity meant:

Whether such unity takes the form of a merger, an amalgamation of existing unions, or a new organization; whether it begins with a combination of two unions or several -- are details which should not hinder us in pursuit of our goal (quoted in Walsh, 44).

According to the Guild Reporter of May 27, 1960, the joint statement by William J. Farson, the executive vice-president of the Guild and its highest-ranking full-time officer,⁵ and ITU President Elmer Brown meant “they were agreed on a goal of ‘one big union’ in the industry, whatever form it ultimately takes.” In June, Guild leaders held meetings with the International Printing Pressmen and Assistants' Union. These would be “the first between the officers of the two unions since the formation of the Guild” (Guild Reporter, May 27, 1960).

Talk of “one big union” was a key theme at the Guild's 1960 convention in Chicago. The convention endorsed a report from the union's international executive board recommending that Guild officers pursue unity talks with the other unions and report to the convention the following year. The report also urged Guild locals to work for solidarity at the local level and to participate to the fullest possible extent in inter-union councils, allied printing trades councils and city and state bodies. The report described that year's unity discussions and the growth of inter-union co-operation as signs of “dramatic progress” toward achieving one of the Guild's constitutional purposes: “to promote industrial unionism in the newspaper industry” (Guild Reporter, July 15, 1960).

⁵ At the time, the job of president was not a full-time position.

The ITU's Elmer Brown, invited to speak at the Guild convention, stressed that unity was necessary to survival. Given the growing power of the corporations that owned the newspapers, "we are down to the alternative of amalgamation or annihilation" (Guild Reporter, July 15, 1960). Brown conceded that the unions themselves had to share some of the responsibility for their current difficulties: "These separate unions have failed to unite for the common benefit of all; each has tried to advance its own interests, too frequently with little or no regard for sister organizations." The solution, however, was clear. "One strong organization of employees in the industry can fight off the attacks upon our free, democratic organizations more effectively than can the several crafts, trades and associations making up the printing trades unions" (Guild Reporter, July 15 1960).

Farson told convention delegates that he planned to propose a working committee of all the unions to draw up a blueprint for a single, unified organization. He recalled that at the 1959 convention in New York, he had expressed doubts about whether genuine inter-union co-operation could be achieved soon at the international level. The situation had changed, however. "Today, the international officers of each of the craft unions have committed themselves to work for all possible unity among the unions. . . . I can assure you they are sincere, and mean what they say." Farson attributed the change of heart to a number of factors, including the Portland strike, developments in printing technology and new leadership in some of the unions.

But above all there is the realization, so dramatically underscored by Portland, that in the year 1960 the unions in the newspaper industry can no longer afford to go their own separate ways, unthinking and alone. We know now -- all of us -- that our own self-interest demands unity, and until there was that realization, there could be no unity (Guild Reporter, July 15, 1960).

When the ITU held its annual convention later that summer, it returned the favour the Guild had shown its president by inviting Guild president Arthur Rosenstock, a New York Times librarian, to speak. Like Brown at the Guild convention, Rosenstock presented unity as an idea whose time had come. "In the year 1960 the unions in our industry can no longer afford to go their separate ways," he said, adding that the newspaper business was not unique in this respect. "Everywhere management is pooling its resources to fight labour. In turn, unions everywhere are concentrating their forces, as they must" (Guild Reporter, Aug. 26, 1960).

But while Rosenstock enthusiastically endorsed the idea of "one big union," he said he saw the phrase as "a symbol of unity, not a blueprint." He outlined the same plan to the ITU as Farson had to the Guild: he would propose the creation of an inter-union committee to draft that blueprint. He also noted that the ITU's Brown had come up with the idea of an amalgamated union in which each of the formerly independent unions would become a department of the bigger union, ultimately merging into functional divisions corresponding to divisions within the industry. Said Rosenstock, "That proposal merits close study of all the unions in the industry. It parallels in many ways our own thinking" (Guild Reporter, Aug. 26, 1960).

If Rosenstock's comments to the ITU were optimistic about unity, Brown's were even more so. "Merger of the newspaper unions could best be described as a spontaneous reaction by the leaders of the various crafts," he told the convention. "But it has been pressured by the membership itself." Brown predicted that unity would be a reality within five years (Guild Reporter, Sept. 9, 1960).

He was wrong.

Seven unions initially participated in formal talks on unity: the Guild, the ITU, the pressmen, the photoengravers, the stereotypers and electrotypers, the bookbinders and the lithographers. Over the next year, they were joined by the United Papermakers and Paperworkers and the International Plate Printers, Die Stampers and Engravers union, bringing the total to nine. The unions appointed an inter-union working committee to draft a plan for merger. Though it met a half-dozen times in 1961 and 1962, it failed to produce a working draft on consolidation. Indeed, only the ITU came up with a written proposal to circulate among committee members. By the end of 1962, the talk of "one big union" had died down.

None of the participants in the talks ever explained exactly why the movement failed (Walsh, 51). It seems clear, however, that the unions were divided on how closely connected they wanted to be to each other, and concerned that they would give up more than they would gain in any merger. Some unions, especially the Guild, feared a loss of identity in a merger with the larger and more numerous craft unions. In addition, several unions found the ITU's attitude during the unity talks to be

patronizing. Walsh quotes the Guild's Farson as saying in a later interview that the ITU president repeatedly used the phrase "come on home" in promoting the idea of unity (55). This phrase was a reminder of the ITU's historic position as the parent of printing unions. But it also put the other unions in the role of runaways, or disobedient offspring, who were now being invited to return to the parental home -- and, presumably, to parental control. For unions who had found it necessary to break away from the ITU, the phrase was galling.

Walsh quotes the president of the pressmen's union, Anthony DeAndrade, as saying that, one by one and for different reasons, the unions stopped attending the meetings of the inter-union working committee. His union, for example, refused to sit at the same table as the lithographers, whom the pressmen accused of raiding (51). The photoengravers, bookbinders and stereotypers decided they favoured a federation of printing unions, not a merger, and lost interest in the unity talks (51). In less than two years, the drive toward "one big union" hadn't just stalled; it had broken down.

One significant merger did, however, result from the talks of the early 1960s. In 1964, the 40,000-member Amalgamated Lithographers of America merged with the 20,000-member International Photoengravers Union to become the Lithographers and Photoengravers International Union. According to the U.S. Secretary of Labor, Willard Wirtz, the motive for the merger was technological change (AFL-CIO news release, quoted by Walsh, 53).

Defining mergers

The failed unity drive of the early 1960s struck notes the unions would play again and again in subsequent decades. Changing technology -- especially changes that eliminated workers -- would prompt all unions at one time or another to question their security. Add to this concerns about growing corporate power and it seems inevitable that the unions would seek out each other as allies in the fight for job security and power. At the same time, though, the unions had to think long and hard about whether the gains of unity would come at too high a cost.

In examining why the merger talks of 1960-62 failed, it's clear that one critical problem was a lack of agreement on what "one big union" really meant. The literature on labour union mergers shows that there are, in fact, several forms of unity. Chaison (1986) identifies three types of mergers: absorption, in which a larger union takes over a smaller one; amalgamation, in which two or more unions of roughly equal power join forces; and affiliation, in which the unions unite but maintain their own identity. Other scholars have identified other forms -- commensalistic mergers, in which the merging partners are unions that organize the same kinds of workers; symbiotic mergers, in which unions represent workers that are technically interdependent; mergers for scale, in which the work the members do has no apparent connection, but the merging unions feel bigger is definitely better. (For a discussion of types of mergers see Chitayat, 1979, and Walsh, 1985.) In 1960-1962, the ITU's Brown saw "one big union" as an amalgamated union divided into departments. Other

unions saw it as a federation -- in other words, as an alliance rather than an organic merger. The Guild's Farson, meanwhile, was even more vague: for him "one big union" was mainly a metaphor. Beyond using the phrase to symbolize a shared desire for unity, he offered few details on how to make it a reality. Another explanation for the failure was that a multi-union merger -- whatever form it might take -- was simply too ambitious an idea. As the unions were learning, a merger between two unions is a substantial undertaking. One involving seven or nine unions is a Herculean task.

But like the leaders of many other unions,⁶ the heads of unions in the newspaper business had a good sense of why mergers were worth pursuing. In a study of trade union mergers in Canada, Coady (1976) identifies a number of causes of trade union mergers. These include increasing concentration of corporate ownership, fragmented and decentralized union membership and continuing technological change. All three threaten union survival. All three applied in the case of the newspaper unions, though they would apply far more strongly in 1970 than in 1960, and in 1990 than in 1970.

Chaison (1986) argues that union mergers occur only when the motivations to merge are greater than the barriers to merge. He notes that the conventional wisdom

⁶ In a study of Canadian mergers, Mawhinney (1989) found that between 1967 and 1987, two out of three small unions -- those with 500 members or less -- disappeared from the Directory of Labour Organizations in Canada, mainly through mergers.

is that mergers are caused by membership decline and financial difficulty. But Chaison's data on mergers refute this idea: one in three unions that end up being absorbed by or amalgamated with another union grows prior to merger, and more than one in four of the unions absorbing other union declines in size before merger (45).

Like Coady, Chaison sees technological change as one of the most significant motivating factors behind union mergers.

Technological change threatens the employment of union members and thus jeopardizes the survival of the union as a representative institution. Mergers are aimed at absorbing the impact of technological change rather than preventing its introduction or continuation (47).

Other motivating factors he identifies include narrow or overlapping jurisdictions (a problem that is exacerbated by technological change), a need to increase bargaining power, and protection against raids by other unions. Changes at the corporate level -- such as mergers among companies, reorganizations or diversifications -- may also prompt union mergers (47-52). All of these have been factors in the newspaper union mergers of the last few decades, though the impact of technological change and its jurisdictional consequences were only beginning to be felt in the early 1960s.

Although the participants in the "one big union" talks of the early 1960s believed closer ties would be beneficial, it's clear that the motivations to merge were not strong enough to overcome the barriers to merger. Chaison says barriers include internal opposition (especially significant if it comes from the leadership of the union), opposition from labour federations or institutional differences between the

merging unions. In 1960-1962, the first factor was clearly at play in some of the craft unions, who decided they preferred a federation rather than a merger and dropped out of the inter-union unity committee. The third was also critical: there were enormous organizational, structural and cultural gaps between these unions, and most especially between the Guild and the ITU.

Over the next few years, these structural and cultural differences would cast a chill over relations between these two unions that would take decades to thaw.

From 'one big union' to 'piggyback unionism'

It would be difficult to find two unions working in the same business that were more dissimilar than the Guild and the ITU. While the ITU had a long history of organization and a hard-earned -- and enviable -- tradition of solidarity, the Guild teetered uncomfortably on the cusp of professionalism and trade unionism. As Jacobson notes,

At one time it was believed that newspaper writers were a working group not organizable into a trade union, especially one using orthodox labour union tactics and procedures. This belief was based on the notion that news reporting was not a vocation but a profession -- and a trade union of professionals would be an anomaly (3).

Though the Guild's membership had been divided between editorial workers and those in the various business offices since the late 1930s, Guild culture has traditionally been dominated by journalists: independent, competitive people who are wary of rules, suspicious of trade unions and likely to see themselves as intellectuals

rather than as members of the working class.⁷ The ITU, by contrast, took pride in its vision of itself as representing the elite of the working class.

A second area of difference had to do with the importance of a union card. Membership in the Guild was not necessarily a requirement of work: rather, it was often a function of whether a reporter joined a newsroom that had already been organized. Membership wasn't necessarily portable either: reporters could move from Guild to non-Guild paper, and back again. The ITU, by contrast, was based on a monopoly on craft, a closed shop, a cast-iron set of ITU laws and a "travelling-card" system allowing members who moved from place to place to retain their union status. As a result, ITU members owed their jobs as much to their union as to their employer. Few Guild members felt that way.

There were other differences as well. The two unions had, for a time, belonged to rival labour federations: the Guild to the CIO, the ITU to the AFL. They had different organizational structures, different ways of dealing with members, different

⁷ Indeed, Heywood Broun's 1933 column that helped prompt the organization of the Guild mocked journalists for being "peculiarly susceptible to such soothing classifications as 'professionals,' 'journalists,' 'members of the fourth estate,' 'gentlemen of the press' and other terms which have completely entranced them by falsely dignifying and glorifying them and their work." Broun wrote that they fail to "look upon themselves for what they really are -- hacks and white-collar slaves." The reporter's view of unions, he added, goes like this: "Unions? Why, that's all right for dopes like printers, not for smart guys like newspapermen!" Meanwhile those "dopes" the printers earned 30 percent more than journalists, thanks to their union (Reprinted in Heywood Hale Broun, 1941).

dues structures and different political and electoral systems.⁸ More crucially, they had different attitudes about how to react to new technology and to each other's strikes -- differences that became increasingly problematic in the years after the unity drive broke down.

The Guild had a tradition of not crossing picket lines set up by other striking newspaper unions. This made sense from both a fraternal and strategic point of view, given that the Guild lacked the workplace control some of the craft unions had. A Guild strike simply did not pose the same kind of threat to the publisher as a strike by the ITU, which could almost certainly shut down a paper. The Guild hoped that if it supported, say, a pressmen's strike, the pressmen would be more likely to support a Guild strike. But while Guild members often refused to cross picket lines set up by other unions, the ITU's bylaws required that once a contract was signed, the members had to strictly observe it -- even if this meant crossing another union's picket line.

During the early 1960s, a few high-profile strikes in Canada and the U.S. put enormous stress on the relationship between the ITU and the Guild. In Toronto, the ITU walked off the job at three newspapers --- the Telegram, Star and The Globe and Mail -- on July 9, 1964, in a disastrous strike that eventually cost the union its certification at the papers. The walkout was provoked in large part not by the local

⁸ The ITU was known for its unique two-party structure. The Guild had no such formal party system. In addition, the presidency of the ITU had long been a full-time job. The Guild presidency was not.

compositors but by the union's international office, which refused to sign off on contract provisions negotiated at the local level. Five members of the Guild walked out with the compositors, and were soon joined by six more. By the end of September, forty-two Guild members were refusing to cross the line (Zerker 1982, 281). This was but a small proportion of the membership, and not enough to affect production. Some of the other unions were even less supportive. The pressmen and stereotypers stood by their contracts and showed up for work, though many found the act of passing their colleagues on the picket lines "shameful and embarrassing" (281). The photoengravers, who were engaged in a jurisdictional dispute with the ITU at the time, signed a new four-year contract just days after the compositors walked out.

In response to a request from the ITU, the Toronto and District Labour Council approved a motion to encourage its members and all Toronto citizens to boycott the struck newspapers.⁹ In a particularly painful display of lack of solidarity among unions in the printing field, the presidents of five Toronto-area locals -- the pressmen, photoengravers, paperhandlers, bookbinders and Guild -- abstained.

In Baltimore, the Guild went on strike for recognition at the Baltimore Sunpapers in April, 1965. The printers and drivers initially refused to cross the Guild picket line. But in May, the ITU international advised its Baltimore members to live

⁹ The ITU also wanted the council to ask Toronto citizens to boycott firms that dealt with the newspapers, and to refuse to cross the picket lines. The motion approved by the council dealt with the newspaper boycott only and stopped short of asking its affiliated unions to honour the picket lines (Zerker, 288).

up to the terms of their contract -- in essence, ordering them to cross the Guild line and return to work. They did so on May 25, 1965, along with the pressmen, stereotypers, photoengravers and mailers. The paper resumed publication and the Guild was forced to call off its strike a week later.

The head of the Guild unit in Baltimore criticized the ITU in the May 28, 1965 issue of the Guild Reporter, charging that the president of the printers' union had "played footsie" with Baltimore management. This angered the ITU, which responded by publishing an attack in the ITU Review, accusing other newspaper unions of dissipating "our members, our funds, and our prestige . . . by piggyback unionism" and accusing the Guild of either strike-breaking or raiding in close to a dozen cities, including Toronto and Portland (quoted by Walsh, 58). The accusation of "piggyback unionism" was particularly hurtful: the phrase suggested not only that the Guild was a burden on the other union, but that the ITU was the stronger player -- strong enough to carry freeloaders. The phrase represented a 180-degree turnaround from the talk of unity and joint action heard from ITU leaders just a few years earlier.

A few weeks later, the Guild's international executive board released a lengthy statement analyzing the state of relations with the ITU. Though it was tough on the printers -- the statement suggested the ITU executive's "bitter attack on the Guild" in the ITU Review sought "to justify its actions in Baltimore by calling attention to Guild actions in Toronto and elsewhere" -- it conceded that both unions had made mistakes:

In the year since our last convention, unions in the newspaper industry have learned the high price they must inevitably pay for failing to respect each other's picket lines. This has been demonstrated as rarely before in our history. ...

Make no mistake about it. We were wrong in Toronto.

The ITU was wrong in Albany¹⁰ and Baltimore.

These are facts of life that our two organizations must face.

But three wrongs don't make a right.

There must be no more Torontos, Albanys and Baltimores. Only the publishers benefit. Instead there must be the kind of co-operation at both the local and international levels that the Guild and the ITU and other newspaper unions have repeatedly endorsed but all too often have failed to achieve. (Guild Reporter, July 30, 1965).

The Guild leadership seemed particularly stung by a portion of the ITU statement that read, "Has the Guild ever aided the ITU or an ITU local in a struggle for a contract or to win a strike? The answer is simply one word -- NO." The reply in the Guild Reporter said, "The correct answer, of course, is YES, and often"(Guild Reporter, July 30, 1965).

The statement concluded with a call for a meeting between the leaders of the two unions to clear the air. The ITU agreed, and the two unions began talks aimed at working out a reconciliation. These ended at an impasse. Walsh writes that the ITU proposed that the Guild affiliate with it. The Guild would pay the ITU \$1 per month per member, but would have no voting privileges. This was an offer the Guild could only refuse. The Guild countered with a proposal for joint council and equal partnership with the ITU. This was an offer the ITU would find unacceptable (Walsh,

¹⁰ In Albany, the other newspaper unions, including the ITU, crossed Guild picket lines in the fall of 1964. (Guild Reporter, July 30, 1965)

59-60). Neither side was willing to budge. Almost 10 years would pass before the two unions would resume formal talks aimed at uniting the Guild and the ITU.

Dealing with new Technology

One of the critical factors in the bad blood between the newspaper unions in the late 1960s and 1970s was changing technology, which affected the ITU far more quickly -- and adversely -- than the Guild. The Guild and the ITU took different approaches to the technology question. Both saw automation and the computer as threats to their members. But the Guild tended to be more open to negotiation on new technology, and more willing to accommodate. The ITU, by contrast, tended to dig in its heels, at times quite aggressively, using jurisdictional claims to shore up its position.

When it came to tracking new technology, Guild members reaped substantial benefits from their in-house newspaper. The Guild Reporter of the early 1960s devoted an enormous amount of space to stories reporting on which newspapers were installing computers -- and where -- and warning about the dangers of automation to its members and other newspaper workers. For example, a lengthy feature published on June 21, 1963 surveyed the state of the technology across the U.S. and Canada:

Automation, a year ago something for automobile and railroad unions to worry about, is establishing a rapidly growing bridgehead on Guild newspapers. Starting, in most cases, in the business office, it is moving inexorably toward processes performed by the editorial and advertising department (Guild Reporter, June 21, 1963).

The article reported that the Washington Post was about to install a computer that hyphenates and justifies classified ads and editorial copy, “an operation that increases productivity by an estimated 40 percent.” This meant the Post would become the first Guild paper with a computer for editorial and advertising copy. At the non-Guild Los Angeles Times, reporters were punching tape to drive composing machines as they typed their copy. At the Toronto Star, computers would soon take on the billing of ad accounts on a newspaper with the second largest classified ad volume in the world. The paper planned to computerize circulation billing and accounts payable a bit later. The article said the Toronto Guild had negotiated contract protection against staff reductions resulting from automation, including retraining, relocation procedures and augmented severance pay. These safeguards hadn’t come into play yet, because the computer had brought about an initial staff increase rather than a reduction.

Eventually, as the computer takes over an increasing burden, the staff will shrink. But this reduction, says R.H. Buchanan, executive secretary of the Toronto Guild, will be spread over two to four years and is expected to be by attrition rather than layoff (Guild Reporter, June 21, 1963).

At The Globe and Mail, where the business office was not covered by the Guild, seven clerical employees were laid off when a computer moved in. At the Chicago Sun-Times, electronic photocomposition machines, known as photons, had been installed to set and make up ads. The article noted, “While they do not yet affect editorial operations, a management official has told the Guild they are adaptable to

editorial use and may one day result in a reduction in copy readers.” At the San Francisco Chronicle, a Univac would handle billing and accounts, undertake sales analysis, make credit checks, compute newsprint consumption, control automatic purchase orders and other function. Other uses, including an automated morgue, were expected to develop. At The Associated Press, nineteen stock-market tabulators were laid off when computer was installed. Nine were displaced in a similar manner at UPI.¹¹

Articles like this and the many others like it that appeared in the Guild Reporter served two functions. The first was the informing function -- simply making sure members got information about what was happening in newspaper shops across Canada and the U.S. The second was an education function: an attempt to make connections between the equipment that was being installed here and there and what the union saw as the implied agenda of the publishers, individually and collectively. To that end, the union invited technology expert John Diebold, president of The Diebold Group Inc., to talk about automation at its 1963 convention.¹² He sketched out the likelihood that within a few years, editors would do most of their work

¹¹ The article is accompanied by “before and after” pictures of the AP office. The “before” picture shows at least twenty tabulators sitting at a long table working on the stock charts. The “after” picture, captioned “the machines take over,” shows a sterile computer lab with four people tending machines.

¹² Diebold was doing research on the use of computers for the owners of the Chicago newspapers. He had given a similar talk earlier in the year to newspaper editors. (Proceedings, 144-145)

electronically, dummyming pages on a computer screen, sizing headlines and cropping pictures to fit a layout.

(T)he whole editorial process will use information retrieval machines for the morgue -- it will have wire services coming in, reporters typing stories into the system, but a constant availability of the information at any desk in the editorial office, availability of any of the information so you can look at what the sports pages look like as of this moment, and you can dial it in and see, if you want to determine the relationship of one story to another (Proceedings 146).

This means that editors would not have to commit pages to type until the very last minute, he said. In the short term, the computers would drive linotype machines; but "not too far off from now," type would go "directly to engraving plates for use on the press" (164).

Diebold warned that these technological developments were inevitable, which meant that the Guild as well as the publishers had to think seriously -- and soon -- about what position each would take. In a question-and-answer session following his talk, Diebold said he believed most unions had taken too narrow a view of technological change.

I think the unions by and large have a very defeating attitude in this, in that unions have looked at this as a question of eliminating jobs. The social changes can be much greater. ... You are totally changing the way in which we do work and the role of work in society, and the role of a union is going to change as a result ... All kinds of basic new questions are raised about the rights of the individual, and the unions are not asking them and ought to be. They would be a much more vital part of the society if they did (Proceedings, 152).

Diebold recommended that unions should be engaging in a continuing dialogue with

management, “so you don't simply artificially confront one another at bargaining time” (153). This dialogue should deal with issues like retraining, and how to revise organizational structures to cope with technological changes that blur craft lines. He added that craft lines “are going to cause more and more and more trouble in the future ... They are going to be more and more artificial” (154).

While some convention delegates made light of Diebold's comments -- one asked him, “Do you think there is a possibility the President of the American Newspaper Guild may some day be a machine?” (153) -- others in the union were working to add language to the Guild model contract¹³ protecting against technological change. This included clauses forbidding dismissals as a result of technological change, and requiring employers to give the Guild six months notice of new equipment that would result in job changes. The changes also were aimed at solidifying the Guild's jurisdiction. James White, speaking for the collective bargaining committee, told the annual convention the next year,

Every Local should insist on language in its contracts protecting the Guild's jurisdiction and assuring jurisdiction over any new work such as is now performed in Guild jurisdiction, or, without raiding any work justifiably the jurisdiction of other unions, jurisdiction over new processes which lend themselves to performance in Guild jurisdiction. (Proceedings, 1964, 73).

The flurry of Guild activity on what it defined as the automation problem in

¹³ The model contract is the basis for negotiations by Guild locals. Though it has no force in and of itself, it sets standards for what the parent union and its individual locals expect in their dealings with employers.

the early 1960s was directed at finding an accommodation between technology and the work of its members. The Guild tended to be suspicious about technological change, but not overtly hostile. In addition, as the new language on jurisdiction shows, it realized that some changes might in fact benefit the union's membership.

The ITU took a markedly different view.

This union had encountered overwhelming success 70 years earlier, when its assertion of jurisdiction over the linotype meant shorter hours, higher productivity and higher pay for a rapidly increasing membership of typographical workers. This time, it hoped for the same result. But the new equipment the newspapers were installing in the 1960s was aimed not at mechanizing various parts of the production, but at collapsing successive stages of the production process into each other.

Zerker says the Toronto branch of the ITU got a whiff of this in the 1950s, when photocomposition was introduced in commercial print shops. The union's 1955 convention responded by asserting expanded jurisdiction over phototypesetting, which put it in conflict with the pressmen's union and raised fears that the ITU would raid the latter's membership (243). The pressmen responded by attempting to broaden their own jurisdiction claim into areas the ITU leaders saw as theirs. "In the nature of that contest, with the dangers of technology undermining all the crafts, neither would be the winner" (244). At the same time, the ITU was engaged in another conflict over phototypesetting, this time with the photoengravers union.

As typesetting machines driven by perforated tape began to appear in

newspapers in the 1960s, the ITU set up a computer training program. It had done the same thing, with enormous success, with linotypes in the 1890s, a move that enabled the union to retrain its members and solidify its jurisdiction. The idea was to pursue a strategy of “controlled automation,” in which the publishers could introduce new technology but only with union approval (Sleigh 1998, 93). This time, though, the union had to deal with a bewildering and rapidly changing array of machinery, not with a single new process for setting type. Zerker, analyzing contracts signed by the Toronto branch of the ITU, notes that the union tried to be as specific as possible in the jurisdiction section of its contracts. Ultimately, this was a hopeless task. “(A)t the rate that changes were occurring in printing technology, it would have been impossible to foresee and write terms which would cover every eventuality” (251).

Near the end of the long negotiations that would eventually lead to the disastrous 1964 Toronto ITU strike, the union tried to claim jurisdiction over computers. This was an extremely sensitive subject: even the most powerful ITU local, New York's Big 6 which was then heading toward a 114-day strike that would in the end help kill three of the city's six dailies, “preferred to act with timidity and caution” on the computer question (265).¹⁴

The problem with computers, of course, was that they were multi-purpose

¹⁴ The agreements that eventually ended that strike had the effect of freezing in place the technology then in use at the remaining three New York daily newspapers (Sleigh, 90). This was, however, a temporary victory for the unions.

machines, not just typesetting machines. As Diebold had told the Guild and the publishers in 1963, computers would set type. But they could do so much more. The publishers in Toronto and elsewhere had no intention of giving jurisdiction over computers to a single union -- and especially not to a union whose members would in all likelihood be the first ones deskilled by the new equipment. Walsh notes that on the computer question, the Guild tended to side with the publishers in seeing computers as multipurpose machines which could be used for writing, editing, billing and other tasks, not as digital analogues of typesetting machines.

As computerized typesetting spread throughout the newspaper in the 1960s and 1970s, ITU membership began to fall. In addition to filing jurisdictional claims which often put it in conflict with other unions,¹⁵ the ITU turned its attention to negotiating job protection for members based on attrition rather than layoffs to reduce newspaper staffing. In 1972, Pacific Press and its joint council of unions negotiated job guarantees ensuring that no employees would lose their jobs as a direct result of technological change (Pacific Press Inc., Application to the B.C. Labour Relations Board, June 12 1995, 34). In 1974, the Washington Post negotiated a similar deal with its ITU compositors (Sleigh, 92). That same year, New York's Big 6 ITU local negotiated an eleven-year agreement with the New York Daily News and New York

¹⁵ Pacific Press reports that in making technological and organizational changes, it encountered "numerous disputes and grievances about jurisdiction and at least seventeen adjudications" (Application, 30). The bulk of these dealt with the ITU.

Times that provided a wage increase and lifetime job guarantees for union members displaced by computerization. Labour arbitrator Theodore Kheel described the contract as “a turning point for the entire newspaper industry” (quoted by Sleigh, 93). Sleigh argues, however, that the publishers’ apparent generosity was not a sign of weakness, but a recognition that this would be the ITU’s last hurrah. The settlement shifted the balance of power in the newspaper unions away from the ITU. The longstanding strategy of controlled automation “had fallen to the guarantees of lifetime jobs” (93).

One pretty big union?

Though the ITU had fallen on hard times, it was still a union to be reckoned with. In 1975, it had about 72,000 members -- down from 94,500 in 1961 and dropping quickly. The next year, its membership would fall to about 66,000. Still, the ITU was twice the size of the Newspaper Guild. Between 1950 and 1970, Guild membership had grown from 23,750 to 32,000 (Kuczun, 257, 305), where it hovered for many years.

The ITU also had new leader, A. Sandy Bevis, who was more open to co-operative action with the other newspaper unions. A genuine thaw in relations between the Guild and the ITU began in 1974, when Charles A. Perlik, Jr., the Guild’s first full-time president, invited Bevis, then president-elect of the ITU, to come to the Guild annual conference. Bevis could not come to the convention, but

asked for a meeting with Perlik. This resulted in the release of a joint statement stressing co-operation, and the appointment of a fact-finding task force whose first job was to shape a common collective bargaining policy. The leaders also quickly agreed to an air-tight no-raiding pact (Walsh, 77).

The next year, Bevis told the Guild convention¹⁶ that each union had to face the reality that they were increasingly working in what had traditionally been the other's territory.

Our spheres of interest and influence continue to tighten and to overlap, so the areas of confrontation between our two unions will continue to grow. We are literally being forced by the changes in our industry into a position where we must make a decision -- a choice. ... (W)e can decide to fight each other tooth and nail for every new member or for every new electronic device -- wearing ourselves out, depleting our treasuries and destroying our effectiveness as labor unions -- or we can make an intelligent choice to join forces and work together for the benefit of our two great unions and for the increased welfare of all those people working in the printing and publishing industry who look to us for help and leadership. (Proceedings of the 1975 TNG convention, quoted in Walsh, 82)

For Bevis, the solution was simple: it was time for the two unions to merge. Many members of the Guild were less enthusiastic about the idea. At the 1976 Guild convention, Perlik said the task force would look at the constitutions, policies and practices of the two unions, with an eye to dovetailing them where possible. Bevis, again invited to speak to the Guild convention, pushed for more. He wanted a merger

¹⁶ Bevis was the first ITU president to speak to a Guild convention since Elmer Brown's appearance in 1960. (Guild Reporter, July 25, 1975)

agreement within the year. He made the same appeal at the 1977 convention:

The ITU can't go it alone in this age of technology, conglomerate ownership, one-newspaper towns and all of the forces that are aligned against us, and we think you feel the same way -- you can't go it alone or you can't make the progress you should make and have the protection you must have in order to survive as a viable trade union organization (Proceedings of the 1997 Guild convention, quoted in Walsh, 90).

This time, the Guild agreed to pursue a merger seriously. In 1977, the unions set up a high-profile merger committee, which began holding hearings. Meanwhile, the ITU demonstrated that it could act on mergers, not just talk about them. It signed a merger agreement with the International Mailers Union,¹⁷ which had split from the ITU in the 1940s (Walsh 90-97).

By the end of the year, both unions felt that many problems were still to be resolved, but progress has been made. The pace was about to slow down, however. In 1978, the ITU elected a new president, Joe Bingel. Like Bevis, he favoured a merger, but according to Walsh, he was not as enthusiastic about the idea. She notes that in his speech to the ITU annual convention, he emphasized the history of hostility between the Guild and the ITU, rather than the new spirit of co-operation (99).

The joint merger committee met on and off in 1978 and 1979, and made progress on some issues like the officer structure of the new union, but the pace was slow. The negotiations heated up in 1981, but collapsed that April. A joint statement

¹⁷ Mailers take newspapers off the presses. They are in charge of adding inserts and bundling completed papers for delivery.

issued by the unions said there was insufficient time to resolve remaining differences in time for each union's annual meeting that summer. Walsh argues that timing was not the real issue: "The truth was that the two sides weren't getting anywhere. As their joint statement put it, discussions would cease 'until new and fresh looks and approaches can be brought to bear on our unresolved problems'" (124). At the ITU convention that summer, the union held a referendum on a merger timetable, calling for third-party assistance, if needed, to get the job done. It passed and the talks resumed.

By the fall of 1982, 4 1/2 years after the first joint meeting in 1977, the two sides had a deal. They would create the Media Workers International Union, a brand-new body with an organization and structure that drew on elements from both unions. The union would have an elected, lay governing board, a feature from the Guild's structure, and an elected board of full-time union officers, an ITU feature. The first president would be from ITU, the second from Guild. Thereafter, the president would be elected by the full membership. Guild features of the merged union included the use of union-wide collective bargaining goals; a requirement that the international clear all contract proposals and settlements; a policy of respecting picket lines; and the use of simple majority votes for questions before international bodies. Guild dues would eventually rise to ITU level. Locals of the two unions would not be forced to merge, but could do so if they wished (Walsh, 149-150).

The entire Guild leadership supported the deal. At the ITU, a majority of the

leadership supported it, but there were some critical weak spots on the executive.

Things began unravelling in December when the ITU secretary-treasurer, Thomas Kopeck, reduced the ITU's estimated membership by between 15 and 20 percent. This raised questions about whether the new union would be financially viable. There were also disagreements over projections of operating costs for the new union (Guild Reporter, Dec. 20, 1982). In a column for the union's newspaper, Typographical Journal, Kopeck made clear that he thought the deal was a bad one for the ITU. He argued that the ITU paid more during the four-year transition period of the merger, but got less. "Simply put," he wrote, "the Guild moves into our home, runs the show and pays less rent" (quoted in Walsh, 158).

The merger committee went back to work and came up with a revised agreement that modified the dues structure slightly in favour of the ITU and estimated total membership in the merged union at about 116,000. An undated Guild memo prepared for the union's 1983 convention in late April noted that the Guild's 12-member special merger committee approved the deal unanimously in early April and its international executive board approved it unanimously in a roll-call vote on April 20. The ITU's 12-member special merger committee, it says, gave it "near-unanimous" approval. At the Guild convention that month, delegates approved it by a margin of 96 percent. A referendum was scheduled for September.

The deal fell apart, finally and forever, at the ITU convention in San Francisco that August. By then, the opponents of the deal within the ITU leadership had

solidified their position. The five-member executive committee went into the convention divided three-two over the deal: Kopeck and vice-president Bob McMichen opposed it; president Bingel and vice-presidents Allan Heritage and Robert Wartinger urged approval (Guild Reporter, Aug. 15, 1983).

The ITU invited Guild leaders to attend the convention, and the majority on the ITU executive hoped their enthusiasm would help seal the deal. But the union also invited Jackie Presser, president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, to speak at the convention. While Guild leaders sat in the audience, the Teamsters leader told the ITU delegates that a merger between the ITU and the Guild was a bad idea. He said he had a better idea: a merger between the ITU and the Teamsters. And if the Guild wanted to join too, so much the better (Walsh, 165). To make matters worse, the head of the Big 6 local, Bertram Powers, told the convention that the ITU should really belong to the new Graphics Communication International Union.¹⁸ He said he no longer supported the Guild-ITU merger, preferring instead a three-way merger among the Guild, ITU and GCIU. On a 122-86 standing vote, the convention rejected the report favouring the merger document (Guild Reporter, Aug. 15, 1983).

¹⁸ This union was the result of a merger between the Graphic Arts International Union and the International Printing and Graphic Communications Union that occurred on July 1, 1983, just a month before the ITU convention. Both partners were themselves the result of a series of mergers. The GAIU was created through a merger among the photoengravers, lithographers and bookbinders in the early 1970s. The IPGCU was the result of a 1973 merger between the pressmen's and stereotypers' union (Guild Reporter, Jan 12, 1973).

That was that. The presidents of both unions announced that the deal was null and void. There would be no referenda, and no merger.

In her analysis of why the merger failed, Walsh identifies 13 separate obstacles to merger (180-185). Most of these are, however, interconnected. It seems clear that the root causes of the failure were an uneven commitment to the merger over the nine years of talks, and a breakdown in unity in the top ranks of the ITU. As Walsh points out, the shape of the merger changed over the years it was being negotiated. At the beginning, it looked as though the larger and more powerful ITU would absorb the Guild. Guild concerns about this possibility go a long way toward explaining why it took two years for the talks to get started. But as the talks wore on, the relative strengths of the two unions changed. The Guild's membership base remained relatively stable; the ITU's dropped.¹⁹ An ITU absorption of the Guild began to look less and less likely. By 1980, the merger looked more like a union of equals.

But this raised a new set of problems: if neither was absorbing the other, then the merger document had to come up with a way of genuinely reconciling two very different partners. Linda Foley, who became president of the Guild in 1995 as it merged with the Communication Workers of America, says it was extraordinarily difficult for the two sides to work out an agreement by which they would share

¹⁹ When the two groups began formal talks, they estimated the membership base of their merged union would be 85,000. When the talks ended, this had shrunk to 67,000 (Walsh, 183).

power. After all, she notes, these unions worked side by side in newspaper plants for years, and had not always got along. “When you get into a power-sharing arrangement, then it becomes a very delicate balance. And that's ultimately what threw it over, I think” (Interview, February 1998).

By the end, the union fearing absorption was the ITU. Once the most powerful of the newspaper unions, it had been battered by new technology that deskilled its members. It wanted a partner, but feared the loss of its identity.

James Cesnik, editor of the Guild Reporter, suggested in a post-convention analysis that some specific points in the merger were hard for the ITU to bear. These included an end to dues-based support for the ITU home for retired printers; an end to the \$500 ITU mortuary benefit; changes in the level of strike payments; a dues structure that would see former Guild members paying lower dues for a time than former ITU members; and the plan to move the union's headquarters to Washington (Guild Reporter, Aug. 23, 1983). Certainly, Jackie Presser of the Teamsters tapped into ITU fears on these points in his speech to the convention. The Teamsters, he said, “do not want to sell your property . . . do not want to close your training centres . . . do not want to deny your pensioners.” He promised that if the ITU joined his union, “we will give you a national division. You will be recognized as the ITU under our banner” (Guild Reporter, Aug. 26, 1983).

Walsh suggests that part of the ITU's reluctance was a longing for the past, when it was “the colossus of newspaper unions,” and an unwillingness to confront the

present. "It yielded grudgingly and gradually to a shift from craft to an industrial union. But to the majority of members, as evidenced by their remarks at conventions, it was still a craft union in an industrial union age" (180).

Reluctance at the grassroots level was reflected in an increasingly bitter division among its leadership. In part this may have been fed by the union's two-party system, which had the effect of institutionalizing conflict. Nonetheless, the fiercest opponent of the deal on the executive council, Kopeck, billed himself an independent (Walsh, 181). After the convention, vice-president Bob McMichen, who opposed the Guild merger but favoured making a deal with the GCIU, announced that he would run for president that fall against Joe Bingel. Bingel, faced with an executive committee that not only helped kill his hard-won Guild deal but was after his job, decided in September, 1983, to open immediate talks with the Teamsters.

A partner for the ITU

This move launched the ITU on the most turbulent period of its long history. In the executive committee elections that fall, McMichen drew more votes than Bingel. But Bingel contested the election and remained in office during the appeal. He wanted to continue talking to the Teamsters while the appeal was decided. McMichen fought bitterly against this and sought to open talks with the GCIU.

Over the next couple of years, factions within the union tore at each other over the merits of an alliance with the Teamsters. The U.S. Department of Labor got

involved, as did the AFL-CIO. An injunction prevented executive members from discussing the Teamsters merger in the ITU's newsletter, the Typographical Journal, or from setting up a referendum on merger with the Teamsters, until the makeup of the executive council was decided (Walsh, 179; Guild Reporter, March 22, 1985).

McMichen and the anti-Teamster faction eventually won control of the executive in a rerun election supervised by the U.S. Department of Labor. At their 1984 convention, the ITU delegates directed the leadership to reach a merger agreement with the GCIU or another AFL-CIO union by January, 1985, or submit the Teamsters proposal to the membership for a vote.

The GCIU and ITU reached a deal. Like the failed Guild merger, it was an agreement for an organic merger -- this time into a union of printing crafts workers with more than 200,000 working members (Guild Reporter, March 22, 1985). But like the ITU-Guild merger it fell apart before the referenda could be held. This time, it wasn't the ITU that pulled out but the GCIU. The GCIU board voted in February to send the merger proposal to referendum, even though it had some questions about the deal. It set up a special meeting March 12 to decide whether it would recommend that its members endorse the proposal. The board decided at that meeting against recommending approval. The union's secretary-treasurer explained that the union had felt rushed by the deadline set by the ITU convention for conclusion of a merger proposal. "A certain number of important operational, legal and financial matters were not fully clarified" (Guild Reporter, March 22, 1985).

Leaders of the ITU offered a different set of explanations for the failure of the deal. Thomas Kopeck, a leader of the pro-Teamster faction, argued in his regular column in the Typographical Journal that the ITU had to choose between two offers that represent two different philosophies.

One road (GCIU) leads to organic merger, thus ending the ITU as an international union ... The other road (IBT) places the ITU under the wing of the Teamsters as an autonomous division to be known as International Typographical Union. There are those who sincerely favor one path over the other and they deserve the right to make a choice (Typographical Journal, March 1985).

Leaders of the anti-Teamster faction agreed that the membership had the right to a democratic choice. But they claimed that the GCIU deal was “sabotaged” by the Teamsters. Wrote president Bob McMichen:

When unions within the same industry attempt to work out mergers that would strengthen their members, the Teamster leaders do what they can to bust up the talks, then circle around like buzzards and sharks, moving in to rip off some flesh. That's exactly what happened in the ITU/GCIU talks (Typographical Journal, March, 1985).

Second vice-president Bill J. Austin offered this explanation as to why the GCIU board would reject the merger:

I've got some ideas on the subject. They include the incredible amount of misinformation and pressures put on the board members by the Teamsters and their ITU agents; the feeling by some board members that the ITU was getting the better part of the deal in the agreement; unresolved internal GCIU politics; concern they'd be buying a peck of trouble from the Teamsters if they followed through (Typographical Journal, March, 1985).

With the GCIU out of the running, the Teamsters urged the ITU to forge ahead

with a referendum on its deal. But by then, much of the enthusiasm for the Teamsters merger had waned. The big attraction of the Teamsters had been size and power: the union had more than a million members, including truck drivers in the newspaper business, and a reputation for ferocity which some ITU leaders felt would help preserve the ITU. By the mid-1980s, these attractions no longer compensated for some less attractive features of the union. The Teamsters were still outside the AFL-CIO.²⁰ A number of Teamster leaders had been convicted in the 1970s and 1980s of irregularities in handling pension funds. One union president, James Hoffa, had disappeared in 1975 and was believed to have been murdered. In April 1985, just as the ITU was looking seriously at the Teamsters, Teamster president Jackie Presser pleaded the fifth amendment 15 times when testifying before the President's Commission on Organized Crime.²¹ The anti-Teamster majority on the ITU executive offered members a close analysis of the Teamster constitution, concluding that the promise to the ITU of an "autonomous division" had far less substance than it seemed (Typographical Journal, July 1985). Finally, it was clear that the Teamsters' attempts

²⁰ They were expelled in 1957 for corruption and did not rejoin the national labour federation until 1988.

²¹ A column by the three anti-Teamster members of the ITU executive noted that among the questions Presser refused to answer were: Is violence an acceptable means by which the Teamsters controls its members? Did he know about corruption by Teamster officers? Did he have "ghost" employees on his own Cleveland local union payroll? Did he have knowledge of Teamster ties to organized crime? (Typographical Journal, May, 1985)

to undermine the GCIU deal had alienated many.

The referendum on the Teamster merger went ahead in the summer of 1985. It was defeated by a margin of two to one (Typographical Journal, October 1985).

This sent the ITU back to the GCIU, for one last effort at making a deal. Again, the GCIU general board was unwilling to rush to meet a deadline set by the ITU (Typographical Journal, May 1986). In July, 1986, two other unions visited ITU headquarters to talk about a merger with the ITU: the Communications Workers of America and the International Association of Machinists. The CWA arrived July 3 with an outline of a merger in hand. ITU officials visited the CWA in Washington on July 9. The Machinists' union president arrived on July 17 and invited ITU leaders to visit his headquarters. "I anticipated further negotiations with both unions," wrote ITU secretary-treasurer Thomas Kopeck (Typographical Journal, August, 1986). But within two hours of the departure of the Machinists' union leader, the ITU executive council agreed to send the CWA offer to referendum.

After twelve years of looking for a partner, the ITU finally succeeded. Its 1986 convention committee on merger put forward the deal with the Communications Workers of America, a union with more than 600,000 members, mainly working in the telephone and telecommunications business. Again, the ITU was split. The deal was approved at convention by the narrowest of margins: 14,266 in favour and 14,042 opposed (Guild Reporter, Aug. 22, 1986). But in a membership referendum later that year, the ITU membership overwhelmingly endorsed the merger, by a margin of more

than four to one.

Under the merger, the ITU became the Printing, Publishing and Media Workers Sector of the CWA.²² It retained a substantial degree of autonomy, including its own bylaws and control of its own funds and pension plan. The Union Printers Home would continue as a separate entity, and the travelling card system would remain intact (Typographical Journal, September, 1986).

At a press conference in December, 1986, McMichen said that joining a union of CWA's "size and sophistication" meant that his union would be "better equipped to move into the twenty-first century and beyond" (Guild Reporter, Dec. 19, 1986). CWA president Morton Bahr said he did not expect to run into jurisdictional disputes with the other unions, adding that he hoped to work with both the Newspaper Guild and the GCIU on joint organizing campaigns for "wall-to-wall" representation.

The Guild stands alone

Between the early 1970s and the mid-1980s, the shape of the unions representing workers in North American newspapers had been radically altered.

One by one, the printing craft unions that included newspaper workers among their memberships had found partners. On the "mechanical" side, the photoengravers, lithographers and bookbinders unions joined in the early 1970s into the Graphic Arts

²² CWA already had four sectors: AT&T Technologies, AT&T Communications, Telecommunications and Public Workers

International Union. Shortly thereafter, the unions representing pressmen and stereotypers created the International Printing and Graphic Communications Union (Guild Reporter, Jan 12, 1973). In 1983, these two unions joined to create the GCIU. With a combined membership of 200,000 members, this union became a substantial player in the printing industry. The ITU's record was considerably more mixed. It had failed at three merger attempts (with the Guild, the Teamsters and the GCIU) and succeeded at two. One success was easy: the absorption of the mailers union in the mid-1970s. The other, with the CWA, occurred after a decade of struggle that sapped the union's vitality and tore its leadership apart.

The rapid set of mergers on the craft union side reflected the rapid pace with which new technology strode through the newspaper plant. As we saw in Chapter 4, the installation of computers affected not just typographers but engravers, stereotypers, mailers and pressroom workers as well. The effect of this new technology was to collapse previously discrete steps in the production process into each other. With their memberships increasingly working in each other's traditional areas of jurisdiction, mergers made sense.

The Newspaper Guild found itself in a very different situation. It had been slow to warm to the idea of a merger with the ITU in the mid-1970s. In part, this was due to the fact that the Guild was not facing the same kind of technological imperatives as the craft unions. It was, however, very concerned about what it saw as the growing concentration of power among its employers. By the early 1980s,

Guild leaders and members were overwhelmingly in support of an alliance. When the ITU deal fell through, the Guild found itself on its own.

In 1983, a few months after the devastating final collapse of the merger agreement with the ITU, the Guild Reporter ran a special section commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the union. In a column entitled, “And What of The Guild Tomorrow?” president Perlik reminded members that despite the failure of the ITU deal, the considerations that led the two unions to seek unity “are as compelling as ever, if not more so.”

Those considerations, in sum, boil down to the elemental fact that individual unions can no longer afford to go it alone in the news industry against management fortified by increasingly sophisticated technology, increasingly concentrated economic power and increasing aggressiveness at the bargaining table. If we hope to counter that power, we must unite our forces.

That means that even if merger with the Typographical Union is no longer just around the corner, it had better not be very far down the road, both for their sake and ours. And it means, of equal importance, steps toward merger with the Graphic Communications International Union . . .

I don't know, and it doesn't too much matter, in what order those mergers take place -- the ITU with the GCIU, for example, and then the guild with the new union, or the guild with the GCIU and then the ITU -- but I do know that merger, in whatever sequence, is imperative (Guild Reporter, Dec. 16, 1983).

The next chapter examines how the Guild found its own merger partner and ended up in the same union as the ITU after all.

Chapter 6 - A partner for the Guild

The 1980s were both hard and good times for The Newspaper Guild. The union got bad news on many fronts. Its high hopes for a merger with the printers union had been dashed in a humiliating defeat on the floor of the ITU convention. But the developments that prompted the Guild to seek a merger in the first place -- key among them the growing concentration of ownership in the media business -- were more worrisome than ever. In 1985, in the wake of a number of high-profile corporate mergers, the international executive board renewed a call for legislation to limit the concentration of newspaper ownership.¹ Guild president Charles Perlik told the 1985 convention,

What is significant here is not just the continued accumulation of newspapers by chains, or even the continued concentration of newspaper control in a small number of powerful chains. It is the maturation of a long-growing trend toward cross-media conglomerates -- mammoth corporations grinding out newspapers, television and radio broadcasts, and now even films -- and with it, inevitably, the entry of the financial wheeler-dealers, prepared to compete with the big chains themselves in takeover attempts, hostile or otherwise, of all these tempting media properties (Guild Reporter, Aug. 9, 1985).

¹ The union had endorsed a call for legislation preventing ownership concentration in both Canada and the United States at its 1979 convention. It also endorsed the Canada Newspaper Act proposed by the Kent commission (Guild Reporter, April 26, 1985).

On the technology front, the Guild had avoided the kinds of layoffs other newspaper unions experienced in the wake of technological changes that deskilled workers and compressed the production process. But the union was concerned about the health consequences of prolonged computer use. Almost every issue of the Guild Reporter from the late 1970s and 1980s contains some sort of story on the perceived dangers of VDTs, from radiation to eyestrain to repetitive stress injuries.

Politically, the Guild, like other unions, was suffering the consequences of the rise of the new right. Governments, first in the U.S. and later in Canada, adopted pro-business economic policies that undermined organized labour. A number of states were rushing toward so-called right-to-work legislation. Overall U.S. union membership was in decline: by 1986, only 17.1 percent of non-agricultural workers belonged to labour unions, down from 30.4 percent in 1946² (Murray 1995, 164).

There was some good news too. During the early and mid-1980s, the newspaper industry registered solid gains in circulation and advertising (Guild Reporter, June 7, 1985). In Canada, overall union density continued to grow, to 37.7 percent in 1986 (Murray 1995, 164). Guild membership, which had dipped below 32,000 in 1982, was on the rebound, heading toward 34,000 in 1985 and almost 36,000 in 1987 (Work Directions Inc. 1993, 22). The general prosperity of the 1980s,

² The decline was striking during the late 1970s and 1980s. In 1976, 27.9 percent of non-agricultural workers were unionized. This dropped to 22.6 in 1981 and 17.1 percent in 1986. The numbers bottomed out at around 15 percent by the early 1990s. (Murray 1995, 164).

fuelled by the boom on Wall Street, meant prosperous newspapers, which in turn meant prosperity for the Guild and its members.

Around 1989, that era of relative comfort came to an end.

Recession hit the North American economy that year -- and hit especially hard at its newspapers. The newspapers had been steadily cranking up advertising rates since 1975 in an effort to record steady increases in earnings, which in turn would translate into steady increases in share prices (Bogart 1991, 53). With the recession, ad lineage -- and as a result, advertising revenue -- began to drop precipitously.³ Readership was declining too, as was household penetration, a measure of circulation. Editors and publishers began to worry about surveys showing that young people were turning to television as a source of news -- and that baby boomers were feeling less guilty than they used to about watching television (Boswell 1992, 8). The newspapers responded with hiring freezes, accelerated efforts to restructure production processes, an emphasis on marketing that at times contradicted news judgment, and flashy “relaunches” that, according to Miller (1998), offered more sizzle than steak. By 1992, even the trade press was wondering about the future of the daily newspaper. As the Canadian journalism review content asked in a cover story that spring, are newspapers “a vanishing breed?” (March/April 1992).

It was amid this atmosphere of uncertainty and discomfort that The Newspaper

³ For example, Canadian newspaper ad revenues plunged from \$2.2 billion a year in 1990 to \$1.6 billion in 1995, a drop of 27 percent (Miller 1998, 11).

Guild began to think again about its future and the future of the industry in which its members worked. This chapter begins with a look at internal Guild efforts to map out the state of the union and its prospects. These led to a series of recommendations, including a recommendation to seek out a suitable merger partner and the development of a consensus on what “suitable” meant. That partner turned out, eventually, to be the Communications Workers of America (CWA), a union that was in the process of transforming itself from a telephone workers’ union to a media and information workers’ union. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how for both unions, the Guild and the CWA, the notion of convergence was critical to bringing about a successful merger.

Once bitten, twice shy

The Guild had put enormous energy, effort and hope into negotiating the merger with the ITU. It took years of work, and many false starts, to reach the 1983 merger agreement. No one thought the deal was perfect, but from the Guild perspective it was good enough -- in part, perhaps, because the Guild knew that given the technological changes of the 1970s and 1980s, time was on its side more than on the ITU’s. After the deal fell apart at the ITU convention, it came as no surprise that Guild leaders would feel a bit edgy about the whole idea of merger.

Nonetheless, a significant portion of the membership believed that the circumstances that made the ITU merger make sense -- a need to increase bargaining

clout, an attempt to counter the growing power of the publishers, a sense that new technology required new approaches to the labour process -- still counted. Three years after the collapse of the ITU talks, a Guild poll of members found the membership was split on the issue of merger. Just over 18 percent supported the concept of merger strongly, and another 24 percent were "somewhat" supportive. Eighteen percent felt the idea was "not good at all" and another 11 percent responded that they were "not very much" in favour of a merger. More than one-quarter of respondents chose not to answer the question (Guild Reporter, Nov. 26, 1986).

Asked which other union, if any, they would prefer as a merger partner for the Guild, 23 percent of respondents listed the ITU, which was then in the process of joining the CWA. Ten percent favoured the Teamsters and nine percent preferred the Graphic Communications International Union, which represented trades workers in newspapers. Seven percent listed other unions. "As a group, these other unions had a common characteristic: none have their principal jurisdiction in the newspaper industry" (Guild Reporter, Nov. 26, 1986).

The analysis of the poll characterized the stance of the Guild membership on merger as "wait and see." It found that the type of merger partner most likely to garner membership support was another of the traditional news industry unions. But the merger partner would likely have to demonstrate three key characteristics. First, it would have to have considerable membership and financial resources -- seen as crucial to satisfying the 21 percent of Guild members who supported a merger on the

grounds that it would “strengthen the Guild.” Second, it would have to ensure that the Guild would maintain some sort of separate identity in the new union -- crucial to answering the concerns expressed by some members about losing the “unique character of the Guild.” Finally, it would have to have a demonstrated record of success in organizing the unorganized -- crucial to meeting Guild concerns about strength and the need for growth (Guild Reporter, Nov. 26, 1986).

This attitude of caution prevailed for the next several years. In 1989, Guild leaders convened a “futures forum,” primarily to study the prospects and advisability for merger with another union.⁴ The forum’s goal was to allow for a free-wheeling discussion. No votes were taken but a committee was struck to draw up a list of elements the Guild would consider essential in any proposal for merging or affiliating with another union. That list was to go to the union’s international executive board -- acting as a committee on merger -- prior to that year’s annual convention (Guild Reporter, May 5, 1989).

Sentiment at the forum ran “roughly two to one in favour of actively pursuing merger or affiliation with another union in the news industry” (Guild Reporter, May 5, 1989). In the months before the forum, the union commissioned a poll of locals, collecting responses from twenty-four locals. These responses ran about three to two

⁴ The mandate of the forum was quickly expanded to look at the union's budget. The union's general fund had run at a record \$181,545 deficit in 1988. The forum was told that the deficit for 1989 would be lower than that, but not by much (Guild Reporter, May 5, 1989).

in favour of a merger. The CWA ranked first in order of preference as a merger partner, followed by the GCIU.⁵

Chuck Dale, who became president of the Guild in 1987, urged forum participants to take a conservative approach on merger.

‘I do not believe we should press forward quickly,’ he said. ‘I do not believe a merger with another union -- in or out of the industry -- should be ruled out in the future, but I do believe that any steps should be taken cautiously, conservatively, slowly and quietly. A bidding war, a romancing of the Guild by interested unions, is not in our own best interest at this time’ (Guild Reporter, May 5, 1989).

Some at the forum focused on fostering inter-union co-operation rather than a merger. Other participants, however, saw a merger as not only a necessity but an inevitability. An officer from Denver said, “Merger is inevitable, and now is the best time. We’re healthy, but under increasing attacks from publishers. . . . We ought to formulate an offer to the CWA or the GCIU and see what they say.” Dale agreed that if the Guild should decide to pursue a merger, it should first focus on what kind of partner it wanted. “We can’t be going down three or four paths at the same time” (Guild Reporter, May 5, 1989).

By that summer, the Guild’s international executive board had come up with a list of nineteen “essential ingredients” for merger. The list, presented to the annual convention, included:

⁵ In March, the GCIU’s general board voted unanimously to pursue “exploratory talks” with the Guild (Guild Reporter, May 5, 1989).

- TNG remain a separate division within an affiliate, with its own budget, convention, executive board (to include separate seats for representatives elected in Canada, geographic district councils, legal counsel and publication).
- Any partner be an AFL-CIO and CLC affiliate and be in compliance with CLC Guidelines-Standards of Self-Government.
- The Guild's role be clearly defined in decision-making on matters outside its own division.
- TNG maintain its own strike fund and rules regarding strikes and payment of benefits.
- A separate Guild collective bargaining program be maintained and TNG's human rights program be maintained or satisfactorily merged with that of the partner.
- TNG's education, research and information programs be blended with those of the partner.
- Locals be encouraged but not required to merge with proximate locals of the affiliate (Guild Reporter, Aug. 4, 1989).

This list is telling, in several respects. It suggests the Guild was willing to merge, but only if that meant it didn't have to give up anything significant in the deal. It wanted to keep its own identity, its own governing structure, its own budget and its own rules on strikes. This was a marked change from the union's position in the 1983 ITU merger agreement. Then, the Guild was prepared to enter into a partnership that would, in effect, create a brand new union out of two existing ones, drawing on elements from each. That merger would have required the Guild to change many of the ways it had traditionally gone about its business -- from the governing structure to the dues charged to its members. After having its fingers burned in the ITU merger, however, the Guild apparently was reluctant to reach that far again. But perhaps it wouldn't have to.

The wish list is significant in another respect: without naming any names, it

suggested that the union was indeed narrowing its list of potential merger partners. The requirement that the merger partner “be an AFL-CIO and CLC affiliate and be in compliance with CLC Guidelines-Standards of Self-Government” might be read as a not-so-subtle reminder about the history of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.⁶ The list also raised questions about whether the GCIU, the other big player in the newspaper industry, might be a suitable partner. The GCIU was the product of a series of mergers: the photoengravers, lithographers and bookbinders joined into the Graphic Arts International Union in the 1970s; the pressmen's and stereotypers' union into the International Printing and Graphic Communications Union in 1973; the GAIU and the IPGCU into the GCIU in 1983. Duncan Brown, an organizing co-ordinator with the GCIU in Toronto, says the GCIU approach “has always been for organic mergers.” Given the diversity of its membership, the union felt that the only way to make mergers work was to insist on unity: to ensure that GCIU members would be GCIU members, regardless of which union they belonged to in the past. In the GCIU's merger negotiations with the ITU, Brown recalls, one of the most difficult points was the ITU's desire to have its own sector or identity within the GCIU. The GCIU wasn't willing to go along with that idea (Interview, March, 1998). For the Guild, however, the kind of mergers that made the GCIU -- and that, presumably, would be expected of the Guild if it wanted to join the GCIU

⁶ By this time, the Teamsters union was back in the AFL-CIO, but many still thought of it as a renegade union.

too -- would mean sacrificing the independence the union itemized on its list of essential ingredients for merger.

But if the GCIU would not be able to fulfil the required wish list, where did that leave the Guild? After all, its 1986 poll of members found that the type of merger partner most likely to be acceptable to the membership was another of the traditional news industry unions. By 1989, there were no “traditional” news industry unions left except the GCIU. The ITU was by then part of the CWA. Within the CWA, however, it had been able to retain a substantial degree of autonomy: it had its own sector, it elected its own officers and it controlled its own finances. In other words, it had the kind of autonomy the Guild saw as desirable in a merger.

The poll of locals commissioned before the “futures forum” found that the CWA was the first choice of a merger partner. But that poll was small: just twenty-four locals. And it found that a sizeable minority -- two out of five -- disliked the idea of any kind of merger at all. Without strong pressure to change coming from either the leadership or the membership, and in the absence of an ideal suitor, the merger question remained on the agenda, but not at the top of Guild concerns.

Forging a strategic plan

In 1992, as the full impact of recession ate into Guild membership and the union's resources, the Guild decided it was time to develop a strategic plan to guide it through the next four years. The union commissioned a Boston firm, Work

Directions Inc., to examine the union and its industry. The study included a survey of locals, an analysis of a membership poll conducted by the Wilson Center, and interviews with 166 local and international leaders, activists and staff. The result was a far-reaching set of recommendations aimed at both reinforcing the union's traditional strengths and promoting expansion into new areas. Twenty-two of the twenty-three-member committee overseeing the plan endorsed its recommendations, sending it to the 1993 convention.

The lone dissenting vote on the committee was cast by Gail Lem of the Southern Ontario Newspaper Guild, who found the plan lacking in two key respects. Lem felt the recommendations should have included the hiring of an organizing specialist and the adoption of a plan specifically to guide organizing efforts. She also felt it should have included "more specific recommendations to resolve the Canadians' concerns" (Work Directions Inc. 1993, 12). As we will see in the next chapter, some Canadian locals -- most especially Lem's -- were becoming increasingly impatient with both the structure of the Guild and the level of service and support it offered locals in Canada. These concerns would eventually result in three Canadian locals, including the powerful Southern Ontario Newspaper Guild, leaving the Guild to join Canadian unions.

The strategic plan is worth examining in some detail. It paints a portrait of a union struggling to maintain its bargaining power in an industry undergoing rapid change. It is also the portrait of a union on the cusp of change.

The plan begins by identifying a series of what it calls external pressures on the Guild. The newspaper industry -- which employed 85 percent of Guild members (33) -- was shrinking, in terms of numbers of dailies and in employment. This did not mean the newspaper industry was dying, however. Rather, it was “consolidating and restructuring as part of an evolving information industry” (15). Fewer and fewer Guild members were working at independently owned newspapers. Instead, they were working for increasingly sophisticated employers that were, for the most part, publicly held corporations with wide-ranging investments in media, information and marketing.⁷ “Driven by the pursuit of high returns, employers have vigorously pursued anti-union and cost-cutting strategies,” it found (14). One of the ways employers cut costs was through the use of new technologies and work processes, which have affected “all phases of newspaper production” (20). Meanwhile, employers in the U.S. have taken advantage of what the report calls weakened union rights. “The result is that over the past dozen years, the Guild has lost power” (14).

In terms of numbers, the report found that total employment in the newspaper industry in Canada and the U.S. began to decline in 1989 (21). So did Guild membership. From a high of close to 36,000 in 1987, membership slid to about

⁷ It found that newspaper companies have diversified into a number of areas: news programming/syndication; news and information; books and magazine publishing; TV and radio (broadcast and cable); marketing; entertainment programming; retail and travel; business services; equipment and transportation (17).

33,000 by 1989. It dipped again in 1992, to roughly 32,000⁸ (22). While the numbers were not disastrous -- the union still had more members than it had in the early 1980s -- the moderate decline was a concern. Of equal concern was the finding that Guild members were more likely than in the past to be working under expired contracts. In 1993, 103 of the Guild's 224 contracts -- or 46 percent -- had expired. This was up significantly from 34 percent in 1977. Meanwhile, it was taking longer and longer to negotiate new contracts (23). The report said these figures indicate that the Guild had lost bargaining leverage.

Financially, the Guild's books were in good shape. In part that was the result of two episodes, in 1979 and 1985, when higher dues were triggered under the constitution (24).⁹ In 1979, 1990 and 1991, international expenses outpaced revenues, primarily due to higher defence fund expenses. In 1992, the Guild reduced its international staff from thirty-three to twenty-six (25). By the end of that year, revenues and expenses were balanced (24).

The report concluded that the Guild was facing a critical strategic choice: how

⁸ Membership decline was a U.S. phenomenon, not a Canadian one, however. Canadian membership in the Guild continued to grow, largely through organizing. This meant that Canadians accounted for 19.2 percent of Guild membership in 1993, up from 13.6 percent in 1982 and 15 percent in 1987 (111).

⁹ Under the Guild constitution, dues were kept at a lower rate as long as the union's International Defence Fund maintained a set balance. Higher dues were automatically triggered when the fund fell below that set point. (Article xviii, Guild constitution, July 1993)

to define itself in an industry that was being transformed from the newspaper business to an information industry. The answer it recommended was to cast the Guild as the union for workers “in the evolving news and information industries in the United States and Canada” (35). This would represent a significant shift in how the Guild's members saw themselves and their union. Instead of a union of news workers, mainly in the newspaper business, the Guild would become a union of information workers. No doubt, in large part this reflected a response to a change in the industry: just as the newspaper business had transformed itself into the information business, so would the newspaper workers’ union be transformed.

The report made a number of recommendations on improving internal Guild operations and enhancing the union’s power vis-à-vis the employers. Several focused on doing a better job of what the union had already been doing.¹⁰ The one with the most far-reaching consequences was a recommendation that the Guild immediately begin exploring merger options and return to the union with a recommendation no later than the 1995 Guild convention.

The report cited three reasons for the Guild to explore a merger. The first was

¹⁰ Internally, the first recommendation was to work with Canadian leaders to strengthen Guild unity. Others called for improvements in policy-making and efforts to ensure financial viability at the local and international levels. As for increasing its bargaining power, the report called for building member commitment to and participation in the union, and efforts to strengthen the Guild’s union and community alliances through unity councils and more systematic efforts at promoting inter-union co-operation. (37)

an evolving industry structure, “with owners investing across the information/media sectors, changed products and markets, and employers who are far more aggressive and well organized.” The second was a shift from print to electronic distribution of news and information. This meant that the Guild “must develop stronger alliances with unions representing workers in those sectors controlling electronic modes: telephone, computers, satellite, broadcasting and cable transmission.” The final reason was the need for additional resources. The Guild was constrained by a small membership base spread out over seventy-eight locals, it said. “The right kind of merger will bring economies of scale to provide additional resources to Guild locals in areas such as corporate research and analysis and organizing” (103).

Though it did not use the word, these reasons for pursuing a merger are all linked to the idea of convergence. Neither the diagnosis of the Guild’s situation nor the prescribed solution focused on simply building solidarity among newspaper workers. Rather, it reflected an awareness that the Guild should be forging links with workers across the information sector, including telephone and telecommunications workers, broadcasters and computer workers. With corporate convergence and technological convergence, it seems, the time had come for unions in the information business to undertake a convergence of their own.

The 1993 convention endorsed the strategic plan. The Guild, which had mulled over the possibility of merger for so many years, was now in the business of finding a mate.

Narrowing the Field

Over the next year, President Chuck Dale and other Guild officials met with officials from a list of potential partners, including the Teamsters, the United Steelworkers of America, the GCIU and the CWA (Guild Reporter, May 29, 1994). Fairly quickly, the union dropped the Teamsters and Steelworkers from the list. Though the Guild Reporter did not say why, it appears that neither fit the profile the Guild had been developing over the previous several years of an ideal merger partner. The Teamsters were still too much of a loose cannon; the Steelworkers, though large and powerful and interested in mergers, were apparently too far removed from the Guild's core business.

This left two unions: the GCIU and the CWA. On Sept. 23, 1994, the Guild Reporter profiled both in a matching pair of stories. The two unions emerge as strikingly different choices.

The GCIU is “a union experienced in both merger and society-shaking technological change,” the profile said, adding, “In the GCIU's eyes, in fact, merger and technological change are inextricably linked, a part of its past and its future.” The profile took readers through the founding of the printing trades unions in North America, noting that in the late nineteenth century the unions underwent an era of technological change that was just as dramatic as the current era. It chronicled the spate of mergers that began in the 1960s and eventually led to the creation of the 200,000-member GCIU. The profile pointed out that the new union has been

aggressive in developing resources and programs in technology, health and safety, collective bargaining and other areas. It concluded with a quotation from GCIU president Jim Norton:

‘As we head into the twenty-first century, the challenges of yesterday are the challenges of today -- new technology, higher skill demands, increased training and retraining, organizing the unorganized. Remember the lessons of the past and look ahead to the future’ (Guild Reporter, Sept. 23, 1994).

The profile of the CWA described it as one of the youngest and fastest-growing unions in North America and noted that it is often “misidentified” as a telephone workers union. Though it does indeed represent phone workers, CWA “is on the cutting edge of organized labor’s expanding role in the information revolution,” it said. More than 500,000 of its 600,000 members “are in the four converging communications industries -- publishing, telecommunications, computers and entertainment.”

The profile said the CWA began as a company union at AT&T. When the Wagner Act outlawed company unions in the mid-1930s, a number of independent telephone workers’ unions were created. These formed a national federation in 1938. The federation won a national agreement AT&T in 1946 but collapsed the next year. As a federation, the profile explained, it was a collection of independent locals, not a genuinely national union. This meant it was vulnerable to pressure from the employer. Following the federation's failure, the phone workers regrouped in 1947 to create a genuinely national union, the CWA, with 162,000 members.

The profile said the CWA has become “one of the most successful unions anywhere in achieving equal pay for equal work, full health care, (and) elimination of discriminatory practices both in the industry and in the union.” It also has “a remarkable record” in organizing new workers and expanding outside the scope of telecommunications. CWA represents 34,000 state workers in New Jersey, 100,000 public and health care workers across the country, 12,000 police and jail workers in Texas, and 6,400 teaching and graduate assistants at universities in New York, Indiana and California. CWA has also merged with a number of communications unions: the ITU, the United Telegraph Workers (which represents technical workers at The Associated Press and United Press International), and the National Association of Broadcasting Engineers and Technicians, representing 9,000 engineers and technicians at NBC, ABC and independent television stations and cable TV production companies. The profile described the NABET merger as “further recognition by both unions of the converging union interests in the converging information industries.” As with the GCIU profile, it gives the last word to the union’s president:

‘The full potential of this emerging industry is still to be defined,’ says CWA President Morton Bahr in a call to his own and other unions to answer the challenges posed by the breathtaking changes taking place in the creation, presentation, distribution and availability of information, and the expanding audience for it. ‘Just imagine the possibilities!’ (Guild Reporter, Sept. 23, 1994).

As these profiles show, the GCIU and the CWA each had much to offer the

Guild. But it's clear that each represented a different path.

If the Guild merged with the CGIU, the result would be a union that would be stronger but more narrowly focused. Between them, the Guild and the GCIU would have the potential to represent almost every unionized worker in the print media, in Canada and the U.S., with one exception: members of the former ITU. It was abundantly clear by the mid-1990s, however, that the ITU was becoming less and less significant. If the white-collar Guild workers joined forces with the trades workers in the GCIU, the merged union would gain at the bargaining table. In a strike, it would be more likely to have the power to shut down a newspaper than either union operating alone. In addition, while the merged union would be large, the Guild might be less likely to get lost in a union of 230,000 than in an enormous union like the CWA.

Many of these very attractions, however, had a downside. Yes, a merged GCIU-Guild would be stronger -- in newspapers and the print media. But given the future sketched out in the strategic plan of 1993, Guild leaders were wondering about the wisdom of tying their future too tightly to the print media. Between technological convergence and corporate convergence, no single media business was as distinct as it had been. Increasingly, Guild members were making their living in what the union saw as the information business, not the newspaper business. In addition, the Guild was hoping to do further organizing among broadcast workers -- it already represented workers at the CBC -- or workers in the so-called new media. Both

groups had a great deal in common with news workers in the print media but almost nothing in common with newspaper production workers.

At the bargaining table, a merged GCIU-Guild would have more clout and a stronger strike weapon. But given the convergence of telecommunications and publishing, there were questions about how strong this weapon really would be. If a strike took reporters off the streets, the publisher could draw on the wealth of wire copy and news agency material that would continue to come into the building over the telecommunications system. If the same strike also shut down the printing plant, it was likely that the publisher could transmit material electronically to another plant operated by the same corporation. And given the growth of newspapers on the Internet, communications workers of all sorts had to confront the possibility that their traditional jobs -- translating information into ink on paper -- were increasingly being transformed into jobs where the work meant putting bits and bytes onto electronic networks which could drive the printing press or serve as content for a Web site.

The GCIU represented, therefore, a paradox. On the one hand, it was the safe choice: another union operating in the same business, a known commodity, and a union with a record of bringing off mergers successfully. It was also a choice that spoke to history and tradition. In an age of convergence, however, this seemingly safe choice might turn out in the long run to be not so safe a partner.

A merger with the CWA, by contrast, would represent an enormous leap for a small international union like the Guild. For one thing, it was an American union,

not a Canada-U.S. one.¹¹ For another, it was almost twenty times the size of the Guild. In addition, while GCIU members worked in a set of crafts with which the Guild was, at least, familiar, the CWA membership was much more diverse. The bulk of CWA members were highly skilled technical workers of one sort or another, many of them in the telecommunications and telephone business. These members had little conception -- and no inside knowledge -- of news work.

If the appeal of the GCIU was the prospect of building on the past and continuing a tradition of print media trade unionism, the CWA's appeal was based on building toward the future. But this too had its risks. Would there be a good fit between a union of journalists with its own professional culture and a union of technicians? Would the two sides be able to build a sense of solidarity?

Linda Foley, who was secretary-treasurer of the Guild at the time of the merger talks,¹² says one of the biggest considerations in selecting a partner was its ability to accommodate the Guild's needs for autonomy within a merged union. "The GCIU, because of their culture and because of the way they had evolved, was unable to recognize the Guild culture within the union," she says (Interview, February, 1998).

¹¹ Its Canadian contingent broke away peacefully in the early 1970s to create the Communications Workers of Canada. After that, the CWA had no presence in Canada until the ITU joined it, bringing along its Canadian locals. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, a substantial number of Canadian ITU locals chose to break away from the parent union and join CEP rather than remaining with the CWA.

¹² She became president of the union in 1995.

The GCIU was trying to create a genuinely unified union out of a number of independent-minded members. The pressmen's union in particular had wanted its own separate sector within the GCIU, but was required to give up that idea. "They were kind of in a quandary. They wanted very much for us to merge with them," says Foley. But this would have meant giving the Guild something the GCIU would not give its own pressmen. "That would have been impossible for them, politically."

Even if the GCIU had been willing to give the Guild its own sector, Foley says she doubts whether the Guild would have joined:

We were interested in seeing whether we could work out a merger with the GCIU but the truth is we never really felt that was where we wanted to go in 1995 because of the technology and the way things are today. For us to merge with a union that was just in print didn't make any sense. In that year our largest local was a broadcast local, the Canadian Media Guild, which is the CBC. So to merge with a union that was just in print wasn't as attractive as merging with a union like the CWA (Interview, February, 1998)

In addition, the fact that the former ITU was now part of the CWA was a consideration. The Guild had been serious about merging with the ITU back in the 1980s and even though that deal fell through, there was a sense among the printing unions that the Guild and the ITU should somehow be together. "The printers came into CWA and that was in no small part why we looked at the CWA as a merger partner," Foley explains. If the Guild joined too, then the long-held dream of uniting these two unions would be fulfilled. "That point shouldn't be lost in this discussion."

Finally, Guild leaders were impressed with how the CWA had responded to

the potentially disastrous effects of the AT&T breakup in 1984. At the time, CWA represented 550,000 telecommunications workers. But with the splitting off of twenty-two Bell operating companies from AT&T and a federal policy of deregulation that promoted open competition in the phone business, its previously secure position at AT&T was undermined. The union fought back on several fronts: waging a strike at AT&T in 1983 that won its members a degree of protection during the switch; running organizing drives at the new companies; fighting plans to contract out jobs; at one point pursuing forty-eight separate negotiations at the former Bell system; and expanding organizing drives into new areas (J.M. Miller, 1988). By 1998, its telecommunications membership stood at 400,000; its public-sector membership had grown to about 100,000 (CWA, "Facts at a Glance," 1998).

And the winner is ...

By October, 1994, the Guild's international executive board had made up its mind: the preferred partner would be the CWA. Said President Chuck Dale, "there are no other unions out there that meet all the goals TNG has set for itself" (Guild Reporter, Nov. 18, 1994).

The board adopted a resolution setting out how the Guild would stand in a CWA merger, and explaining why CWA was the most attractive prospect:

Just as we evolved from a union of editorial-only employees to one representing employees in all newspaper departments to a union with members in virtually all facets of the news industry, we must now

continue that evolution to become part of a larger organization representing workers all along the Information Superhighway. . . . We also must seek a merger that will fulfil our mandate to forge stronger ties with unions in broadcast as well as other areas of the media industry (Resolution, printed in Guild Reporter, Nov. 18, 1994).

At the same time, the resolution said the CWA was willing to preserve the unique identity, purpose and character of the Guild, creating a division or sector specifically for it. The Guild would retain control over its contracts and collective bargaining and would “continue to exercise the great degree of autonomy that has been a hallmark of our international union.” In addition, the merger would not be rushed: it would begin with a period of affiliation. This would give the two unions time to get to know each other. It would also give the Guild time to reorganize its Canadian membership, something the union pledged to do as part of its strategic plan. A full merger would occur later.

In an apparent attempt to calm the concerns of members about the merger, the Nov. 18, 1994 issue of the Guild Reporter included interviews with Bill Boarman, head of the Printing, Publishing and Media Workers Sector of the CWA (the former ITU) and Ken Moffett, assistant to the president of the NABET sector of the CWA. These two leaders spoke frankly and candidly about the downside of joining a giant like the CWA, but concluded it was worth the effort. Moffett was quoted as saying the 10,000-member NABET had to get used to dealing with “a bureaucracy of a union that has more than 600,000 members.”

There are various layers for everything. It's not that we can't get quick action on things, but we're not used to that. But it's the best thing to happen to us. If we're going to grow this union, this is the way to do it (Guild Reporter, Nov. 18, 1994).

Boarman and Moffett both said there had been problems melding the financial operations of their unions with the CWA. In addition, Boarman said, until the ITU joined it, CWA was not accustomed to dealing with newspaper employers. "They were used to dealing with corporations like AT&T, Bell Atlantic, Pacific Telesis and the like. But we're working through the problems." He added there is an upside of belonging to a large union: "all the resources, the research capability, legal assistance, strike benefits and so on. That has a big impact on the local level" (Guild Reporter, Nov. 18, 1994). And both leaders stressed that CWA's willingness to create special sectors for their unions had helped the former ITU and NABET to preserve their identity. Said Moffett,

I know that what a lot of people fear in a situation like this is that their union will lose its identity in a merger. Well, in some mergers, the little union does get swallowed up. But what (CWA President Morton) Morty Bahr has done with the sectors is to save the identities of the ITU and NABET. It's the best of all possible worlds, we've maintained our identity and our traditions and we've had full access to the tremendous resources of the CWA (Guild Reporter Nov. 18, 1994).

Over the next few months, negotiators from the Guild and the CWA sat down to draft a merger agreement. What they came up with was a plan for a two-year period of affiliation. If both sides were happy, formal merger would occur in 1997.

The agreement was adopted by the Guild's international executive board in

April, 1995, and sent to the union's convention in Boston that June for approval. A referendum of members was set for September. Under the Guild constitution, the merger agreement had to be approved by a majority of members in both Canada and the United States. It did so overwhelmingly: more than 90 percent of ballots supported the deal (Guild Reporter, Sept. 29, 1995).

In large part, the high approval had to do with the fact the agreement came remarkably close to meeting the list of "essential ingredients" for merger that had been adopted at the 1989 convention. Under the new agreement, the Guild would have a substantial degree of autonomy. It would be a sector of the CWA, with its own bylaws (the former Guild constitution), its own staff and its own set of officers. The president of the Guild would become a vice-president of the CWA. The Guild would send delegates to the CWA convention, but would also hold its own sector conference prior to the annual CWA convention. It would retain its own legal counsel. It would continue to publish the Guild Reporter. It would continue its own dues structure and its collective bargaining program. It would maintain its own defence fund (Text of merger agreement, published in Guild Reporter, Aug. 11, 1995).

At the same time, it would be able to take advantage of the expertise of the CWA's staff, including its researchers, organizers, lobbyists and legislation experts. Participation in the CWA defence fund would be phased in. The Guild headquarters would move from Guild-owned offices in Silver Spring, Md., into offices in the CWA headquarters in downtown Washington, D.C. The Guild would, however, have its

own suite, separate from other CWA sector offices or general CWA staff. Finally, while locals of the two unions would be encouraged to merge with each other, there would be no requirement for them to do so (Guild Reporter, Aug. 11, 1995).

Foley says that in negotiating the agreement, the CWA was very willing to support a substantial degree of Guild autonomy. "We're not a threat to the 600,000 other members of the CWA in the sense that it doesn't disrupt the culture of the CWA to let the Newspaper Guild have its own sector and have its own thing," she explains. "The rest of the CWA can continue doing what it's been doing and we just become a part of that. It's almost like, why didn't we think of that before?" (Interview, February, 1998.)

While the merger agreement calmed Guild fears of being swallowed up in a large union, it emphasized that the purpose of merger was not simply preservation of a special identity. Rather, it was a way of responding to changes within the industries that would affect members of both unions. The introduction to the agreement said,

The changing nature of information industries and the convergence of various communications technologies throughout North America make it imperative that the Unions continue to evolve as viable forces and strong representatives of workers who are at the heart of those industries (Agreement text, Guild Reporter, Aug. 11, 1995).

The merger agreement claimed that the act of union will significantly enhance bargaining power for the hundreds of thousands of people working in the communications, publishing, graphic arts, media, broadcasting, cable television and news industries. "It will also create a better climate for our unions to deal with the

‘convergence’ and technological changes that are upon us,” it added. To that end, the merger document included a commitment to create a council on convergence at the international level, drawing on all CWA sectors involved in the communications and information industries. Once that structure was in place at the top level of the new union, the CWA would endeavour to establish similar councils at the local level to develop public policy positions, union education, political, research, organizing and collective bargaining strategies (Agreement, Guild Reporter, Aug. 11, 1995).

Foley says it was important to have the concept of convergence in the merger agreement itself, for two reasons. “We made convergence a real *raison d’être* of the merger agreement, which not only helped sell the merger with our people but also sent a signal to employers -- this is what we’re doing.” Salesmanship mattered: after all, Guild members had to be convinced that this was the right deal for them. But good salesmanship depends on having a product to sell. In this case, it was the idea that the unions weren’t just sitting back and watching while technologies converged and the newspaper business transformed itself into the information business; they were reorganizing to put themselves in a better position to deal with it.

Making the merger happen

Less than three months after the referendum approving the merger document, the CWA and the Guild put on a joint conference in Washington entitled The Information Superhighway: Exploring Strategies for Workers. The conference was

designed to showcase the capabilities of the newly combined unions and to focus attention on their shared interests in a time when the previously separate industries of telecommunications and media work had converged. It was also intended to bring together local representatives of the CWA and the Guild. Close to 300 attended.

In preparation for the conference, Guild and CWA researchers put together a report highlighting issues the information highway creates for workers and families -- things like access, intellectual property rights, health and safety, and the trend of employers toward creating a contingent workforce of people hired on short-term contracts (CWA-TNG, July 1995). CWA researchers also put together a set of profiles of major employers in the converging information industry (CWA, December 1995). These reports provided Guild and CWA members with information about their industries, pointing out a community of interest. There was also an element of salesmanship in their publication: they highlighted the quality of the research a merged union could produce.

In his opening address to the conference, CWA President Morton Bahr sketched out the patterns of corporate and technological convergence that characterized the last ten years. He added that the change in CWA's relationships with other industry unions was "just another consequence of convergence" (Speech text, Dec. 8, 1995, printed in Summary of Conference Sessions).

But the CWA is not interested in simply responding to developments in the industry, he said. "Since it seems clear that we will be working for the same

employers in a very few short years, CWA must develop a much stronger and closer relationship with all of the entertainment and media unions.” It must also develop plans to stay ahead of what he described as inevitable and continuing change in the telecommunications, information, media and entertainment industries -- or the TIME industries. He noted that mergers, acquisitions, partnerships and breakups were creating new players in the industry and changing the roles of old ones. Bahr reminded delegates that he was elected head of the union in 1985, at the time of the AT&T breakup. “Practically overnight we went from an industry that was almost 100 percent organized to an industry that was about 35 percent organized,” he said. The breakup offered CWA a chance to reorganize its own operations so it could organize new groups of workers. “In looking back, we know that if we had not changed, our membership base would have eroded to the point where CWA today would be looking for a merger partner in the name of survival.” But the union regrouped, experimented with new methods of fighting back against employers, now bargaining relationships and new organizing strategies.

The point I want to make is this: convergence presents many new challenges and uncertainties. But convergence also offers many new opportunities and openings for us. We are at the ground floor of a burgeoning new industry that is still taking shape (Speech text, Dec. 8, 1995).

Bahr also stressed that if the industries are converging, so is the work performed by CWA members. The lines that once separated craft, professional, technical and office work are slowly evaporating.

We are not even certain what this industry will look like next year, much less give years from now. . . . As more employers merge and combine forces, how can our members possibly hope to survive in this new environment unless we merge and join forces? (Speech text, Dec. 8, 1995).

Convergence, he concluded, is just another chapter in a long history of change that has affected the CWA from its beginnings. “We have survived and prospered from technological change in the past. We are learning how to change today to grow with the converging information industry of tomorrow” (Speech text, Dec. 8, 1995).

The conference introduced Guild members to the leaders of other CWA media sectors -- the former ITU and NABET -- and to scholars, government regulators and other union leaders confronting the effects of digitization on work. The conference concluded with an effort to launch local convergence councils drawing on all sectors of the CWA. In early 1996, the CWA sent out copies of conference proceedings to all local presidents.

Foley says the conference was useful in more than one respect.

Our whole goal here was not just to educate people about what we need to do to meet the challenges in our industry but also to make them have a comfort level with the new union that they were about to go in (Interview, February, 1998).

Over the following two years, Guild leaders and members had time to grow increasingly comfortable in the CWA. “The transition period was really helpful because it allowed up to get a peek at what it was going to be like,” Foley says. “The CWA let us in on everything.” During that time, the leadership encouraged CWA

vice-presidents in the field to contact Guild locals, and Guild locals to get involved in what the CWA districts were doing. The Guild Reporter promoted CWA programs on its pages. Guild members began receiving the CWA's newsletter, CWA News. "The more they saw the CWA, the more comfortable they got," Foley says.

At the end of the transition period, Foley was sworn in as a CWA vice-president at the 1997 CWA convention. More than 100 Guild members attended as CWA delegates. It was an emotional moment, Foley recalls:

When I was sworn in, we arranged it so the Guild people would come up to the front of the hall while I was speaking. When they did that, they got this overwhelming response from the rest of the delegates -- 1,000 or 1,500 people cheering. They left there feeling very welcomed, and very much a part, at every level, of the CWA (Interview, February, 1998).

'One big union' revisited

By the end of 1997, the Guild had managed to bring to life an idea leaders and members had been talking about as early as 1960: the creation of "one big union" for news workers. In its final form, this "big union" turned out to be vastly different from the kind of organic merger some leaders envisioned in the early 1960s. In some respects, the arrangement of newspaper unions within the CWA is closer to the concept promoted thirty-five years earlier by the ITU's Elmer Brown, who argued that each of the former newspaper unions should become a department of a larger union (Guild Reporter, Aug. 26, 1960). The mergers have also not been anywhere near as complete as the leaders of the merger drive of 1960s dreamed: the Guild and

the ITU are under the same roof, as sectors of the CWA; the other newspaper unions are now part of the GCIU. In addition, the “big union” the Guild and the ITU joined is not a newspaper workers’ union, but a union representing telephone, broadcast and wire service technicians and other workers across the communications sector. And while the mergers of both the ITU and the Guild with the CWA occurred relatively swiftly and smoothly at the international level, as of this writing much work remained to be done at the membership level.

For the Guild, the benefits of the merger seem clear: it has managed to preserve its autonomy while sharing in the financial, research, human and political resources of the CWA. In an era of technological convergence and the rise of the multimedia conglomerate, it has joined a union that has the size, flexibility and vision to pursue labour convergence across all areas of communications work.

But there has been a cost: the merger was unable to fend off entirely the growing demands for autonomy voiced by a number of Canadian locals. The act of coming together with CWA also meant a coming apart in the Canadian arm of the Guild. The next chapter takes up the Canadian question, detailing the increasing disenchantment of some key elements of the Canadian membership that prompted a number of locals to choose a different path: to leave the Guild and seek Canadian partners. It also describes how the Guild tried to respond to these concerns, through the creation of a unit known as TNG-Canada that is in some respects more of an experiment in convergence than its Washington-based parent.

Chapter 7 - Answering the Canadian question

One of the distinctive features of the Canadian labour movement is its substantial degree of interpenetration with its counterpart in the United States. Among industrialized economies, only in Ireland and Britain are the union structures linked to the degree they are in Canada and the United States (Murray 1995, 176).

In large part, the labour links are the result of the history and political economy of English-speaking North America. Canada and the U.S. share a common language, a common belief in a democratic political system, and a capitalist economic system characterized by extensive cross-border trade and a significant degree of integration. At the same time, the size and power of the U.S. economy means that what happens south of the border often has more influence on Canada than the other way around.

The basic structure of Canadian labour law owes a great deal to laws enacted in the U.S. -- especially to the Wagner Act of 1935, which recognized the rights of workers to organize and bargain collectively and created a National Labor Relations Board to administer federal labour law.¹

¹ In Canada, responsibility for labour law is divided among the federal government and the provinces. While each province's law contains unique features, both the federal law and the set of provincial laws are based on the Wagner model, recognizing the right of workers to organize and relying on a labour relations board to resolve jurisdictional disputes and administer the certification system (Carter 1995, 62).

While Canada's labour movement has been influenced by its British connections² the structure and operating principles of unions owe far more to the union movement in the United States than to counterparts in Europe. The two major phases of union development in North America, craft unionism and industrial unionism, spilled over from the U.S. into Canada. In addition, the unions that were busy organizing workers south of the Canada-U.S. border saw the similar workforce north of the border as candidates for organizing too. It is no surprise, therefore, that for many years U.S.-based "international" unions dominated the Canadian labour movement.

In newspapers, for example, one of the fundamental characteristics of North American printers unions has been the belief that their monopoly on craft certification should take precedence over questions of nationality and geography. Just two years after its founding in 1852, the U.S. National Typographical Union urged locals to look into the interchange of union cards with Canadian printers (Zerker 1982, 71). By 1865, the union claimed "original and exclusive jurisdiction in all matters pertaining to the fellowship of the craft in the United States and the British Provinces" (quoted by Zerker, 75). It adopted the name International Typographical Union in 1869 to reflect its jurisdiction claim and took as an article of faith that its duty was to organize and represent printers wherever it could find an opening in Canada or the United

² For more on this see Morton 1998; Heron 1989, 1996.

States. Later, industrial unions like the American Newspaper Guild treated the international border as no impediment to organizing. Just five years after its founding, the Guild had fought (and lost) its first organizing drive in Canada (Craig 1987, 3). It signed its first contract in Canada in 1949, with the Toronto Star ("Guild Milestones," TNG Constitution, 1993). By the time the Guild was twenty-five, it represented workers in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Vancouver and Victoria³ and across the country at the CBC (Craig, 5).

The international composition of the newspaper unions is far from unique. Between 1921 and 1970, the percentage of Canadian trade unionists belonging to international unions bounced between 60 and 70 percent, hovering from 1950 to 1966 at just over 70 percent (Dawes 1987, 8-9). Beginning in the 1970s, however, this number began to drop precipitously: by 1976, less than 50 percent of Canadian trade unionists belonged to international unions (17); by the mid-1990s, this was down to under 30 percent (Murray 1995, 177). The decline of the international unions in Canada is not simply a matter of numbers, however. As Dawes notes (2), there has also been a decrease in the directive authority international unions have had over their Canadian sections.

This chapter examines the growing pressure on The Newspaper Guild to

³ The Vancouver and Victoria locals both began in the 1940s as independent unions under direct charter from the Trades and Labour Congress. They affiliated with the Guild in the mid-1950s (Craig 1987, 3).

accord its Canadian members more autonomy. It explores the fissures among the Canadian locals over what level of Canadian control the Guild could -- or should -- give its Canadian members. These struggles peaked in the early 1990s, just before the parent union merged with the Communications Workers of America. Canadian Guild members were split over the merger: some felt their future would best be safeguarded by sticking with the parent union and becoming CWA members, while others felt their interests would be better served by leaving the Guild and finding Canadian merger partners. For both groups, convergence was both a driving force behind merger and a goal of merger. But for those Guild workers who left the international, the key was convergence on a different scale -- into a national union rather than an international one. The chapter concludes by examining how the Guild sought to retrench its presence in Canada, and how the breakaway Canadian members sought to solidify their own position, mainly within the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers union.

Before dealing specifically with the newspaper unions, however, it's important to sketch out, if only in the broadest strokes, the context within which the struggles for Canadian autonomy in the Guild took place.

The quest for autonomy

The issue of national versus international affiliation raises practical and philosophical questions. In pragmatic terms, one key question is whether a union

based in one country can adequately represent workers in another sovereign state. A second and more politically charged question centres on whether a union based in one country should represent unions in the other country. These questions have been the subject of longstanding debate in the Canadian labour movement, and have been answered in various ways at various times by Canadian trade unionists.

Without a doubt, one of the significant factors in the relative decline of international unions in Canada has been the rise of Canadian-based unions, especially within the public service. Between 1970 and 1986, for example, membership in the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) more than doubled to 304,000 (Dawes, 22). By the mid-1990s, CUPE had added another 100,000 members and was by far the largest union in Canada (Murray, 173). Two other public service unions were among the top five unions: the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE),⁴ with more than 300,000 members, was the second-largest union in Canada and the Public Service Alliance of Canada, with 168,000 members, was the fifth-largest (Murray, 173).

Dawes argues that the growth of public sector unionism is a key reason for the relative decline of international unions in Canada, but by no means the only one. He also cites economic factors (the relative decline of manufacturing, where international unions are concentrated, and the relative growth of services and public administration,

⁴ Unlike other large public service unions that provide service directly to members, NUPGE is a federation of autonomous provincial unions (Murray, 176).

where Canadian unions are concentrated); the recent failure of international unions to organize the unorganized;⁵ Canadian dissatisfaction with international unionism; the rise of nationalist Canadian trade union leaders; the availability of national union merger partners and the significance of Canadian sections of international unions with respect to their U.S. parents (2-3). Looking specifically at the sources of Canadian dissatisfaction with international unions, he argues that this results from questions of autonomy, the concession bargaining and political action philosophies of some American unions, international union support for American interests over Canadian ones, the perception that internationals bring fragmentation and disunity to the labour movement and drain money from Canadian members, and the problem of substantial dues increases or corruption in a few international unions (3).

Tension over the international question has appeared not just within individual unions but at the level of national trade union federations. Heron (1989, 148) describes the American Federation of Labor as treating the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada as “little more than a state federation.” At times, it cracked the whip to keep the Canadians in line with AFL policy. The U.S. Congress of Industrial Organizations had a looser relationship with its Canadian counterpart, the Canadian Congress of Labour, though it too regularly tried to make the Canadian body

⁵ This is seen most dramatically in the growing discrepancy between the two countries in the proportion of unionized workers. While the number has been relatively stable in Canada, the proportion of unionized workers in the U.S. has been in sharp decline (Murray, 164).

conform. The merger of the two wings of the labour movement into the Canadian Labour Congress -- mirroring the merger of the AFL and CIO⁶ -- "included a clear declaration of independence that American labour leaders agreed to respect" (Heron, 149). But major policy differences would continue to divide the labour federations, especially the CLC's support for the New Democratic Party and American labour's support for the Vietnam War (149).

A final contextual factor that must be noted here is a longstanding pattern of mergers among unions -- and most especially among small unions. According to Alton Craig (1986) one of the driving ideas behind mergers is that small unions have neither the finances nor the personnel to serve their locals adequately. The CLC has seen mergers as a healthy evolution: "fewer and larger unions are thought to be the logical weapon against government and large multi-national corporations" (Mawhinney 1989, 51).

Clearly, the changes within The Newspaper Guild did not occur in a vacuum. Nor were they a particularly unusual story: much of the labour history of the postwar era in Canada has dealt with questions of nationalism versus internationalism, autonomy versus solidarity, domestic interests versus international control, and the

⁶ Indeed, Alton Craig contends that the labour federation mergers are another example of how actions taken by the U.S. labour movement influence Canadian labour: "... it is undoubtedly true that such an event would not have taken place in Canada (at least not as early as 1956) if the AFL-CIO merger had not taken place in the United States" (1986, 73).

tradeoffs between independence and economies of scale. But within that broader North American pattern, individual unions have resolved (or failed to resolve) such questions in their own specific ways. In the Guild, this has resulted in a series of attempts to draw and redraw the structure of the Canadian section of the union, and the eventual splitting off of a portion of it. The struggles for Canadian autonomy have been fought at the level of individual locals, among the Canadian contingent in the Guild, at the international level and before the Canadian Labour Congress. And while matters were more or less resolved by the mid-1990s, the Canadian question endures as one that newspaper unions must revisit time and again.

Standards of Self-Government

The Canadian autonomy story begins not within the Guild itself but at the Canadian Labour Congress. Despite its founding declaration of independence, the bulk of CLC members for many years came from Canadian branches of international unions. As a result, these unions were able “to destroy, or at least subdue, nationalist initiatives that came before conventions or the executive” (Dawes, 26). During the 1960s, however, the nationalist voice in Canadian labour gained more volume and power and in 1970, the CLC convention adopted a list of “minimum standards of self-government” for the Canadian sections of international unions. These included the election of Canadian officers by Canadians, allowing those elected officers and Canadian members to determine policies to deal with national affairs, and giving

Canadian elected representatives the authority to speak for the union in Canada. The 1974 convention added two other standards: the idea that if an international union was affiliated with an international trade secretariat, the Canadian section of that union should be separately affiliated, and the idea that Canadian members should not be prevented by constitutional requirements or policy decisions from participating in the social, cultural, economic and political life of Canada (CLC proceedings, cited by Dawes, 27).

These “minimum standards” were passed as convention resolutions, not as amendments to the CLC constitution. This meant that although they represented CLC policy, they were not enforceable. Compliance rested on moral suasion and voluntary action by the internationals.⁷ In 1973, the CLC surveyed its members to see how many had adopted the Canadian self-government standards. It found that among 90 internationals, 43 boasted full compliance; 28 had achieved partial compliance and 19 had done nothing. This last group included the International Typographical Union (Morton 1998, 279).

The Newspaper Guild addressed the Canadian self-government question at its

⁷ Morton notes (1998, 279-282) that these standards did little to appease the nationalists in the CLC. At the same time, they enraged some of the international unions, especially those in the building trades. A number of these unions withheld their affiliation cheques in protest. The president of the CLC went to Washington to discuss the issue with the international and the cheques resumed. Eventually, the construction unions withdrew from the CLC and formed the Canadian Federation of Labour in 1982.

1972 convention in Puerto Rico and came up with a number of changes aimed at resolving the problem of how to meet the Canadians' desire for more autonomy without according the Canadians special status within the union. It decided that the Canadian region would get two regional vice-presidents rather than one. This meant that the union's international executive board would have seven regional and six at-large vice-presidents. It formed a Canadian policy conference and agreed to appoint a Canadian director on the recommendation of the two regional vice-presidents, in consultation with the locals and with the consent of the international president. Finally, it decided to change the name of the union from the American Newspaper Guild to The Newspaper Guild⁸ (Craig 1987, 6).

The question of whether the Canadian director should be appointed or elected was the most divisive and politically difficult aspect of the changes. An appointed director would become part of the union's staff structure, ultimately accountable to the Washington, D.C., headquarters rather than to Canadian membership. This meant that although the director would hold a Canadian title, the nature of the job was that he would serve as the Guild president's representative in Canada, rather than as the Canadians members' chosen leader.

But some locals, especially in the west, feared that since half the Guild's

⁸ President Charles Perlik explained later that the union decided against changing "American" to "international" because Canadians thought the word "international" in the name of a union was synonymous with "American." Instead, it chose a title that neatly avoided the question of nationality (Craig 1987, 6).

Canadian membership was concentrated in one Toronto-area local,⁹ that local could determine the outcome of any election for a director. Some Guild members outside Ontario felt there was no certainty they would be better off with a director elected by one big local than with a director appointed by the international in consultation with the Western Canadian vice-president. Bob Rupert, a former Ottawa local president who was then on the Guild's paid staff, was named the first Canadian director in 1972.¹⁰ In a 1987 interview, Rupert, then a professor at the School of Journalism at Carleton University, said he was disappointed that the job ended up being an appointed position rather than an elected one, but said it was the choice of the Canadians themselves (Craig, 6). He reaffirmed his disappointment in 1999, in an article written for the program of the TNG-CWA Sector conference in Ottawa:

I could write a book about these Guild experiences. It could have a chapter about the Guild's too-slow move to grant more autonomy to its Canadian members, about my term as the Guild's first Canadian director: appointed, not elected, as would have been my preference (Program 1999, 9)

Once the decision had been made that the directorship would be an appointed position, it was remarkably difficult to change. For almost fifteen years, it remained

⁹ It eventually became the Southern Ontario Newspaper Guild, known as SONG.

¹⁰ Rupert left the post of Canadian director after less than two years, taking a job with the Guild as an organizer in California. He was replaced in 1974 by Bill McLemon, who held the job until 1988. The last non-elected Canadian director was John Bryant, who held the post from 1988 until the early 1990s.

an appointed job.

In the mid-1980s, the Guild took another step toward granting more autonomy for Canadian members. It replaced the Canadian policy conference, which began meeting in 1973, with a Canadian District Council. The conference's primary emphasis was on education. While it had served as a vehicle for Canadians to get together and discuss issues, it was, in some respects, a vehicle without wheels because it offered no means for the Canadians to express their views on pressing public issues. The council, by contrast, had the authority to express itself autonomously on Canadian social and legislative issues. It also advised the international executive board and Guild conventions on how internal Guild policies affected Canadian members and locals.

To proponents of Canadian autonomy the creation of the district council was an important and progressive step. Nonetheless, some Canadian members of the union, led by the large, active and independent-minded southern Ontario local known as SONG, were becoming increasingly unhappy with their position in the international union. Their discontent stemmed in part from a feeling that the union had not done enough to address the distinct needs of the Canadian minority. In addition, they felt that the differences between the Canadian and American branches of the union were growing, not shrinking.

Gail Lem, former SONG president and the chief architect of the local's withdrawal from the international union, recalls vividly the growing frustration of the

Canadian autonomy advocates in the local during the 1980s (Interview, February, 1998). Two incidents in particular stood out. One occurred in 1986, after the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a ruling against clauses in union contracts requiring people who had signed up as union members to maintain their membership. (The issue was whether members could drop their memberships on the eve of a strike.) The ruling in effect outlawed a portion of the Guild constitution in the U.S., but not in Canada. Lem, now vice-president of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers (CEP) union, says Guild President Charles Perlik came to a Canadian District Council meeting that year and assured the Canadians that their position would be protected. “When we got to the convention we discovered that the international executive board was proposing simply to drop this clause from the Guild constitution,” Lem recalls (Interview, February, 1998). It took “a huge floor fight” to make sure that Canadian locals were not affected.¹¹ And it left some Canadians feeling bitter that their own union would consider Canadian members to be -- in effect if not in fact -- under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Supreme Court.

The second incident occurred in 1987, as SONG was gearing up for a strike at Maclean's, the Canadian weekly news magazine. Perlik, who knew the head of

¹¹ The result was a clause in the constitution saying, “In Canadian Locals only, no resignation or withdrawal may be accepted during a strike or lockout, or at a time when a strike or lockout appears imminent” (Article X, Section 13(c) TNG Constitution, 1993). Section 15 then set out the resignation rules in each country. These changes represented a significant bifurcation of the constitution, since it meant some sections applied in one country but not the other.

Maclean-Hunter, told the Toronto local to put their strike plans on hold until he could talk to the magazine's management. This infuriated local leaders, who saw it as interference and went ahead with their strike as planned. But for more than a week, Lem says, the Toronto workers didn't know whether they would receive strike pay. That's because under the Guild constitution the international executive board -- which Perlik headed -- had to approve strikes, and Perlik had put matters on hold. Eventually, the Maclean's strikers got their money. But the local's anger over the international's handling of the Maclean's strike erupted in what Susan Craig described (6) as "a diatribe against Perlik" in the next issue of the SONG newsletter, SONGsheet. The president wrote back, asking the local to "cancel my subscription to SONGsheet." He later apologized for the letter. But Perlik was unrepentant about his attempt to go directly to management. "I was afraid we were going on strike for nothing. . . . If I'd pulled it off I'd be a hero," he said. As things worked out, he conceded, the situation was "custom-made for the nationalists" (Craig, 6).

Pressing for autonomy

In 1988, SONG decided to bring its concerns about American control to the annual Guild convention. But it did not simply put together a list of complaints; it came up with a proposal, endorsed by its executive, which the local felt would solve the problem of Canadian autonomy within the international union.

The twenty-one-page document, "The Guild and Canadian Autonomy: A

Blueprint for Change,” began by discussing the scope of the problem. It argued that especially since the rise of Reaganomics starting in 1980, the American and Canadian members of the union has been heading in different directions on a number of fundamentals, such as organizing, bargaining and political action. Due to a series of anti-labour measures adopted in the U.S., the Americans locals found themselves “scrambling to collect dues from their members while at the same time trying to coordinate fight-back campaigns to protect their collective agreements” (SONG “Blueprint” 1988, 2). The Americans were in this position because two things which in Canada were mainly housekeeping matters -- dues checkoffs and the modified open shop¹² -- had reappeared as organizing issues in the U.S. Following the 1986 U.S. Supreme Court decision, members in the U.S. could opt out of their union membership any time. In addition, some employers were pursuing a tactic of breaking off negotiations and then posting conditions that didn't include dues collection. As a result of these developments, “the first priority for organizing in the U.S., and therefore for the Union we have been told, is to sign up free riders,” (2) or those who reap the benefits of Guild contracts without contributing to the union. In Canada, free riders were not an issue. The priority there was on organizing new bargaining units.

¹² In Canada, contracts tend to follow the so-called Rand formula, named after Ontario Justice Ivan Rand, the arbitrator in a major 1945 Ford strike. Rand ruled that the employer would deduct union dues from all members of the bargaining unit and remit the money to the union. But while everyone would be required to pay union dues, no one would actually be forced to join the union (Morton, 186).

As for collective bargaining, “we in Canada view with some alarm the increasing number of concessions agreed to by American unions over the last few years, the Guild included” (3). In part this reflected the increasingly difficult political climate for American unions, the Blueprint said. But again, the document added, Canadian Guild members were not in the same situation. In terms of political action, the SONG blueprint said Canadian Guild members were facing a number of issues that were of considerably less interest to members in the U.S. These included fighting the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement, opposing the privatization of government services and the dismantling of Crown corporations, and the need to combat deregulation (5).

Given these differences and others, the document argued, Canadians needed more autonomy within their union. But under the existing Guild structure, “no one person can speak for Canadians or be responsible for ensuring that the interests of the entire Canadian membership are looked after at the executive level of our union” (13). The union had two regional vice-presidents on the executive board (one from Eastern Canada and one from Western Canada), a situation that encouraged regional bickering and rivalry rather than co-operation. The Canadian director, meanwhile, had not become the strong, national Ottawa-based voice the Guild envisioned in its 1972 resolution creating the position. “The reality is that the Canadian Director is an International Representative based in Western Canada,” the Blueprint said (15). It

emphasized that SONG was not blaming the current director, whom it did not name.¹³ Rather, the problem lay in the nature of the position: as an appointed job, it had no domestic Canadian political base or clout and as a result, the holder of the job answered to the American administration rather than to the Canadian membership.

The Blueprint praised the Guild for creating the Canadian District Council, which it said had become a forum for sharing information, passing resolutions on issues of concern to Canadians and presenting educational seminars to those who attended. But the council alone wasn't enough, it said:

The CDC alone cannot provide the leadership that is needed to unite the Guild across Canada and make it an effective force in Canada. It can't act in any practical way between meetings. It can't implement a program or mobilize the Canadian membership on an issue. That has to be left to each local. Any staff support that is needed must be requested of the administration in Washington (16).

The Blueprint concluded by making five recommendations which the SONG executive felt would create more Canadian autonomy in the Guild (20-21). It said the Canadian director should be elected nationally at the same time as the regional vice-presidents. The director should be the political leader of the Guild in Canada, sitting on the international executive board. The director and vice-presidents should together form a Canadian executive board, which would be responsible to the Canadian membership through the Canadian district council and the locals. This board should

¹³ That individual was Bill McLemon, who had held the job since 1974 and in 1988 was about to move on to a different post within the union.

take over from the international executive board the responsibility for making decisions on approval of strikes, defence-fund expenditures and contract settlements. The Canadian director should hire and direct Canadian staff. The budget for the Canadian office should be approved by the convention but controlled by the Canadian director. Finally and perhaps most provocatively, the Guild constitution should be amended to recognize the right of the Canadian membership to merge with another union and to have a separate vote on any international merger proposals: "The Canadian members should have a legal and democratic method to express and act on their desire, should that be the case in the future, to go in a different direction than the rest of the Guild through another union" (21).

SONG delegates took the Blueprint to the 1988 Guild convention in Vancouver. There, they suffered what Lem calls "a crushing, humiliating defeat" -- largely at the hands of the other Canadian locals (Interview, February, 1998).

The SONG proposal went to the constitution committee, which quickly agreed to postpone debate on it indefinitely. It told the convention that it did so after the Canadian caucus decided it wanted to examine the document at the next Canadian district council meeting (Proceedings, 1988, 60). SONG's Bill Petrie took the proposal to the floor of the convention as a minority report from the constitution committee, claiming that the committee's decision to postpone consideration of the report and then to cut off debate amounted to "orchestrated procedural moves aimed at the suppression and censorship of the legitimate concerns of the second-largest

local of this union” (Proceedings, 60). Petrie said that at the 1988 CLC convention, delegates had agreed to incorporate the standards on self-government into the CLC constitution, which meant they would become a constitutional requirement for all unions like the Guild that were CLC members (67). SONG wanted a full and fair hearing on the Canadian autonomy issue at the current Guild convention, he said. He concluded by arguing that the document was not “a declaration of independence, as has been suggested by a number of people. It’s a declaration of self-determination” (68).

Under convention rules, speakers addressing a minority report were limited to five minutes each, with the chair keeping time. Petrie was followed to the microphone by two other SONG delegates, then by Bob Smith of Los Angeles, who argued that giving Canadians what they wanted would strengthen the Guild. Then Jan Ravensbergen of the Montreal local said that on behalf of the other Canadian locals, he asked the convention to defeat the minority report. He said the seven other Canadian locals had only received SONG’s report within the last few days.

Without proper advance notice or consultation and only having just concluded a Canadian District Council meeting this May, we find out that SONG is bringing a brief forward to this international convention that seeks major changes within TNG on a solely Canadian issue. As a Canadian caucus . . . all seven of the other Canadian locals agreed that this subject go to the Canadian District Council meeting in October with no preconditions. . . . We ask that you allow us the opportunity to first discuss this subject in our own house. (70)

President Chuck Dale, a former CBC news staffer who went on to become a Guild

international representative and eventually a U.S. citizen, was the final speaker. He stressed that the Guild was “first and foremost an international union,” whose members share common employers and common problems, many of which call for common solutions (73). Where differences existed, he said, the Guild had responded with “tools specifically honed for Canada” (72). Dale spent several minutes summarizing how the Guild had met Canadian concerns in the past, then noticed that he had used up his five minutes. Jerry MacDonald, a staff representative with the Canadian Wire Service Guild, said he would donate his five minutes to Dale. The president continued, saying he was aware that the Canadian sections of some international unions “have separated from their parent unions in recent years,” but adding that he hoped the Guild had been responsive enough to prevent that from happening here. He concluded with an old-fashioned appeal to solidarity:

United we stand; divided we fall. It’s a hallowed motto that has particular validity for the labour movement. All we have, against the bosses’ power, the bosses’ money, the bosses’ hired guns is our unity. Let’s not give that up, not a single iota of it! (72)

Dale got a standing ovation. The SONG report was defeated on a voice vote (73), its future left to the Canadian District Council.

Toward Canadian autonomy

SONG’s decision to take the Canadian autonomy blueprint directly to the convention angered some of the other Canadian locals, which felt the Toronto local

had tried to do an end run around the Canadian District Council. The council had discussed Canadian autonomy on and off for many years, and its other members were nowhere near as committed to the idea as SONG was. At the first post-convention council meeting, in October, 1988, the other locals reacted with little enthusiasm to the SONG document (CDC minutes, Oct. 29-30, 1988). The Montreal and Windsor locals went on record as opposed to the report -- in Montreal's case as "unalterably opposed." Ottawa took no position but said the document raised a number of questions. Victoria, Vancouver and the Canadian Wire Service Guild said there was no strong interest among their members in pressing for more Canadian autonomy. Mike Bocking of the Vancouver local, however, brought his own counterproposal on autonomy to the meeting.¹⁴ SONG offered a four-part motion covering much of the same territory as the recommendations in its blueprint. The council defeated this proposal, then defeated Bocking's alternative plan as well. Without the support of the council, SONG's plan to get the Guild to change its constitution was dead.

But SONG was by no means finished.

Between February and June, 1989, it filed complaints with the Canadian Labour Congress, charging The Newspaper Guild with violating the Canadian standards for self-government that were by then part of the CLC constitution. SONG

¹⁴ It called for retaining the Canadian directorship as an appointed position, but elevating the chair of the Canadian District Council to chief spokesperson for the Guild in Canada (Minutes, Oct. 29-30, 1988).

also brought charges under the CLC code of ethical practices and the code of union citizenship (Guild Reporter, Dec. 14, 1990). The action angered some of the other Canadian locals, which sent letters to the CLC saying they disagreed with the SONG action. One such letter to CLC president Shirley Carr from Larry McInnes, head of the Montreal local, said the other Canadian locals were unanimous in their support of The Newspaper Guild (Letter, Feb. 28, 1989).

In early 1990, while the charges were pending before the CLC, the executive of the Canadian Wire Service Guild voted to withdraw from the Canadian District Council (Guild Reporter, Feb. 16, 1990). Local president Dan Oldfield complained in a letter to the council president that the educational role of the council “has been largely replaced by political manoeuvring,” blaming SONG for the change. Since 1987, “SONG has used the CDC as a forum for promoting its version of greater Canadian autonomy within TNG,” he said. “While being for greater Canadian autonomy within an international union has some emotional appeal, most Canadian locals view SONG’s policies as ill-advised” (Guild Reporter, Feb. 16, 1990).

The act of filing charges presented the CLC with a problem. The source of the complaint had to be taken seriously: SONG was the largest Canadian local in the union, and it represented the elite of Canadian print newswriters, including reporters at The Globe and Mail, Toronto Star and Maclean’s. In addition, due in large part to Lem’s leadership, SONG was an unusually active local, racking up an impressive

record in organizing even while it was fighting with the international.¹⁵ At the same time, though, SONG's position was not shared by the rest of the Guild in Canada. Finally, The Newspaper Guild itself had been a longtime member of the CLC.

The charges themselves delved into some fairly murky waters: the standards of self-government called for the election of Canadian officers by Canadians. While it was true that the Guild's Canadian director was appointed not elected, the Guild did indeed have two elected Canadian vice-presidents. As for the CLC itself, it was in the delicate position of balancing the interests of Canadian locals seeking more autonomy against the interests of the international unions that were affiliated with it.

The CLC decided to appoint a fact finder. On Nov. 27, 1990, more than eighteen months after SONG filed the initial charges, CLC President Shirley Carr informed SONG that "in the absence of *prima facie* evidence of a violation" of the CLC constitution, "I must dismiss your claim . . . unless such evidence is forthcoming" (Guild Reporter, Dec. 14, 1990). The fact finder's report walked a fine line between the positions staked out by SONG and The Newspaper Guild. It found no evidence that the union violated the self-government standards, "notwithstanding that the Canadian director is not an elected position." Making the directorship an elected position "would no doubt . . . lessen the tension" between SONG and the

¹⁵ The union's organizing summary for 1989 shows that SONG gained representation for more employees than any other local in the Guild that year. These included newsroom employees at the London Free Press, the Brabant weeklies in Ontario and the Polish Alliance in Toronto (Guild Reporter, Jan. 5, 1990)

international union, it said, adding, however, that this was something the Guild should sort out on its own. SONG's complaint that the Canadian District Council did not have the authority to direct the Canadian district vice-presidents was "once again . . . an internal matter that should be resolved by the parties" (Guild Reporter, Dec. 14, 1989). SONG had also complained that the international president chose a Canadian representative to go to the International Federation of Journalists convention, saying the Canadian District Council should have made the choice. The report said that while the fact finder "can appreciate that the Canadians would want more say" in selecting the delegate, perhaps this matter could be resolved internally before the next Federation convention.

Union president Chuck Dale greeted the report as a vindication of the Guild. SONG president Gail Lem told the Guild Reporter she felt the report "doesn't diminish the validity of our complaints." In her view, the fact finder "in essence recommended that TNG talk to us about these issues" of Canadian autonomy (Guild Reporter, Dec. 14, 1990). And that, after all, was what SONG tried to do at the 1988 convention.

Lem says that when she and the other activists at SONG began to press for more Canadian autonomy, they were interested in working with the international leadership to develop a stronger union that would be able to accommodate the need for more Canadian autonomy (Interview, February, 1998). The Southern Ontario local was not the only unhappy voice in the union in the late 1980s: two groups of Guild

activists, in the U.S. as well as Canada, were pushing for stronger leadership within the international. They were especially critical of Chuck Dale, who succeeded Perlik as president of the union in 1987. Lem and Juan Gonzalez of the New York local were co-chairs of a group known as Concerned Guild Members, which called for a more progressive, activist leadership. This group felt that the union had become too conservative, too willing to make concessions to employers, and not aggressive enough in organizing or in dealing with employers. The influential Columbia Journalism Review quoted Gonzalez as saying, "It's not that they're evil or corrupt; they're just not very smart or capable" (Simurda 1993, 26). A second dissident group, the Coalition for Constructive Change, also had complaints about the leadership of the union. This group felt that the Guild's leaders were spending too much energy responding to crises and too little time developing a coherent organizing strategy. Bruce Meachum of Denver, a founder of the group, told the Columbia Journalism Review, "You can't go out and organize when you're telling people that all you're doing is putting out fires" (28). He added, "What's missing is a more aggressive stance -- more aggressive in dealing with publishers and more aggressive in organizing" (26).

As the months went by and as the fighting within the union became increasingly bitter, Lem's views changed. By the end of 1990, she had concluded that SONG's future lay outside The Newspaper Guild, not inside a reformed Guild. In an article headlined "It's time to say 'Goodbye Charlie'" in SONG's December, 1990,

newsletter, she wrote:

(A)s close as some of us may feel to The Newspaper Guild, it appears clear that our legitimate aspirations may not be met in this union. . . . Do we want to continue being second class members in The Newspaper Guild? (quoted in the Guild Reporter, Oct. 4, 1991).

While Lem's column no doubt represented her own feelings and those of like-minded members of the local, the question of whether to leave the Guild was for the membership to decide, not for Lem. If SONG was to think seriously about leaving, however, it had to tackle two key questions: how to manage an exit from the Guild without losing its assets or the loyalty of its membership, and where to go from there.

SONG began to develop an answer to the first question in late May, 1991, by setting up a non-profit corporation, the Southern Ontario Media Workers' Society, Inc. In September, the local's fifty-five-member executive committee voted to transfer to this society the local's \$1.3 million defence fund and its \$200,000 headquarters building. The executive committee's action was approved at a Sept. 11 membership meeting (Guild Reporter, Oct. 4, 1991). In essence, it meant that the local had declared financial independence from the Guild -- though not political independence.

John Bryant, a former member of the SONG executive who was by then the Guild's Canadian director, went to court seeking a temporary injunction against the transfer. When his motion was turned down Sept. 19, he filed, unsuccessfully, for a permanent injunction (Guild Reporter, Oct. 4, 1991). The Guild Reporter noted (Oct. 4, 1991) that an affidavit filed by Lem in opposition to the injunction request argued

that it was “quite typical” for Canadian unions to hold buildings in non-profit corporations, saying this would shield the properties against the possibility of seizure through lawsuits against the unions. She also said in the affidavit that she knew of no “secession drive” that would take SONG out of the union, and promised the membership in a column in the local newsletter that before taking any steps toward leaving the union, they would have a chance for “full and open discussions.”

The decision to transfer SONG’s assets to a non-profit corporation infuriated the Guild international. SONG had set up the corporation through an amendment to its bylaws, but it had not submitted the amendment to the international board for its approval, as required by the Guild constitution. In late October, 1991, the international executive board ordered that the measure be repealed and the transfer reversed (Guild Reporter, Nov. 15, 1991). The board said the SONG action violated several provisions of the Guild constitution, which prohibited incorporation by locals. The constitution also required locals that disbanded or had their charters revoked to turn over all books and property to the parent union.

The union’s international executive board also expressed concern that transferring funds to a non-profit organization amounted to transferring control away from the local’s membership (Guild Reporter, Nov. 15, 1991). In a letter to SONG members, Guild President Dale argued that the board’s effort to overturn the transfer was solely “to protect your control over your funds” (Guild Reporter, Oct. 14, 1991). He argued, “It is *not* a move toward international trusteeship. It *will not* give TNG

control of the local's funds. It *will not* interfere in any way with the local's use of those funds for normal Guild purposes" (Guild Reporter, Oct. 4, 1991, emphasis in original).

Here, though, the board found itself caught between its own constitution and Canadian law. The Ontario judge who threw out the injunction application in September ruled that the local's action did not violate the Guild constitution because it was not itself a corporation. He also said he was not convinced that the local's assets had been removed from control by the local. The executive of the corporation had exactly the same structure as the executive of the local (Guild Reporter, Oct. 4, 1991). And since setting up the corporation did not violate Canadian law, there was no need to grant an injunction.

With SONG's assets secured in Canada, Lem and other proponents of Canadian independence embarked on a turbulent and intensely political period of activity. This involved, at various times, the Canadian District Council, the union as a whole and other unions representing Canadian media workers. And while SONG's leaders made plans for a possible life beyond the Guild, the local still had to take care of the day-to-day affairs of running a large and busy local: organizing new units, bargaining contracts, providing service to members, and so on.

In terms of Canadian autonomy, two crucial developments occurred in the Guild, in 1992 and 1993. In the first, the Guild convention agreed to a constitutional amendment saying that any merger proposal would have to be approved by separate

votes in Canada and the U.S. (Guild Reporter, July 24, 1992). This idea, one of the recommendations in SONG's original blueprint for autonomy, was approved at a time when the union did not have a merger partner in sight -- much less an agreement on the table. Again, it took a floor fight at the convention to get the change through. The amendment was taken to the convention floor as a minority report after the constitution committee turned it down. During floor debate, delegates from six Canadian locals -- SONG, Vancouver, North Bay, Ottawa, Northern Ontario and the Canadian Wire Service Guild -- spoke in support. The minority report said that without the support of the majority of Guild members in both the United States and Canada, a merger would not be viable.

Canadians are asking to be recognized as citizens of a separate country in an international union. Americans at the same time, deserve the right to determine their own future in a merger agreement, regardless of Canadian decisions. A requirement for a double majority . . . provides this recognition and protection to members in both countries (Minority report, quoted in Guild Reporter, July 24, 1992).

Opponents of the amendment contended that it gave the Canadian minority in the union a veto: if the large U.S. membership endorsed a merger but the smaller Canadian membership did not, the deal would be sunk. Bruce Meachum of Denver argued, however, that this missed the point: he said a double majority would be the best mechanism to keep the Guild together in a merger (Guild Reporter, July 24, 1992). Earlier in the same session, convention delegates rejected another amendment -- this one proposed by the Victoria local -- that would have excluded Canadian

locals as a group from a merger if a majority of Canadians opposed it, but would have permitted individual Canadian locals to become party to a merger. This plan was seen as potentially too divisive.

The constitutional amendment requiring a double majority met one of the key concerns of SONG and the other Canadians locals. Like many in the Guild, they saw a merger as an inevitability -- and most likely, according to Lem, as a desirable development (Interview, February, 1998). But they wanted to have a genuine say on whether a possible merger deal was good for the Canadian contingent. By getting the convention to agree to a double majority, they felt more confident that any potential suitor would have to win the Canadian membership's approval in particular, as well as the Guild's approval overall.

Later that year, the Canadian District Council finally reached an agreement on a plan for greater Canadian autonomy within the Guild. Lem, who was by this time the Eastern Canada vice-president of the union, and Mike Bocking of Vancouver, the Western Canada vice-president, outlined its key elements to the international executive board in April, 1993. It called for the election of a Canadian director, the creation of a Canadian executive board, and a separate "global" Canadian budget, to be approved by the convention. In short, the plan contained virtually all the key elements of the original SONG blueprint for autonomy, a plan that had been defeated at the convention in 1988 and by the Canadian District Council later that year.

The international executive board did not take up the autonomy document

itself at that meeting. Rather, it agreed to continue discussions on the issue (Guild Reporter, April 30, 1993). During the meeting, Lem was grilled on whether SONG intended to remain in the Guild regardless of whether that year's convention endorsed the Canadian autonomy plan. She affirmed that there was strong sentiment among SONG leaders that the local should begin exploratory talks with Canadian unions but said a membership vote on this had not been taken (Guild Reporter, April 30, 1993).

In August, 1993, the Canadians who had struggled so hard for so many years to gain more autonomy within the Guild finally got their wish. By unanimous voice vote, delegates to the Guild convention approved amendments to the constitution that would turn the job of Canadian director into an elected position and would make the director the chief spokesperson for the Guild in Canada (Guild Reporter, Aug. 20, 1993). The director -- to be chosen at a special Canadian convention in the spring of 1994 -- would join the two Canadian vice-presidents on the international executive board and would be responsible for organizing and collective bargaining in Canada. The director would still have to seek approval from the international executive board on hiring, contract approval and strike sanction. The Guild's Canadian office would be located in Ottawa (though the director would not be required to move there), and would have a full-time staff person trained in research techniques.

Interestingly, the Guild Reporter referred to this plan as "Dale's Canadian autonomy proposal," implying that the international president was the driving force behind granting the Canadian wing more control over its own affairs (Guild Reporter,

Aug. 20, 1993). This certainly stretched the truth: it had taken more than five years of hard work by the Canadians to get Dale on board, and a lot of hard bargaining to reach a deal. But in the long run, the substance of the deal would be more important than who got the credit for it. The end result of the long fight for autonomy was that the Canadians won a point many felt should have been won in 1972: the election of the top Guild representative in Canada and the transfer of substantial control over day-to-day affairs from the Guild's Washington-area headquarters to Ottawa. Significantly, the autonomy drive achieved this success at the same time as the Guild was launching the strategic plan that would eventually lead to its merger with the Communications Workers of America.

One big union -- Canadian-style

The Canadian autonomy plan passed with barely a whisper of debate when it reached the convention floor in Hawaii in 1993 (Guild Reporter, Aug. 20, 1993). But it came as too little too late to stop the departure of SONG. By this time, SONG's leaders (and many of the local's members) had become convinced that they simply were not getting enough out of their Guild membership. The local did not have control over the dues its members paid; the international did.¹⁶ It also did not have

¹⁶ Between 1991 and 1994, SONG sent \$1.2 million in per capita payments to the international, or about one-third of what it collected from its members. President Dale contended that it got that much back in organizing subsidies, reimbursements for organizing expenses, legal fees and strike benefits (Guild Reporter, Oct. 21, 1994).

control over what it saw as crucial local decisions, like strike votes or bylaw changes. Again, the power lay with the international.

The big question was where to go from there. Lem says the dream was to create one big media union for Canada, drawing in national media-workers' unions and the Canadian locals of international unions. This union would not be limited to newspaper workers -- or even to news workers. Rather, it would draw on Canadians who worked in print and broadcasting, in news and entertainment, as professionals and as craft workers. This was not simply Lem's personal dream: in the early 1990s a number of people from a number of unions were interested in exploring the possibility of either converging into one new union or, at least, restructuring the existing unions.

One key group came from the former ITU -- by then members of the printing, publishing and media workers sector of the Communications Workers of America. Canadian CWA/ITU members had faced even more frustrations than their Guild counterparts in the struggle for Canadian autonomy within their union. At the time the ITU merged with the CWA, it had no Canadian director -- elected or otherwise -- and had done virtually nothing to comply with the CLC standards of self-government. The Canadians met at conventions in an *ad hoc* caucus, but that was as far as the ITU was willing to go in recognizing them as citizens of a different country. Indeed, one of the main reasons the Canadian ITU contingent supported the CWA merger was that the union promised a better deal for Canadians, says Doug Grey of the Communications,

Energy and Paperworkers union (Interview, May, 1999).

Grey, then with ITU Local 91 in Toronto, says the American ITU leaders tended to treat Canadians as second-class citizens and used their paid staff of international representatives to fend off or break up any attempts by the Canadians to develop solidarity among themselves. "Every time we thought we had a position on something, someone would vote against it. We found out later that they were using the reps to work us against each other -- especially to work the large locals against the small ones," he says (Interview, May 1999). Grey and the other Canadian ITU members hoped things would improve after the CWA merger. In some ways, they did: a Canadian Conference was established in 1987 and, in 1991, the union created the elected post of Canadian director. Grey won the job in early 1992.

But neither development lived up to its potential. Grey says the Canadian Conference used a different voting system than the union convention -- one that allowed the small locals (who were more likely to be under the control of the representatives) to dominate.¹⁷ Eventually, under pressure from Grey and the large locals, the voting structure for the Canadian conference was changed to mirror the standards in the U.S. union. As a result, Grey says, many of the smaller locals stopped

¹⁷ Grey explains that the ITU constitution was based on one member, one vote. The Canadian conference, by contrast, was based on one delegate, one vote. This meant that although six large locals contained the bulk of the union's Canadian membership, they could easily be outvoted by the 30 or so small locals who could send delegates to the conference.

coming to Canadian sector meetings.

As for the Canadian directorship, Grey found it difficult right from the beginning. He says his mandate, duties and responsibilities were never spelled out clearly. The leadership of the union tended to treat him as a staff representative -- in other words, as a subordinate rather than as an equal.¹⁸ And he discovered to his horror that the staff in his own office in Ottawa worked for the president of the printing, publishing and media workers sector of the CWA, not for him.

The first time I tried to give an order to the woman who worked in the office, she said no. So I phoned down to Washington and they said, 'Well, she's under the direction of Bill Boarman.' So everything I did had to be approved by Washington. . . . I also realized she was also reporting back to Washington on what I was doing (Interview, May, 1999).

Grey used his first convention speech as Canadian director to express concerns about the structure of his job. He said the Canadian contingent saw the director as the spokesman for Canadians on Canadian issues, not as "another representative under the control of Washington" (Convention proceedings, 1992, 11).

Grey also gave delegates a briefing on what was going on with other Canadian media workers. He noted that SONG was "in a dispute" with the Guild "and they may

¹⁸ At a sector convention shortly after he was elected, he recalls, he was shocked to learn that he had been named a sergeant-at-arms. This was a low-level convention job carried out by the paid staff but not by the elected leadership. He says he and the Canadian contingent took this as an insult and fought it. The head of the sector told him he either had to serve as a sergeant-at-arms or not appear on the convention floor at all. Grey pressed the point and won. The next year, however, he was given the same order. This time, he put on the armband of a sergeant-at-arms.

soon be taking a referendum vote on separating and joining a national Canadian union or forming their own media union” (10). Meanwhile, he said, Guild locals in British Columbia were working closely with CWA/ITU typographers and were interested in joining CWA (10). He also suggested that the Canadian National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians (NABET), which split amicably from its U.S. parent organization in 1974 (Alton Craig, 103), might be interested in joining CWA.¹⁹

These examples are pointed out to illustrate that some very creative thinking must go into developing a strategy to establish a Canadian structure and bring all the unions together into one printing and communications international union and even to try to interest independent unions in Canada to join (Proceedings, 10).

During the convention, Grey says, he told Bahr and Boarman about a meeting to be held in Toronto with a number of Canadian media unions and locals -- among them SONG, several CWA/ITU unions, the Association of Canadian Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA), NABET and the GCIU. Grey was excited about the meeting and saw it as a chance to talk about the possibility of the Canadian media unions converging within the CWA. But a few days before the meeting, he got a letter from Washington telling him it was not appropriate for him to attend. “They said, ‘Morty Bahr handles all mergers. So you can’t go’” (Interview, May, 1999). Grey sat in a restaurant across the street from the meeting, getting reports from members of the ITU

¹⁹ The American branch of NABET was also exploring a merger with the CWA. It became the union's Broadcast and Cable Television Workers sector in 1994 (CWA Facts at a glance, 1998)

locals who attended.

At the next print sector convention, Grey used part of his Canadian director's report to complain bitterly about the decision.

When the meeting was arranged to meet with all the unions in the media industry in Canada, GCIU, NABET, The Newspaper Guild, Actors,²⁰ CWA, and just a week prior to the meeting I was ordered not to attend the meeting because one of the leaders of the TNG had been leading her union, SONG, to disaffiliate from TNG and the 'call' for the meeting was to establish a Canadian media union. We assured everybody that we were going in there to try to get them to merge with CWA. We believe that CWA lost an opportunity and credibility because the elected autonomous CWA Canadian Director did not attend that meeting. President Bahr in a letter later told Canadians not to talk to other unions about affiliation with CWA. Only the CWA President and the Executive Board had the mandate to do it. So where does that leave us. In the mainstream of labour with all those amalgamations going on in Canada. (Convention Proceedings, 1993, 10)

Lem and Grey say this meeting was one of several held in the early 1990s to discuss whether unionized Canadian media workers might somehow get together -- and if so, how. Some meetings occurred at CLC conventions; others were held separately. Lem confirms that Grey was told not to talk with the other Canadian unions, and recalls once joking with him when she ran into him on an airplane that she guessed he would have to jump off (Interview, May, 1999).

If Grey saw the meetings as leading toward the creation of a strong Canadian media-workers wing within the CWA, Lem hoped the meetings would create something even more ambitious: a new Canadian media-workers union. That hope

²⁰ This was a typographical error for "ACTRA"

faded pretty quickly, however. The failure to create a new national media-workers union was not really anyone's fault, she argued (Interview, May, 1999). "No one was a deal-breaker. The fact is that because of the history of the way we had been organized, we weren't at the same stage of development at any given time." The large ITU locals were farther along the path to independence from their international than any of the others. Among Guild locals, her own local and a few others were thinking seriously about cutting their ties to the Guild, but most were committed to remaining with the international union. ACTRA's participation mattered more to the NABET people (members of the two unions often worked together) than to the other unions. But NABET, which was facing a financial crisis, "needed a new home fast" while ACTRA was less interested in a merger. And the GCIU's Canadian leaders were less enthralled by the idea of a Canadian media union than some of the other unions. "It became obvious to some of us that unless the GCIU and ACTRA would come on board, we wouldn't have the numbers to create a Canadian media-workers union," Lem says. Without the GCIU, which had 20,000 members in Canada, "it would be hard to realize the economies of scale." In short, while many of the Canadian union leaders thought the idea sounded interesting, they were not at all sure it was practical.

Moving toward CEP

At the CWA/ITU, relations between the large Canadian locals and the Americans continued to be a problem. Montreal's Local 145, with close to 4,000

members,²¹ had decided in 1987 that it wanted to be affiliated directly with the CWA, not with the printing, publishing and media workers sector.²² At the 1990 CWA/ITU sector conference, delegates passed a resolution declaring that the local was delinquent because it had not paid its sector dues and recommending that it be ejected from the union (Proceedings, 1990). According to Grey, the local was required to be on its own for two years, and then could look for a partner. It settled on the 44,000-member Communications Workers of Canada -- the former Canadian arm of the Communications Workers of America that had broken away from the CWA in the early 1970s and represented telephone and telecommunications workers.

At the time local 145 joined it, CWC was itself on the eve of a major merger with the Paperworkers Union of Canada and the Energy and Chemical Workers. The resulting union, the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers union, known as CEP, had 137,000 members and instantly became the fourth-largest private-sector union in Canada (Toronto Star, Nov. 27, 1992). But while size mattered -- articles in the trade press pointed out that the three-way merger gave each of the constituent unions access to a larger strike fund (see, for example, Journal of Commerce, July 28,

²¹ This local had begun as a traditional typographical workers' union but had taken seriously the idea that the ITU should be an industrial union, not one limited to a particular trade workers. It had organized a broad range of workers, from mushroom pickers to coffin makers (Lem interview, February, 1998)

²² The local had been engaged in a dispute with the ITU over strike pay and decided that while it no longer wanted to be affiliated with the ITU's sector inside CWA, it would be willing to be affiliated directly with the CWA.

1993; Canadian Papermaker, January, 1993) -- the merger's significance involved more than sheer numbers. Bringing off a merger of this magnitude required creativity, energy and flexibility in the union's leadership -- attributes the Canadian media unions found appealing. In addition, the new union immediately began presenting itself to its members (and the broader public) as a response to consolidation among the companies that employ union members (Journal of Commerce, July 28, 1993). Suddenly, it seemed, Canadian labour had a major player in the converging communications industry.

This idea was brought even more sharply into focus in October, 1993, when Canadian NABET, representing about 8,000 broadcast-production workers, signed an agreement to merge with CEP (Merger agreement, Oct. 28, 1993). With NABET on board, CEP was beginning to look more and more like the Canadian equivalent of the CWA: a large union, composed of highly skilled technical workers in several branches of the communications industry, including telephone workers, broadcast employees and print-media workers. (CEP also represented pulp and paper workers -- people who, while not in the communications business, produced a product that was essential to the communications business.) Increasingly, it seemed, CEP was becoming the natural national choice for Canadian workers in the information age.

Meanwhile, a number of other Canadian ITU locals had become dissatisfied with their position in the CWA. Grey says that by 1993, the Canadian sector had decided it wanted a free vote on leaving the CWA/ITU and joining a Canadian union

-- most likely CEP, which would reunite the other Canadian locals with Local 145. Fred Pomeroy, the former president of the CWC and by then a vice-president of CEP,²³ was at the Canadian conference meeting and was asked to talk with CWA President Morton Bahr about the idea of a separation vote for the Canadians.²⁴ Grey says Pomeroy reported back to the Canadian locals that Bahr didn't believe the majority of Canadian members were unhappy. But at the convention that summer, Bahr announced that he would agree to a free vote of the Canadians, if only to put to rest rumblings of discontent.²⁵

The vote, by mail ballot, was set for the fall of 1993. An article in the October, 1993, sector newsletter set out two possible outcomes:

A majority 'yes' vote would keep the members in CWA and eligible for Sector and CWA representation and programs such as the strike and mortuary funds . . . A majority 'no' vote would divorce the workers from the Sector and CWA and leave them free to handle their own bargaining, representation and legal concerns and to establish their own, new strike and mortuary funds, if they chose to (CWA Sector news, October, 1993).

²³ He became president of CEP in 1995 (Toronto Star, June 27, 1995).

²⁴ Bahr and Pomeroy had a history of working together. In 1989 Pomeroy joined CWA leaders at the bargaining table to show support for CWA members who were on strike against Northern Telecom plants in the United States. A CWA press release issued at the time said it was the first time Canadian and U.S. unions had joined together in this matter to put pressure on an employer. (CWA, Aug. 21, 1989)

²⁵ Grey says the Canadian locals had brought to the convention a resolution condemning the actions of a CWA/ITU representative in dealing with a strike in Nova Scotia. The resolution would have embarrassed the leadership of the union. In return for the promise of a free vote, the Canadians agreed to withdraw the resolution.

Nothing this clear-cut emerged, however. In characteristic ITU fashion, the vote was split: 1,626 in favour of leaving CWA, 1,563 in favour of staying. The difference was just sixty-three votes (CWA Sector News, December, 1993). But there was a distinct difference between the results from the large and small locals: a majority of members in the seven large locals wanted to leave; a majority of members in the twenty-nine small and medium-sized locals wanted to stay.

The next edition of the Sector newsletter declared the result “a virtual dead heat.” In December, Bahr wrote to the Canadian locals, saying those which had voted to leave CWA could do so if they wished. This infuriated Grey and his allies in the large locals, who argued that a majority was a majority and that Bahr was going back on his word. A number of the smaller locals, meanwhile, had begun lobbying to stay within CWA. In January, twenty-three local leaders sent a letter to Bahr asking to keep their affiliation, complaining that the Canadian Conference was not representative of the Canadian membership -- it was described as being “in the hands of those who are proponents of disaffiliation” -- and asking that Doug Grey be fired as Canadian director, charging that he “has not worked on behalf of CWA, but rather the CEP” (CWA Sector News, February, 1994).

In January, Canadian conference leaders invited all Canadian locals to a meeting to get an update on the sector’s dealings with the CWA and to meet leaders of the CEP. The locals that sent representatives to the meeting -- those that supported a move to the CEP -- decided to bar CWA loyalist Dave Esposti, a representative

from Sault Ste. Marie, from attending (CWA Sector News, February, 1994). Shortly thereafter, Grey says, he was dismissed as Canadian director (Interview, May 1999).

In March, 1994, nine Canadian locals voted by referendum to move to CEP. While Grey was happy with the move, he still smarts over the fact that the Canadian district of the union ended up divided between CWA and CEP. He blames CWA for changing the rules on the Canadian district after the vote was taken. But he also blames CEP for not going after the CWA more aggressively.

Fifty percent plus one is a victory, right? That's democracy, right?

. . . But the Americans didn't understand what democracy means. They changed their position. . . . They violated the CWA constitution. If we had taken legal action against them we would have won. But that was the failing of the CEP to follow through with that. (Interview, May, 1999).

SONG moves on

While the Canadian ITU locals sorted themselves out, SONG was moving inevitably toward its own declaration of independence from the Newspaper Guild.

By early 1994, the parent union had undergone some significant changes. It now had an elected Canadian director, Mike Bocking of Vancouver. It had also picked up a major new group of members at the CBC, as a result of a consolidation vote ordered by the Canada Labour Relations Board.²⁶ These workers swelled the

²⁶ The CBC had been fighting since the early 1990s for a realignment of its unions. In 1991 the Guild and two other independent producers unions at the CBC combined to form the Canadian Council of Broadcast Unions, which they hoped would serve as a joint bargaining council at the CBC. The labour board rejected that idea, ordering a consolidation vote in the summer of 1993. The Guild polled 56 percent of

membership of the Canadian Wire Service Guild five-fold to 3,500. This local, soon to be renamed the Canadian Media Guild, was the largest Canadian local and the second-largest local in the union (Guild Reporter, Feb. 18, 1994). By May, 1994, The Newspaper Guild was actively in the market for a merger partner, and the CWA had emerged as a main contender (Guild Reporter, May 20, 1994).

In an attempt to ensure the continued support of its Canadian membership, the union was drafting plans for the creation of something known as TNG Canada, an autonomous Canadian section within the Guild -- wherever the Guild might end up. The plan called for shifting responsibility for day-to-day affairs of the Guild in Canada to a Canadian national committee. TNG Canada would have its own budget and would service its own locals. Guild officials estimated in June, 1994, that about \$1 million of the \$1.5 million in dues collected from Canadians each year would stay in Canada. The Canadian director would sign off on contract settlements, in consultation with the international executive board. Use of the strike fund in Canada would be governed by resolutions established for all locals by the union's executive and conventions (Guild Reporter, June 24, 1994).

None of this stopped the SONG secession drive. While Gail Lem and her colleagues had fought hard for more Canadian autonomy within the union, by 1994

the ballots, beating out ACTRA, which won 25 percent, and CUPE, which picked up 19 percent. This meant that it was the sole bargaining agent for CBC employees who write, edit and produce CBC news programs. (Guild Reporter, July 14, 1993)

that was yesterday's story. They had had it with belonging to a union headquartered in another country. The arrival of the CWA as a merger partner did nothing to change their view that SONG should move to a Canadian union. SONG had closely followed the CWA's dealings with the Canadian ITU locals, and viewed the departure of Grey's locals as the only reasonable course of action for them. As for a possible CWA-Guild merger, "We thought the CWA was a good partner for the Americans, but not for us," Lem says (Interview, February, 1998).

In March, 1994, SONG members voted overwhelmingly to authorize their leaders to pursue affiliation talks with a Canadian union (Guild Reporter, May 20, 1994). Lem says SONG held exploratory talks with three unions: the Canadian Auto Workers union, CUPE and CEP. Her personal preference was the CAW, which had managed a difficult but successful divorce from the American United Auto Workers union in 1985. But the CAW wasn't interested. A statement to the membership from the local's Canadian autonomy committee reported that the CAW "decided against providing a new home for us" (Oct. 20, 1994). It explained that CAW President Buzz Hargrove felt that CEP "was developing into the Canadian national media-workers union that so many of us had so long sought. He felt our interests could best be met by being in the same union as most other newspaper and broadcast industry workers in the country." Talks with CUPE didn't go much farther. Lem said her local felt that union was "too public-sector-oriented" (Interview, February, 1998). That left CEP.

SONG made its move in June, 1994, asking the Guild's international executive

board for permission to leave. The board turned down the request (Guild Reporter, Sept. 23, 1994). This raised the prospect of a bitter legal battle between the local and the parent union, in which SONG's assets might become contested terrain. In August, SONG sent a letter to the Canadian Labour Congress asking the national labour federation to rule that the local had “justification” for leaving the Guild and joining another union. In her letter, SONG’s Lem wrote that TNG “may or may not be technically in violation of the Constitution of the Canadian Labour Congress at this point in time.” In any event, she said, SONG was convinced that belonging to the Guild was not in the best interests of its members. She complained that the Guild was too small to provide for the minimum service needs of the large local. (Guild Reporter, Sept. 23, 1994).

The last time the local approached the CLC with a complaint against the Guild, in 1990, it had been rebuffed. This time, after a hearing in September, the CLC’s executive committee ruled in its favour. It invoked a rarely used section of the CLC constitution to grant SONG’s request for a finding of justification.²⁷ This was not simply a symbolic victory for the local: the federation directed the Guild to assist in the local’s efforts to disaffiliate. If the Guild tried to fight SONG’s departure, it might find itself facing sanctions from the CLC (Guild Reporter, Oct. 21, 1994).

²⁷ The CLC ruling cited three sections of its constitution which it said were relevant to the case. But it did not specifically find the Guild in violation of the CLC constitution (Guild Reporter, Sept. 23, 1994).

The CLC did not offer a public explanation for its decision. But it seems likely that the growing power of Canadian unions in the upper echelons of the federation was a factor. The president of the organization at this time was Bob White, the former Canadian Auto Workers leader who had led the secession drive from the United Auto Workers and was likely to be sympathetic on questions concerning national identity.

The Guild learned about the CLC decision when a press release from SONG announcing the result was posted on the Guild's computer bulletin board by the administrative officer of the Los Angeles Guild (Guild Reporter, Sept. 23, 1994). President Dale and Canadian director Mike Bocking responded in a joint statement printed in the Guild Reporter:

In petitioning the CLC's executive committee and in a press release announcing the CLC decision, SONG President Gail Lem repeated a falsehood she has used in various other forums for several years, to wit: that TNG does not provide for its Canadian members even the bare minimum of services that a local should be able to reasonably expect from a parent union. We categorically reject claims of inadequate service . . . (Guild Reporter, Sept. 23, 1994).

The next few weeks were fraught with tension. At the time the succession drive reached its climax, SONG was in negotiations with The Globe and Mail. Workers there took a strike vote on Sept. 24, though according to Dale, SONG's leadership had not consulted with the international when it set a strike deadline (Guild Reporter, Oct. 21, 1994). On Sept. 28, SONG leaders proposed to affiliate with the CEP, and made plans for a referendum to ratify the agreement. On Sept. 29, the Guild's international executive board decided in a conference call to revoke SONG's

charter (Guild Reporter, Oct. 21, 1994). This action cast SONG free while it was in the final hours of negotiations with Thomson and before it had its merger fully in place. Lem blames Dale personally for the decision and believes there was more than a hint of malice in the action (Interview, February, 1998).

The Guild Reporter's account of the meeting shows that Dale took the hardest line against the renegade Toronto local, but was by no means alone in making the decision to revoke the local's charter. Canadian director Mike Bocking told the board he had advised the leaders of other Canadian Guild locals that his recommendation would be to allow SONG to depart. But Bocking's approach was decidedly more gentle than Dale's. In a press release issued after the vote, Bocking said the board took the decision with "regret and reluctance." He wrote, "The Toronto local has been a strong part of the Guild for decades and has served its members there well. We wish them every success in their future endeavours in their new home" (Guild Reporter, Oct. 21, 1994).

Chuck Dale was considerably less gracious. In a fax to Lem after the vote he wrote,

It is regrettable that SONG has precipitated and compelled this course of action. We hope that the members of your local will benefit as much from their new affiliation as they have throughout their long and successful relationship with TNG (Guild Reporter, Oct. 21, 1994)

Pat Bell of the Ottawa local, who was then the union's Eastern Canada vice-president, expressed concerns about what the decision would mean to The Globe and Mail

workers. Dale replied, "The strike deadline is SONG's issue" -- essentially washing his hands of the whole business (Guild Reporter, Oct. 21, 1994). As it turned out, the local reached an agreement with The Globe and Mail early on March 30, averting a strike (Guild Reporter, Oct. 21, 1994). Lem says CEP was prepared to support a SONG strike, even though the merger had not yet been ratified (Interview, February, 1998). An undated document in the SONG archives indicates that when the ratification vote came later that fall, the results were 1,300 to 50, or 96 percent in favour of the merger.

In October, 1994, Dale sent a letter to the CLC complaining about its handling of the SONG request for justification. "The short shrift given to TNG's presentation and examination of material left for you suggests strongly that this long-time affiliate of the Congress was denied the due process it deserved," he wrote (Guild Reporter, Oct. 21, 1994). He also claimed there had been "a distortion of the facts," and said the CLC executive should review its decision. And he suggested that the CLC would eventually regret the move, saying it "will create a disastrous precedent for other international unions which hope to continue to function in Canada" (Guild Reporter, Oct. 21, 1994). But none of this mattered: SONG was long gone.

Departures and realignments

Most of the Guild's attention in 1994 was focused on finding a merger partner. By the end of the year, CWA was it. Because of the constitutional change approved

in 1992, however, any merger had to be ratified by both the Canadian contingent and the American majority in the union. While the international leaders were negotiating a deal with the CWA, the Canadians struck their own “futures committee” in the fall of 1994 to study merger options for Canadian Guild members.

In early 1995, the CWA and Guild negotiators came up with an idea they thought might be enticing for all concerned: the possibility of a “reverse merger” in which the remaining former ITU members in Canada would move to TNG Canada, the evolving autonomous Canadian branch of the union (Guild Reporter, Feb. 17, 1995). This would expand the Guild’s reach in Canada, giving it a presence at newspapers in the Maritimes, for example, where the Guild had no members. It would also add 1,500 new members to the 6,000 remaining Guild members in Canada. And it would serve as an example of convergence in action -- putting together workers from two different CWA sectors into the same Canadian home. Ironically, this would create in Canada the kind of organic Guild-ITU merger that had died at the international level in the 1980s. For the CWA/ITU print sector, which had the responsibility for servicing a large number of small locals scattered across a wide terrain, some in French, the idea also made sense.

While the merger negotiations at the international level proceeded very quickly, the Canadians took some time to decide what to do. Their first question was whether it was in their interest to try to go it alone. At a meeting in January, the futures committee solved that one easily: they agreed that with just 6,000 members,

the Canadian branch of the union was simply too small to survive as a freestanding union (Guild Reporter, Jan. 20, 1995). But rather than rushing to embrace the CWA, they decided that they should study the full range of merger alternatives. They invited three unions -- the CWA, CEP and the Canadian Auto Workers -- to make presentations at a meeting in March. Guild leaders who hoped this would settle things were disappointed. After hearing from all three unions, the Canadian futures committee felt that they needed more information. According to Mike Bocking, "The group had a long discussion on Saturday afternoon. At the end, the group was not able to make a recommendation that would represent a consensus of the people there" (Guild Reporter, March 24, 1995).

Some committee members decided to seek out more details on CEP. Others were more concerned about the structure of the proposed TNG-Canada. The large Canadian Media Guild brought to the meeting a number of ideas about how to grant even more autonomy to TNG-Canada, including the radical notion that locals should be able to opt out of their per-capita payments to the international and instead reimburse the international only for services rendered (Guild Reporter, March 24, 1995). The other locals objected to that plan, feeling it would weaken both the locals and the union itself. But clearly, the Canadians were still divided on what kind of deal they felt would serve their interests in a CWA-Guild merger.

By late March, 1995, however, the Canadians had agreed on a plan for TNG-Canada. It was adopted almost immediately -- and unanimously -- by the Guild's

international executive board (Guild Reporter, Aug. 11, 1995). The plan set up TNG Canada as an autonomous body within the Guild, with constitutional jurisdiction in Canada and an affiliation agreement with CWA/TNG. It would be governed by an elected representative council, chaired by an elected Canadian director. TNG Canada would send per-capita dues payments to the Guild headquarters in Washington²⁸ at a rate to be negotiated. The parent union would send a portion of that back to Canada, and the executive council would be in charge of deciding how to spend this money (Guild Reporter, Aug. 11, 1995).

While the outlines of TNG Canada were clear, there were a lot of blanks to be filled in, especially on money. But in an apparent reflection of the divided feelings among the Canadian locals, the longest and most detailed section of the plan dealt not with how to put TNG Canada together, but how locals could opt out of it:

Whereas several Canadian locals have expressed concerns about merging with a large international union, and have shown a preference for joining a national (Canadian) union,

Be it resolved that should any Canadian local decide by a membership referendum, conducted using the international's voting rules, to join a Canadian union, that the international shall facilitate this process by the following means:

- a) Allowing locals to retain current assets.
- b) Refrain from raiding charges, trusteeship or other legal challenges etc. (TNG Canada resolution, Guild Reporter, Aug. 11, 1995)

This amounted to an escape clause for Canadian locals who weren't sure the merger

²⁸ As part of the CWA-Guild merger, the Guild would move back into Washington, into a suite of offices at CWA headquarters.

with CWA was a good idea for them.

The CWA-Guild merger and the proposal to create TNG Canada were approved by the Guild convention in June, 1995, and a membership referendum set for September. Over the summer, however, two Canadian locals -- the large Vancouver local representing workers at Pacific Press and the small local in Windsor, Ont., representing workers at the Windsor Star -- decided the time had come to go elsewhere. For the Vancouver local, there was only one real choice, says Jan O'Brien, who was then president of the local (Interview December, 1997). Local members had become increasingly convinced that they should belong to not just a Canadian union but a Canadian media-workers union, she says. With NABET, the typographers (including those at Pacific Press) and SONG already on board, that union was CEP. Vancouver's departure left the Guild leadership in an awkward position. Mike Bocking, who came from that local, was the union's Canadian director. When Vancouver decided to pull out of the Guild, Bocking stepped down and returned to his job as a reporter (Guild Reporter, Sept. 29, 1995).²⁹ For the Windsor local, the calculation was a bit different. Windsor is auto country -- and for unionized workers, the major union in town was the Canadian Auto Workers union. While this union had been reluctant to take in SONG, suggesting it look for a home in CEP, it showed no such reluctance to accept the home-town workers at the Windsor Star.

²⁹ CBC television producer Arnold Amber, from the Canadian Media Guild, replaced Bocking as Canadian director.

Windsor and Vancouver were still officially part of the Guild when the referendum on the CWA merger took place in September, 1995, but neither participated. The remaining Canadian locals approved the merger by a vote of 677 to 83. In every local except North Bay, where the vote was split, the result was strongly in favour of the merger and the creation of TNG Canada.

United, Divided

The Canadian question has been a recurring theme for newspaper unions for more than twenty-five years, and especially for the Newspaper Guild. While the ITU chose largely to ignore the issue of Canadian autonomy until joining the CWA in the 1980s -- and then handled the matter with a lack of tact -- the Guild took steps as early as 1972 to comply with the spirit of the CLC principles on self-government. It created an appointed Canadian directorship and two elected Canadian vice-presidencies and followed up with a number of refinements over the next several years. It finally made the top Canadian spot an elected position in the 1990s.

As noted at the outset of this chapter, however, for organized labour the Canadian question contains both pragmatic and philosophical elements. It deals not just with how effectively an international union can represent workers in another sovereign state, but with whether it is appropriate for a foreign-controlled union to do so in the first place. Not surprisingly, while some of the more pragmatic issues are relatively easy to resolve, those dealing with more politically charged areas, like

identity and nationalism, are much more difficult to answer.

Over the last twenty-five years or so, the “hot button” issues surrounding Canadian content in the union movement, as seen by the Canadians, have varied. In the early 1970s, the debate at the CLC and within individual unions centred on how Canadians could achieve improved democratic representation within their international unions. The focus of such discussions in the Newspaper Guild was on the appropriate role for the Canadian director -- especially on whether this individual should serve as a top-down leader, appointed by the international to run the Canadian sector, or as a bottom-up leader, elected by the Canadian membership. These were, at heart, essentially practical questions -- and were (or at least, they could have been) relatively easy to solve.

By the time SONG came up with its blueprint for Canadian autonomy in 1988, however, the concerns of at least some Canadians in the Newspaper Guild had expanded beyond pragmatic matters like the job description of the Canadian director into more difficult philosophical and political areas. It's worth noting that the SONG blueprint was not so much a complaint against the Guild as it was an uneasy statement of what that local was beginning to see as nationalist differences -- differences that might, in the end, turn out to be irreconcilable.

In the late 1980s, SONG's leaders came to feel that the labour movements in the two countries were growing farther and farther apart. After eight years of Reaganomics and union-bashing by Republican law-makers, American workers were

struggling once again with things like security of the bargaining unit. The proportion of unionized workers in the U.S. was in rapid decline: from almost 28 percent of paid workers in 1976, it had dropped eleven points to 17 percent by 1986 (Murray, 1995, 164). In Canada, security of the bargaining unit was a non-issue. And the proportion of unionized workers had not dropped: indeed, between 1976 and 1986 it had actually increased, by just under one percentage point, to 37.7 percent (Murray, 164). The Canadians, meanwhile, had their own political and economic concerns -- free trade and the privatization of previously public institutions and services, for example -- which were of less gripping interest to the Americans.

The kinds of questions the SONG document raised did not lend themselves easily to simple, pragmatic fixes. But the local nevertheless tried to come up with an answer, proposing the creation of an essentially autonomous Canadian branch of the Guild. This answer was shouted down at convention -- and ironically, the loudest voices were those of the other Canadian locals. In 1988 the Canadian locals were not prepared, as a group, to confront the issues SONG raised. At the same time, they were angry that SONG had not come to them first.

Over the next six years, as SONG slowly cut its ties with the international, it argued for Canadian autonomy on both pragmatic and philosophical grounds. In pragmatic terms, it focused on issues like whether the Guild was providing adequate servicing to its Canadian locals, or whether American leaders should have the final say on a strike call by a Canadian local, or who should appoint Canadian delegates

to the International Federation of Journalists meetings. But it was thinking about larger questions, such as whether the time might be right for Canadian workers from previously discrete parts of the communications business (newspapers and broadcast outlets) who did substantially different types of work (reporters and entertainers; technicians and professionals) to unite into a Canadian media-workers' union. It also questioned the role Canadians might play in a merged Newspaper Guild-CWA union. While SONG's Gail Lem was out front on these questions, and often took the blame from the American leadership, the other Canadian locals eventually began asking the same kinds of questions.

In summarizing the sources of Canadian dissatisfaction with international unions, Dawes (1987, 3) lists a number of problem areas: questions of autonomy; the concession-bargaining and political-action philosophies of some American unions; international union support for American interests over Canadian ones; the perception that internationals fragment Canadian labour and drain money from the country; and the problem of substantial dues increases or corruption in some international unions (3). For Canadian Guild members, in SONG and in other locals, almost all of these factors except corruption were irritants or sore spots at one point or another in the 1980s and 1990s. The Canadian members of the former ITU faced the same sorts of problems and more -- including, if not actual corruption, a sense that politics and partisanship superceded principle in decisions about the union's future.

In the end, Canadian media workers in the Guild and elsewhere came up with

two very different answers to the so-called Canadian question -- answers that resulted in a dramatic restructuring of the media unions in Canada. In both solutions, convergence was a key consideration behind restructuring the union. And in both cases, convergence was achieved more fully than in the Guild-CWA merger.

Some Canadians ended up as part of the American-based CWA union, a union that presented itself, according to President Morton Bahr, as the leader in the telecommunications, information, media and entertainment industries. Under the merger agreement with CWA, The Newspaper Guild agreed to set up an autonomous Canadian branch known as TNG Canada. In a so-called reverse merger, this branch acquired former Canadian members of the ITU, which had itself merged with CWA. As a result, TNG Canada is a vivid example of labour convergence in the communications sector. It draws together newspaper editorial and business-office workers in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia and Saskatchewan³⁰; national, regional and local broadcast workers with the CBC; wire-service reporters and editors across the country with The Canadian Press; and former typographical union members at small newspapers across the country. In addition, it represents a more thorough merger than the one at the international level. The former ITU and Guild have their own separate sectors within CWA, but in TNG Canada, they are breaking

³⁰ At the same time, the GCIU organized the pressroom (Kevin O'Connor, Interview, April, 1999)

new ground together, on everything from housekeeping matters³¹ to organizing strategy.

A key indicator of a labour union's success is whether it is able to organize new groups of workers. TNG Canada has had some significant successes in this area. It won the right to be the bargaining agent for newsroom workers at the Regina Leader Post in late 1998, after being defeated in an earlier organizing drive. Kevin O'Connor of the Leader Post Guild unit says the certification drive was limited to editorial workers; the next step is to organize other departments in the plant (Interview, April, 1999). Through one of its former ITU locals, TNG Canada has organized the newsroom at the independent Halifax Chronicle-Herald (TNG Canada Newsletter, May 1999). In early 2000, a small union of background performers in Canadian-made movies and television shows voted to join the Canadian Media Guild local of TNG Canada (The Globe and Mail, Jan. --, 2000). These organizing drives have expanded Guild jurisdiction into brand-new territory, enhancing its position as a national union. The Saskatchewan drive was particularly satisfying for TNG Canada: though it took two tries, the union succeeded in getting in at a paper that

³¹ At the 1999 CWA sector meeting in Ottawa, for example, TNG Canada worked its way through a lengthy set of proposed bylaw amendments. On an issue like the voting formula at twice-yearly meetings, the delegates found themselves trying to reconcile three conflicting sets of rules and standard: the ITU approach, the Guild approach and the CWA approach. They managed to do so, but only after lengthy debate.

suffered badly after being bought by Hollinger.³²

For Canadian Guild members, the establishment of TNG Canada offered attractions on two seemingly contradictory fronts. On the one hand, it would give Canadian workers the chance to belong to an international union of 600,000 -- a union that was bigger and more powerful than the very biggest Canadian unions. At the same time, TNG Canada was set up as a largely autonomous sector of a larger but also largely autonomous sector of the parent CWA. In other words, while TNG Canada belongs to the CWA, it has more independence than Guild members of the early 1970s ever dreamed possible. At the same time, though, TNG Canada is a relatively small organization: its membership of between 6,000 and 7,000 amounts to about 1 percent of total CWA membership. In addition, the membership is unbalanced: a single local, the Canadian Media Guild, accounts for more than half the total.

The other answer to the Canadian question was the clustering of media-workers unions within a converged Canadian union³³ -- CEP. Through its own series

³² Within days of buying the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix and Regina Leader-Post in 1996, Hollinger fired 27 percent of the workforce at the two dailies. The firings occurred *en masse* on a day critics and union activists call Black Saturday (Miller, 1998, 94).

³³ The Windsor Star local's move to the CAW is perhaps most properly seen as a local solution. Even so, CAW holds many of the same attractions as CEP. It's a large union, a Canadian union, and a union that is diversifying the kinds of workers it represents.

of mergers, CEP has picked up the formerly free-standing broadcast technicians unions, two large former Newspaper Guild locals and the biggest of the former ITU locals in Canada. It too has had significant success in organizing. In 1998, CEP became the bargaining agent for reporters and editors at the Calgary Herald and for two new groups of Toronto Star workers: 2,000 part-time carriers and a small number of workers at the Toronto Star Web site. It has also organized newspaper carriers at the Winnipeg Free Press. All were significant achievements: in Calgary,³⁴ CEP penetrated distinctly hostile territory: not just a Hollinger newspaper but a newspaper in Alberta, a place where private-sector unions are rare indeed. The Toronto and Winnipeg organizing drives added new types of workers to the fold. In British Columbia, as we will see in the next chapter, CEP has staked out a strong claim as the media-workers' union in the province.

Within CEP, the former Guild and ITU locals do not have the same kind of sector-based autonomy as their one-time parent unions have in CWA. Instead, they are all members of the shared media-workers sector. In this respect, they are in a similar situation to that of their counterparts in TNG Canada. Part of the price of joining CEP, however, was giving up a local's previous name and identity, which

³⁴ One of the unusual features of this hard-fought organizing drive was the company's decision to file a \$12 million defamation suit against the union and two of its officials (The Globe and Mail, Oct. 28, 1998). Negotiations for a first contract at Calgary dragged on for almost a year before failing in the fall of 1999. The union went on strike. As of this writing, the strike had not been resolved.

hasn't always been easy. Within CEP, however, the media workers are more of a force to be reckoned with than their Canadian counterparts in CWA. About one in seven CEP members comes from the former Guild, ITU or NABET.

Each group -- those who went to CEP and those who went to CWA -- feels it chose the best answer to the Canadian question. Nonetheless, there is regret, in both camps, that the Canadian news workers have ended up divided even as they sought to unite. And it is impossible to escape the irony that more than three decades years of work on two fronts -- making previously separate unions come together and ensuring adequate Canadian representation -- has resulted in two separate comings-together.

Chapter 8: Convergence on Command

Earlier chapters have examined how a number of labour unions that represent workers in the newspaper business have converged into unions that represent workers across the communications sector. These mergers at the national or international level have occurred largely in response to other forms of convergence -- especially convergence in ownership and technological convergence. They represented a recognition by the leaders of the unions that new circumstances required new approaches, and that by joining together, the unions would be stronger than if they remained apart. In many workplaces, however, a merger at the international level has relatively little impact on the day-to-day work life of members. Existing contracts setting out hours or work, the jurisdiction of the bargaining agent, pay scales and so on continue to be in force. And while both the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers union (CEP) encourage the locals of previously separate unions to merge with each other as part of the larger merger process, for the most part they do not require them to do so, and few do.

This chapter examines another form of labour convergence, one that has occurred at a specific worksite, Pacific Press in Vancouver. Unlike the mergers that revitalized The Newspaper Guild as a sector of the CWA and led to the creation of

a strong media sector in the CEP union, labour convergence at Pacific Press began at the instigation of the employer, not the unions. Pacific Press successfully petitioned the British Columbia Labour Relations Board for an order to consolidate all its unions into a single bargaining unit. It based its case on the idea that technological convergence had eliminated the boundaries between previously separate forms of work. As a result, the jurisdictional boundaries of the various bargaining units no longer applied. The seven unions at Pacific Press fought the consolidation, and fought hard. In the end, however, they came to see consolidation as an opportunity to undertake further convergences of their own: a chance to strengthen their position not just at Pacific Press but across British Columbia.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the reasons Pacific Press sought the consolidation of its bargaining units. It then describes how the unions fought the consolidation but failed to halt it. Eventually, they were forced to vote on which union would represent them all. The resulting election ended up pitting the two unions that took in branches of The Newspaper Guild -- CEP and CWA -- against each other. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the winner of that contest, the consolidated CEP local, seized on the situation. Given lemons, as the saying goes, the CEP local made lemonade, merging with another British Columbia CEP local to create a converged local representing most media workers in the province.

The Pacific Press consolidation case is unique among media unions. It could only have happened in British Columbia, where provincial labour law encourages

consolidation of bargaining units.¹ And of all newspaper employers, Pacific Press seemed to be the one most likely to press for consolidation, given its unique corporate history and its lengthy record of difficult and divisive labour relations. Nevertheless, the Pacific Press consolidation offers lessons, to both employers and workers, about how the forces of convergence may play out at the level of the shop floor.

Background to consolidation

With union density² of 38.7 percent, British Columbia is one of the most strongly unionized provinces in Canada. In addition, unions in British Columbia have been among the most successful in Canada in organizing workers in two areas of strong employment growth -- trade and services (Murray 1995, 168). Not surprisingly, labour relations are serious business in the province -- and at Pacific Press, which produces the Vancouver Sun and the Vancouver Province. Workers at Pacific Press have been unionized for a long time.³ As workers at the biggest dailies in the biggest

¹ The only other media union consolidation of note occurred at the CBC, following a decision made by the Canada Labour Relations Board.

² Density is calculated on the basis of union membership and the number of paid workers, excluding pensioners and the unemployed. British Columbia ranks third in Canada in union density, behind Newfoundland (53.3 percent) and Quebec (40.6 percent). Neighbouring Alberta, by contrast, has the lowest density at 26.4 percent (CALURA, 1993, 25, reprinted by Murray 1995, 193).

³ For example, the Vancouver Typographical Union was chartered in 1888 (Harold Funk interview, December, 1997).

city of the province, their contracts have been a bellwether for industrial relations in the rest of British Columbia (Joint council response, Sept. 6, 1995, 5).

Vancouver was one of six cities chosen for study by labour relations researchers for the Royal Commission on Newspapers (Hébert et al, 1981).⁴ Under the revealing title “Vancouver: a history of conflict,” researchers described labour relations in the province as “perhaps the most militant in Canada” and said labour relations at Pacific Press included “all the elements found in many historic struggles: genuine mistrust between the parties; changing technology affecting time-honoured tradition; and conflict between unions over jurisdiction” (Fraser and Angel 1981, 24).

At the time of the Kent commission study, Pacific Press had an unusual corporate structure, and an even more unusual bargaining structure. The company was the product of a 1957 joint agreement between Southam, which owned the Province, and Sun Publishing, which owned the Sun. Control of the Sun was sold to FP Publications in 1964, then to Thomson Newspapers in 1980 and later that same year to Southam (Hébert 1981, 30). This meant that between 1957 and 1980, companies that were competitors elsewhere operated as partners in Vancouver.

⁴ The goal of the research was to determine whether there was a correlation among concentration of ownership, newspaper closings and labour-management relations. It used an industrial relations model that saw technology, along with the legal framework and the product market, as forming the context in which negotiations occur. The study concluded that labour relations “interact with other factors affecting the fortunes of newspapers, and have been of major consequence in many cases” (Hébert, 177). Vancouver was not, however, one of those cases (176).

On the labour side, the unions began bargaining as a joint council a few years after the formation of the company (Fraser and Angel 1981, 28).⁵ Joint councils are rare in Canadian industry (Chaykowski 1995, 232), but the longevity of the council at Pacific Press suggested a degree of stability. At the time of the Kent commission study, the council included six of the eight groups of unionized workers at Pacific Press. The largest of these was a local of The Newspaper Guild, an industrial union. The others were traditionally known as craft unions:⁶ the mailers and compositors, represented by two different locals of the International Typographical Union; the pressmen and wholesalers, represented by one local of the International Printing and Graphic Communications Union but with two certifications; and the engravers, part of the Graphic Arts International Union. The electricians and machinists, representing eight workers each, were not part of the council (Fraser and Angel, 25).

The council, which had no constitution and no bylaws, evolved out of the practice of unions sending observers to each other's negotiations. Between contract

⁵ The company says the joint council was founded in 1967 by five of the nine unions then at the plant (Pacific Press, Application for consolidation 1995, 27).

⁶ The distinction between craft and industrial unions in newspapers has never been absolute. In smaller communities especially, craft unions have organized workers outside their traditional areas of jurisdiction. For example, newsroom employees at the Kingston Whig-Standard were organized by the ITU, while those at the Cornwall Standard-Freeholder were organized by the pressmen's union, the GCIU. In larger centres like Vancouver, where economies of scale ensure that a local will be big enough to thrive, the distinction between bargaining units organized by industrial and craft unions has traditionally been much clearer.

negotiations, it met on an irregular basis to discuss issues that cropped up, such as jurisdictional problems or disputes with management over clauses common to all contracts. Bargaining issues at Pacific Press fell into two categories: “commons,” or matters affecting all the unions, and “peculiars,” which were specific to a particular union. The council of unions met in advance of collective bargaining to develop its list of “commons” and its chairs negotiated the “commons” with the company. The individual unions all turned in their “peculiars” at the same time, but negotiated them individually (29). In general, the “peculiars” were settled first. Sometimes, however, a particularly difficult “peculiar” showed up on the “commons” table.

The Kent commission study looked at negotiations between 1970 and 1980 and found a decade of “almost continuous conflict” (32), much of it centring on technological change. The most serious episode was a strike-lockout that lasted from November, 1978 to June, 1979. Writing not long after that bitter dispute, Fraser and Angel noted a significant level of union mistrust of management, a tendency to use third parties (mediators and arbitrators) to resolve disputes, and a lack of consensus within the informal joint council on the one hand and the company on the other. They took the company to task for spending a minimum amount of time or effort on improving labour relations, and for its traditional pattern of seeing bargaining as a matter of enforcing, or trying to enforce, strict legal rights. That pattern had since changed, they added. They also wrote that the turmoil within the newspapers was related to the culture of work and the particular workplace:

Management has guaranteed that no one will lose employment as a result of technological change. But the unions fear a loss of pride, skills, and tradition, among other things. Management appears not to have recognized that there is more to working than having a guaranteed job (47).

The Royal Commission report concluded that Southam's purchase of Thomson's half-ownership in Pacific Press in August, 1980, would likely have beneficial effects on labour relations: "It will be easier for management to reach and implement decisions than it was when two companies shared control" (Hébert 1981, 172).

Fifteen years later, labour relations were still difficult. According to the company, the source of the problem was a labour-relations structure that was frozen in the pre-computer age. In 1995, the company proposed a solution: a radical restructuring of its unions. It asked the B.C. Labour Relations Board for an order to consolidate all seven⁷ bargaining units, representing 1,400 workers, into the Vancouver Newspaper Guild. This local⁸ already represented about 800 workers, or more than half the staff at Pacific Press. The bargaining units that Pacific Press wanted rolled into the Guild were: the pressmen's union, Graphic Communications

⁷ In the years between the Kent report and the consolidation application, one of the bargaining units had disappeared. The truckers, who were members of the pressmen's union but were certified separately, lost their certification when the company decided to contract out delivery.

⁸ Partway through the Pacific Press consolidation case, the Vancouver local left the Newspaper Guild (which was then merging with the CWA) and joined CEP, changing its name to CEP Local 115-M. For the sake of simplicity, it will be referred to here as the Guild -- the name by which both the employer and the other unions referred to it during the consolidation case.

International Union Local 25-C, representing 192 employees; the mailers' union, Communications Workers of America Local 14003, with 201 members; the compositors' union, CEP Local 226, with 126 members;⁹ the engravers' union, part of GCIU Local 525-M, representing thirty-two employees; the electricians' unit, part of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 213, with eighteen members; and the machinists' unit, part of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, Vancouver Lodge 692, also with eighteen members.

Pacific Press argued that in a time of technological convergence, where computerization has resulted in a highly integrated workplace, the existing collective bargaining structure was not just out of date but was dysfunctional. And as the company pursued plans for a major investment in new production facilities, it saw no signs that things would improve.

Why consolidation?

The company began work on a consolidation application in 1993, after the provincial labour relations board handed down a landmark decision approving consolidation of unions at Island Medical Laboratories Ltd. (BCLRB No. B308/93). Pacific Press saw this ruling as evidence that the board would take a "more

⁹ The mailers and compositors' units were both originally part of the ITU, which merged with the CWA in the 1980s. In the aftermath of the split result in the referendum on Canadian autonomy described in Chapter 7, the mailers ended up staying with the CWA. The compositors left to join CEP.

contemporary stance towards rationalizing bargaining structures,” in line with recent amendments to the province’s Industrial Relations Act (Pacific Press, Application for Consolidation of Bargaining Units, 1995, 10). During the late stages of collective bargaining in 1993-94, company officials visited Jan O’Brien, the president of the Guild local, at home and showed her a draft of the consolidation application, which sought to have the Guild designated the sole bargaining agent¹⁰ (Interview, December, 1997.) But the company decided to wait until after negotiations ended before filing its application.

The application drew heavily on the IML decision, which set out three factors to examine in such cases: whether one or more bargaining units are no longer appropriate; what constitutes an appropriate bargaining unit for workers with that employer; and whether there is evidence of actual or potential industrial-relations instability. In determining what would be an appropriate bargaining unit, the board would take into account a number of factors: similarity of skills, interests, duties and working conditions; the structure of the employer; the degree of functional integration of workers; geography; the current collective-bargaining scheme; and the practice of collective bargaining in the industry (Application, 9).

Pacific Press argued that following a series of technological developments

¹⁰ O’Brien said she was stunned by the move. “My response was, ‘Holy shit! If you want to prolong bargaining, that’s how to do it!’” She told other members of the joint council about the visit, so they would not be surprised when the company filed the application (Interview, December, 1997).

beginning in the 1960s, there was no longer any rationale for the current collective bargaining structure. The roots of that structure lay “in turn-of-the-century divisions based on the skills, trades, and crafts that were necessary to operate the hot metal-based technology of that era” (1). But in recent decades, “more efficient processes” began to transform the newspaper and the work of news workers. “Computerization and automation diminished the need for craft skills. The skills needed in many areas of the operation converged and met on the computer” (27). Pacific Press became a workplace where operations were functionally integrated and interdependent, where traditional distinctions between the bargaining units had been eliminated “in fact and in practice,” and where employees “increasingly use the same or similar skills or interdependent skills when using computers” (25). This “departs radically” from the pre-1960s newspaper on which the bargaining unit structure was based (13).

But while the labour process in the newspaper had been transformed, the application said, the collective bargaining structure had not:

The current jurisdictional boundaries between unions are arbitrary and artificial. Work that historically required a high degree of skill and training has been modified or eliminated. The jurisdictional boundaries that separate the bargaining units cannot be justified when the units use similar or identical skills, technology is shared across jurisdictions and production is computer-driven and highly integrated (12).

The company said the unions’ response to technological change was to negotiate protection for their members and to “compete over jurisdictional claims to the changed work” (32). The result has been “industrial instability which is not likely

to change unless the bargaining structure is rationalized" (32).

The Pacific Press application set out a chronology of technological change at the newspapers, beginning in the 1960s. Chapter 4 of this work summarizes those changes. The application also described, department by department, how in the age of the computer, employees from the various bargaining units had become functionally integrated. This description offers a vivid, shop-floor-level account of how computerization had changed the labour process as of mid-1995.

In the advertising department (14-16), Guild staff interacted with both compositors and engravers. Guild sales staff and Guild graphic artists worked with customers to design ads. Members of the compositors' unit stationed in the advertising department set the text of these ads in type, while members of the engravers' unit scanned in the graphics. Guild artists and compositors both used computers linked by an Ethernet network to compose display ads. Guild advertising assistants delivered ad components between the engraving and composing departments. Some ads came into the advertising department ready for publication. Guild staff in the advertising department received these ads, flagged them with notes on where and when they should run, and sent them to the compositors, who pasted them up. Classified ads came in by telephone, fax, mail, or over the counter. Guild ad-takers handled ads sold by telephone or over the counter, typing the ad into the computer system. Compositors handled ads that arrived by mail or fax. Once an ad was in the computer, compositors or Guild ad-takers could call up the copy and make

corrections. Guild computer operators in the data processing department “paginated” the classified ads, sending full and complete pages to the composing room electronically. In a separate area of the advertising department, known as the “make-up” section, Guild staff slotted the display and classified ads into a “dummy,” which directed the layout of the next edition of the newspaper. Once the dummy was made, pages were sent electronically to the editorial department. Pacific Press added that Guild make-up staff were in daily contact with the pressmen to discuss the laydown of the newspaper and to co-ordinate the location of colour ads with the configuration of the press.

Pacific Press publishes two newspapers, the Sun and Province. While the newspapers share business office and production functions, each has its own newsroom. The company application noted (16-17) that Guild members did most of the work in the editorial departments, though each newsroom had up to two compositors permanently on staff. Reporters typed their own stories into the computers. Some columnists filed their copy from another location by modem. If a writer was away from the newsroom and had to submit a story by telephone, a compositor typed it into the computer. The compositors also set in type letters to the editor or other bits of text that arrived on hard copy. Once in the computer, articles were transmitted to editors electronically, over an Ethernet link. The editors prepared the copy for publication, using software that showed the editor exactly what the page would look like in print. At the time the application was written, the newspapers were

not fully paginating photographs. Wire-service photos, which came in electronically, were placed on the dummy electronically. But local photographs, taken by Guild photographers and developed in a Guild photolab, were selected by Guild editors who worked with members of the engravers union on the sizing and quality of pictures. Guild clerical staff and photo technicians delivered pictures to the engravers, who used electronic scanners to manipulate the photos to the proper size.

In 1995, the compositors performed two primary jobs: typing text into the computers and pasting up newspaper pages. The application said (17-18) they interacted with a number of people from other bargaining units. These included Guild reporters, editors, advertising and promotions staff. Guild production clerks coordinated the production of display ads by compositors. The secretary in the composing room was a Guild member, reporting to the compositors' general foreman, who was part of the compositors' bargaining unit. Compositors also worked closely with the engravers about corrections, type, colour, and quality of images on pages. The engravers produced screened half-tone images, transforming photographs into a form that could be reproduced on the press. Compositors aligned the half-tones on the page, pasted in display advertisements and integrated colour pictures with text in preparation for the production of printing plates.

The engravers, who processed images rather than text, created the plates used to print the newspapers and worked on the creation of display ads containing graphics and pictures. This meant they worked closely with members of the Guild, compositor

and pressmen's bargaining units (18-20). They received photographs from Guild photolab staff, consulted with Guild editors about photographs and sent them low-resolution pictures for pagination. They worked in the same area with Guild ad production workers, and communicated with compositors about the content and production quality of ads. They delivered half-tone images to the compositors for pasteup. The engravers also had on-going interaction with the pressmen about the quality, delivery and replacement of printing plates. The engravers received completed, pasted-up pages from the compositors. They used a photographic process to create a negative of the page and transfer it to a plastic printing plate. For colour pages, they had to make four negatives¹¹ and corresponding plates.

The pressmen operated and did some maintenance on the printing presses. According to the application, they had ongoing contact with a number of other bargaining units: engravers, Guild members, mailers, machinists and electricians (20-21). They received printing plates from the engraving department and often consulted with engravers about missing plates or plates whose quality was poor. They followed instructions from Guild makeup staff about the laydown for that day's newspaper. They also worked regularly with other Guild staff in the maintenance department and some business departments. The pressmen also kept in constant touch with the mailers about the quality and flow of the production, letting them know whether the presses

¹¹ They used computer software to separate a colour image into four components: cyan, magenta, yellow and black, creating a plate for each.

must be slowed or stopped. Finally, they worked extensively with the machinists and electricians. The former were in charge of installing, maintaining and repairing equipment; the latter were in charge of work on electrical or computer equipment.

In the mailroom, mailers loaded and operated machines called inserters that put flyers and supplements into the newspapers as they arrived by conveyer belt from the pressroom. They also operated stacking machines that counted, stacked and wrapped bundles of newspapers, preparing them for loading onto delivery trucks. The application said (21-22) that in addition to working closely with pressmen on the flow of newspapers from the press, mailers worked with Guild maintenance staff, Guild business office staff and Guild data processing staff, who produced labels for the bundles. They also worked with machinists and electricians.

The reader sales and service department, more commonly known as the circulation department, was staffed by Guild members (22) who generated lists, counts and other information to create the mailers' bundles and to set the waybills of delivery truck drivers. The company contracted out its trucking to other companies. Home delivery was also contracted out.

The maintenance department employed machinists, electricians and Guild janitors, painters, carpenters and air conditioning workers (22-23). The machine shop was next to the pressroom at the Vancouver plant. The company estimated the machinists spent 50 to 60 percent of their time in the pressroom. The electricians also had a shop next to the pressroom, but they worked in all areas except the composing

room, where the compositors had jurisdiction over maintenance work.

Finally, most workers in the business departments (human resources, accounting, information systems, editorial services, security and promotions) belonged to the Guild (23-25). The data centre was staffed by Guild members, compositors and mailers. In almost every one of these departments, Guild members interacted with workers from another bargaining unit.

The portrait of a workplace painted by the Pacific Press application differs substantially from descriptions of newspapers in the pre-computer age (see Chapter 4), where news and advertisements moved, almost in lock step, from one department (and one group of unionized workers) to the next, and where each set of craft workers used its own set of tools and relied on its own mastery of craft knowledge to do its part in transferring ideas to ink on newsprint. At Pacific Press, new technology had broken up the production chain, collapsing stages into each other. Everyone used a common tool -- a computer terminal networked to other computer terminals -- and everyone interacted, in greater or lesser degrees, with other groups or workers.

The company concluded that while the functions of the different bargaining units had been substantially integrated, the fact the bargaining units were not had resulted in a significant degree of industrial instability. The application expressed frustration over how long it took to negotiate collective agreements, especially in 1993-1994, when the company was putting together plans for a \$200 million investment in a new downtown office building and a new printing plant in suburban

Surrey that would print both newspapers.¹² The company originally proposed that the unions negotiate a two-year extension of their existing contracts. That failed. The company proposed the use of a facilitator to help in the negotiations. That eventually failed too. In May, 1994, the company met with the council of unions to discuss its long-term goals. It announced that it needed the stability of long-term contracts to get through the major rebuilding of the plant. In June and July, while the joint council continued to bargain “common” issues, a number of unions brought forward their “peculiarities.” In July, the company offered buyouts to engravers and compositors, whose work would be further eroded by pagination. By October, three unions had indicated they were willing to strike over “peculiarities.” By the end of that month, all the unions had taken strike votes. The pressmen, who had said they were willing to strike over manning issues for the new presses, walked out on November 1 for a “study session.” A ten-day strike/lockout ensued. Eventually, the company and the unions reached agreement on five-year contracts (64-69).

In addition to difficult collective bargaining, Pacific Press complained about lengthy jurisdictional disputes or skirmishes over which union was responsible for a particular task. In the pressroom, three such disputes were unresolved at the time of the application. Perhaps the most significant -- certainly, the nastiest -- dealt with who could push the button to start or stop the presses during repair and maintenance work.

¹² At the time of the application, Pacific Press printed the Sun at its Vancouver headquarters and the Province in a plant it opened in Surrey in 1991(41).

The pressmen claimed that starting and stopping the presses was solely in their jurisdiction, and that no one else could push the button. The electricians argued they had the right to start and stop the machinery to test for safety. The employer sided with the electricians, saying this was a safety issue and that the Electrical Code of Canada and workers' compensation board regulations should prevail. The dispute played out in months of stress and tension in the pressroom. The electricians and machinists (who carried out maintenance work) complained that the pressmen physically intimidated them while they were working in the pressroom. They feared the situation might escalate to violence (50). The dispute peaked in an ugly shoving match just before Easter, 1995, in which a pressman threw a rag and a magazine at the company's labour relations manager, then pushed him and the foreman (50-51).

In the 1970s, as the actual and potential impact of computer technology began to be seen, the unions and the company had worked out a mechanism for resolving jurisdictional disputes. The company argued that by the 1990s, the mechanism was out of date. It had resulted in artificial jurisdictional boundaries that bore a diminishing relationship to the traditional boundaries based on craft expertise:

As the work has become less distinct, less skilled and more homogeneous, it has become increasingly obvious that the problem is no longer one of parsing increasingly similar work amongst the existing bargaining units. . . . Multiple bargaining units now represent employees performing the same or similar work in a functionally integrated operation. They compete for the same technologically changed work. The differences inevitably boil into jurisdictional and collective bargaining disputes (Application, 55).

The company concluded that the existing bargaining structure “is dysfunctional and urgently requires rationalization” (102). It had impaired Pacific Press’s ability to compete in the marketplace, and to respond to technological and organizational change in the industry. For Pacific Press, the solution was straightforward: the unions had to be consolidated, and they had to be consolidated under the umbrella of the industrial union that represented the largest group of Pacific Press workers, the Guild.

The unions’ response

The unions had known since the contract negotiations of 1993-94 that the company was working on a plan to consolidate them. When the company filed its application in 1995, they quickly came up with a strategy on how to respond. They decided to ask the Labour Relations Board to divide the case into two distinct phases. The first would address the question of whether the existing structure was, as the company contended, dysfunctional. If the board sided with the unions and determined that it was not, that would be that. If the board sided with the employer, then the case would move into a second phase to decide what would be an appropriate bargaining structure for Pacific Press. The board agreed to this two-step process.

The unions also decided to argue the case on two levels -- as a joint council and as individual units. Interestingly, this tactic was similar to the unions’ approach at collective-bargaining time, with the joint council handling the “commons” and the individual unions responsible for the “peculiar.” Behind the show of unity, however,

some union leaders felt they were fighting a losing cause.¹³ In addition, it was clear to everyone that defending the status quo meant putting the best face on a labour-relations picture that the unions (as well as management) knew had been contentious. Nonetheless, the union leaders firmly believed that the company, in proposing consolidation, was really seeking a collective bargaining advantage. The best way to fight it, separately and collectively, was to argue that while bargaining at Pacific Press may have had its rough spots, the system worked.

The joint council's response conceded that there was a "superficial, first-impression appeal to the employer's application" (Joint council response, Sept. 6, 1995, 1) but said that what the employer saw as a sign of failure -- the collective bargaining record -- was actually a sign of success. It argued that a dysfunctional structure would be characterized by a number of things: rogue units with noticeably richer collective agreements; a mishmash of expiry dates; short duration contracts; and the absence of a jurisdictional dispute resolution mechanism.

How do the collective agreements at Pacific Press stack up? Do the contracts reflect these telltale signs of bargaining structure instability? The answer is, no. The wages, benefits and job security provisions in all contracts are essentially the same. . . . All contracts have a common expiry date. . . . All contracts have the identical provision for resolution of jurisdictional disputes. Do the collective agreements at Pacific Press reflect instability? Quite the contrary, these agreements represent a strong, stable collective bargaining regime (4).

¹³ Harold Funk of the composers local says that before the hearings began, his local had legal advice that the company would prevail. Bob Jennings of the engravers' union says he had the same view (Interviews, December, 1997).

As for the company complaint that it took more than a year to negotiate the five-year contracts reached in 1993-94, the joint council response was brusque: "So what" (4). That round of bargaining dealt with some particularly hard issues. Just before talks began, the company contracted out delivery and laid off more than 100 drivers represented by the pressmen's union. "Understandably, the pressmen wanted to try to do something for the drivers in collective bargaining; understandably, protection against contracting out of jobs became a prime concern for all employees and their unions" (4-5). Pacific Press then opened collective bargaining by announcing it planned to eliminate at least 200 jobs. It demanded long-term contracts in a workplace where one- or two-year contracts had been the norm, and it "took its traditional run at the pressmen and mailers' job security provisions"(5).¹⁴ Finally, the council argued that much of the delay in negotiations was a result of the employer's uncertainty over plans for the Surrey production plant.

These are extremely difficult bargaining issues. Moreover, all the contentious issues were created by employer bargaining demands or issues. Under the circumstances, can the employer complain that negotiations took a long time? That new five-year collective agreements were achieved with only a ten-day strike must be considered a remarkable collective bargaining success (5).

Because the bargaining structure had been able to produce a fair and workable contract, the joint council argued, the employer had to have another reason for applying for consolidation: "to try to shift the balance of bargaining power in its

¹⁴ The submission noted that shortly after signing the contract, the company reduced the flyer business and laid off forty-four mailers (5).

favour with the ultimate goal of negotiating lower cost labour contracts” (6). The joint council suggested that in pursuing this goal, Pacific Press was using as its model the food industry. It noted that the Great Canadian Superstore had opened with what was in effect a two-tier wage structure: \$20 an hour for long-service employees; \$10 an hour for new employees. “This is where Pacific Press wants to go” (7).

The council said that consolidating the work force into the industrial Guild would destroy the craft unions, the ones that traditionally had “bargaining muscle” because publishers could not put out a newspaper without them (8). It argued that Pacific Press had been campaigning for years to break these unions, and had used new technology as a tool in this campaign. On almost every major change in technology, it said, the company had assigned remaining work to the Guild rather than to a craft union (8). As a result, Guild membership went up, from 650 in 1978 to 800 in 1995, while membership in the compositors’ union went down, from 319 to 114. The council also rejected the employer’s contention that it wanted to be freed of the jurisdictional barriers so it could retrain and move employees around to make best use of the new technology. “The employer has used the new technology to eliminate the trades, not upgrade them. All initiatives for combined skills and combined work groups have come from the unions. The employer has consistently killed these initiatives” (10).

The council also disagreed with the idea that new technology had created an integrated work force. Although there had been “some mixing of skills at the

interface,” it argued that the vast bulk of Pacific Press employees worked in clearly distinct jobs. “An ad sales person is never going to run the press; a mailer is unlikely to be sent to photograph a fire” (14).

Finally, it rejected out of hand the idea that the employer should tell workers which union to join.

On this application, the company names the Guild as its choice of bargaining agent. Needless to say, the choice of bargaining agent is for the employees, not the company. The company’s purpose in naming the Guild as the successor bargaining agent is first and foremost an attempt to stir up trouble, to split the united front of the joint council (9).

It argued that consolidation would force skilled trades people to give up their union, the body that certified their skills. This in turn would cost them their mobility rights -- the so-called travel cards which allow craft workers to change jobs yet retain their craft status. In addition, they would lose their ability to take a stand on issues that mattered deeply to one group but less so to others.

Collective bargaining with this employer is bare knuckles reality. All the employer needs to break the pressmen is the ability to contract out the press work. The employer is betting that the necessary contracting out provision can be pushed through the majority. In the amended bargaining structure, the pressmen lose the ability to say, ‘no.’ Now they can shut the place down. In an all-employee unit, the pressmen have only the power of reason and moral suasion. How far does that get you in the crunch of collective bargaining (13).

The council noted that consolidation was part of the newspaper environment in Canada. On the employer side, chain ownership continued to expand. “In response,

the unions have restructured" (15), through the creation of fewer but larger unions¹⁵ and through new arrangements at individual workplaces.¹⁶ The labour board, it said, should allow the Pacific Press bargaining structure to continue to evolve on its own. "No matter how painful, sometimes torturous, the route, evolution finds the better path" (15).

The joint council position offered a show of solidarity among unions with a long record of working together. Nonetheless, it offered glimpses into the tensions that existed between the more militant craft unions, like the pressmen, and the Guild. These tensions would grow as the case proceeded, eventually derailing the effort to prevent consolidation.

In addition to the joint council response, each of the seven unions came up with its own response to the proposal. Many of these struck similar themes to those in the joint council submission. But they also expressed the specific interests of the individual unions, along with their own interpretation of what the consolidation application meant.

The Guild rejected as "ludicrous" the employer's contention that industrial strife has worsened at Pacific Press since the settlement of 1993-94. It added that

¹⁵ It referred to the merger of the former ITU with CWA or CEP, and to the merger with CEP being undertaken by the Pacific Press Guild local (15).

¹⁶ At smaller papers, it said, "the trend is toward representation by one or two unions" (15).

Pacific Press's chronology of that round of negotiations was "extremely one-sided," arguing that the employer's conduct "was a cause of industrial unrest, delay and frustration of collective bargaining. The employer's bargaining goals zig-zagged all over the map. This was one of the major reasons for protracted bargaining" (Guild response, September 1995, 4-5). The Guild added that despite all the difficulties, the joint council had maintained a united front in 1993-94 (5) and that a deal was reached through direct bargaining, with the help of a mediator. "What we have in the Pacific Press application is an employer complaining that bargaining has been tough and that the unions have exercised their legal right to strike" (6). But consolidation won't necessarily prevent strikes in the future. "No matter what the bargaining structure there will still be common concerns of job security, technological change, wages and benefits that have led to strikes and lockouts in the past" (6-7).

The Guild submission also said that merging all the unions into one would not be an easy task. The Guild constituency alone represented more than 225 job classifications, covering a broad range of administrative, editorial and advertising employees whose working conditions were markedly different from those in the craft unions (9). The craft unions played a role in apprenticeship training and operated hiring halls; the Guild did neither (8). In addition, the union argued that the fact the members of the various bargaining units interacted with each other did not constitute functional integration (9). It also rejected as "laughable" the idea that workers using the same tools -- such as printers connected to computers -- shared a job duty. "The

work outputted will vary dramatically. It could be anything from an accounting report to a news story. All employees may use the telephones but that does not mean their job duties are shared” (10).

The submission from the composers questioned Pacific Press's sincerity in arguing that consolidation would allow the company more flexibility in retraining and reassigning workers whose jobs were eroded by new technology. It said the history of how its members fared since negotiating job guarantees in the 1970s shows otherwise. The composers originally expected that job guarantees would encourage retraining. That didn't happen.

The employer has steadfastly refused to retrain and redeploy the printers. . . . Cynically, the employer has turned the job guarantee into a weapon: you are redundant; there is nothing for you to do; don't you feel useless; wouldn't you rather go elsewhere; how about a buyout? (Compositors' response, September 1995, 2)

The submission also acknowledged that most jurisdictional disputes at Pacific Press had been between members of its union and the Guild, and that the composers had consistently lost. Nonetheless, the composers lived with the joint council and with the disputes resolution mechanism. The only exception was the so-called “spec ads” dispute, over the company's decision to use Guild graphic artists to put together ads “on spec” for sales representatives to show prospective advertisers. If the advertiser liked the idea, the “spec ad” would become the real ad. The composers' refusal to handle these ads in 1993 “is properly viewed as an aberration,” the union

said (3).¹⁷ It added that this assignment of printers' work to graphic artists had nothing to do with the introduction of new technology and therefore did not fall within the jurisdictional dispute resolution mechanism of the collective agreement.

The union concluded by pointing out that consolidation at Pacific Press would have ramifications beyond Vancouver. For its local, it would mean the immediate loss of 114 of its 1,400 members, and the loss of the standard-bearing contracts at Pacific Press. "If (CEP Local) 226 is developing as a potential vehicle for broader-based representation in the newspaper industry, the Board's intervention on this application may very well kill that potential, scattering the experience acquired to date" (6).

In the shortest individual response, the engravers' union noted that since 1984, Pacific Press had lost only eleven days to collective bargaining disputes. "We submit that eleven days lost in eleven years is not evidence of an unstable collective bargaining history" (Engravers' response, September 1995, 1). It argued that the company got much of what it wanted in the 1993-94 round of bargaining: "a five-year contract, buyout provisions coupled with reduced manning and a number of its other demands" (1). The jurisdictional disputes mechanism, meanwhile, "has not inhibited the company's introduction of extensive and virtually continuous technological

¹⁷ The submission noted that this dispute got caught up in internal union politics over whether to move to CEP or to stay with the rest of the ITU in the CWA. Resolution of the union's successor rights took "considerable time and several board decisions." As a result, the arbitration of the spec ads dispute was delayed and simmering frustrations boiled over (3).

change” (2). In sum, “we submit that this is not a situation calling for the labour relations board to alter the current bargaining structure” (2)

The electricians argued that unlike other trades, their job at Pacific Press had not changed with the move from hot metal to cold type. “Our job was and is the repair of electrical powered and controlled equipment” (Electricians’ response, September 1995, 1). But another form of convergence -- between the electrical and electronics industries -- had affected the work of electricians. The union said it had responded to this convergence by providing training in computer maintenance, installation and repair (1). Instead of capitalizing on the reskilling one of its unions had undertaken on its own, however, Pacific Press “has made every effort to maximize contracting out of electronic and computer work” (2). The submission argued that this experience with the employer shows it has little interest in retraining or reassigning workers. “It is hard for this union to imagine this employer going out of its way to crosstrain workers to safeguard employment” (2).

The submission also accused the employer of trying to provoke jurisdictional disputes (5), including the so-called “button” dispute (6); of misleading the unions about their plans for new presses (5); and of refusing to grant the electricians established “commons” provisions for years after they joined the joint council of unions (8). It argued that the one-day electricians’ strike in 1991 was the result of company provocation: Pacific Press sought one-sided concessions from the electricians, who refused to make them. The union saw the strike as “a wakeup call”

that convinced the company to refer the question to arbitration (8). "It is unacceptable for the company to paint itself as the trapped victim of a dysfunctional system. . . . It is difficult to reconcile the employer's stated desire for common contract terms with their continuing behaviour at the bargaining table" (8).

The machinists argued that each bargaining unit had a separate community of interest "which has survived the technological revolution" (machinists' response, September 1995, 1). The jurisdictional boundary of the machinists union was largely defined by the nature of the work, which was unlike that of any other unit. Though the crafts worked alongside each other, each performed separate and distinct duties. In addition, the machinists expressed concern that consolidation would mean the absorption of the machinists by an all-employee union, severing their links with their craft and their union, which had certified their status as craft workers.

While the other unions took some pains to avoid criticizing each other in their submissions to the board, the pressmen were less temperate. After expressing support for the joint council submission, the pressmen's submission said,

The pressmen take the position that their unit is a craft unit and therefore is an appropriate unit even if other units at Pacific Press are inappropriate. There is no basis to destroy a viable, functioning bargaining unit because another unit in the workplace is inappropriate. Such action amounts to throwing a baby out with the bath water (pressmen's response, September 1995, 1).¹⁸

The submission accused Pacific Press of seeking to be "delivered to a

¹⁸ The statement did not specify which other unit or units the pressmen saw as inappropriate.

corporate utopia” (1). It took issue with the assertion that the unions were the reason for the delay in bargaining in 1993-94, saying that Pacific Press’s uncertainty over which presses it would buy meant that manning had to be negotiated three times (2). The submission also rejected the idea that the so-called “button” dispute was a jurisdictional issue, saying that giving electricians the right to start and stop the press contravened the collective agreement.

The pressmen’s chief argument, however, rejected the idea that technology had blurred craft work. The pressmen contended there was little or no functional integration between them and the other employees, and no overlap of duties (4). Pressmen worked in a separate area of the building, with its own showers and washrooms, and ate in a section of the cafeteria reserved specifically for them (9). Despite technological change, the submission argued, some aspects of press work had not changed in seventy-five years (3). The chief difference between the work in the 1990s and in the hot metal days was that modern printing plates were lighter (5). “The distinct skills of the pressmen’s craft remains as vibrant and distinguishable today as they were centuries ago,” it said (4), adding that the pressmen were “a true craft union” (8) and one that was critical to the success of the newspaper business:

It is the pressmen who, through the union-administered apprenticeship program, provide the continuity of skilled trades for the industry in general and Pacific Press in particular. . . . There is no basis to believe that the Newspaper Guild or CEP would be able to provide the teaching skills and expertise that is currently being provided by the GCIU in order to preserve the continuity of supply of skilled tradesmen (11).

Finally, the mailers' union, after arguing that there was no evidence of bargaining structure instability in the mail room (mailers' response, September 1995, 1), contended that in its area of jurisdiction, the company's real goal in seeking consolidation was to allow for contracting out. It noted that in the 1970s, the company took on more flyer work and hired more mailers.

Having sought and received the union's co-operation in expanding and upgrading the mailroom work force, the company changed direction. Suddenly, journeymen mailers were too expensive. Southam set up a new company, Flyer Force, to take over the flyer business across Canada. In Vancouver, the union organized the Flyer Force employees. The Flyer Force closed (3).

At the beginning of 1995, the submission noted, Pacific Press cut the flyer work and laid off forty-four mailers (5). It argued that Pacific Press was determined to break the union (4) and sought the removal of contract restrictions against contracting out work in the 1993-94 negotiations. The union refused.

The company's new scheme is straightforward. The company has set up distributorships, pulling work out of the Guild. The Guild had challenged the company's action. If the company is successful in setting up the distributorships, the next step is to contract out the mailroom work to these distributorships (4).

The mailers said Pacific Press needed the labour board's help, through the consolidation application, to break the ban on contracting out. "From the mailers' point of view, the company's application has nothing to do with the bargaining structure; everything to do with bargaining strength, the employer's drive to eliminate proper mailroom jobs at Pacific Press" (4).

In their individual statements, the unions voiced more than simply their opposition to the consolidation application. They also catalogued a range of fears and frustrations over the meltdown and reconstitution of the labour process in the digital age. The statements from the compositors, pressmen and mailers are especially interesting in this regard, since all three deal with the question of technology and skill. The compositors, who had been deskilled by the introduction of computerized typesetting in the 1970s, were still angry twenty years later that their hard-won job guarantees had not translated into meaningful work at Pacific Press. But the compositors seemed, overall, resigned to their changed situation. Their own local, they pointed out, was an industrial union at smaller papers, not simply a craft one. Indeed, their statement presented compositors as not really a trade at all but rather as “the link between the front end and the back end of the newspaper, between editorial and sales and the trades that produce the paper” (compositors’ response, 5).

The pressmen, by contrast, clung ferociously to the notion of craft integrity and insisted that new technology had had virtually no impact on the pressroom except to make the plates lighter. This denial of the impact of technological change was remarkable, given that “manning” in the pressroom was such a significant issue in the 1993-94 negotiations. In addition, unions and management both knew that the new presses Pacific Press had purchased included software that automatically set ink and water levels -- one of the more skilled aspects of the pressman’s job (Application, 45). The pressmen’s statement was almost arrogant in its insistence that it was viable as

a stand-alone union, even if others at Pacific Press were not. Indeed, it was eerily reminiscent of the kind of statements made by ITU leaders in the 1960s and 1970s: claiming strength and appealing to the tradition of craft integrity even as new technology rendered much of their work obsolete.¹⁹

The mailers were considerably less confident than the pressmen about the integrity of their skill, and less confident than the compositors about the centrality of their work to the newspaper production process. Their fear was that as the final group of unionized workers to handle the newspapers, they were the most vulnerable of all to contracting out. Indeed, they had some grounds for this fear: until the early 1990s, truck drivers had been the final group of unionized workers in the production chain at Pacific Press. A few years before filing the application, the company decided to contract out delivery, and in 1995 it began cutting back on flyer work handled by the mailers. With the possibility of transmitting circulation data electronically -- to anywhere, not just to the mailroom -- and with the increasing depth, flexibility and sophistication of that data, the mailers were concerned that automation and the company's desire for cost savings meant that their future was on the line.

Defining what is appropriate

The company and the unions hashed out the nuances of their arguments during

¹⁹ As we saw in Chapter 5, the ITU's stubborn adherence to the past was a factor in the 1983 failure of its merger with The Newspaper Guild.

several several days of hearings spread out over many months in 1995 and 1996. Not surprisingly, one of the touchiest issues had to do with the status of pressroom work. The employer contended that pressroom work had become deskilled, and that pressmen, rather than being skilled craft workers, had become operators. Bob Osipa, head of the pressmen's union, reacted with anger to this claim. "We are crafts, in my mind, and very talented and skilled crafts" (Testimony, Feb. 2, 1996, 108).²⁰ The company eventually withdrew that argument.

On May 2, 1996, the B.C. Labour Relations Board handed down its first decision in the case. It ruled that the existing collective bargaining structure was inappropriate for Pacific Press (BCLRB No. B146/96, Decision, May 2, 1996).

The board said the key factor in the Pacific Press case was the notion of industrial instability, on two fronts. The first had to do with the administration of collective agreements -- including jurisdictional disputes and what it characterized as "inflexibility" in adapting to continuous technological change. The second related to the collective bargaining process itself, including "the potential for industrial

²⁰ Osipa charged that the consolidation application was really an attempt to break his union:

And once they've got their ducks in order, if you might say that and they are successful at consolidation, they've got now a situation where they will have a major proportion of the number of votes in the Guild unit, which aren't all craft-rated, and they threaten that, 'Look it, accept what we tell you or we're going to take you down. We're going to scab you. We're going to run.' (108-109)

If that were to happen, he said, the pressmen's and mailers' wages would be up for grabs (109).

instability through whipsawing,²¹ as well as the history of strikes at Pacific Press” (Decision, 21). It said that the frequent and protracted jurisdictional disputes at Pacific Press arose “directly from the multiple bargaining unit structure” (22). For example, the “spec ad” dispute had been going on for more than three years, it said, and the “button” dispute in the pressroom had resulted in potentially unsafe tensions in the workplace. Further developments in technology would only make the situation worse, it said:

Historically, the changing technology in the production of newspapers has cut across craft lines and telescoped functions and skills. We are satisfied that will continue with the move to full ‘pagination’ and the new, computer-driven technology of the new presses. As a result, we do not see any lessening of the jurisdictional disputes on the horizon. Quite to the contrary, the employees and the Unions themselves (who likely know best) are engaged in a competitive ‘grab for the grey’ or staking out their ‘turf’ to secure and protect their respective jurisdictions in the face of the new technology. (25)

Jurisdictional divisions have stood in the way of the retraining and reassignment of workers, it said (26). The board praised an effort by the Guild and the employer to retrain Guild employees whose jobs had disappeared or been eroded by technological change. “Although not a ‘love-in’ [as again described by the vice-president of human resources of the employer] the committee has been successful . . . That success, however, was again only within the Guild’s unit. That limitation, of course, is the crux of the issue before us” (26).

²¹ The term refers to the practice of one union demanding concessions equal to or greater than concessions gained by another union.

On the question of collective bargaining, the board found that the “peculiar/commons” structure had been problematic. It noted, for example, that when the employer agreed to a Guild “peculiar” on same-sex benefits, the same issue then showed up as a “commons” demand; when it agreed to a “peculiar” with the machinists on resoling workboots, the mailers unit then put forward resoling as a “peculiar” of its own (27). The board ruled that the voluntary nature of the joint council and the lack of formal rules governing it had aggravated the potential for whipsawing.

The board said it was satisfied that the employer was not seeking a collective bargaining advantage. It also dismissed the unions’ emphasis on the distinctive nature of their particular crafts. “Where industrial instability arises out of a multiple bargaining unit structure, as it has in the present case, the unique craft skills of the separate bargaining units will not preclude the Board from finding the bargaining unit structure to no longer be appropriate” (29).

The ruling put an end to decades of collective bargaining history at Pacific Press. By determining that the collective bargaining structure was inappropriate, the board had given Pacific Press half of what it wanted -- an end to what it saw as a “dysfunctional” multi-union structure held over from an earlier era. For the unions, the decision was a stinging defeat, though not an entirely unexpected one. They had based their argument on the idea that despite occasional difficulties, the multi-unit structure and the joint council of unions worked well enough. When the board

disagreed, the unions were left with a choice: they could try to come up with a new structure of their own, or they could give in to the employer and go for the Guild. Given the depth of their conviction that the employer's true agenda was to achieve a collective bargaining advantage, they concluded that the second option was not for them. But what kind of new structure could they develop? That question consumed the attention of the unions, separately and jointly, in May and June, 1996.

Five of the seven unions agreed that the best approach to protecting the diverse interests of the various unions would be to draw up a set of rules to formalize the joint council. They began meeting to come up with a constitution for this council, which they believed should have a simple and straightforward structure operating on majoritarian principles. But the five unions were unable to convince the other two -- the pressmen and the mailers -- to sign on. These two unions had come to a different conclusion about how future collective bargaining at Pacific Press should be shaped. The company's restructuring plan would result in Pacific Press running two plants in two distinct places and with two distinct functions. Editorial, advertising and administrative work would stay in downtown Vancouver, and the presses and distribution system would be in suburban Surrey. Given this, the mailers and pressmen argued, the most sensible approach was to have two unions: the Guild representing what they called "pre-press" workers in Vancouver, and another union, selected by a vote of production workers, representing people at the Surrey plant. In a June 11 submission to the labour board, the pressmen's union argued that there was

no "community of interest" between the two groups of workers. "The interests of the pre-press employees compared to those of the production employees are completely different," it said (pressmen's submission, June 11, 1996, 4), adding that several other large Canadian dailies operated on a similar structure.²² The letter said this approach was the most appropriate structure because it would take into account a number of so-called community of interest factors identified in the original IML decision: "similarities in skills, interests, duties and working conditions; physical and administrative structure of the employer; functional integration; and geography" (8). It concluded by restating its objection to joining the Guild:

The pressmen submit that a single, all-employee unit represented by the Guild is not appropriate. Such a single, all-employee unit would have a devastating effect on, and cause irreparable damage to, the rights and interests of employees currently represented by the pressmen and other unions (5).

Jan O'Brien, who was president of the Guild local during the consolidation debate, said later that most of the other unions thought the two-union scheme was unworkable and would hurt all the unions in the long run (Interview, December, 1997). Representatives of the Guild and the other four units, still hoping they could

²² At the Toronto Star, a Guild/CEP local represented pre-press employees while production employees, with the exception of electricians and machinists, were represented by the GCIU. At the Edmonton Journal, pre-press workers (and some production workers) were non-unionized. Unionized production workers, however, belonged to the GCIU. At the Montreal Gazette, representation was split along pre-press and production lines by the Guild and the GCIU. At the Ottawa Citizen, all pre-press employees belonged to a Guild/CWA local; production workers belonged to the CEP and the GCIU (pressmen's submission, June 11 1996, 6-7).

get the pressmen and mailers to change their minds, applied to the B.C. labour minister on June 5, 1996, asking that the labour relations board consider whether a council of trade unions would be an appropriate bargaining agent for Pacific Press.²³ The letter from the unions suggested that a formal joint council would accomplish a number of things: ensure stable, orderly and simplified collective bargaining; avoid unfair bargaining advantage by either side; protect the employer from jurisdictional wrangling; maintain the mobility of specialized craft workers throughout the larger newspaper industry; maintain the democratically chosen union ties of the workers; promote a co-operative and harmonious climate among workers; allow for co-operative approaches to lateral mobility and retraining with the company; accommodate future voluntary mergers of unions; and fit the current policy trend favouring larger and all-employee unions (Letter, June 5, 1996, 2).

The letter acknowledged that the pressmen and mailers had decided not to go along with the formal joint council idea. It said that if the board determined that the joint council was the appropriate choice, then those two unions should be given a choice: to join the council, "or, in the alternative, to put their locals forward as alternatives to the council in a vote of the entire combined bargaining unit to determine which of the three bargaining agents will represent the all employee bargaining unit" (5). If the council won such a vote -- as it almost certainly would,

²³ The application was filed under Section 41 of the British Columbia Labour Code.

given the numbers²⁴ -- “it is the position of the applicants that the current membership of these two local unions should be administered by one of the member unions in the council” (4).

The board rolled that application into the existing proceeding. During the weeks between the first decision and the start of the second stage of the proceeding later that spring, the unions and management engaged in a series of alternative dispute resolution meetings, aided by a board mediator. The goal was to allow all sides to air their concerns and work out a satisfactory arrangement.

One of the key issues in the joint-council idea was how to work out a formula for strike votes and contract ratifications that would be based on majoritarian principles but would at the same time respect the individuality of the various unions. The five unions came up with a number of variations, but ultimately were unable to convince the pressmen and the mailers to go along with the joint-council idea. The board noted later that, “after engaging in what must have been difficult, heartfelt discussions with the assistance of a board mediator, the unions found that they could not agree upon a proposal to put to us for a council of trade unions under Section 41” (BCLRB No B292/96, Decision, Aug. 30 1996, 5).

O’Brien says the stumbling block was that the pressmen and mailers would not go along with any plan based on majority rule. “They would not concede that a joint

²⁴ The pressmen, with 192 members, and the mailers, with 201, were vastly outnumbered by the 800-plus members of the Guild alone.

council had to be based on numbers. They wanted a veto” (Interview, December, 1997). Submissions to the labour-relations board from the pressmen and mailers support this view. The unions ranked the two-union idea as the best option, and a formal joint council as a second choice. Any such council, however, should be based on a “one union, one vote” principle (mailers’ submission, June 19, 1996, 1; pressmen’s submission, June 19, 1996, 2). This structure would give smaller unions far more clout.

The pressmen also reacted with anger to the section of the joint-council application dealing with what to do if the pressmen and mailers did not want to join the council. The other five had suggested that these unions would have to put themselves forward as alternatives to the council in a vote open to all employees. If they lost, their membership would be administered by another local.

To advance such an alternative would not only destroy the pressmen as an entity with significant and distinct characteristics, but also inevitably lead to constant strife between employees of the employer. . . . Further, to force a large number of employees against their wishes, to become members of another trade union, which is not their freely chosen representative, can only lead to further disharmony amongst members of the entire bargaining unit. For these reasons, the pressmen strongly oppose a council of trade unions which could contemplate such alternatives (pressmen’s submission, June 19, 1996, 2).

The employer, meanwhile, remained steadfast in arguing that the Guild was the appropriate choice. It drew on a technological argument to reject the two-union proposal of the pressmen and mailers: “we remind the panel that the mailers and pressmen seek to divide the work force along geographic lines. Pacific Press

geographically is truly located on the information highway” (Employer’s submission, June 19, 1996, 7). As for the formal joint council proposed by the other five unions, the employer found it significant that two unions had refused to sign on.

The unions themselves have proven incapable of a viable relationship in the past and where now a significant portion of the unionized work force rejects the workability of a joint council, the board ought to reject imposing a process so lacking in support and evidence of possible success (15).

Pacific Press also argued that the council had a “fundamental” flaw: under a council of unions there would still be jurisdictional disputes, a situation that would “perpetuate, not eliminate, a fundamental source of industrial instability” (15). During the alternative dispute resolution process, however, the employer made one important concession: it agreed that the 1,400 employees could vote to choose which union would represent them (BCLRB No. B292/96, Decision, Aug. 30, 1996, 6). Given the numbers, it was likely that management’s choice, the 800-member Guild, would win anyway.

Once it became clear during June, 1996, that there was no way the unions would agree to either a seven-member joint council or a two-union split based on geography, and no way the employer would support either idea, the unions all had to move to their fallback positions. For the five unions advocating the joint council, that position was a single bargaining agent, to be chosen in a vote of all union members. The pressmen and mailers again staked out a different position: they decided that a joint council was the way to go after all, but it should be a joint council of three

unions, not seven. They proposed that the Guild be given 50 percent of the employees. The remaining 50 percent would be divided between two other unions, chosen in a run-off vote among the pressmen, the mailers, the engravers, the electricians and the machinists (Decision, Aug. 30, 1996, 8). Given the numbers, the pressmen and mailers would probably win this election -- and would each end up with roughly twice their existing membership. The mailers argued that the four smaller unions were moribund and not viable (Decision, Aug. 30, 1996, 27) and therefore should be rolled into viable unions. The five unions opposed this plan as well. By the time the hearings began in late June, they had withdrawn their support for the idea of a joint council.

The inability to come up with a new joint council defined and deepened the cracks in the solidarity of the former members of the joint council. The five unions, which hoped that a new council would preserve the best of the old structure, ended up siding with the employer. They argued that if a joint council was not in the cards, then a single union was the only viable option. Opposing them were two craft unions, the pressmen and mailers, who feared that the council would cost them the ability to control their own destinies. These unions stubbornly dug in their heels, insisting on standing their ground even as it eroded from beneath their feet. They were unwilling to make the kinds of compromises that would have retained much of what they liked about the old joint council. Instead, they staked out positions no one else would back.

When the second round of hearings began in late June, two ideas were on the table: the employer's original proposal for a single unit, amended to allow for employees to choose it in a company-wide vote; and the pressmen's and mailers' proposal for a three-party joint council, which none of the other parties would endorse.

The labour board ruled that a joint council of unions would not be an appropriate choice, in large part because there was a "fundamental, major disagreement among the unions as to the advisability and workability of such a joint council" (Decision, Aug. 30, 1996, 33). It added that it was "not a stretch" to suggest that the unions' inability to agree on the structure of such a council reflected the kind of divisions that led to the industrial instability identified in the first decision (3).

As for the specific proposal by the mailers and pressmen, the board said that the strong opposition of the other five unions meant that the council would probably be unable to resolve the jurisdictional problems that were a source of industrial instability. "As well, technology has, and will continue to, cut across craft lines. There will thus be a continuing need to overcome the jurisdictional orientations and accommodate retraining and relocation throughout the workforce" (33-34). It said that the work processes of the newspaper were increasingly functionally integrated. This reinforced the principle set out in the IML ruling against multiplying the number of bargaining units.

The board ruled that a single bargaining unit, as requested by the five unions

and the employer, was the appropriate structure for Pacific Press. The board gave all the unions two weeks to decide whether they wanted their names on the ballot. In the meantime, it would accept submissions on how to work out the voting procedure.

The campaign

The night the second labour board decision came down, the pressroom on downtown Granville Street that printed the Sun was an unhappy place. The pressmen learned, through reading an article being printed in the newspaper that night, that the board had decided in favour of consolidation. This meant that, in effect, they had lost their union. That night, the presses had twenty-four web breaks, or ruptures in the paper loaded on the press.²⁵ The company foreman felt this was an "extremely high" number (BCLRB B320/96).

The pressmen received their copy of the decision on September 3. The union's night chapel chair, Peter McQuade, distributed a letter dated September 4 to members of his bargaining unit calling the decision "devastating" and "an especially cruel blow" (4). He urged the pressmen to write to members of the provincial legislature, saying a request for political intervention "may be our last chance to save our voice at Pacific Press and most of all the conditions we all enjoy" (4). He also posted a

²⁵ The company's general foreman explained that web breaks can be caused by a fault in the newsprint, a mechanical problem or operator error. A number of the breaks were noted in pressroom records as "running breaks," a phrase that meant there was no particular reason for the break (3).

copy of a letter he sent to former B.C. Labour Minister Moe Sihota. It said the labour board decision “makes us slaves of Pacific Press” and accused the company of trying “to bust certain unions” (4). That week and the next, the number of web breaks averaged of 8.73 a day, compared with 4.07 a day between June 15 and July 3.

The company complained that the web breaks and a rash of minor incidents of vandalism²⁶ amounted to an illegal strike and filed a complaint with the B.C. Labour Relations Board. It argued that the union was attempting to exert retribution and that the web breaks were “concerted acts of mischief” (6). In testimony before the board, pressmen's union leader Bob Osipa and John Savage, the local's secretary treasurer, rejected that idea. In fact, they said, the union had told the pressmen to remain calm.²⁷ The board's decision on the complaint said “both admitted that during collective bargaining disputes in the past the union had deliberately disrupted production, however, they have not encouraged that type of action now” (5). Mark J. Brown of the labour board, who heard the case, found that some of the incidents the company complained about had no impact on production, and were therefore disciplinary matters. He added, “It is not surprising that the union members were

²⁶ The acts of vandalism alleged by Pacific Press included: a metal ring found in the press blanket, which caused damage that cost four hours and \$150 to repair (4); vandalism of new markup sticks (4); damage to a pane of glass in the pressroom's “quiet room” (5); and hot water left on in the showers (5).

²⁷ Osipa testified that he told a membership meeting Sept. 8 that the union was appealing the decision. He advised the workers not to panic or disrupt production, but warned that they might have to live with the result of the decision (4).

upset with the decision. Osipa, Savage and McQuade all testified that members were unhappy, disappointed and frustrated” (8). He ruled that the increased number of web breaks were caused by operator error, “either by inadvertent poor work performance caused by poor morale or by deliberate error of some individuals” (8). But this did not constitute the concerted activity that would define a strike.

The case offers insight into the state of affairs at Pacific Press in the weeks before the consolidation vote. The pressroom workers were unhappy and angry -- some of them angry enough to commit minor acts of sabotage. Many members of other unions were also unhappy: they had lost their second consecutive decision before the board and were now entering uncharted territory. A consolidated union was a new and unfamiliar idea. No one knew for sure whether it would work, or how. The company, meanwhile, was apparently in an intolerant mood, unwilling to put up with any mischief and quick to see signs of discontent as an illegal strike.

It was in this tense atmosphere that the leaders of the Pacific Press unions had to make a crucial decision: whether to put their names on the ballot.

Only four unions represented significant numbers of workers at Pacific Press: the Guild with more than 800, the Pressmen and Mailers with about 190 each, and the compositors with 125 members. The Pacific Press compositors were, however, a small unit in a large local: the 1,400-member CEP Local 226-M, which represented newsroom and production workers at a number of papers outside Vancouver. Harold Funk, who was local president at the time, says CEP 226 leaders gave serious thought

to putting the local on the ballot (Interview, December, 1997). “We thought that if we could take all the non-Guild members and some Guild members, 226 could prevail.” But they knew that was a long shot, so they decided instead to throw their support behind the Guild, which was a fellow CEP local by this time.

The Guild had known all along that its name would be on the ballot. The mailers, another former ITU group that had stayed with the CWA rather than moving to CEP, and the pressmen, who were members of the GCIU, decided to run too. This made the election a three-way race -- ironically, among the very unions the pressmen and mailers had identified a few months earlier as the most viable unions at the plant, and as their favoured candidates for a joint council.

The vote was set for October 31 and November 1.

The campaign the unions waged in September and October developed into a hard-fought though ultimately uneven contest between the Guild local and the mailers’ union. This made it a contest between Canada’s CEP union and the international CWA -- the two unions chosen as merger partners by units of The Newspaper Guild.

The Guild local’s campaign, outlined in a large, glossy edition of its Inside Story newsletter (October, 1996), was based on the idea that it was “the logical choice.” The newsletter’s main story drew on workers from a number of departments who explained why they felt the union was the best choice:

For many, it stems from the Guild CEP 115-M intervening in their personal dispute with the company. For others it comes from looking at larger issues such as combatting technological change or corporate concentration of the media. And some find they support the Guild/CEP 115-M for a combination of personal and political reasons (2).

One of the workers quoted was reader sales and service representative Jim Lepper, the brother of John Lepper, who was head of the rival mailers' union.²⁸ Lepper said the Guild went to bat for him in 1993, when the company wanted to lay him off. The Guild took the case to the labour board and won. "I never missed a day of work. That's one reason I will support the Guild," Lepper was quoted as saying. (2)

Another story included statements of support from leaders of the machinists, electricians, engravers and composers' unions. It quoted electrician Al Sear as saying,

It's the only union on the ballot qualified to represent Pacific Press employees. Today, labour relations battles call for far more than just workplace disruption. The Guild/CEP 115-M has shown it's effective in handling the challenges union members face in these times (3).

Composer Lewis Hansen was quoted as saying the Guild local was in the best position to weather technological change: "The mailers and the pressmen will be further reduced by attrition," he predicted (3).

In an editorial headlined, "Let's show PacPress we stand strong," local

²⁸ The newsletter noted that Jim Lepper started at Pacific Press out of high school in 1976, was a shop steward for ten years and was then in his second year on the local executive. "He developed his union roots from his father, Stan, who was a long-time president of the Mailers' Union" (2). The newsletter did not mention his brother John Lepper.

president Jan O'Brien made a plea for unity and solidarity: "A strong vote for the Guild will send the company the message that we're united -- that we are ready to stand up for every employee no matter what job they do or which department they work in" (4). The newsletter also included an interview with Brian Payne, CEP's chief officer in Western Canada. He was quoted as saying that media corporations have learned that CEP can solve problems and finish a deal. They have also learned that CEP can take on a company in a labour dispute and in a public campaign (4).²⁹

The mailers' campaign drew heavily on the unit's connection to the CWA, the former Newspaper Guild and the old ITU, through the international merged union and through the fledgling TNG Canada. It argued that by choosing the CWA local, Pacific Press workers would end up in a union that would be, according to the headline of one of its campaign bulletins, "better than the joint council" (Special Election Bulletin #9, Oct. 30, 1996): "CWA/TNG is going to take the model of the Joint Council and make it even better. Your new bargaining team will have representation from every area of the workplace to ensure the interests of one department are not sacrificed for another," it promised.

During the campaign, the mailers distributed a newsletter headlined, "Ottawa Guild Members Reject CEP" (Election Special Extra, Oct. 25, 1996). It reported on

²⁹ CEP was "standing up to Conrad Black" by sponsoring a court challenge to Black's acquisition of Southam, he said (4).

the results of a referendum campaign at the Ottawa Citizen, in which members of the Ottawa Newspaper Guild local decided to stay with the international rather than switch to the CEP. The bulletin quoted Arnold Amber, head of TNG Canada, as saying, "It was a great victory because for the first time the Guild took the opportunity to properly debate the merit of the Guild versus CEP. With that, the members chose the Guild. This will help CWA/TNG Canada get even stronger across the country." Some in Vancouver interpreted the comment as a dig against the Guild/CEP local. By contending that the Ottawa vote was the "first time" the Guild had "properly" debated the relative merits of the CWA and the CEP, the letter implied that something was amiss in the Vancouver local's move to CEP.

The mailers followed this up with an open letter from Amber³⁰ dated October 29 that described the consolidation vote as "an opportunity for journalists at the Sun and the Province to resume their ties with their counterparts in newsrooms, news agencies and broadcast outlets in Canada and indeed throughout the world." Amber listed a number of benefits of CWA membership, including lower dues, better strike benefits and access to the CWA's defence fund, which was 10 times as big as CEP's. "And working with the CWA we are now better able than ever to take on international

³⁰ Amber said later he felt it was important to get involved in the campaign. He said he had been unhappy that the Guild international let the Vancouver local go without a fight in 1995. The consolidation campaign offered an opportunity for genuine debate. He added, however, that he had not expected to win the vote (Interview, March, 1998).

media companies such as Conrad Black's Hollinger." Amber's letter echoed some of the same themes as an October 5 open letter from Bill Boarman, head of the CWA's printing, publishing and media workers sector -- the former ITU. Boarman wrote that TNG Canada's autonomous governing structure allowed Canadian publishing and media workers to make decisions without the intervention of union leaders who were more concerned about chemical plants and pulp mills than newspapers and computers. (This was a slap at CEP, which included pulp and paper, chemical, energy and communications workers.) Boarman also said that TNG Canada combined the traditions and expertise of two of the oldest and most successful unions at Pacific Press: The Newspaper Guild and the former ITU.

This campaign angered some leaders of the CEP locals, who felt that the mailers were not only trying to usurp the Guild local's position but were portraying themselves inaccurately as a Canadian union. CEP 115-M circulated a newsletter dated October 15 with a question and answer section addressing the matter directly:

Q - Why is another union calling itself the Guild?

A - . . . The mailers are a local of the CWA. So now the mailers are using a merger of two American unions to try to use our name and reputation to confuse voters. Make no mistake, the Vancouver Newspaper Guild is CEP 115 on the ballot.

William Saunders, secretary treasurer of CEP local 226-M, circulated a letter dated October 8 with the headline: "Can the CWA be trusted to live up to its promises? Look at their record!" It said his local's experience with CWA "reveals a very different union from the one presented in the literature CWA is circulating

seeking to represent all employees at Pacific Press.” He reminded employees that the CWA president had reneged on his promise to respect the results of the close 1995 Canadian referendum on whether the Canadian ITU locals should remain with the CWA. This not only broke a promise to Canadian workers, he wrote, but violated CWA’s own constitution. When the composers local voted to join CEP, he added, CWA put Local 226 under trusteeship and applied unsuccessfully to the labour relations board for control of more than \$300,000 in assets. “CWA consistently broke promises to our local and to their Canadian membership,” he wrote.

In the end, the CWA campaign made some headway, though not enough to be decisive. When the votes were counted, the Guild/CEP local received 631 votes (Guild Reporter, Nov. 18, 1996). This was a majority of the 1,133 ballots cast, but about 200 fewer than its membership at Pacific Press. The mailers’ local, whose membership was about 190, got 306 votes. This meant that more than 100 members of other locals voted in favour of the CWA affiliate. The pressmen’s union got 196 votes, apparently sweeping the pressroom but nowhere else. The Guild Reporter wrote, somewhat ungraciously, that CEP “barely received enough support to claim a majority” (Guild Reporter, Nov. 15, 1996). It also quoted Amber as complaining that the CEP local continued to refer to itself as “the Guild” when it no longer belonged to the former Newspaper Guild.

From consolidation to convergence

From Pacific Press's point of view, the outcome of the vote was perhaps the best of all possible worlds. It ended up with exactly what it sought in its application to the labour board: a consolidation of its seven bargaining units into the Guild local. In addition, the closer-than-anticipated vote on consolidation suggested a lack of solidarity that might work more in the company's favour than in the union's. Interviewed a year after the vote, Andy Smith, the head of human resources at Pacific Press and the chief advocate of consolidation, said he was happy with the outcome. The transition from seven unions to one had gone "very smoothly -- more smoothly than we thought it would" (Interview, December, 1997). Jurisdictional wrangling had come to an end. There were no disputes over work assignments. The compositors had moved into the advertising department, where they were indistinguishable from other workers. "Under the old regime we'd still be in hearings as to whether it was engraver work or compositor work," he said. Smith also said the fact that Pacific Press workers were now in one big union did not worry management. "The bigger union may not be the stronger union on specific issues," he explained. In the past, each of the smaller unions could call a strike over their own special concerns. "With a big union you've got to have the entire bargaining unit buy in. For example, if you have a manning issue in the mail room, they've got to be able to convince an ad taker that it's important enough to go on strike for."

If Smith was upbeat about how smoothly the transition had occurred, members

of the consolidated local were considerably less enthusiastic. According to Jan O'Brien, who as president of the Guild local became president of the consolidated local, "it's been a very difficult transition" (Interview, December, 1997). O'Brien and her staff faced the task of integrating the old and proud (if slightly battered) craft units into a local that was vastly different from what they were used to. The craft unions had to give up elements of their craft culture -- something they did with reluctance. In addition, they had to adjust to being in a local where women outnumbered men -- a common feature of Guild locals but not of mailers' or pressmen's locals.³¹

John Lepper, head of the mailers' local, agreed that the transition had been tough. "You're ripping apart something like 50 years of history," he said (Interview,

³¹O'Brien and CEP staff representative Joie Warnock described two connected disputes concerning chapel rooms as an example of how difficult it was to bridge the cultural divide. Chapel rooms are where craft union foremen organize the schedules and work assignments of their members. For some time, the pressmen's chapel room in Vancouver had been decorated with photos of sexy women, which prompted complaints from some women on staff. The Guild local president asked the pressmen's leader, Bob Osipa, to take down the pictures. He refused. At about the same time, the company announced that there would be no chapel rooms in the new production building. The company argued that chapel rooms were a remnant of the previous craft structure. Since the production workers were now part of the Guild, which had never had chapel rooms, there was no need for chapel rooms in the new facility. The local took the case to the labour board, which eventually declared it a collective bargaining issue. But O'Brien said she was deeply aware of the irony of her situation: "While we're fighting with the company to keep the chapel rooms, we're also having an internal fight over girlie pictures in the chapel room" (Interview December, 1997). Eventually, a Guild staffer went into the Vancouver chapel room and took down the pictures, said Bob Osipa (Interview, February, 1998). He added that no one put them back up.

December, 1997). But while he blamed the company for putting the unions in this position, he also had some harsh words for CEP. Lepper said he thought the national leaders of CEP should have called a meeting after the vote to discuss how to proceed. Instead, he said, they left it to the local to handle the transition. "I was told to come to the CEP (local) office and turn over everything to them." That was far from easy -- especially since relations between the CWA mailers and the CEP Guild had been strained over the campaign for the consolidation vote. Lepper said that for the first year, the CEP local was "a fractured union" and some of its new members felt they weren't represented "properly or fairly -- or at least not as they traditionally were."

But a number of developments beginning shortly after the consolidation vote started to turn things around. In late 1996, Mike Bocking, a long-time Guild activist locally, nationally and internationally, went out for a beer with the leaders of the craft side to talk about how to build the consolidated union. O'Brien had decided she would not seek re-election as local president after her term expired in late 1997. Over the next several months, Bocking and the craft workers' representatives met several times to plan for the local elections and to discuss improvements in the staffing and administration of the local office. They eventually came up with a "unity slate" of candidates that drew on people from all the previous members of the joint council. The slate, headed by Bocking, swept the election.

The local also made some changes to its staff -- including hiring former pressmen's president Bob Osipa to work with production workers at the new printing

plant (Bocking interview, February 1998). By the end of 1997, a number of Pacific Press union leaders who originally saw consolidation as a devastating defeat had decided it could be turned to their advantage. For example, John Lepper of the former mailers unit said he was delighted with the outcome of the Local election: “We have a unified group of people on council, from virtually every area of the company. I believe we have a group of officers who won’t make Andy Smith happy at all. The people he sees as most troublesome are in charge of the large union” (Interview, December, 1997). Lepper also said he believed that in the long run, the consolidation would turn out to be a better choice than the two-union setup his union and the pressmen originally proposed. “Ironically, today I think the union would have been weaker had that happened,” he said. Bob Osipa of the pressmen’s unit was even more enthusiastic about the consolidation a year after it occurred. “People are getting comfortable with consolidation. People are united. We look at it as a situation where the company may have made a mistake” (Interview, February, 1998).

By early 1998, the Pacific Press local had not only adapted to the idea that consolidation was a positive development, it had decided to undertake a further consolidation, this time with CEP Local 226. This local had represented Sun and Province compositors but its real power source was outside Vancouver, where it represented editorial and production workers at a number of smaller newspapers. The Pacific Press consolidation had presented Local 226 with a problem: its leaders, people like Bill Saunders and Harold Funk, would no longer be in the local. The

solution was to bring the two locals together. They came up with a merger agreement early in 1998 (Mike Bocking interview, May, 1998). It was ratified easily by the memberships of both locals in the spring and summer of 1998. The merged local chose a new name and an optimistic number: Local 2000 -- the Media Union of B.C. Suddenly, Pacific Press workers were part of a 2,500-member local representing workers all over the B.C. mainland.³² Bocking said other media locals were following the new local's actions closely and had put out feelers about joining too. "There's the potential that we could have 3,500 members in two or three years," he said.

For any local, the biggest test is whether it can succeed in negotiating a contract with the employer. The consolidated local at Pacific Press took on that test in late 1998, as the five-year contracts negotiated in 1993-94 expired. As had long been the pattern at Pacific Press, the negotiations were time-consuming and difficult. The union served seventy-two-hour strike notice at Pacific Press in late June, 1999, after winning a strike mandate by an overwhelming 93.5 percent (The Globe and Mail, June 28, 1999, A5). It eventually set a strike deadline of noon July 7. At precisely that time, the employees walked out and set up picket lines outside the downtown headquarters and the Surrey plant. Just two hours later, the strike ended

³² In mid-1999, CEP 2000 had contracts with the following: Surrey Now, The Trinity Group of Newspapers, Broadway Printers, Mitchell Press, The British Columbia Provincial Council of Carpenters, The Cowichan News Leader, College Printers, NOW Newspapers (in Westminster, Burnaby, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody and Coquitlam) and the Salmon Arm Observer.

with a tentative agreement providing wage increases of 3, 2 and 3 percent over three years (The Globe and Mail, July 8, 1999). The newspapers didn't lose a single day of production.

The fact the union was able to win a strike vote by such a high margin was indicative of how the consolidated local was able to build solidarity. The fact it won a contract without a lengthy strike is perhaps best seen as a sign that solidarity had been translated into bargaining power. The cover story of the next issue of local's newsletter said that the most significant achievement of the bargaining was "the unity achieved by members of Local 2000" (Insider, August, 1999, 1-3). The newsletter quotes Osipa, by now a Local 2000 vice-president, as saying, "They threw seven unions together and instead of going for each other's throats we showed unity and cohesiveness. . . . I've never worked with a better committee" (3). Bocking added that other media unions could learn from Local 2000's experience: "I personally believe we need one union in media in Canada. Although the consolidation was forced upon us, in retrospect I believe it is a good thing" (3).

This chapter has described how Pacific Press successfully presented a case to the British Columbia Labour Relations Board that computer technology has eroded skills and blurred jurisdictional lines in the printing crafts. It has turned newspapers into workplaces where skills have "converged and met on the computer" (Application, 27) and where, regardless of union jurisdictional boundaries, workers "use similar or identical skills, technology is shared across jurisdictions and production is computer-

driven and highly integrated” (12). Pacific Press contended that as a result of these changes, the existing union structure was dysfunctional and should be replaced by a single, all-employee local.

Although the merger ordered by the labour relations board was a “shotgun wedding,” the resulting consolidated local emerged in better shape than many of its members had expected. The fights over jurisdiction which the company and the board saw as signs of a dysfunctional relationship have ended -- an outcome all sides see as a positive development. The local has a new and united leadership, drawn from the former craft unions as well as from the former Guild. It has been able to negotiate a first contract, something many leaders of the former units doubted it would be able to accomplish. And it has undertaken a strategy of growth, joining with news workers across the province.

What started as an act of coercion, therefore, appears to have become a case of convergence: an effort by the unions to transcend craft lines and old divisions and create a new organization that is well-positioned to represent media workers of all kinds. As this chapter has shown, however, convergence at Pacific Press was by no means an easy accomplishment. Indeed, when asked whether the unions would ever have done this on their own, many leaders of the former Pacific Press locals were doubtful. Jan O’Brien of the Guild said that given the changes in the industry, a merger of the unions would have eventually occurred, but it would have taken a much longer time (Interview, December, 1997). Harold Funk of the composers unit

said a merger at the local level would probably have occurred only after a merger of the Canadian branch of the GCIU with CEP at the national level (Interview, December, 1997). Mailer John Lepper said Bob Osipa of the pressmen's union once approached him and asked him to merge his mailers into the pressmen (Interview, December, 1997). His response was to invite Osipa to merge his pressmen into the mailers. "Could we have ever gotten over our egos? I'm not so sure," he said. But he quickly added that reluctance to merge was not simply a matter of ego:

We all did business in a certain way and we all thought we did it in the best way for our members. Could I have been convinced that Mr. Osipa would do a better job of representing the mailers than I could? I doubt it. Would he have been convinced I would represent the pressmen as well as he could? Again, I doubt it (Interview, December 1997).

By forcing a consolidation of its locals, Pacific Press forced the unions to re-examine their position within the company, and their role within the industry. And while their initial response was to defend their own turf, the consolidation process allowed the unions to see the possibilities inherent in creating a new structure. Indeed, painful though it was at the beginning, the Vancouver convergence may offer a template for how the mergers at the national and international level can filter down to the level of the workplace.

Conclusion: Convergence and beyond

In early 1996, two Toronto-area locals of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada and the Graphic Communications International Union released an action plan on how to strengthen their unions. The report was drawn up by a joint Communications Technology Adjustment Committee, which kicked off its strategic planning process at a 1995 conference in Toronto called "Talking Tech." More than 100 people -- including employed, unemployed and retired printing workers, union leaders, professors, industry experts and government officials -- attended that meeting and made recommendations. The action plan also drew on recommendations from a second meeting, held in British Columbia by four other locals of the same unions, that looked at the future of the newspaper business (Communications Technology Adjustment Committee 1996, 1-2).

The plan noted at the outset that the "overwhelming majority" of participants at both meetings believed that there should be a single union in the printing industry:

They identified the existence of multiple units, locals and unions as a major barrier to developing appropriate union responses to industry changes. They believe a single union would be stronger. It would facilitate strategic co-operation and conflict resolution, and would result in increased organizing, coordinated collective bargaining and membership education. The reality, however, is that there are multiple units, locals and unions in the industry (2).

As a result, the plan conceded, the most appropriate approach to strengthening the

labour unions in the printing business in Canada was to encourage joint, co-operative or co-ordinated action, at the local, regional and national levels (2).

The frustration expressed by the participants over the gulf between the ideal of labour convergence and the difficult reality of multiple unions has been a recurring theme for the unions that represent North American newspaper workers. However, this research has found that there have been some significant comings-together among unionized workers in the communications sector, starting in the 1960s and accelerating into the 1990s. Indeed, the unions that organized the Toronto and Vancouver meetings were each the product of a number of mergers. The GCIU, created in 1983, is a U.S.-based international union that, beginning in the 1960s, brought together a handful of formerly independent printing trades unions. The 150,000-member CEP was created in 1992 out of the merger of three Canadian private-sector unions in the telecommunications, chemical and pulp and paper businesses. Since then, it has created a strong media sector that represents broadcast and newspaper workers, including some who once belonged to the Newspaper Guild. Meanwhile, the bulk of the former Newspaper Guild's members have followed their blue-collar colleagues from the former International Typographical Union into the 600,000-member Communications Workers of America, a union that sees itself as the major player in the converging telecommunications, information, media and entertainment industries.

In examining these mergers, this thesis has used two theoretical lenses. The

first is the idea of deskilling, as developed by Braverman (1974) and refined by a generation of labour process scholars. (See, for example, Edwards 1979; Burawoy 1979, 1985; Zimbalist 1979; Gordon, Edwards and Reich 1982; Thompson 1989.) Deskilling refers to the tendency of capital to break apart the labour process as a process controlled by workers and reconstitute it as a process controlled by management. Managers automate where possible and use bureaucratic techniques to control what cannot be automated. As a result, worker skills fall, in both an absolute sense through the loss of craft or traditional skills, and in a relative sense, in terms of understanding how to control machinery that takes over the performance of increasingly sophisticated tasks. The second lens, drawn from communication studies, is the idea of convergence, referring to the integration of or interface between and among different media systems and organizations. One strand of convergence refers to the coming together of technologies through the development of a common digital language (see, for example, Dennis and Pavlik 1993; Babe 1996, Mosco 1996); a second refers to the coming together of corporations into media empires (see, for example, Bagdikian 1983, 1987, 1990; Underwood 1993). In both, convergence brings with it the possibility of transformation, not simply of growth.

This thesis argues that in choosing to join unions like CWA and CEP, The Newspaper Guild and its breakaway Canadian locals were undertaking an act of labour convergence. They did so in response to corporate convergence, which has transformed their employers, and technological convergence, which has taken apart

and restructured the labour process in the daily newspaper. Their decision to come together into new structures and new organizations implied not simply growth but transformation as well. By moving toward new configurations, the Canadian and U.S. elements of The Newspaper Guild were repositioning themselves for the digital age. Rather than creating a large print-media union, they joined unions that represent a broad range of workers across the communications sector -- in print and broadcasting, telecommunications and cable, in news and entertainment.

As we have seen, the unions have talked on and off about uniting during most of the period studied here, from the early 1960s to the late 1990s. In the wake of a difficult strike at Portland, Ore., in 1960, the idea of creating “one big union” in printing and publishing seized the imagination of several union leaders, especially those from the white-collar Guild and from the ITU, the oldest and at the time the most powerful of the printing craft unions. The idea of creating “one big union” represented a radical reversal of labour history in the newspaper business. Since the 1880s, the pattern had been one of increasing fragmentation and specialization -- of divergence rather than convergence. Between 1889 and 1901, the printing pressmen, bookbinders, photo engravers, and stereotypers and electrotypers all broke away from the ITU to create their own unions (Pane 1994, 128). They remained on their own until they reconverged into what eventually became the GCIU.

At the time of the Portland strike, at least nine unions -- including the American Newspaper Guild, founded in the 1930s -- laid a claim to representing

printing industry workers in North America. Each had its own slate of officers, its own paid staff of organizers and representatives, its own budget and dues structure, its own constitution, its own notion of a model contract, its own way of doing business. Each also had its own culture: the ITU, for example, had a unique two-party electoral system, while the Guild, with its roots in the professional culture of the newsroom, saw its obligation as improving the quality of journalism as well as the level of journalists' wages.

Although the idea of creating “one big union” sounded exciting, Chapter 5 of this work has shown that translating that idea into reality in the early 1960s was an impossibly ambitious undertaking. Significantly, though, the discussion of why unity mattered in 1960 centred on two related developments that would in later years become enormously powerful stimuli for labour convergence. The first was a recognition of the growing power of the corporations that owned the newspapers. As ITU president Elmer Brown told the 1960 Guild convention, given the power of the employers, “we are down to the alternative of amalgamation or annihilation” (Guild Reporter, July 15, 1960). The second was a gathering wave of computer-based technological change that was about to sweep through the newspaper business. As Guild president Arthur Rosenstock told the ITU convention, “in the year 1960 the unions in our industry can no longer afford to go their separate ways” (Guild Reporter, Aug. 26, 1960).

Although the “one big union” drive failed, it offered unionized workers and

their leaders the chance to think seriously about their future. With remarkable clarity, they diagnosed the problem they were facing -- increasingly powerful owners equipped with new kinds of machinery that would hollow out the production process and eliminate workers -- and prescribed merger as a way to strengthen labour's hold on the work. But although the diagnosis was remarkably accurate, it would take many more years before any of the unions were ready to fill the prescription they wrote in the 1960s.

During those years, ownership of the media in North America became increasingly concentrated, with fewer but larger corporations controlling not just the newspaper press but other forms of media as well. Chapter 3 of this work shows that in the early 1960s, concentration of ownership was seen as synonymous with the newspaper chain. Newspaper chains were a feature in both Canada and the U.S., though they were assembled more rapidly -- and more completely -- north of the border, where protectionist tax laws prevented foreign owners from moving into Canada. A special Senate committee in the 1970s and a Royal Commission in 1980 both expressed alarm about what the growth of newspaper chains meant for democratic debate and freedom of expression, but none of the measures they proposed to prevent further expansion were enacted.

By the 1990s, the chain metaphor to describe newspaper ownership was looking pretty rusty; instead, newspaper corporations had taken on more of the characteristics of chain mail -- strong, flexible and interconnected horizontally,

vertically and diagonally. This change did not happen overnight. Indeed, the Royal Commission on Newspapers pointed out that in 1981, Canadian newspaper companies were becoming diversified corporations. But this transformation accelerated as the stock market discovered the newspaper business, a discovery helped, in large part, by Gannett's aggressive self-promotion as a recession-proof investment (Squires 1993). As publicly traded corporations, newspaper companies had to rack up a record of steadily improving profits to boost their share prices on the stock market (see Underwood 1993, Squires 1993). With increasing size came opportunities for further growth -- and thus, even more profit. Much of that growth occurred outside the newspaper business. The pattern in recent years has been toward convergence of ownership across media forms, across international borders, and into areas far removed from the business of producing a local daily newspaper.

For newspaper unions, corporate growth has come with a price. The goal of higher corporate profit has been met, in large part, by maximizing revenue and minimizing production costs. What were once uniquely local newspapers have been subjected to the disciplines of the national or international marketplace, and to the rigours of corporate culture that emphasizes cost-cutting. Revenue targets must be met, regardless of local conditions. The unions, meanwhile, have been pushed into concession bargaining by owners using chain-wide calculations as the guide for extracting maximum revenue -- again, largely without regard to local history or conditions. For the head of the CWA sector that was once the Newspaper Guild, the

consolidation of ownership of the media is the “number one worry” (Foley interview, February, 1998). It has put unions on the defensive as they try to maintain their bargaining power with employers who, increasingly, are far removed from the day-to-day life of their employees.

In newspapers, deskilling has gone hand in hand with cost-cutting. Chapter 4 of this work has shown that for most of the century, publishers refined and streamlined production processes that had been more or less in place since 1900. The application of computer technology to newspaper work changed all that. Rather than shaving seconds here and there off each stage of the production cycle, computers allowed employers to eliminate entire stages of production. This undercut the craft unions, whose power rested on their monopoly over specific forms of skilled work. With video display terminals for writing, editing and paginating, who needs compositors to set type? With digital cameras, why not eliminate the darkroom and get rid of the photo technicians? With computers to set ink and water levels, couldn't manning levels in the pressroom be reduced?

The extent to which computer technology has deskilled news workers has varied. So has the pace. Some workers, like compositors and stereotypers, were hit early and hard. Others, like copy editors, ended up with additional responsibilities, most of them having to do with production rather than traditional editing. Still others, like pressroom workers, slid through the first round of computerization largely unscathed, only to confront the deskilling effects in the 1990s. Similarly, the unions'

responses to these changes varied. The ITU, devastated by the installation of video display terminals in the 1960s and 1970s, fought back on a number of fronts, pursuing jurisdictional claims that at times put it in conflict with other unions, seeking job guarantees for its members, and reviving the idea of merging with another union. Chapter 5 describes its long, painful and ultimately unsuccessful attempt to merge with The Newspaper Guild. Eventually, after flirting with the Teamsters and the GCIU, the ITU found a new home within the CWA.

The Newspaper Guild took a more accommodating view toward new technology than the ITU. This was no doubt helped by an awareness that computers offered it some possibilities for expansion, not just for deskilling.¹ The convergence of computers and telecommunications has offered reporters and editors new tools for doing their jobs, from spell-check programs to computerized clipping files to spreadsheets for analyzing public records. The Guild also realized that new technology would mean new media ventures, and hence new possibilities for organizing. Nonetheless, the Guild came to believe in the early 1990s that given the dramatic convergences in corporate structure and communications technology -- and against a backdrop of anti-labour sentiments, especially in the U.S. -- its survival as a relatively small union of relatively specialized workers was by no means assured.

¹ Indeed, as Chapter 8 has shown, when Pacific Press installed new technology or revised its production process, it tended to assign the redefined work to the industrial Guild rather than to a union with a narrower, craft-based jurisdiction.

As we saw in Chapter 6, the Guild chose to recast itself in the early 1990s as a union for workers “in the evolving news and information industries in the United States and Canada” (Strategic Plan 1993, 35). It also began an active search for a merger partner. In the end, the union had to choose between joining the GCIU, which would take it a long way toward fulfilling the long-time dream of “one big union” in the newspaper business, or the CWA, a telephone workers union that was recasting itself as a union for the information age. CWA’s strategy is to organize in what its president calls the “time” industries (telecommunications, information, media and entertainment). CWA has also sought out other media-workers unions, inviting the ITU and the broadcast technicians’ union NABET to join. This union quickly emerged as the Guild leadership’s favoured partner. The membership got onside too.

At the same time as the Guild was moving toward the CWA, however, it had to confront a growing rebellion within its Canadian contingent. As Chapter 7 shows, nationalism was a factor within the Guild, in other international labour unions that operated in Canada, and at the Canadian Labour Congress. But the dissatisfaction at the Southern Ontario Newspaper Guild local also came from a sense that the Guild leadership wasn’t giving the local what it needed to deal with the unique aspects of the Canadian media -- and that perhaps it never would nor could. In addition, there was a genuine sense that Canadian union members should control their own destiny, from electing leaders to setting budgets to managing strike deadlines to providing appropriate service to members. As the parent Guild moved toward CWA, three

Canadian locals decided it was time to move on too. The two largest joined CEP, a union that offered the same types of attractions as the CWA but with a distinctly Canadian voice.

Much of this thesis has concentrated on why and how newspaper unions, acting at the national and international level, undertook the process of choosing a partner. Labour convergence did not happen cleanly, simply, quickly or completely. And sometimes, as shown in the Pacific Press case examined in Chapter 8, it began as someone else's idea. The unions at Pacific Press fought fiercely against the consolidation order. Since then, however, they have come to believe not only that it was an idea whose time had come but that it offered opportunities for further growth.

In choosing new partners, the Guild leadership in Canada and the U.S. sought two things: strength through size as a counter to corporate convergence, and a chance to position the union to take advantage of the technological convergence that is transforming the industry. Although there have been some painful moments -- the Guild-CWA has been living through a devastating strike in Detroit² while CEP, at the time of writing, had spent a long, cold winter on the picket line in Calgary --

² The strike by six unions against the Detroit Free Press and Detroit News had dragged on for more than four years at the time of writing. Negotiations with a mediator were held in late 1999 and the U.S. Court of Appeals scheduled oral arguments in the main unfair labor practice case against Detroit Newspapers for May 4, 2000. The U.S. National Labor Relations Board is asking the court to enforce its unanimous order that all former strikers be returned to their jobs (Guild Reporter, Nov. 19, 1999).

the whole the strategy has worked. The new unions have made some significant gains, especially in Canada, in organizing workplaces and in expanding jurisdiction to groups of workers that previously were not covered.

Labour convergence does not begin and end with mergers, however. The unions studied here have worked in a number of areas -- before, after or instead of a merger -- to strengthen the connections among workers and the organizations that represent them. Further co-operative efforts by the unions may merit scholarly attention in the coming years. Areas to watch include:

Building solidarity within the new union: Although members of the Guild strongly supported the merger with the CWA, the merger was only the first step in integrating the memberships of the two unions. TNG sector president Linda Foley says some Guild members have been stubbornly resistant to changes in the culture or operation of the union that result from the merger. This extends even to seemingly small matters, like membership cards: "They say, 'Well, you told us we could have our own identity, so how come we have to have CWA membership cards?' The answer is, 'Well, it's because we're part of the CWA'" (Interview, February, 1998). The Guild insisted on its own sector, "to preserve enough of our identity that people felt comfortable in supporting this and getting with the program," she said.

So now, after it's done, we spend every day here trying to prove to people that it's so, and walking the fine line of (unity versus independence). We need to keep enough of our identity but we also need to be involved and be part of the CWA enough so that it makes sense that we merged. In other words, if we just kept everything we had, what would be the point? So we have to figure out

how to get the synergy out of the merger and at the same time preserve what we said we were going to preserve (Interview, February, 1998).

Foley and CWA leaders came up with the idea of “convergence councils” as a means of drawing together Guild and CWA locals. These have not developed as planned, however. “On paper it looked good, but the truth is we really haven't been able to make that work too well,” Foley said. Without a clear agenda, or a clearly defined project on which both groups could work together, the convergence councils lacked focus. After initial meet-and-greet sessions, many found themselves unsure of how to proceed, and as a result did little.³ Foley added that Guild and CWA members have worked together to support the locked-out Guild strikers in Detroit, and TNG Canada has participated in campaigns to preserve the CBC. But building closer relationships at the local level will take time. Foley said she hopes that the connections made at the top of the union will eventually create a culture of co-operation and solidarity throughout the membership.

Developing broader bargaining strategies: As unions find themselves dealing with powerful corporations, they need to develop new strategies to rebalance power at the bargaining table. In the coming years, this may mean increasing efforts to undertake chain-wide bargaining, in which a single contract covers workers at a

³ In some places -- Foley identified San Francisco, Buffalo, Arizona and Cleveland -- CWA and Guild locals have come together more successfully, supporting each other's goals and making efforts to include other branches of the union in meetings and on campaigns.

number of outlets owned by the same corporation, and joint-council bargaining, in which the unions at a plant present a united front at contract negotiations. CEP has had some success in this area: the Southern Ontario Newspaper Guild local bargains chain-wide with Metroland, a TorStar subsidiary that publishes community newspapers across southern Ontario. Local president Joe Matyas explains that the agreement covers about 20 papers. "We bargain with Metroland once, then everyone who works there is covered" (Interview, February, 1998). He added, though, that the master contract is only possible because SONG's certification defined its jurisdiction at Metroland broadly. In British Columbia, two CEP locals traditionally bargained site by site with the dozen or so Trinity papers. But in 1995 the two locals and management came up with a master contract applying to all sites, and two sub-contracts dealing with the specific concerns of each local (Harold Funk interview, December, 1997). Since then, the locals themselves have merged.

Union leaders agree, however, that chain-wide bargaining is far from easy. This is especially so with a large employer whose workers are represented by several locals of a union and by several different unions. Arnold Amber, head of TNG Canada, says the leaders of the three major newspaper unions -- CEP, GCIU and TNG/CWA -- would have to set this as a priority and come up with a plan for how to pursue it.

For whatever the reason, when you want to get to chain bargaining, you're going to have to overcome the culture and practice of negotiation at the local level. You're going to have to overcome the practices and lack of trust

between the unions (Interview, February, 1998)

Amber added that that the employer would also have to see chain-wide bargaining as an efficiency. "There's no reason why you're automatically going to get the chain to want to bargain, so how are you going to do it?" Matyas said a reasonable starting point might be to seek bargaining with a section of a chain. He noted that Southam/Hollinger newspapers are sorted into small, medium and large divisions, and SONG represents workers in all three. "For us to say we're going to try to negotiate for all of Southam may be unrealistic. Maybe for now we might want to adopt the employer's model -- organize initiatives that cover, say, the small market dailies" (Interview, February, 1998). In the meantime, SONG's approach is to divide its staff representatives so that one handles negotiations at all the small Hollinger papers, for example, and another does all the large Southam contracts.

That way we have the same chief negotiator, the same mind, the same person, sending the same message to the employer. At the same time, we get an overview of what's happening at all the papers and we can start to develop common strategies and goals (Interview, February, 1998).

In February, 1998, the Canadian newspaper unions -- CEP, TNG Canada, GCIU and the Canadian Auto Workers, which represents workers at Windsor -- renewed their commitment to pursuing another alternative to traditional negotiations: joint council bargaining. Under this arrangement, the unions at a workplace negotiate together with the employer and until all are satisfied, no one signs a contract. The record of success in this kind of bargaining is mixed. It has worked in some places

(such as Pacific Press) but there have been some disastrous experiences. At the Montreal Gazette in 1980s and the Toronto Star in the mid-1990s, for example, joint council bargaining collapsed when one of the unions broke ranks and settled before the others. It took until 1997 for the unions at the Gazette to try it again (Denis Fournier, GCIU, speaking at an inter-union newspaper council conference, 1998). At the Toronto Star, the council collapsed when the GCIU local settled as SONG went on strike. In the next round of negotiations, in 1998, the joint council held and an agreement was reached.

Amber of TNG-Canada said the challenge is not just establishing joint councils but getting them to work. “One lousy joint bargaining makes it very difficult to do it again,” he said (Interview, February, 1998). In addition, joint bargaining can make it difficult for a union to pursue an issue that is of strong interest to its members, but not to others. Matyas says that when SONG organized the London Free Press, journalistic standards were a major issue in the newsroom.⁴ “To a craft union, this sounds ludicrous, but it was critically important to the Guild,” Matyas said. If the negotiations had been a joint-council situation, it would have harder for SONG to press the point. An issue that affects one unit but not the others can divide a council, “and the employer will then pit the rest of the group against that party,” he said.

⁴ Matyas recalls that the newspaper was undergoing a transformation from a traditional Ontario daily into the so-called McPaper format of USA Today. Ethics and professional practice mattered deeply to the Guild, and loomed large at the bargaining table.

Despite the possible risks, however, union leaders believe that done well, joint-council bargaining can strengthen labour's hand. At the inter-union conference in February, 1998, the unions pooled data on the expiry dates of all their contracts, since common expiry dates are necessary for joint-council bargaining to work.

Promoting inter-union co-operation: In Canada, CEP and GCIU have led the way in working co-operatively on issues that affect newspaper workers of all types. CEP and GCIU leaders were the driving force behind two inter-union newspaper council meetings, held in Toronto and Ottawa. They also co-ordinated a joint 1994 CEP/GCIU/CWA research study of how changing technology had affected work in the Ontario newspaper industry. This kind of work is significant in building bridges across the gulfs that divide blue-collar and white-collar newspaper workers.

Inter-union relationships between CEP and TNG Canada are a bit more delicate. The newspaper locals in CEP, after all, broke away from both the Guild and the former ITU. Says Arnold Amber of TNG Canada, "Is there still anger? Sure. People who went through the battles for ten years with Gail Lem -- those things don't heal quickly." Nonetheless, he added, it's important for the unions to see where they can make common cause. Further co-operative efforts are likely, either nationally or on a regional basis.

Expanding into non-traditional areas: With technological convergence, the lines between types of work have blurred. At the same time, employers are launching new products delivering news and information online. In 1998, the Guild sector of

CWA published a report on new technology sharing the experiences of various locals in trying to make the claim to represent new groups of online workers. "We start from the premise that online work is ours," wrote sector president Linda Foley (TNG, August 1998, 7). She added that if an employer resists that premise, the local should file a grievance and pursue arbitration, seek clarification of its certification, or simply organize.⁵ At the 1999 sector conference, Guild leaders invited a representative of WashTech, an organizing affiliate of CWA, to talk about the campaign to organize temporary workers at Microsoft and other software companies. In Canada, CEP has organized 2,000 part-time home-delivery workers at the Toronto Star (SONGsheet, January, 1999). Both unions are likely to make further attempts at expanding their membership to cover electronic-information workers, or workers (like drivers) whose jobs depend on electronic-information companies, or workers who are part of the so-called contingent labour force of permanent temporary or casual workers.

Preparing for further mergers: By the late 1990s, the newspaper unions on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border had gone a long way toward uniting -- not just with each other but with unions that represent broadcast, telecommunications and other information workers. As of this writing, three unions dominated: the CWA, which includes former Guild and ITU workers as well as members of the former U.S.

⁵ In his report to the 1999 Guild sector conference in Ottawa, Amber said the Guild won the right to represent online workers at the CBC in its most recent round of contract negotiations.

NABET; CEP, which drew the same types of workers into an all-Canadian union; and the GCIU, whose membership includes newspaper pressmen. The question remains of whether further convergences are likely to occur, and if so, where and how. A number of union officials interviewed for this research project suggested the next candidates to join CEP may be some or all of the Canadian contingent of the GCIU. Given the friendly relations between that union and CEP, and given a degree of dissatisfaction among Canada GCIU members about the state of the international union, they may be interested in moving into a domestic union. Canadian GCIU officials reject that idea, but concede that the question of the GCIU's future in Canada is complex. Says Duncan Brown, organizing co-ordinator of the GCIU in Toronto:

People see there would be strength in a single union in the industry, but it's always been seen that that is not a practical thing, it ain't going to happen. At same time . . . there's a commitment to internationalism. A lot of people say that if you want to separate this union or any other from the American, all you have to do is wrap yourself in the flag and do it. I don't think that would work in our union as well as in other unions. There's the desire for a single union; there's frustration with being part of a U.S.-based union that doesn't do what we want it to do whether it's in servicing, politics, vision, agenda. (There's a) whole level of frustration. But those things don't automatically translate into a nationalist tendency, or a desire to separate (Interview, February, 1998).

Nonetheless, the situation bears watching. If some or all of the Canadian GCIU locals moved to CEP, it would certainly strengthen the latter's claim to being *the* media union of Canada. This in turn might prompt further realignments in Canada (would some branches of TNG Canada switch too?) or the U.S. (would some or all of the American GCIU decide to go to CWA?). That would be another chapter in the

story of labour unions at North American newspapers. For now the story ends with the unions in Canada and the U.S. well down the road toward labour convergence, which they see as their best strategy for dealing with technological and corporate convergence.

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Open letter from Arnold Amber, head of TNG Canada, Oct. 29, 1996.

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B.C. Labour Relations Board Documents

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June 12, 1995**

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Larkie Gildersleeve, Director, Research information and technology, CWA/TNG. February, 1998.

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Includes company profile
- www.hollinger.com - Hollinger International corporation.**
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