

PRESS & TELEVISION

adequate consideration of the public interest. (Clay Felker, owner of the *Village Voice*, which printed the "secret" House committee report obtained by Schorr, admitted that he decided to publish the report without really reading it.) In response to official abuses of power which resulted in a self-aggrandizing "imperial presidency," professional journalists seem to be creating an "imperial press" which is sometimes guilty of the same kinds of excesses that newsmen have been trying to expose.

Political News As TV Drama

"Captives of Melodrama" by Paul H. Weaver, in *The New York Times Magazine* (Aug. 29, 1976), 229 W. 43rd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

Television news is "not primarily information but narrative . . . governed not by a political bias but by a melodramatic one," observes Weaver, a *Fortune* editor and former Harvard assistant professor of government. Analyzing nightly news coverage of the 1976 presidential primaries by ABC, CBS, and NBC, he finds the contenders depicted as actors in a gripping drama, starting in the snows of New Hampshire.

Carter, Weaver argues, was "lucky enough and clever enough" to benefit from TV's own biases. The Georgian put his big effort into the early primaries, won them, and thereby was established on TV as "front-runner"—despite later losses. In running "against Washington," Carter was in fact also running against an image that TV, with its simplistic news treatment of government, helps perpetuate. And, because TV likes a candidate who can be portrayed as having been raised out of obscurity by the people, Carter emerged the "good guy."

The problem, Weaver contends, is that TV's biases in coverage constantly intervene between the candidates and the voters, diminishing the voters' ability to choose on the basis of their own perceptions.

The Nature of News

"Novelty Without Change" by E. Barbara Phillips, in *Journal of Communication* (Autumn 1976), P.O. Box 13358, Philadelphia, Pa. 19101.

The nature of daily journalism, with its emphasis on "the concrete, the particular, and the individual," inhibits the development of broad insights into changing American realities, says Phillips, a former journalist now teaching sociology and urban studies at San Francisco State.

After working 13 months at two radio stations, one television affiliate, and a daily newspaper, Phillips interviewed newsmen working in large northeastern cities and surveyed 165 reporters, editors, and producers from various backgrounds. She concludes that newsmen share certain mental habits and a special perspective on social reality which is