
 PRESS & TELEVISION

few people rich enough to have leisure to read. But rising mechanization in the workplace meant that working hours declined, giving more Americans leisure time. The first sports publications (such as *The American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine*, launched in 1829, or *The Spirit of the Times*, begun in 1831) catered to horse owners and gamblers craving news of harness racing.

By the Civil War, many newspapers covered sports, yet some papers did so reluctantly. *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley, for example, once gave six columns to a prize fight, but added an editorial denouncing the brutality of the boxing match. As sports news drew more readers, sportswriters gained influence. Baseball writer Henry Chadwick (1824–1908) helped create the National League (which in 1876 became the first organization of professional sports clubs in the United States), and also founded the first sportswriters' association.

Technological advances (such as the Linotype) and cheaper newsprint allowed newspapers to become larger. The newspaper barons of the 1890s, constantly looking for new customers, placed sports in a separate section and allowed sportswriters free rein to create columns of purple prose. Yet sports reporters rarely wrote articles that would tarnish an athlete's reputation; when Babe Ruth was sidelined for the first six weeks of the 1925 baseball season after a "herculean" bout of "boozing, gorging, and wenching," journalists attributed his absence to "indigestion" after eating too many hot dogs.

Sports coverage remains popular today, filling 20 percent of most U.S. newspapers. Yet coverage is largely confined to the "middle-class" sports of baseball, football, and basketball; "lower-class" sports (stock car racing, bowling) or sports lacking "a visible and stable professional league" (soccer) are rarely mentioned. "Readers like what they get in the newspaper sports section and want more of it," says Stevens. And that is why there is unlikely to be any dramatic change in sports journalism soon.

Risky Business

"Reporting Hazards: Their Benefits and Costs" by Eleanor Singer and Phyllis Endreny, in *Journal of Communication* (Summer 1987), Oxford Univ. Press, 16-00 Pollitt Dr., Fair Lawn, N. J. 07410.

Reporting on risky activities or hazardous phenomena, from the spread of virulent diseases such as AIDS to the increase in potentially dangerous experimentation such as recombinant DNA research and organ transplantation, is very common in the media, both print and broadcast.

But do the media do an equally thorough job in reporting on activities or products that *could* be harmful? Singer, at the Center for the Social Sciences, Columbia University, and Endreny, an assistant professor of communications at the University of Illinois, think not.

The media's problems with reporting hazards, the authors contend, result from the priorities editors use to determine what is news. New and dramatic hazards are more newsworthy than more commonly recurring risks, even if the latter are more dangerous. Rather than cover life-threat-

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ening activities that occur routinely, newspaper editors devote more space to "hazards that are relatively serious and relatively rare." For example, toxic shock syndrome was extensively reported in the media, although the number of cases (nine per 100,000 menstruating women per year at the peak) was "about equal in frequency to tuberculosis."

Journalists usually offer little statistical information either about the relative risk of a hazard or how dangerous an activity might be compared to other alternatives—for example, the risks of injury while skiing and while jogging. Of 624 stories from magazines, New York newspapers, and evening network-news broadcasts that the authors surveyed during four months in 1984, only five percent told how many deaths each year were traceable to a particular hazardous activity or product. Twenty-four percent *did* point out the size of the population at risk from the hazard.

When the media offer statistical information about risks, they frequently use misleading data. For example, journalists often report the *potential* number of people who could be killed by a nuclear power accident, but fail to report the *actual* number of people killed so far by nuclear power, a miniscule total. Moreover, only 16 percent of the stories surveyed compared the possible costs and benefits of a risky activity. In most stories, journalists imply that the costs of an activity outweigh its benefits, while failing to give the reader the information needed to reach an independent assessment. "*None* of the media," say the authors, "is very informative in providing information about risk."

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Islamic Ideals

"Islam: Resistance and Reassertion" by Amin Saikal in *The World Today* (Nov. 1987), The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 10 St. James's Square, London SW1Y 4LE, United Kingdom.

What is the nature of the current Islamic resurgence? Saikal, a political scientist at the Australian National University, finds that the movement rejects both capitalism and communism. As Muslim theologian Muhammed Iqbal says, "both fail to recognise the Lord, deceive mankind . . . they are two millstones, that pulverise the human kind."

According to Saikal, the leaders of the world's various Muslim movements, such as Iqbal in India and Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, all agree that the essence of Islam is *tawhid*—the idea that every aspect of life is unified under God. *Tawhid*, they stress, should guide the Muslim state as much as Muslim spiritual life.

These beliefs do not make the resurgence movement fundamentalist. The new leaders argue that Islamic principles should not be applied as if "frozen in time." Rather they must be interpreted by theologians (*mujtahiddin*) to fit changing historical circumstances.

Muslims, Saikal emphasizes, "cannot fulfill Islam in its entirety without creating Islamic governments in their societies." Such a government, he