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act." On the other hand, human crowding does seem to generate more crimes that combine thefts with bodily harm to the victim—perhaps only because *undetected* robbery becomes more difficult.

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Conglomerate Journalism

"From 'Moderately Liberal' to 'Doctrinaire Libertarian'" by Lloyd Gray, and "When the Takeover Doesn't Take" by Peter Katel, in *The Bulletin of the American Society of Newspaper Editors* (Feb. 1981), Box 551, 1350 Sullivan Trail, Easton, Pa. 18042.

What happens when the local newspaper is swallowed up by a national publishing chain? As is suggested by two case studies by Gray and Katel, former correspondents for the *Delta Democrat-Times* of Greenville, Miss., and the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, respectively, the decline in community coverage can be striking.

Founded in 1936 by Hodding Carter, Jr., the *DD-T* soon won national renown, and a Pulitzer Prize—as well as censure from the Mississippi House of Representatives—for its outspoken civil-rights editorials and ambitious local reporting. But in 1979, the Carter family sold the paper for a reported \$18 million (more than \$1,000 per paid subscriber). The buyer was Freedom Newspapers of Ohio, a staunchly libertarian, anti-government chain of 29 publications in 11 states.

Change was swift. Freedom cut the space held open for day-of-publication news by an average of four columns—in a paper that was often only 12 pages. And advertising space increased. The staff that had once fanned out to six Delta counties was reduced from six correspondents to four. Reporters were asked to limit their investigations beyond Greenville's Washington County to phone checks with law enforcement officials. (As a result, several nearby communities no longer enjoy regular coverage by a daily newspaper.) Freedom also closed the *DD-T*'s bureau in Jackson, the state capital.

Meanwhile, Freedom's blanket hostility to government, says Gray, means neglect of the community's special interests—e.g., in federal flood control. Too often, the paper's "local" editorials are simply reprints from Freedom publications elsewhere.

News has fared little better at the *New Mexican*, Santa Fe's only daily, since its takeover by the Gannett Company in 1976, according to Katel. Gannett, with 82 newspapers, is the nation's largest chain. Under the conglomerate's management, in 1978, the *New Mexican*'s word count per issue for one week shrank by 5,064 compared with a week in 1975. Headlines ate up more than twice the space they had before. The newsroom remained well staffed and employees were better paid, but

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the number of daily stories dropped from 157 to 92.

Gannett has made some improvement in its new property, writes Katel. The *New Mexican* runs some excellent local features and gives good coverage of nearby Espanola. But, like Gray, Katel suggests that conglomerates may not be big enough to fill small newspapers' shoes.

Milton as Censor

"John Milton's Place in Journalism History: Champion or Turncoat" by Mark Fackler and Clifford G. Christians, in *Journalism Quarterly* (Winter 1980), School of Journalism, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kans. 66045.

John Milton (1608–74) has long puzzled historians of journalism. His impassioned 1642 essay, *Areopagitica*, is perhaps the most compelling defense of free speech ever penned in English. But to some scholars, Milton's later brief service as Oliver Cromwell's press licenser showed him to be lacking "the courage of his convictions."

Fackler and Christians, researchers in journalism at the University of Illinois, Urbana, defend the epic poet's reputation.

A long-time foe of the Stuart monarchy and England's Anglican state religion, Milton enthusiastically supported the Puritan Revolution of 1642. After Oliver Cromwell's victorious "Roundheads" executed Charles I in 1649, Milton joined the Puritan administration for one year as Secretary of Foreign Tongues. His prime responsibility was composing state correspondence elegant enough to allay the fears of continental monarchs wary of the Puritan regicides. He also oversaw *Mercurius Politicus*, an official newspaper, and licensed publications for printing.

How stiff a censor was he? A close reading of styles in *Mercurius Politicus* suggests that the ailing Milton was an absentee adviser, who contributed occasional paragraphs but gave chief writer Marchmont Needham nearly free rein. Indeed, during Milton's tenure, there was less to Puritan censorship in general than the harsh-sounding laws of the Roundheads have led some historians to conclude. The Printing Act of 1649, for instance, which curbed the number of presses, the production of type, and printers' profits, was not enforced until 1651. And full-time Puritan censors were phased out soon after Cromwell's victory, not to re-emerge until 1662.

Milton apparently stretched the definition of "acceptable literature" in the Puritans' eyes. Soon after he left public service, the nearly blind bard was summoned to defend his licensing of a heretical catechism. His defense (allowed "just this once" by the Council of State): He had simply followed the principles expressed in *Areopagitica*.

Milton himself never perceived a conflict of interest between his belief in free speech and his "censor's" role. He held that free expression must advance justice and virtue. To him, in 17th-century revolutionary England, that meant "the good of my country and . . . the glorious cause in which we were engaged."