

PRESS & TELEVISION

not challenging Washington's policies. And in fact, TV reporters preparing stories on the Vietnam War (excluding antiwar protest in the United States) relied just as heavily on government spokesmen after Tet as they had earlier and rarely questioned their reliability.

Beyond mirroring changing events, Hallin contends, newsmen reflected the dissolution of consensus, particularly among national leaders, behind the U.S. war effort. As Max Frankel of the *New York Times* explained: "As protest moved from the left groups, the antiwar groups, into the pulpits, into the Senate . . . it naturally picked up coverage. . . . Because we're an Establishment institution, and whenever your natural constituency changes, then naturally you will too." Indeed, in Hallin's sample of TV news segments on domestic dissent after Tet, 49 percent of *all* criticisms of U.S. policy were attributed to public officials, chiefly U.S. senators and congressmen.

In sum, Hallin argues, television coverage of Vietnam changed not because newsmen were suddenly at odds with their government, but because the nation's political leadership itself was increasingly divided.

The Woes of The Black Press

"The Black Press: A Victim of Its Own Crusade?" by Courtland Milloy, in *The Washington Journalism Review* (June 1984), 2233 Wisconsin Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007.

During much of its history, the greatest preoccupation of the black press was the fight for civil rights. Now, the economics of survival is foremost in the minds of black publishers.

"Since the first black newspapers appeared on the scene in 1827," reports *Washington Post* columnist Milloy, "more than 4,000 have been published. Only 300 exist today, with an estimated combined circulation of about six million." Only three cities (New York, Chicago, and Atlanta) sustain daily black newspapers; many notable black papers are weeklies or biweeklies, such as the weekly *New York Amsterdam News* (circulation: 90,000). The majority of the papers are "service publications" that feature local news and personalities and are given away free at supermarkets and drugstores.

The future of black newspapers is in doubt because their combined advertising revenues are slim—about \$3 million annually, or just 15 percent of all advertising dollars collected by the black communications media. Milloy explains: "It is the top 20 percent of the black population—white-collar blacks earning \$40,000 and up—that accounts for 45 percent of the total black income, and more than half of that segment shows little interest in black news publications." Advertisers look to black radio, magazines, and other media to reach these prime customers. (Thanks partly to the civil-rights gains that the black newspapers helped bring about, white-owned dailies now give much more coverage to blacks.)

Some black publishing executives believe there is still a need for a national black newspaper. The much-praised *National Leader*, a weekly

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launched in 1982, folded last February for lack of advertising revenues after achieving a circulation of 40,000 nationwide. But its former publisher, Claude Lewis, believes that a successor will arise once more major advertisers are persuaded that there is still a distinctive black market.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Is There a Right To Height?

"Short Children, Anxious Parents: Is Growth Hormone the Answer?" by Martin Benjamin, James Muyskens, and Paul Saenger, in *The Hastings Center Report* (Apr. 1984), 360 Broadway, Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y. 10706.

Americans routinely turn the latest tools of medicine into instruments of vanity. Indeed, some doctors have become virtual sculptors, performing cosmetic face-lifts, hair transplants, and orthodontic work. Soon, thanks to laboratory genetic technology, they will also be able to control children's height.

Human growth hormone (hGH) has long been available in limited quantities from human cadavers. But pharmaceutical companies can now make large batches of the hormone artificially, report Benjamin and Muyskens, philosophers at Michigan State University and Hunter College, respectively, and Montefiore Medical Center's Saenger. Once Washington gives its approval, hGH will be widely available.

That is good news for children who suffer from hGH deficiency. But only 10 percent of abnormally short children do. Delayed growth, genetic make-up, psychological stress, and other factors account for the remaining cases. The new technology will make hGH available to these children, as well as to youngsters who may be short, but not abnormally so. Inevitably, the authors warn, doctors will have to decide whether to prescribe hGH for cosmetic or other nonmedical purposes (e.g., to ensure that a child will be tall enough to play college basketball).

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that physicians limit hGH treatment to children deficient in the hormone. But the authors suggest that other uses may be legitimate. The practice of medicine has never been limited simply to remedying ill health: For example, doctors provide therapy for "tennis elbow" and the like. Moreover, research suggests that shortness can be a professional disadvantage to adults trying to get ahead in the work world.

Still, the authors favor a cautious approach. Pediatricians are sure to encounter parents who demand treatment that is not in the best interests of their child; the youngster would receive painful intramuscular injections three times a week for a minimum of one year and might suffer harmful side effects. Physicians should not forget that "those who run the risks are young children."