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**PRESS & TELEVISION**


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salary received \$15 to \$25 per week—about what the average plumber in New York State earned. Many more journalists were paid by the story—\$6 to \$8 per news column in New York, where rates were highest, \$16 for exclusives, and 50 cents an hour when assigned stories fell through. Reporters were rarely reimbursed for their expenses.

Since cost-conscious editors cut stories to the bone, and since column inches meant money, a reporter always handed in reams of copy. Moreover, he quickly learned that “the plain ‘fire’ is worth a dollar and the ‘conflagration’ will make him a possible ten,” as one editor observed in 1884. Though most tried to stay *near* the truth, some journalists created events and paid “witnesses” to “confirm” them. Others got their scoops by flouting the law, such as the St. Louis reporter who found a corpse in the street, hid it, and tantalized readers with a gripping “missing person” story before clearing up the mystery by “discovering” the body. Moonlighting and writing for rival publications were common practices. In fact, two salaried New York journalists simultaneously held down full-time \$2,500 per year jobs as city court stenographers. And some journalists picked up cash by discreetly plugging certain politicians or products in their stories.

Typically covering 14 or 15 assignments per day—ranging from weddings to political conventions—many reporters split their news gathering duties with journalists from other papers. The “pool” then shared the information, agreed on the specifics of the story (whether correct or not), and, as H. L. Mencken recalled from his reporting days in Baltimore, “synthesized” the final product. Few editors protested; these practices, after all, extended news coverage but not news budgets.

### *The Black Press and ‘Bakke’*

“The Black Press and the Bakke Case” by Paula M. Poindexter and Carolyn A. Stroman, in *Journalism Quarterly* (Summer 1980), 431 Murphy Hall, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn. 55455.

A major threat to minority progress was what black leaders called the *Bakke* “reverse discrimination” decision of 1978—in which the Supreme Court ruled, in part, that a rigid racial quota system had unconstitutionally denied a white man admission to medical school. How did the nation’s black press cover the story?

The coverage was thin, “event oriented,” and surprisingly low-key, say Poindexter, a researcher in journalism at the University of Georgia, and Stroman, an Afro-American studies specialist at the University of North Carolina. They surveyed four of America’s oldest black papers—New York’s *Amsterdam News*, Los Angeles’s *Sentinel* (both weeklies), the *Atlanta Daily World*, and the *Chicago Daily Defender*. Of the 99 items dealing with Bakke before the presentation of oral arguments to the Court in October 1977, 48 percent were hard-news reports on the hearing, anti-Bakke demonstrations, and statements by black

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organizations; 35 percent were opinion columns or editorials. The remainder were illustrations and feature pieces. Yet only 6 percent of all stories reviewed the history of affirmative action. A mere 4 percent described the workings and results of special admissions programs. And only 5 percent portrayed the background of plaintiff Allan Bakke. All the papers except the *World* editorialized strongly against Bakke's position, but news headlines were generally neutral. Fewer than one-third of the Bakke stories appeared on page one.

Immediately after the Court decision, the four papers ran 35 Bakke-related items. Only one headline—in the *Amsterdam News*—betrayed editorial bias: "Bakke: We Lose!!" Seventeen items appeared in the *Amsterdam News* alone. The *Defender*, the *Sentinel*, and the *World* ran just 9, 4, and 5 Bakke stories, respectively. In contrast to prehearing coverage, the papers ran only 5 hard-news stories but 18 background articles on the political and philosophical issues surrounding the case.

The black papers ran a significant amount of Bakke-related commentary, the authors note. But they suggest that the greater focus on facts and events indicates that the black press is moving away from its old "protest" role to a more "neutral, objective" stance.

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**RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY**


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*John Paul II:  
One View*

"The Political Theology of John Paul II"  
by Harvey Cox, in *Michigan Quarterly Review* (Spring 1980), 3032 Rackham Bldg.,  
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.  
48109.

A relatively young man, John Paul II (age 60) may well guide the world's 563 million Catholics into the 21st century. His travels, his "spiritual charisma," and his inclination to speak out on poverty, consumerism, and the latest SALT treaty could make him an influential global figure. But first, warns Cox, a Baptist theologian at the Harvard Divinity School, the pontiff will have to drop his insistence on conservative rules and absolute doctrinal conformity within his own church.

John Paul's political interests stem from the belief that mankind was rendered potentially divine and deserving of dignity when "the Son of God became the Son of Man." In his only encyclical to date, *Redemptor Hominis*, he held that the Church's responsibility was not to convert the rest of humanity but to fight forces that degrade the individual. He numbers among these forces not only totalitarianism but Western consumerism—"the hunger for status symbols that divide both the world and the hearts of men."

Yet, Cox contends, the pope has not been equally sensitive to indignities inflicted within the Church. Relegating women to the status of