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THE DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANISATION OF
THE FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY PRESS GALLERY,
1901-1978

by

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D E C L A R A T I O N

This is to certify that this thesis
is my own work and that all sources
used in its preparation have been
acknowledged.

(C.J. LLOYD)

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

I thank the officers of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery who made available to me the surviving Gallery records, in particular Ken Randall, the late Peter Hardacre, and Graham Howard. This was done with the approval of the Gallery Committee, and I thank Tony Hill and John Lombard for facilitating this decision.

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I thank my supervisor, Professor Colin A. Hughes for invaluable guidance, and Mrs Pauline Lyall for the impeccable typing of a difficult manuscript.

¹ R.J. Bennetts. 'Development of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, 1901-1968', Master of Arts Qualifying Thesis, Department of Political Science, SGS, ANU, 1968.

² Derek Woolner. 'Change and Continuity in the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery', essay for Sociology B20, Department of Sociology, SGS, ANU, 1976 (held by the author).

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A B B R E V I A T I O N S

AAP	Australian Associated Press
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
AJA	Australian Journalists Association
ANL	Australian National Library
ANU	Australian National University
AUP	Australian United Press
CPD	Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates
HR	House of Representatives
MS	Manuscript
PMG	Postmaster-General
SGS	School of General Studies
VDT	Visual Display Terminal
VPD	Victorian Parliamentary Debates

FOREWORD

This thesis sets out to do four things. In Chapter 1 it tries to establish how the media got into the Australian Parliament, and what right they have to be there. The next three chapters trace the history of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery from the establishment of the Federal Parliament in 1901 to the end of 1978. Chapter 2 describes the Gallery and its work during the years from 1901 to 1927, when Melbourne was the federal capital, and the Federal Parliament met in the State Parliamentary Building. Chapter 3 recounts the history of the Gallery from its move to Canberra in 1927 until the end of World War II. Chapter 4 takes up its history in the years following the war. Chapter 5 analyses the formal structure of the Gallery, and describes its main characteristics as an institution. Chapter 6 gives an account of the contemporary Gallery (circa 1977-79) in the context of its history and organisation. There is a brief conclusion in Chapter 7.

This thesis was conceived along different lines as a straightforward study of Canberra political journalists broadly similar to Tunstall's study of the journalists who make up the Westminster Lobby, and Rosten's study of the Washington Press Corps.¹ The original intention was to interview as many Gallery journalists as possible, and to collate material on socio-economic background, education, professional experience, income, work habits, political affiliations, and other variables, on the basis of a standard questionnaire. Interviewing was begun on this basis

¹ Jeremy Tunstall. *The Westminster Lobby Correspondents*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1970; L. Rosten. *The Washington Correspondents*, Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York, 1937.

at a time when the Gallery entered a period of unprecedented change in its composition. Rapid changes in personnel made material collected in 1973 or even 1975 largely irrelevant in 1978. Most major offices in the Gallery have turned over their staff at least once, and in some cases several times, during the past six years. At the same time, the functions of the Gallery have changed significantly, particularly with the development of the electronic media. Unlike the Westminster Lobby, which is made up predominantly of print journalists covering non-Parliamentary political activity, the Canberra Gallery is not a cohesive institution. It includes representatives of electronic media as well as newspaper reporters and journalists who perform a range of miscellaneous activities, grouped together here under the label of 'Fringe Journalism'. Because of cohesiveness and relative stability, it is a relatively straightforward task to make a study of the Westminster Lobby based on survey techniques. Short of undertaking a major sociological survey with a series of interviews at regular time intervals, it is not possible to make a similar analysis of an institution whose membership is constantly changing and which contains groups of journalists whose interests and functions are so disparate.

The intention to study Press Gallery journalists as a professional group was abandoned, and the focus of the thesis switched to the history of the Gallery as an institution, its formal organisation, and how the contemporary Gallery is influenced by this history and structure. The thesis contains information about Gallery journalists and how they do their job, but this is now incidental to the main themes of history and organisation. Interview material which was collected with a different thesis in mind has been used to amplify these themes, but it has been used sparingly and no attempt has been made to quantify it.

The interest of political scientists in the Gallery has at last been aroused after long neglect. Some studies have been completed and more are planned. This thesis has not sought to duplicate such work, but to provide an historical context and to describe the formal elements of an extremely complex institution. It is hoped that this will supplement other studies, and perhaps encourage the major sociological study of Gallery journalists which was beyond the resources of this author.

Much of the Gallery's history has been irredeemably lost. The Gallery Committee preserves current files, and a few documents from earlier periods are held by former Gallery officers. The bulk of the Gallery records seem to have disappeared, apart from an important photographic collection. The records of the Canberra District of the Australian Journalists Association (AJA) contain valuable material, although it seems that correspondence which was regarded as having no historic value was destroyed in the 1950s. The main documentary sources used in this account have been the extant records of the Gallery and the AJA, Hansard and official documents, trade union journals, and manuscript collections. There has been no attempt at oral history by seeking the recollections of former members of the Gallery, although supplementary information was obtained from members of the Gallery about its contemporary structure.

A stylistic problem in writing about any Press Gallery is distinguishing between 'Gallery' as an institution and 'gallery' as physical space in the sense of the accommodation provided for reporters within the Parliamentary chamber. An attempt has been made here to distinguish between the two usages by capitalising 'Gallery' as an institution and using the lower case 'gallery' when Parliamentary space is intended.

CHAPTER 1

THE AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT AND THE PRESS

The status of the Press in the Australian Parliament derives from the Australian Constitution in an extremely ambivalent way. Section 49 of the Constitution gives the Parliament the powers to declare its powers, privileges and immunities; until declared by the Parliament, the powers, privileges and immunities of the Australian Parliament are those of the House of Commons at the establishment of the Commonwealth. Section 50 of the Constitution gives each House of the Parliament the authority to make procedural rules and orders for regulating the conduct of its business so as to exercise and uphold its powers, privileges and immunities.

The Australian Parliament has never declared its parliamentary privileges in a comprehensive code. It has enacted legislation under section 49 for the publication of parliamentary papers, and for the broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings.¹ In every other respect, interpretation of the law relating to parliamentary privilege is governed by the privilege of the House of Commons as at 1 January 1901. Parliamentary privilege forms part of common law known as the *lex et consuetudo parliamenti* which can be discerned only in the 'ancient rolls of Parliament and other records, and by precedents and continual experience'.² According to Quick and Garran, the sole evidence of the

¹ See J. Odgers. *Australian Senate Practice*, 5th edn., AGPS, Canberra, 1976, pp.636-37.

² John Quick and R.L. Garran. *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1901, p.501.

ancient law of Parliament is to be found in the declarations, customs and usages of Parliament:

Each house may expound the law of Parliament and vindicate its own privileges, but no new privileges can be created. In 1704 at a joint conference of the Lords and Commons, it was resolved: that neither house of Parliament has any power by vote or declaration to create for itself new privileges not warranted by the known laws and customs of Parliament.¹

In short, the Australian Parliament has constitutional power to declare and codify its privileges. It has not done so, except for two aspects, publication and parliamentary papers, and parliamentary broadcasting. This means that the law with regard to privilege is based on ancient practice, supplemented by English legislation passed before 1901. The standing of parliamentary privilege is related directly to the status of the Press in Parliament.

Traditionally, members of the Press have been strangers in Parliament. In 1660, the House of Commons resolved that 'no person whatever do presume at his peril to print votes and proceedings of this House without such leave and order of this House'.² The history of the House of Commons in the 17th and 18th centuries is studded with instances where printers and reporters were punished by Parliament for reporting its proceedings. There were two reasons for this attitude of the Parliament and the strict preservation of its right to exclude strangers and to debate behind locked doors. The members of the Commons were apprehensive about pressures imposed by strangers and attempts to influence their proceedings from the galleries. They were even more fearful that objectionable

¹ Erskine May's *Treatise on The Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, 10th edn., p.11, quoted in Quick and Garran, *op. cit.*, p.501.

² 'Partners in Parliament: A Report to the Press Gallery', London (undated), p.8.

speeches might be reported to the Crown which would resume its efforts to intimidate parliamentary proceedings. Later in the 18th century when the Tory oligarchy gained control of the House of Commons, there was a reluctance to submit parliamentary process to public scrutiny.¹

These attitudes were expressed in a series of motions approved by the House of Commons. The most influential was passed by the House on 13 April 1738, and reiterated on 3 March 1762. It read:

That it is a high indignity to, and a notorious breach of privilege of, this House, for any news writer, in letters or other papers (as minutes, or under any other denomination), or for any printer or publisher of any printed newspaper of any denomination, to presume to insert in the said letters or papers, or to give therein any account of the debates, or other proceedings of this House, or any committee thereof, as well during the recess, as the sitting of Parliament; and that this house will proceed with the utmost severity against such offenders.²

This motion was used to sustain a technical breach of the privileges of the House of Commons as recently as 1949.

Such a rigorous approach to reporting of parliamentary proceedings was modified by practice. One aspect of this amelioration was the protracted struggle to publish a comprehensive record of parliamentary proceedings. (The story of the emergence of Hansard is beyond the scope of this thesis, although its history does intertwine at some points with the development of the Australian Press Gallery system; see below.) The other was the gradual recognition of the practice by which Press representatives entered Parliament and reported its proceedings for a wide range of printed outlets.³

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ For the legal problems encountered by the early Hansard reports, see Erskine May. *Parliamentary Practice*, 18th edn., Butterworths, London, 1971, pp.77, 183-85, 248-9. For a history of Hansard reporting in the Commonwealth Parliament, see J.S. Weatherston. *Commonwealth Hansard: Its Establishment and Development*, 3rd edn., AGPS, Canberra, 1975.

For many years, reporters observed Parliament from the Strangers' Gallery, where they were not allowed to take notes and where they competed for seats with the public. Their subsequent reports were based on recollections of what had happened. On a famous parliamentary occasion in May 1803 when Prime Minister Pitt addressed the House of Commons about the war with Napoleon, the Press were unable to gain admission, and Pitt's speech was not reported. Mr Speaker Abbott ordered that, in future, seats should be kept for reporters. This was the first sign of official recognition of the Press, although a Press gallery was not provided in the Commons Chamber until 1835 when it was accommodated temporarily in the Lords after the fire of 1834. (The Lords had provided a Press gallery in 1834.) Proper gallery accommodation was not provided until 1852 in the rebuilt Commons.¹

The most eloquent statement of the emergence of the press galleries as an important part of Parliament is Lord Macaulay's celebrated dictum:

There are three estates in Parliament, but in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sits a fourth estate more important than them all.²

The practical problems of parliamentary reporting were expressed by the most famous of all Press gallery journalists, Charles Dickens, who spent four years in the gallery in the 1830s:

I have worn my knees by writing on them in the old back row of the old gallery of the House of Commons.³

Despite the drudgery of the work and the cramped physical environment in which it was done, a considerable body of custom had built up

1 'Partners in Parliament', *op. cit.*, pp.8-9.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

by the middle of the 19th century. This gave tacit approval to the reporting of Parliament, and countenanced the provision of rudimentary facilities for its practice. A clearly discernible Press gallery was functioning by the 1850s, although the position of the gallery was not formalised until 1881, when the first Gallery Committee was elected.

Australian Parliaments accepted the role of the Press in Parliament at a relatively early stage. According to Hawker, the Press was allowed to observe and report the proceedings of the New South Wales Legislative Council in 1832.¹ The public was not admitted to the Council until 1838 when public galleries were provided and special provisions were made for reporters.

As responsible government developed in the Australian States, the Press was included in the parliamentary structure as a matter of course. This process was part of the adoption by the State legislatures of the accumulated customs of the British Parliament, particularly the House of Commons. The Constitution Acts adopted by the States contained clauses which enabled their Parliaments to declare their privileges, immunities and powers along similar lines to the House of Commons. An example is section 35 of the Constitution Act of Victoria:

It shall be lawful for the Legislature of Victoria by any Act or Acts to define the privileges, immunities and powers to be held, enjoyed and exercised by the Council and Assembly and by the members thereof respectively. Provided that no such privileges, immunities or powers shall exceed those now held, enjoyed and exercised by the Commons, House of Parliament, or the members thereof.

The Press was assimilated into the Australian political structure in a rather ambiguous way. As with the House of Commons, a strict

¹ G.N. Hawker. *The Parliament of New South Wales, 1856-1965*, NSW Government Printer, Sydney, 1971, p.3.

adherence to declared privilege would have prevented any publication of parliamentary proceedings. The development of custom by the House of Commons had turned a blind eye to privilege, and had countenanced an important role for the Press within the Parliament. Australian Parliaments accepted both the privileges, powers and immunities of the House of Commons, which branded Press representatives as strangers and accepted, also, the customary usages which permitted the Press to report parliamentary proceedings. This sort of ambivalence has coloured the history of the relationship between Press and Parliament in Australia, just as it has done in Britain.

Quite clearly, the clauses in the State Constitution Acts relating to the broad ambit of parliamentary privilege gave each Parliament the power to declare the rights and duties of the Press in relation to Parliament, and how these rights and duties should be regulated by the Parliament. There is no evidence that this has ever been done by any Australian Parliament. Just as the whole area of parliamentary privilege has been allowed to remain as an amorphous mass of ancient common law principles and customary usage, the Australian Parliaments have been content to accept a role for the Press similar to that shaped by the House of Commons in the first half of the 19th century.

The ambiguous status of Press galleries in the Westminster system of Government was raised in an investigation by the British Parliamentary Press Gallery:

Somewhere in existence there must be a record of the original decision to erect a Press Gallery for the reporting of Parliament, or to make space available to reporters.¹

¹ 'Partners in Parliament', *op. cit.*, p.72.

These mystical documents have not been uncovered for the British Parliament, nor have any records been found which declared the status and privileges of State Press Galleries in Australia during the 19th century. Yet in the last forty years of that century, there were vigorous and influential Press Galleries in Sydney and Melbourne, at least. These Galleries provided the only record of Parliamentary proceedings in these chambers until Hansard reporting was initiated on British lines in the 1870s. The Hansard staff in Sydney and Melbourne were largely recruited from the Parliamentary Press Gallery staffs. At the turn of the century, the official Hansard of the South Australian Parliament was still provided on an alternate basis by the two major newspapers.¹

The growth of the Victorian Parliamentary Press Gallery was extremely important for the subsequent emergence of a Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery. The history of the Victorian Press Gallery was illuminated in a debate in the Victorian Parliament on 10 November 1886 about the relationship between the Press Gallery and the Parliament. The Member for Ballarat West had moved 'that it be referred to the Standing Orders Committee, with an expression of opinion from the House, that the Reporters' Gallery should not be under the control of anybody outside Mr Speaker and the Officers of the House'.² He had asserted that the gallery was controlled by a committee over which the House had no control, and places in the gallery were allotted by a person who was not an officer of the House. This allegation was put rather more pungently by Mr David Gaunson, the Member for Emerald Hill, who said that persons having business in the Reporters' Gallery should submit their application

¹ Sir Lloyd Dumas. *A Full Life*, Sun Books, Melbourne, 1969, p.12.

² VPD, Vol.53, 10 November 1886, pp.2265-66.

to the Speaker. The present system amounted to reporters having to submit their applications for attendance in the gallery to *The Argus*. The Attorney General, Mr H.J. Wrixon, said that the affairs of the Gallery 'had been managed by a committee of gentlemen of the press since 1856 and that arrangement was in accordance with the practice of the House of Commons'. The House referred the question of control of the gallery to the Standing Orders Committee, but it seems that no formal action was taken.¹

This suggests that the Reporters' Gallery of the Victorian Parliament had been regulating its own affairs since 1856, and that the model for its functioning was the House of Commons. Control by the Parliament, at least at this time, seems to have been administered somewhat laxly. This reinforces the point that British custom and precedent were applied, rather than the strict letter of the powers, immunities and privileges taken over from the House of Commons.

The evolution of the Victorian Reporters' Gallery along the lines of House of Commons custom is of fundamental importance to the subsequent creation of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery. A compromise by the founding fathers made Melbourne the federal capital in the early years of federation until Canberra was built. This meant that the first Federal Parliament met in Melbourne, and it took over the building which had housed the State Parliament. Part of the inheritance was the practice of the Victorian State Reporters' Gallery which was the nucleus of the Federal Gallery. This process has been described by a former Clerk of the House of Representatives, Sir Alan Turner:

¹ *Ibid.*

The [Press] Gallery seems to be here because it is here. The Federal Gallery probably inherited the status and privileges of the Victorian Press Gallery when Federal Parliament occupied the State Parliament Building in Melbourne. And I suppose the State Gallery simply carried on the traditions of the House of Commons when the Victorian Parliament was formed on the Westminster mode.¹

This thesis that a Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery emerged by adoption of the customary practice of Westminster is supported if we look at the implementation of sections 49 and 50 of the Constitution. As we have seen, these sections adopted the basic approach of the colonial legislatures. In effect, the relevant clauses of the State constitutions allowed the Houses of Parliament to declare their privileges, with the usual proviso that these privileges should not exceed those of the House of Commons. Although these 'powers, privileges and immunities' were not codified, the conventions of parliamentary privilege as applied by the House of Commons were used in certain circumstances to govern relationships with the Press, and on occasions to discipline newspaper editors.²

The position of the Press in Parliament does not seem to have occupied the deliberations of the founding fathers during the constitution debates. It is a reasonable implication therefore that the parliamentary relationship with the Press would be covered by privilege and by customary usage. Throughout the 78-year history of the Australian Parliament there have been several actions against the Press for breach of privilege. In these cases, privilege has been defined by reference to House of Commons precedent; there has been no attempt by either chamber of the Australian Parliament to declare the broad spectrum

¹ Bennetts, *op. cit.*, p.5.

² See Odgers, *op. cit.*, pp.647-51.

of its privilege. With regard to the Press and Parliament, the formal position is that of the House of Commons at the time the Commonwealth was established, that is 1 January 1901. The constitutional position has been set out by the Clerk of the Senate, Mr J.R. Odgers:

No comprehensive declaratory act has been passed, and consequently the powers, privileges and immunities of each House of the Commonwealth Parliament and its members and committees are, in the main, the same as those of the House of Commons.¹

Mr Odgers might have gone a step further and noted that these 'powers, privileges and immunities' were substantially those of the House of Commons in 1901. This is of importance for the status of the Press in the Australian Parliament, because the House of Commons in 1971 modified its formal antipathy to the presence of the Press in Parliament. Mr Odgers has summarised the change:

So far as reporting of debates is concerned, of historical interest is the fact that it was only in 1971 that the House of Commons finally changed the technical situation whereby it was 'an high indignity and a notorious breach of the privilege of this House for any news writer . . . to presume to give . . . any account of the debates'. This was exactly 200 years after the press gallery won the right, but only in practice, to give an account of the debates in the House.²

The modification made by the House of Commons in 1971 in strict terms does not apply to the Australian Parliament because its parliamentary privilege is the privilege that applied in the House of Commons in 1901. The fundamental basis of the relationship between Press and Parliament in this country remains the declaration of the 18th century: reporting the debates of Parliament is a notorious breach of privilege and a high indignity. This is the formal position, although in practice it is not

1 *Ibid.*, p.633.

2 *Ibid.*, p.631.

observed. The Press are encouraged to report Parliament and are given facilities to perform this function. This de facto recognition has been stated, although without much confidence in its constitutional basis, by Mr Odgers:

The position probably is that, in the press Gallery at Canberra, the reporting of proceedings is sanctioned by practice only. So far as committees are concerned, however, it is usual for Senate committees to pass motions authorising the publication of public proceedings.¹

The status of reporters in Parliament has been stated succinctly by Mr Reginald Palgrave, the clerk assistant of the House of Commons in a monograph entitled *The House of Commons*, published in 1878. Mr Palgrave noted that the arrangement between Press and Parliament was, remarkably enough, a wholly voluntary one:

The newspaper reporters are technically and truly 'strangers' to Parliament. The House cannot recommend their services, does not pay them, cannot revise a word of what they write, the only control the Commons have over them is to order them to be off. Every word the reporters write is a breach of privilege.²

Another definition of the status of the Press in the Palace of Westminster was given by the authors of 'Partners in Parliament: A Report to the Press Gallery':

We begin by defining the official status of the journalists. There is little difficulty about definition. Journalists at Westminster are strangers expressly forbidden, by resolutions of the House, to report the proceedings. In fact, newspapers have been reporting Parliament, with permission or without it, for hundreds of years. The technical prohibition still exists, although most authorities agree that it was in 1771 that attempts to bar the Press were finally abandoned.³

1 *Ibid.*

2 'Partners in Parliament', *op. cit.*, p.7.

3 *Ibid.*, p.6.

Just as the Press has existed on sufferance within the precincts of Westminster, the presence of the Press within the Australian Parliament has been tolerated on the clear basis that Press representatives are strangers, and subject to removal at any time at the discretion of either House.

The status of the Press as strangers in the Parliament was affirmed by Mr Speaker Holder in the House of Representatives on 11 September 1907. During a debate on secret drugs, cures and foods, the use of drugs to induce abortion was raised by Mr Johnson. Mr Salmon promptly called attention to the presence of strangers in the chamber, in effect calling for the galleries to be cleared. The Speaker then read to the House standing order 55 which governed the position that had arisen.

If at any sitting of the House, or in Committee, any member shall take notice that strangers are present, the Speaker or the Chairman (as the case may be) shall forthwith put the question That strangers be ordered to withdraw, which shall be decided without debate; provided that the Speaker or the Chairman may, whenever he thinks fit, order the withdrawal of strangers from any part of the Chamber.¹

The Speaker went on to put the question, 'That strangers be ordered to withdraw'. This exchange followed:

MR CROUCH--Will the term 'strangers' include the representatives of the press?

MR SPEAKER--Yes.²

Mr Speaker Holder's ruling that 'strangers' includes representatives of the Press has been accepted as an important parliamentary precedent, and as an affirmation of the unofficial status of the Press in Parliament.

¹ CPD, HR, 11 September 1907, p.3095.

² *Ibid.*

There are two ways in which the status of strangers within Parliament may be challenged. Any member or senator may move from the floor a resolution that strangers are present. Under the standing orders, the Presiding Officer must forthwith put the question: 'That strangers be ordered to withdraw'. Such a question must be decided by immediate vote without debate, and if the motion is successful, the galleries, including the press galleries, must be cleared of strangers. Moreover, the Presiding Officer of each chamber may order the withdrawal of strangers from any part of the chamber, whenever he thinks fit.¹

The standing orders give the Presiding Officers much more sweeping powers to control Press representatives by their powers over 'strangers' than is given to the House and the Senate. The two chambers can only exclude 'strangers' by resolution of the House. A motion for such a resolution may be defeated, as happened with the instance mentioned above, when the House decided that the subject matter of the debate was not too squeamish for 'strangers' and Press. Throughout the history of the Federal Parliament, there has been tension between the two chambers and the Presiding Officers over who has the authority to regulate the presence of the Press.

In 1912, the House of Representatives laid down a ground rule for its relations with the Press. On the motion of a member who claimed that he had been misrepresented in a newspaper, the House declared that:

. . . immediate action should be taken to protect Members of this Parliament from the aspersions and misrepresentations of the newspaper press by making an order that, when any article or paragraph appears in a newspaper reflecting upon the good conduct or integrity of a member, which, in the opinion of the said member, is calculated to prejudice him in the eyes of the

¹ Odgers, *op. cit.*, p.604.

community, and the member affected, by personal explanation or otherwise, declares that the statements so made in regard to himself are erroneous, misleading and injurious, and the House in good faith accepts such statement, no representative or representatives of the newspaper implicated be allowed within the precincts of Parliament House unless, or until, the explanation or contradiction made by the aggrieved member be given in the aforesaid newspaper prominence equal to that given to the offending article or paragraph.¹

This power has not been exercised by the House of Representatives or by the Senate. Both chambers have regarded such incidents as breaches of privilege and have referred them to the Privileges Committees for investigations and actions. The Presiding Officers have, on a number of occasions, acted in accordance with the spirit of this resolution to discipline the Press. In the process, the principle has been established that the Presiding Officers have powers over the Press within Parliament that are absolute. The precedent has been stated explicitly by a former Speaker, N.J. Makin: 'The Speaker has absolute power of admission to order exclusion from the Press Gallery of the House.'² The President of the Senate has a similar absolute power. These powers have not gone unchallenged by Parliament, but the Presiding Officers have been able to assert them over a broadly defined Press Gallery which includes all of the facilities at the disposal of the Press within Parliament House as well as the gallery space within the actual chambers. These powers and their exercise may be illustrated by reference to four widely separated incidents involving the Presiding Officers and Press representatives.

In 1914, members of the Press Gallery displayed a notice headed 'The Lousy List' within the precincts of Parliament. It listed a number

¹ CPD, HR, 20 December 1912, p.7687.

² CPD, HR, 23 April 1931, p.1275.

of Members and Senators who were blamed for the curtailing of Press privileges, and reporters were advised to extend no favours or 'no free advertising' to these Parliamentarians. In effect, it was suggested that these members and senators should not be reported. The Speaker and the President used the threat of exclusion to obtain apologies for the publication of 'The Lousy List'.¹

A much more significant incident for defining the bounds of the powers of the Presiding Officers over the Press was the expulsion by Mr Speaker Makin of a Melbourne journalist, Mr J.A. Alexander, from the precincts of the House of Representatives in 1931. Mr Makin has described this incident in an unpublished memoir, rather quaintly referring to himself in the third person:

One of the actions taken by Speaker Makin that came under challenge was that of dismissing from the Press Gallery a newspaper representative. During the absence abroad of the Prime Minister (Mr Scullin) an exchange of confidential cables took place with senior ministers in Australia . . . certain of these cables were published in a Melbourne newspaper, much to the embarrassment of the Government. These particular cables at an earlier date had been kept in a minister's room at Parliament House, Canberra, and Speaker Makin felt that it was his responsibility to safeguard any communications that were held in the Parliamentary building that was in his jurisdiction. He summoned the journalist representing the newspaper concerned and demanded to know how such documents, unauthorised to other than ministers concerned had come into his possession. He resolutely refused to state from whom the documents had been received. The journalist was thereupon warned by Mr Speaker that if he persisted in this attitude, he would be denied all rights and privileges as a member of the Press Gallery and from being at any time in the precincts of the House of Representatives. He still refused to comply. The Speaker thereupon gave instructions to effect his exclusion from the galleries, corridors, and rooms of the House. The following day the matter was raised in the House of Representatives on a question of privilege, and was ultimately resolved on the casting vote of Mr Speaker.²

¹ CPD, HR, 12 December 1914, pp.1688-94.

² Norman Makin. 'Speakers of the Commonwealth Parliament of Australia', unpublished manuscript, Vol.2, Chapter on N.J.O. Makin (no pagination), ANL MS 4663.

The exclusion of Mr Alexander was maintained for five months. It was hotly contested within the House of Representatives on the basis that the cables involved were departmental documents and not parliamentary documents. The leakage involved the affairs of the executive government, and not the Parliament; therefore, the Speaker had exceeded his authority in excluding Mr Alexander. It was argued by Opposition members that as a general rule, journalists should not be excluded except in the case of proven misconduct affecting their relationship with the Parliament.

The venerable argument about 'strangers' and the Parliament was raised again. At one point, the Leader of the Opposition, Mr J.G. Latham, rejected the contention that journalists were 'strangers'. In reply to the Prime Minister, Mr J. Scullin, who stated the standing order empowering the Speaker to order the withdrawal of strangers, Mr Latham interjected: 'That does not apply to pressmen. The position is entirely different.'¹ Unfortunately, Mr Latham did not amplify this interpretation. The conventional attitude to reporters as strangers was stated by the Attorney-General, Mr F. Brennan:

. . . no stranger has any right to enter the precincts of Parliament. He may do so only by permission. In that respect pressmen have no greater rights than are possessed by the poorest wayfarer who seeks the permission of Mr Speaker to take a seat in the gallery Everybody who is not a member of this Parliament is a stranger in this House.²

In amplification of the Opposition view that as a general rule, there should be no exclusion of journalists unless there was proved misconduct in relation to the Parliament, Mr Latham said that the House was entitled to take cognizance of the misconduct of any journalist.

¹ CPD, HR, 23 April 1931, p.1279.

² CPD, HR, 24 April 1931, p.1287.

That was one of the rights and privileges of the House and it should be maintained in order to govern properly the relations of the Press to Parliament. In the absence of any such offence, there should be no action in the way of denying a journalist the opportunity of reporting parliamentary debate - an occupation for which he required special qualifications, knowledge and experience.¹

It was argued, also, on behalf of Mr Alexander that he had done what his employers had expected him to do, and what was considered thoroughly legitimate from the point of view of modern journalism. In the event, the rigorous interpretation prevailed of parliamentary power over the Press as espoused by Mr Speaker Makin and Mr Brennan. Throughout, the debate was conducted on party lines, and the Speaker's casting vote was necessary to enforce the Government's attitude. It is arguable whether if the party roles had been reversed a different result would have applied. Very likely, a coalition government would have been just as affronted by the leaking of confidential cables as was the Labor Government. Subsequent coalition governments did nothing to ameliorate the strictness of the action taken by Mr Speaker Makin and prescribed by him in these terms:

The Speaker is the custodian of the rights and privileges of the House over which he presides, and is empowered to admit or to exclude from the galleries of the House any person who, in his discretion, he may deem it desirable to admit or exclude I have taken advice as to what my powers are in the matter, and the advice is that they are absolute.²

¹ *Ibid.*, pp.1282-83.

² CPD, HR, 23 April 1931, p.1275.

Mr Alexander's access to the House and his privileges were restored after a lengthy correspondence between Prime Minister Scullin, the Speaker, and officials of the Australian Journalists Association (AJA). Ultimately, the way for his return was cleared by his written assurances that he had acquired the information in an 'honourable and legitimate way'.¹

Mr Alexander was able to hold out for a settlement which was not to his discredit; he was not compelled to reveal his sources and the ultimate assurance which was accepted by the Speaker was one which he could have given at any time. Furthermore, he was not excluded from the Senate Chamber and precincts because the Senate was controlled by the Opposition, and the Alexander affair became a political issue. Access to the Senate allowed Alexander to continue his political reporting, and affirmed the point that to be successful, control over journalists in Parliament rested on joint action by the two Presiding Officers.

There was another important case of exclusion in 1942 when the representatives of the *Sunday Telegraph* and *Daily Telegraph* were denied access to the Parliament after the *Sunday Telegraph* criticised the conduct of the Senate. The details of this incident were recounted rather dryly by a Clerk of the House of Representatives:

Members of Press staffs have been excluded from Parliament House on occasions by the Presiding Officers. Perhaps the most recent case of importance was one that occurred in 1942, when the representatives of certain Sydney newspapers were excluded from Parliament House for several months following the publication of an offensive article relating to the Senate which appeared in the *Sunday Telegraph*. Than this there can be no greater offence, of course.²

¹ CPD HR 23 April 1931, p.1275.

² Sir Alan Turner, Clerk of the House of Representatives, 'Report of the First Conference of Australian Presiding Officers and Clerks-at-the-Table', Canberra, 23-25 January 1968, p.173.

In this incident, the initial action was taken by the President of the Senate, Senator Cunningham, and was reinforced by a similar ban imposed by Mr Speaker Nairn, although the article involved had not reflected on the House of Representatives. The implications for the Parliamentary Press Gallery were extremely serious because a joint ban excluded a number of Press representatives from all of the facilities of Parliament House. In effective terms, this meant that these journalists could not do their job because virtually all political reports emanated from the parliamentary building. There were even problems for the excluded reporters in obtaining refreshment services in the rather rudimentary Canberra of World War II. It was argued strongly by the Press Gallery journalists that the offensive article did not derive from the Press Gallery, and that disciplinary action should have been directed against the newspaper for breach of privilege. There were risks of a wider dispute when Mr Speaker Nairn threatened to exclude other journalists who supplied material to the *Sunday Telegraph* and *Daily Telegraph*, or to the excluded journalists outside the parliamentary precincts. The exclusion was operative for several weeks before it was resolved by a satisfactory apology on the part of the *Sunday Telegraph*.¹

The joint powers of the Presiding Officers were invoked again early in 1973, when Mr Speaker Cope and Mr President Cormack excluded a radio journalist, Mr Barry Everingham. This joint action was notable because it transcended party lines. Mr Cope was a member of the Labor Party and Sir Magnus Cormack a member of the Liberal Party. It was alleged that Mr Everingham had been found in the suite of the then Leader of the

¹ CPD, Vol.171, 2 June 1942, p.1806; 3-4 June 1942, p.2187; Vol.172, 29 September 1942, p.1003.

Opposition, Mr E.G. Whitlam, in Parliament House late in 1972. The suite was unoccupied and, according to the Presiding Officers, Mr Everingham had not accounted satisfactorily for his presence. By authority of the Presiding Officers, Mr Everingham's Press Gallery pass was withdrawn. This action excluded him from the facilities of Parliament House, and his employers dismissed him because he could not carry out his duties as a political reporter. Such drastic action demonstrated the absolute powers of the Presiding Officers over Press reporters within Parliament. Significantly, there was no challenge to their powers by either chamber of Parliament, probably because of the agreement between Presiding Officers representing the two major political groupings.¹

A number of conclusions can be withdrawn from these four incidents. The power of the Presiding Officers over Press reporters in Parliament has increased since it was first employed in a tentative way in 1912. Mr Speaker Makin asserted absolute powers and these have been confirmed and consolidated. The powers of the Presiding Officers have been exercised in all of the precincts of Parliament House; they are not confined to the galleries in the chambers. The Parliament has not challenged the use of these powers since the ineffectual challenge by the minority Opposition in 1932, when the attitude of the Nationalist and Country Parties was determined by political rather than parliamentary considerations. It remains open to the Parliament to assert control at any time, either by amendment of the standing order relating to strangers, by inserting new standing orders on the Press in Parliament, or by a declaration of privilege which would include the relationship between

¹ This paragraph is based on documents in a file on the Barry Everingham incident, which is part of the records of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery.

the Press and Parliament. In the absence of such action, regulation of the Press remains firmly in the hands of the Presiding Officers of the Parliament. It is not impossible that this equilibrium could be disturbed for political ends, but it seems increasingly remote. The control of the Presiding Officers has been entrenched more firmly in recent years, with Speaker and President joining in co-operative action to regulate and, on occasions, to discipline Press representatives within Parliament.

To summarise, this chapter has sought to outline the status of the Press within the Australian Parliament as a context for the more detailed account of its functioning in later chapters. This status is extremely ambiguous. The constitutional power given to the Parliament to declare its privilege has not been used, except in the relatively minor instances of broadcasting and publication. This means that the relationship of Parliament to Press has never been declared by the Parliament, so the privilege of the House of Commons in 1901 applies to the Press. In strict terms, this prescribes that the Press cannot enter the Parliament and report its proceedings. Over the past 150 years, the House of Commons has modified this stringent ruling and a mass of customary usages has been accumulated which sanctions the activities of the Press within Westminster and provides facilities for it to report the Parliament. These practices were taken over by the colonial Parliaments of Australia. When the Commonwealth was formed and the first Commonwealth Parliament met in Melbourne, the practice of admitting the Press and providing gallery space for it was adopted on similar lines to the House of Commons and the Westminster Parliament. In particular, the Press Gallery of the Victorian State Parliament served as a nucleus

for the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery. Press representatives are 'strangers' in the parliamentary sense, and their admission and conduct is regulated jointly by the Presiding Officers of the Parliament, whose authority has been accepted by the Parliament as absolute.

CHAPTER 2

THE MELBOURNE GALLERY: 1901-1927

The Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery inherited an organisation which was strong in numbers and effective in organisation. The mechanics of the Victorian Press Gallery can be traced through from 1865 to federation in 1901 by a series of rolls entered in the back of a gazette which was part of the press gallery furniture. These rolls were maintained by the Federal Gallery until 1918. The rolls are mainly a bald listing of organisations and names of their staff, although there are occasional cryptic entries which illuminate the organisation of the gallery.¹

The first reporters' roll for the Victorian gallery in 1865 lists three newspapers, the *Argus* with six reporters, the *Age* with four, and the *Herald* with three. The names of five country correspondents are also listed. The next entry for 1872 listed three Hansard reporters with the rest of the Victorian Press. The Victorian Hansard service was established in 1866 when William Valentine Robinson, a political reporter on the *Argus*, formed the first Hansard staff with two of his colleagues from that paper. Before Hansard was established, the *Argus* was accepted as the official Hansard report. This demonstrates the close relationship between the

¹ *Bailliere's Victorian Gazetteer and Road Guide*, compiled by Robt. P. Whitworth. According to an inscription on the cover, Whitworth presented the publication to the Reporters' Room of the Legislative Assembly, Melbourne, on 9 May 1865. The reporters' rolls are entered from the last page of the Gazetteer (page 442, which concludes with entries for Yuill's Swamp and Zero, Mt) and are entered on blank pages which form the end papers of the book. The rolls are reproduced as an appendice in R.J. Bennetts. 'Development of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, 1901-1968', Master of Arts Qualifying Thesis, Department of Political Science, School of General Studies, Australian National University, 1968, and there is a copy in the manuscript section of the Australian National Library at ANL MS 2010.

Press Gallery and Hansard, a relationship which persisted with the Federal Gallery into the second decade of the 20th century. It reveals as well the comprehensive nature of the Press coverage of Parliament. In many ways the Parliamentary reporting of great daily journals like the *Age* and the *Argus* was so extensive that a Hansard record was not regarded as indispensable. The links between Hansard and the Press Gallery staff were maintained until parliamentary reporting deteriorated as an important element of political journalism.¹

Subsequent entries listed extremely strong staffs for the *Argus* which always exceeded the *Age*, sometimes by a factor of two to one. These were the years when the chiefs of the rival gallery staffs were two legendary newspapermen, Dr E.S. Cunningham of the *Argus* and G.H. Schuler of the *Age*. After many years of political rivalry, Cunningham and Schuler became editors of their respective papers. The *Argus* and the *Age* formed the foundation of the Melbourne Gallery for the whole of this period, with a consistent quota of country representatives, and other representation which reflected the changing fortunes of Melbourne newspapers. The last entry for the old State Gallery was made for 1900 when the roll of names reflected the gallery membership of the preceding years, and noted changes of status, rather poignantly in some instances:

F.W. Ward (leader writer) afterwards Ed. Syd. D.T.
 Wells (died suddenly, Pt. Melbourne station)
 Lambie (killed in South Africa) Burt dead.²

¹ See J.F. Weatherston. *Commonwealth Hansard, Its Establishment and Development*, 3rd edn. AGPS, Canberra, 1975.

² See fn.1, p.23, *supra*.

When the first Federal Parliament met in 1901, a strong Press tradition had existed in the Victorian State Parliamentary Building for at least 40 years. When the State Parliament moved to temporary quarters in the Exhibition Building which it occupied for 27 years, enough of the personnel of the old Press Gallery joined the new Federal Gallery to provide a strong thread of continuity. There were other elements which strengthened the new Federal Gallery. A tradition of federal reporting had emerged in the 1890s with the necessity to report the constitutional debates. Just as the constitutional conventions brought State politicians together for the first time in a federal context, so also did they create a spirit of federal political reporting. In the case of the Adelaide convention, the official record was compiled by newspaper gallery staff who also provided the State parliamentary Hansard:

Mr Kingston was President of the Convention in Adelaide. Mr Barton was its leader. The debates were at first reported from the press gallery directly over the President's chair. Hearing was difficult, and one reporter wrote: 'The president was understood to say.' This brought from Mr Kingston a stinging memorandum on the duties, and lack of intelligence of the staff. His note was pasted on the wall of the reporters' room at Parliament House as a warning to future evil doers Later, as one of the results of this unpleasantness, the official reporters were allowed at the table on the floor of the assembly chamber.¹

For the first time, the young reporters who were lent by the daily papers to transcribe the record were exposed to Alfred Deakin, whose rapidity of speech often exceeded 200 words a minute, and Edmund Barton whose elaborate parentheses were fitted together like an intricate mosaic which would fall apart if a single phrase were missed.²

¹ R.F. Sholl. 'The Hand Behind the Mask', Memoirs of Press and Parliament, unpublished manuscript in the W.M. Hughes papers, ANL MS 1338, p.76.

² *Ibid.*, p.39.

A federal approach to political reporting was inculcated by coverage of the inauguration of the Commonwealth in Sydney. Although the Federal Parliament was to meet in Melbourne, the first Governor-General, Lord Hopetoun, arrived in Sydney in December 1900. The ceremonies to mark the inauguration of the Commonwealth were held in Sydney, where the principal figures of federation were gathered during the crucial weeks when the composition of the first Commonwealth Government was determined. A small knot of political journalists assembled in Sydney, and covered the events which surrounded the 'Hopetoun Blunder' and the ultimate appointment of Edmund Barton as first Prime Minister. This group included journalists who were prominent subsequently in the Federal Press Gallery: George Cockerill, David Maling, Harry Peters, Gerald Mussen.

Cockerill, who represented the *Melbourne Age*, was an active participant in the negotiations which terminated when Sir William Lyne, the Prime Minister-elect, failed in his efforts to form a government. In his book, *Scribblers and Statesmen*, Cockerill related how Sir William Lyne used him as an intermediary to sound out the views of the proprietor of the *Age*, David Syme. Lyne judged that the support of Syme, a proponent of protectionism, was essential for his efforts to bring Victorian political leaders such as Alfred Deakin and Sir George Turner into his Government:

The same evening Joe Althorpe [Cockerill] received another message asking him to come along to the Premier's office within the next hour. Sir William Lyne became more than ordinarily candid. 'What does the *Age* think of this man Isaac Isaacs and A.J. Peacock,' he asked? . . . 'I'm ready to take into the Federal Cabinet any two Victorians whom Mr Syme will nominate and support. As you are his representative I would like you to get in touch with him.'¹

¹ George Cockerill. *Scribblers and Statesmen*, J. Roy Stevens, Melbourne (undated), p.106.

Cockerill sent a judiciously worded telegram to his Chief of Staff, and received in return a curt dismissal of the two Victorians Sir William had suggested as Cabinet possibilities.

Another reporter, Gerald Mussen, was present in Barton's home at the historic moment when the call came from the Governor-General. He recalled the event in terms which were less than epic:

The telephone rang. Barton's little girl burst into the room and said, 'Dad, Dad, it's from Government House.' Coming back from the phone Barton said, 'It's from Government House alright. I have been sent for.' And turning to his young daughter he said, 'Give me my boots.'¹

This experience with the founding fathers, with the inauguration of the Commonwealth and its first Government, and with the coverage of the first election campaign had given some feel for national politics to members of the Victorian Gallery during the vital transition period before Parliament and Cabinet met for the first time in Melbourne. The sense of a corporate identity for the Federal Gallery was heightened by the creation of a Commonwealth Press Club during the ceremonies which marked the opening of the Commonwealth Parliament. This club included overseas journalists and interstate representatives, but the nucleus was the group of reporters which had been assembled to report the new Parliament. The Chairman of the Commonwealth Press Club was David H. Maling of the *Argus*, subsequently an influential member of the Gallery. The club wound up its brief existence with a 'smoke social' hosted by the Commonwealth with Prime Minister Barton as principal speaker.²

¹ B.S.B. Cook. 'Memoirs of a Pioneer Pressman', unpublished manuscript, ANL MS 1453, p.97.

² *Argus*, 15 May 1901, 'Smoke Social to Journalists', p.3.

The reporters' roll for the first session of Federal Parliament in 1901-02 listed a substantial Hansard staff with recruitment from all of the State Parliaments except Tasmania. The staff listed for the *Age* (seven) and the *Argus* (eight) was comparable to those in the State Gallery, and there was a representation of four for the Melbourne *Herald*, the most substantial of the evening papers. The country representation was maintained with four reporters. The most important change in the structure of the old State Gallery was the addition of a handful of interstate representatives: *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, 3; *Sydney Evening News*, 1; *Sydney Star*, 1; *Brisbane Courier*, 1; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2.¹

Other interstate newspapers were serviced by arrangements with members of the Gallery and in subsequent years by development of Press agencies which were represented in the Gallery. These agencies built up substantial strings of clients. The proprietor of the Southern Press Agency, Mr D.G. Walker, told a parliamentary inquiry in 1923 that his agency reported Parliament for Reuters, the *Adelaide Advertiser*, *Adelaide Register*, *Perth Daily News*, *Broken Hill Truth*, the *Ballarat Echo*, *Grafton Examiner*, *Lismore Star*, the *Tamworth Leader*, *Wagga Advertiser*, *Albury Mail*, *Brisbane Courier*, *Port Pirie Reporter*, *Launceston Examiner*, the *Bathurst Advocate*, and the *Newcastle Herald*. Another agency, the Provincial Daily Press Agency, was formed to give a parliamentary service to major provincial newspapers at Bendigo, Geelong and Mildura.²

¹ See fn.1, p.23, *supra*.

² Commonwealth Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works. 'Report on the Proposed Erection of Provisional Parliament House, Canberra,' House of Representatives Votes and Proceedings, No.17 of 12 July 1923.

Some of the arrangements made for Press Gallery representation had an anomalous flavour. In 1923, the Sydney *Sun* provided a service for two Melbourne papers as well as the Newcastle *Sun*. This was due to the incursion by Hugh Denison's Sydney *Sun* group into Melbourne with the establishment of a morning *Sun Pictorial* and an *Evening Sun*. Subsequently the *Sun* group divested itself of the Melbourne papers, closing the *Evening Sun* and selling the *Sun Pictorial* to the Melbourne *Herald* group.¹

During the 27 years of its existence, the Federal Gallery in Melbourne represented a diversity of newspaper interests ranging over metropolitan dailies, provincial dailies, bi-weeklies and weeklies, and news services such as Reuters. This breadth of political coverage in an era when extensive reporting of parliamentary debates was still fashionable was accomplished by a Gallery staff which ranged between 20 and 32. The main organisations represented in the Gallery remained relatively stable: Melbourne *Argus*, Melbourne *Age*, Melbourne *Herald*, Sydney *Morning Herald*, and Press agencies, with more sporadic representation of the Sydney *Sun* and the Brisbane *Courier*.

It is possible to discern from the reporters' roll consistent patterns of organisation for the Gallery staff, particularly the *Age* and *Argus* which were the major organisations. It is clear from the designations of individual reporters that the reporting of parliamentary proceedings was of overwhelming importance. A senior reporter was designated frequently as 'leader'. This post referred to the 'leader' of a newspaper's reporting team in the gallery. The 'leader' organised the first 'take' of an important speech with the rest of his team taking

¹ An unpublished life of Sir Keith Murdoch by C.E.S. Sayers describes how Murdoch established his newspaper empire in Melbourne during the 1920s and 1930s. See the Murdoch Papers, ANL MS 2823.

their turn. These 'takes' were usually transcribed in longhand, often in the gallery while debate continued. Typewriters were rare in newspaper offices during the early years of the century, and political material was prepared for the printers in the newspaper offices adjoining the galleries. The 'leader', or in some cases Press gallery Chief of Staff, was responsible for assembling the reports, sub-editing them for publication, and despatching them to the printers who returned galley proofs directly to the gallery. This meant that for the *Age* and the *Argus*, the political pages or columns were filled by an autonomous process, separated from the literary staff and sub-editing processes which produced the bulk of the paper.¹

It was also common for the great political dailies to station one of their leader writers on a permanent basis in the gallery. This was an arrangement of convenience. The *Age* and the *Argus* often ran one leader a day on federal politics and the composition of these extremely important items was facilitated if its author was in the gallery or in touch with the parliamentary lobbies. As well as leaders, these writers often compiled parliamentary notes which in many ways resembled the later political columns. One of the earliest of these columnists was the *Age*'s chief leader writer David Maling, who contributed a weekly column:

The heading was 'Above the Speaker' - a reference to the press gallery which was so situated - and he used the nom-de-plume 'Ithuriel' ('with his spear touched lightly'. This was, of course, a reference to Milton's *Paradise Lost*.) A cultured gentleman, Maling never descended to vulgar criticism. His 'Ithuriel' column was a smoothly running narrative in faultless English and replete with witty satire. It never failed

¹ The *Australasian Journalist* contains valuable transcripts of Arbitration Court hearings which throw light on all aspects of journalistic work, including political journalism. See particularly 23 February 1917 and 20 March 1917.

to hit on the raw some of the political opponents of the causes espoused by the *Argus* in the old days.¹

With the bulk of the staff confined to parliamentary coverage, the attention given to the other elements of federal politics was rather more perfunctory. This side of political reporting was described broadly as 'rounds' which covered the Cabinet, Ministers, and their departments. Rounds work included the traditional scrutiny of the parliamentary lobbies, although this work was supplemented on occasions by the gallery reporting staff. In some cases, reporters were allocated to cover another broad category described simply as 'departments'. This was in some ways a refinement of rounds; it stipulated the daily coverage of the departments of state, including daily calls on their Minister and departmental head.

The Melbourne Parliament House did not provide accommodation for Ministers, except the Prime Minister, nor did it provide space for Cabinet, which met in a near-by office block. Ministers worked in their departments when Parliament was not sitting or when their presence in the chamber was not required urgently. When Ministers were not in their departments they could be picked up by the parliamentary roundsmen in the lobbies of Parliament, or at their hotels or other private assignation places in the city.

Coverage of rounds in Melbourne presented some difficult logistical problems because of the geographical dispersal of departments around the city. The Melbourne dailies allocated staff to four main rounds - Federal, State, Defence (the St Kilda Road end of the city) and Western (mainly State Government departments). Federal roundsmen usually moved

¹ Cook, *op. cit.*, p.45.

in a pack, meeting each day at Parliament or at a point near the Cabinet Room, and moving around the individual departments. The logic of this sort of arrangement was accepted both by reporters and by Ministers:

Federal ministers could not be expected to give of their time to see pressmen individually, unless by special arrangement, and that practice had grown up of the pressmen doing the departmental rounds in a body. This arrangement was suitable to the morning paper men, but not to the Melbourne *Herald*, the only evening paper with its own federal political representative. Evening papers in the other States were satisfied with the services of news agencies.¹

Many years after his elevation from the Federal Ministry to the Bench, Mr Justice Isaacs recalled to an industrial hearing his experiences with federal roundsmen:

I have a very strong and long-continued recollection of reporters coming in a body and all taking part in a very suggestive conversation, and not just being content with what was doled out to them.²

The nature of lobby and rounds work was described in the same hearing by one of its distinguished practitioners, Dr E.H. Cunningham, the Editor of the *Argus*. Dr Cunningham deprecated the practice of roundsmen working in groups and compared it disparagingly with his own days as a state roundsman for the *Argus*. (He was comparing federal practice in 1917 with state practice in the 1880s.):

They all go about in a body. In my day Mr Schuler [his counterpart on the *Age*] and myself would not be seen in each other's company . . . he [the political roundsman] only does what hundreds of politicians are doing each day. It is speculation based on the general knowledge of politicians which every reporter should have. He gets that knowledge by experience. It has always been the case that the reporter has had to keep in constant touch with leading politicians, to cultivate friendship with them, and to be

¹ *Ibid.*, pp.170-71.

² *Australasian Journalist*, 20 March 1917, p.81.

constantly in contact with them as far as he can. He is picking up the gossip of the Parliamentary lobbies. Almost anybody can do it who has had any experience at all. Most of the men who get special information come out of the [newspaper] office with instructions. The news of the [Cook] double dissolution was exclusive. It appeared in the *Age* first. I don't know how that happened.¹

Acknowledging that Dr Cunningham was here putting a case for his newspaper against an award for journalists, and that this animus against the AJA coloured his views to some degree, he gave to the Industrial Court a reasonable picture of the work of the federal parliamentary roundsmen.

The rather informal approach to news gathering which Dr Cunningham found detrimental to journalistic initiative continued until the termination of the Melbourne Federal Gallery in 1927. Undoubtedly there was a considerable measure of collaboration between roundsmen, with a regular pooling of information. In particular, there seems to have been a tacit understanding that where the defence departments were covered by federal roundsmen, any stories they collected should be given to the rest of the roundsmen. Reciprocally, the defence roundsmen were supplied with news from the rest of the rounds. In one of his daily bulletins to his staff, the Managing Editor of the Melbourne *Herald*, Sir Keith Murdoch, in the mid-1920s once rebuked his federal roundsman for what he interpreted as a blatant example of collusion with a rival.²

Relations with the Prime Minister and senior Ministers were usually cordial, although there were occasional frictions. A sense of the relationship between Ministers and Press, and the ways in which Press Gallery journalists did their job, emerges from the rather garrulous

¹ *Ibid.*

² Sir Keith Murdoch. Notes from the Managing Editor, 30 July 1926, ANL MS 2823, Folder 54. Murdoch issued regular bulletins to his staff in which he commented on the previous day's publications.

anecdotes which were collected many years later by pioneer Pressmen. A sequence of these stories is included here to convey something of the flavour of political reporting during these years.

In the early days of the Commonwealth Parliament, the politicians had just as much trouble as state-oriented journalists in cultivating the federal spirit. On one occasion, roundsmen were waiting in a corridor of the Commonwealth offices for the Barton Cabinet to rise for lunch.

The first to emerge from the Cabinet Room was bluff Sir John Forrest, playfully referred to as the 'King of the West' in recognition of his great individual services to West Australia. He was red-faced and seemingly in a state of perturbation. 'What's doing, Sir John,' blurted an irrepressible reporter. 'Huh,' grunted Sir John. 'Too many captains.' He declined to amplify his remarks, but it was a sufficient text for some imaginative pressmen to vamp up a stirring story headed: 'Early dissensions in the Cabinet.' Other ministers laughed at the newspaper report but refused to discuss what had given rise to it. Deakin simply remarked: 'Dear old Sir John! He finds it difficult to accustom himself to the fact that this is a federal cabinet, not a state like his, with himself as head man.'¹

Sir George Reid once prohibited any access to the Melbourne *Herald* until it apologised for describing him as 'being as spurious as his politics'. When Reid became Prime Minister, a *Herald* roundsman presented himself with a group of Pressmen waiting to pay their respects to Sir George, 'wondering whether I was to be ignominiously kicked out':

'Well, gentlemen,' said Reid, with pride in his voice. 'I think I have met nearly all of you before as leader of the opposition.' He slowly readjusted his monocle and ran his gaze over the pressmen present. He paused at me. 'Well, well,' he ejaculated condescendingly, 'and here is the little *Herald*, too!' Then after what to me was an awkward pause, he added: 'I suppose as Prime Minister, I must let bygones be bygones and treat you all alike. Yes, you may stay, little *Herald*.'²

¹ Cook, *op. cit.*, p.133.

² *Ibid.*, p.110.

Leaking of material from Cabinet was prevalent from the early days of the Commonwealth. The former Premier of New South Wales, Sir William Lyne, who had been Lord Hopetoun's first choice for Prime Minister, used to divulge for tactical reasons information to Sydney Press representatives. According to Gerald Mussen, one of the first representatives of the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* in Melbourne, when Lyne thought a Cabinet decision would not be popular with his electorate, he would pass it on to a friendly federal roundsman from New South Wales:

Deakin had a very shrewd suspicion that Lyne was responsible for such occasional Cabinet leakages, but Lyne was acute enough to be the first to complain about this premature disclosure of ministerial intentions.¹

Sir William's strategy has served as a plausible ruse for generations of Cabinet leakers which followed him.

Sir William Lyne and Alfred Deakin were also involved in one of the most celebrated incidents that ever occurred on the floor of the Australian Parliament. In 1909 Deakin joined in a coalition with Cook, to the extreme chagrin of Lyne. A federal roundsman called on Lyne when the session opened:

He was boiling over with rage. We had a whisky as usual and I asked him what he intended to do. That properly opened the floodgates. 'What am I going to do?' he shouted. 'I tell you what I am going to do. I am going to point to Deakin and say, "Judas! Judas! Judas!"' And he did this later in no uncertain manner in a House seething with excitement.²

This carefully contrived incident had all of the marks of spontaneity when Lyne unleashed his diatribe in the Parliament. Another journalist who witnessed it from the Press gallery described it as 'that

¹ *Ibid.*, p.136.

² *Ibid.*, p.138.

terrible scene in the House of Representatives which ended in the death of Sir Frederick Holder - a scene which I shall never forget.¹

Much of the political legwork was done outside the limits of Parliament House and the departmental rounds. It was a common practice to call on politicians in the relative privacy of their rooms or at their homes. A famous example of the productivity of this sort of approach occurred with the first double dissolution of the Federal Parliament in 1914. The double dissolution was announced exclusively in the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* and the Melbourne *Age*. The story was obtained by two *Telegraph* reporters, H.W. Peters and Q.S. Spedding in the following way:

All Australia was eagerly awaiting the decision of the Governor-General but this naturally had to be communicated only to the Prime Minister. Peters talked the matter over with Spedding, and although it was after midnight, he decided to seek an interview with the Prime Minister. They went to the White Hart Hotel in Spring Street where the Prime Minister [Joseph Cook] usually lodged when the Federal Parliament was sitting in Melbourne. They groped their way along in the semi-darkness to the Prime Minister's room. Their first knock was responded to by an irate 'Who's there?'. Peters had known Cook for years and was not deterred by his shouted terms of resentment at being disturbed. No, he had nothing to say. But the imperturbable Peters fired question after question at him . . . while the Prime Minister supplied no definite information, he spoke unguardedly and perhaps to a degree incautiously. What he said and his manner of saying it were sufficient for his acute and canny callers to justify Peters in summing up the question in the affirmative. Thus the *Daily Telegraph* had a notable scoop in announcing that His Excellency had granted Cook's request for a double dissolution.²

Once Peters had despatched the news to his paper in Sydney, he passed it on to the roundsman for the *Age* with the understanding that it was for his paper exclusively. Apparently the *Age* journalist was well-liked and could be trusted:

¹ Leonard V. Biggs. *Forum*, 13 February 1924, 'Melbourne Memories, Alfred Deakin', pp.3-4.

² Cook, *op. cit.*, p.94,ff.

Had the *Argus* man been more popular, he might have had the news, too.¹

This incident shows the degree of collusion which existed between certain elements of the Gallery, and the sanctions that could be exerted against a roundsman who was not popular or who was regarded as untrustworthy. It indicates as well the existence of the practice of 'clubbing' by which journalists grouped together to ensure that they were protected as much as possible against unexpected scoops. This incident also explains the bewilderment that the Editor of the *Argus*, Dr Cunningham, felt about the exclusive account of the double-dissolution in the *Age*.²

Although there were occasional leaks from the top, more often the Prime Minister was concerned to staunch the flow of information from his Cabinet and party. A reporter related how on one occasion he had walked past the room of the Prime Minister Andrew Fisher and his shadow had fallen across the frosted glass panels:

Within a few seconds the door suddenly opened and Fisher glared up and down the corridor. I asked Shepherd [Secretary to the Prime Minister's Department] what Fisher was looking for. He replied that Fisher was annoyed and irritable at the leakage of Cabinet secrets, and hoped to catch the spy.³

In later years, Press Gallery reporters recalled that the Melbourne gallery retained something of a Dickensian flavour:

Two occupants of the old upstairs Press Gallery above the Speaker's Chair, who might have stepped straight out of a Dickens book were J.[?] Walker . . . and . . . Laws. Walker Senr. was bald headed and six feet tall. One of the

1 *Ibid.*

2 See p.32, *supra*.

3 *Ibid.*, p.113.

reporters carried his meals in a schoolbag slung over his shoulder. They reported Parliament for a string of country papers for very many years.¹

Contemporary accounts show that journalists were well accommodated and provided with reasonable amenities in Melbourne Parliament House. Reciprocal arrangements between Melbourne and interstate papers provided some pooling of resources and sharing of facilities: for example, the *Argus* with the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Age* with the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*.

The proximity of the Melbourne newspaper offices, the branch offices of the main interstate papers, and the telegraphic services of the Postmaster-General's Department facilitated the work of reporters and reduced strains on the facilities available at Parliament House. Interstate reporters were accommodated in a room on the ground floor which had served as gallery accommodation for the old State Parliament. Melbourne reporters used mainly the traditional gallery above the Speaker's chair. Their rooms were adjacent. Interstate visitors for the parliamentary sessions were housed in two inside galleries built into the floor of the House of Representatives. In an era when verbatim reporting still predominated, although it was a steadily waning force, these inside galleries were greatly valued by reporters. Absence of microphones and auditory aids made it difficult to report accurately from the gallery above the chamber. The galleries on the floor of the chamber were removed after the Federal Parliament moved to Canberra in 1927, because one of the provisos for use of the building was that the chamber should be restored exactly as it had been before federation.²

¹ H.S. Innes. Typescript note on the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, Parliament House, Melbourne, Innes Papers, ANL MS 4880. The Innes Papers contain press clippings, memos, staff rosters, journal articles with annotations, and some typescript comments on aspects of the Press Gallery and political journalism.

² *Ibid.*

Reporters had access to the front part of the Parliamentary Library and could call on Ministers in their rooms. They had unrestricted use of Kings Hall and were permitted to use the Speaker's Corridor to summon members from the chamber. One reporter recalled getting Prime Minister Fisher to come from the chamber twice within a few minutes to discuss a Cabinet story. Tables outside the Members' Dining Room were provided for meals and refreshments, although the *Argus* sustained its independence by providing permanent arrangements for its staff to dine at the White Hart Hotel across Spring Street from Parliament House. Interstate copy could be lodged with an operator in the parliamentary building and telegraphed by hand-operated morse code, or it could be sent by messenger to the General Post Office for telegraphing or transmitted from associate newspaper offices.¹

Although the privileges and facilities extended to reporters at Parliament House were extensive, there was a feeling of resentment among the Gallery that they were under constant threat. Certainly, there was some diminution in the privileges given to reporters. During the first fourteen years of the Federal Parliament reporters had access to the Members' Refreshment rooms and, when accompanied by a member, could use the tennis courts, cricket pitch, billiard room and library. They could use all of the corridors where members gathered, and a select few who had established reputations for trustworthiness could enter the party rooms and chat freely with members when party meetings were not in session.²

1 *Ibid.*

2 Leonard V. Biggs. *Forum*, 27 February 1924, 'Parliament as a Club', p.3.

These extensive privileges were withdrawn abruptly by order of the Joint House Committee at the time of the 'Lousy List' incident described in Chapter 1. This action, which one reporter described as revolutionary and unprecedented, followed allegations that a journalist had obtained exclusive stories based on inside political knowledge by secreting himself for lengthy periods in a lavatory used by Ministers, members and officials. The withdrawal of privileges was particularly galling to interstate journalists because the closeted reporter allegedly had been one of their number:

The interstate pressmen took strong exception to the inference that they were nothing better than a disreputable band of eavesdroppers, when disapproval should have fallen exclusively on the shoulders of one man.¹

This resentment sparked the promulgation of the 'Lousy List' and the subsequent brush with the Presiding Officers. The tensions and strains caused by this incident gradually simmered down, and the relinquished privileges were partially restored. The reporters did not enjoy thereafter the easy access to all parliamentary areas and facilities that they had been given hitherto.

Reference was made earlier to the processing of parliamentary copy, most of it transcribed from shorthand notes and written out for the printer in longhand. The emphasis on penmanship and verbatim note-taking was strongest in the early years when the tradition of verbatim reporting was taken over from the reporting of the State Parliament. The essence of this sort of reporting was excellent shorthand. Taking Alfred Deakin's occasional bursts of over 200 words per minute was

¹ Cook, *op. cit.*, p.91.

regarded as the supreme test of both Press and Hansard reporters. Edmund Barton, with his intricate parentheses, and the fluent William Watt were graded at only slightly lower degrees of difficulty. A Hansard reporter told an Arbitration Court hearing in 1917 that 'in reporting Mr Watt a reporter would have to be prepared to work up to 180 words a minute.'¹

The need for accurate verbatim reporting was hampered, also, by the phone system supplied when responsibility for Posts and Telegraphs passed to the Commonwealth. Reporters were accustomed to the Ericsson apparatus, a box-like outfit in which the receiver and transmitter were in one piece and hung on a lever at the side. This allowed easy note-taking of conversations for shorthand journalists because it left one hand free. The pedestal apparatus which replaced it required the use of one hand to hold the receiver while the user spoke into a funnel at the top. This adversely affected the work of journalists and other office workers to such an extent that the old one-hand combinations were revived for office use. There was a conscious attempt by the Commonwealth authorities to limit the telephone to urgent communications, leaving the lines free as much as possible. Whatever the merits of this approach as public policy, it was disruptive to use of the telephone as an aid to political reporting.²

The requirements for verbatim reporting were relaxed perceptibly during World War I because of the need to include a mass of military reportage. In the 1920s the trend quickened because of changing newspaper styles such as the impact of the young Keith Murdoch and his

¹ Amos Burr, Chief State Hansard Reporter, *Australasian Journalist*, 23 February 1917, p.37.

² Cook, *op. cit.*, p.185.

introduction of the techniques and principles of Lord Northcliffe to Australian newspapers. This made gallery reporting less arduous, as a senior political reporter recalled in 1917:

The position of the leader of the parliamentary staff is quite different from what it was eight or ten or say fifteen years ago. In those days a man used to write a column, a column and a half and sometimes two columns of paras which contained a lot of descriptive matter and sometimes criticisms of the debates.¹

While the pressure of gallery reporting undoubtedly eased, it was still an intensive occupation and a parliamentary reporter was constrained to do his job well. Although it was demanding, gallery reporting did not require excessive hours of work. Certainly there was little of the 'sweating' which had characterised newspaper offices in the late 19th century. An evening newspaper gallery reporter told an Arbitration Court hearing in 1917 that his average working week was 40 hours, and the average for a morning paper political reporter was 44 hours. Although hours were reasonable, pay-rates and conditions for all journalists remained poor until the formation of the Australian Journalists Association (AJA) and the subsequent resort to arbitration. Senior gallery reporters were among the better paid journalists of the time.

If one feature dominated the political Press of the period in which the Commonwealth Parliament sat in Melbourne (1901-1927) it was the overwhelming influence of the great Melbourne dailies. This dominance was expressed by W.M. Hughes in a retrospective look at the old Parliament in 1927:

¹ George Cockerill. *Australasian Journalist*, 20 March 1917, p.84.

The powerful press of Melbourne moulding and moulded by public opinion in that great city exercised a profound influence upon Parliament. It made itself felt upon members of other States almost as strongly as upon representatives of Victorian constituencies. The Melbourne journals applied much the same role with members of the Federal Parliament as did the 'cloud by day and pillar of fire by night' with the Israelites; it was always with them. It was to their columns that members turned to find how their contributions to the previous day's debates had been received, and from the leading articles strove to learn what the people - according to the press - were thinking about them and what they had done or what they had proposed to do. Every day members were gibbeted on the javelins of hostile and biting criticism, or, more rarely, covered with enheartening eulogy. All this had its effects. No matter how self-reliant, how confident in the justice of the cause he champions a man may be, censure falls on him like acid on a raw wound. He is prepared to bend a little to avoid it.¹

The *Age* and the *Argus* were the great political newspapers of the first twenty-seven years of federation in the same way that with the *Sydney Morning Herald* they had been the great political newspapers of the colonial Parliaments. They were helped immeasurably by having the Federal Parliament in their home city where they could deploy superior resources to covering its activities. They were helped, also, by the marked proclivity of Ministers and party leaders for the morning Melbourne Press, although interstate reporters picked up occasional exclusive stories from State partisans. Very often, these stories were filtered back to either or both of the great Melbourne morning papers so that their eminence was preserved. The other Melbourne daily, the evening *Herald*, was hindered by the propensity of Prime Ministers, particularly Deakin, to reserve their news for the morning papers which worked to a different time scale. This reduced the coverage and influence of the *Herald*, the only possible rival to the *Age* and *Argus*,

¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, Federal Capital Supplement, 9 May 1927.

and this in turn reinforced the dominance of these great political Melbourne dailies. The era of the Melbourne Parliament was exclusively a Press era, and it was a Press era when two Melbourne papers were pre-eminent.

Although the pattern of newspaper coverage evolved during these twenty-seven years, it was recognisably the same as the basic pattern that had been established in the early years when the dominant influence was the inheritance from the old State Parliament. This emerges clearly in a vignette of the work of the gallery and its political roundsmen in the 1920s:

Access to the Ministers, including the Prime Minister (Billy Hughes in my time) was regular and easy. We usually saw the Prime Minister twice a day and were able to ask any questions - unless he happened to be in one of his tantrums. Other Ministers were just as accessible - either in the House precincts or in their departmental offices scattered around the city or in the Commonwealth offices. I worked in the Gallery as Federal roundsman for the *Age* under the chief political reporter. I covered most of the departments and when the House was sitting usually 'led' our team of three or four reporters from the ordinary staff. For the first years of the war I was particularly tied up with the Defence and Navy departments. In times of political crisis I assisted the chief political reporter to get the news in the lobbies, in Queen's Hall, or else very privately at some rendezvous in the city When the House was sitting the *Age* usually had two reporters, sometimes three, plus myself, in the gallery, with one lobby man looking after politics and a roundsman who combined rounds with parliamentary reporting. There were no commentators. But the *Age* leader writer, and I think the *Argus* man too, often listened to debates or questions in the gallery and wrote leaders in their papers' private rooms. The *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Daily Telegraph* had each its special representative in the *Age* and *Argus* [city] offices respectively and these would attend the House when they thought it advisable. Otherwise I think they and the Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth papers just took their news from the proofs of Melbourne newspapers with which they were associated.¹

¹ Ralph Simmonds, quoted in Bennetts, *op. cit.*, pp.42-43.

The final years of the Melbourne Parliament were notable ones, with the Bruce-Page Government in power. Reporters who covered the Parliament at this time remembered as most memorable the debates in the House over the seamen's strike, and the efforts to deport the union officials Walsh and Johnson.¹ The final session of the Parliament in Melbourne adjourned on 24 March 1927 to the national capital in Canberra.

¹ Innes, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER 3

THE CANBERRA GALLERY: 1927-1945

1. 1927-1939

The concept of a national capital had always been part of the daily working lives of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery. Some of its members had accompanied the rambling pilgrimages of federal politicians around capital sites in south-eastern New South Wales during the first decade of the century. These peregrinations accumulated a folk-lore of their own and Cockerill has conveyed a vivid picture of the rituals.¹ Once the choice had been made, the plans and preparations for Canberra had formed part of the parliamentary business which was reported by the Gallery on a daily basis. King O'Malley as Home Affairs Minister took journalists with him on his occasional visits to the capital site, invariably in the middle of winter. The main impression left on these envoys of the Melbourne Gallery was one of overwhelming cold and desolation.² It was not until the early 1920s when the move to Canberra achieved a degree of imminence that the collective consciousness of the Gallery was concentrated wonderfully on the prospect before it.

The main preoccupation of political journalists and their papers was with the accommodation and facilities provided in the new Parliament House. These emerged in evidence put to a Parliamentary Public Works Committee inquiry into proposals for the 'Erection of Provisional

¹ G. Cockerill. *Scribblers and Statesmen*, Melbourne, J. Roy Stevens (undated), Chapters 23-25.

² Sir Lloyd Dumas. *A Full Life*, Sun Books, Melbourne, 1969, p.18.

Parliament House, Canberra'.¹ Representatives of four newspapers and one news agency made submissions.

There was some difference of opinion among newspapers about the size of representation in the new gallery. The proprietor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, J.O. Fairfax, felt that 50 seats should be provided for journalists in the Canberra Gallery (presumably the House of Representatives Gallery), Parliament should provide 12 rooms at Parliament House, and newspapers with common interests should group their staffs together. If the *Sydney Morning Herald* couldn't get a room to itself, then it could work co-operatively with the *Argus*, and the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* could work on a similar basis with the *Age*. Fairfax said that seven distinct newspaper interests from Sydney would be represented in the Gallery, and the competitive nature of their work meant that each would require a different room. Press refreshment facilities would be needed because Canberra would not have the catering arrangements of a big city.²

A lower estimate of the demand for accommodation was given by Raymond Austin, the chief of staff of the *Age*, who thought that initial accommodation would be needed for 30 to 40 journalists. The accommodation should have a growth factor built into it with provision for an increase of at least one-third over the next 25 years. This indicated a peak figure of 40 to 50 journalists, broadly similar to the Fairfax estimate. The newspaper rooms should be contiguous to the seats allocated in the chamber galleries. Press offices in the administration buildings half a mile away from Parliament House would be useless for

¹ Commonwealth Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, 'Report on the Proposed Erection of Provisional Parliament House, Canberra,' HR Votes and Proceedings No.17 of 12 July 1923 and No.21 of 19 July 1923, pp.69-72.

² *Ibid.*

parliamentary reporters. There would be a greater necessity for Press and parliamentarians to maintain closer contacts than in Melbourne, and it would be irritating and unnecessary if journalists were confined to the gallery area, or were prohibited from going to members' rooms.¹

These generally expansive views of the Canberra Gallery were discounted by the editor of the *Argus*, Dr E. S. Cunningham, who felt that public interest in Federal Parliament would wane once it moved to Canberra. Gallery accommodation would be needed for about 32 journalists: 12 from Melbourne, 14 from Sydney, and six from interstate and country services. Some provision could be made for additional representation, but accommodation for 32 should suffice during the 25 years of the provisional Parliament House.²

Cunningham raised in some detail the private accommodation of journalists, and suggested that this obligation should be taken over by the Parliament. He pointed out that many journalists would go under some form of duress to Canberra, where they would do public work, although for private employers:

It is all very well to provide them with accommodation and facilities for carrying out their parliamentary work but you have to remember that these men will be away from their homes for several months in the year If public interests govern the removal of the seat of government to Canberra, that involves the Government in an obligation to see that proper living accommodation is provided for the people who must go there You are opening up quite a new venture, and you could not expect the proprietors of the newspapers to build cottages for their representatives in Canberra.³

¹ *Ibid.*, pp.92, 93.

² *Ibid.*, pp.89-92.

³ *Ibid.*

Cunningham suggested that the Parliament should provide tennis courts, bowling greens, cricket pitches, a billiards room, and a library for journalists. This generous appropriation of public funds must have confounded Melbourne journalists long accustomed to the austerity of the *Argus* and its editor. Dr Cunningham concluded with a touch of patronising prophecy:

I can offer no opinion on what is likely to be the population of Canberra ten years after Parliament has commenced to meet there. I cannot imagine anyone wanting to go there.¹

A more realistic assessment of accommodation needs was given by D.B. Walker of the Southern Press Agency, who predicted a greater public interest in Federal Parliament once it moved away from Melbourne:

I know that Dr Cunningham considers that the reports of proceedings will be lessened when Parliament is removed to Canberra, but he is speaking from the *Argus* and Melbourne point of view. I am speaking from the point of view of a much larger area. From my own experience I know that the interest of the provincial daily press in the Commonwealth parliamentary proceedings is increasing every session Much bigger reports are being sent to newspapers outside Melbourne or Sydney than one would imagine. Very often they are longer than the reports which are published in the Melbourne daily papers.²

The recommendations of the Public Works Committee provided for the construction of a gallery behind the Presiding Officer's chair in each chamber, 12 small rooms each to accommodate four persons, one large common room, and a dining room. The construction of the provisional Parliament House incorporated these proposals, with the exception of the separate Press dining room.

1 *Ibid.*

2 *Ibid.*, pp.105-6.

The protection of Press interests during these crucial years when the House was under construction devolved upon the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery Committee, the Australian Newspaper Conference (representing the proprietors of the major metropolitan newspapers), and the Australian Provincial Press Association. There was some friction between these interest groups, mainly because the proprietors felt that accommodating journalists and the logistics of the move to Canberra fell properly within their domain. The Gallery Committee was able to refute this argument and represent effectively the interests of Gallery members in negotiations with the Presiding Officers.

It was soon apparent that estimates for accommodation were inadequate, particularly in the House of Representatives where most of the reporting work would be done:

It was pointed out that despite the fact that there is accommodation for over 40 pressmen in the House of Representatives galleries in Melbourne, only 24 had been provided in Canberra.¹

In the circumstances, the Gallery Committee felt unable to make a permanent allocation of seats and rooms in the new Parliament House, but it did make an interim disposal. If readjustments were necessary once the allocation had been tested, then the committee reserved its right to do so without question.²

When it became clear to Parliamentary Officers and supervising architects that insufficient gallery space had been provided, hasty improvisations were made. Side galleries were built into the House of Representatives and allocation of one of them to the Press provided

¹ *Australasian Journalist*, 1927, p.55.

² *Ibid.*

another 12 seats. The Parliament approved the furnishing of one of the larger rooms as a rest room where reporters who were not working in the gallery or were not transcribing their notes could wait their turn. When the Parliament met in session for the first time in September 1927, the accommodation problems had been overcome, although the press rooms were sparsely furnished. Journalists and parliamentary staff were moving items of furniture into the press rooms even as the bells sounded to announce the opening of the session. For the most part, journalists found their new accommodation comfortable and far superior to facilities in other Australian Parliaments.¹

A number of important differences between the Melbourne Gallery and the new Canberra Gallery were apparent to the journalists who covered the first parliamentary session in Canberra. The most fundamental was the loss of the distinctive Melbourne influence and overwhelming political influence of the *Argus* and the *Age*. This aroused in W.M. Hughes an optimistic belief that Canberra would foster the development of a nationalist rather than a parochial spirit in Australian political reporting.² The Canberra press was confined to one provincial daily, the *Canberra Times*, which was established in 1926. A national radio news service was still many years away, and in theory there existed an opportunity for a redistribution of political influence among the major national dailies.

The move to Canberra also removed the strong departmental rounds base which had been an important component of political reporting in Melbourne. Parliamentary reporters were separated from the departmental

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Sydney Morning Herald*, Federal Capital Supplement, 9 May 1927.

work which had given coherence to their job, because it allowed access to the whole spectrum of political and administrative activity. Now, the Parliament and the Executive Government were in Canberra while most of the departments were in Melbourne, and this split political reporting rather significantly. It meant that an important part of federal rounds work remained in Melbourne and Melbourne-based reporters had to be assigned to cover it. Ministers had to go to Melbourne for administrative work, and their activities had to be covered in Melbourne. It was many years before the steady influx of public servants from Melbourne to Canberra redressed this imbalance.

This in turn produced an extreme concentration of the Press Gallery on Parliament and the Executive Government. Ministers developed the habit of working from Parliament House because their departments had not been built or because most of their departmental officers were in Melbourne. Cabinet met in Parliament House, although accommodation had been set aside in the administration buildings. The bulk of political activity which the Press Gallery had to cover was centred on Parliament House. This facilitated the work of political journalists at the cost of inculcating a fixation on Parliament House which still persists.

The transfer to Canberra also split the unified Melbourne Gallery in another way. Although it had been envisaged that most journalists working in Canberra would return to their home bases when Parliament was out of session, this proved impractical. There were strong domestic pressures on journalists to settle permanently in Canberra, rather than move between Canberra and their homes at irregular intervals. These pressures were most severe on senior journalists or heads of service. While hostel or barracks accommodation was accepted by younger and comparatively junior journalists, the older men with families wanted

stability in their domestic arrangements. The newspaper companies were forced to invest in Canberra property, and provide 'cottages' for their employees.

This divided the gallery into two components: a small group of senior journalists who took up permanent residence in Canberra, in accommodation provided by their offices, and a much larger group of transient sessionals who came to Canberra for the parliamentary sessions and returned to their offices when the session ended. Appointment to Canberra as a head of service or his number two quickly became a prized job in all metropolitan newspaper offices. Salaries were at the top of the AJA scales and were supplemented by housing and expenses allowances. Housing provided by the newspaper offices in Canberra was another inducement. Accommodation described rather contemptuously by Dr Cunningham as 'cottages' soon developed into select and socially desirable pieces of real estate. These accommodation perks were accompanied by other totems of social acceptability, including membership of the sports and social clubs where heads of service mixed on a footing of familiarity with senior public servants. In the early years at least, there was a sense of pioneering kinship which transcended the sort of socio-class barriers that applied in Melbourne.

By contrast, the life of the sessional was rather less elegant. It was many years before the flavour of the construction barracks was dispelled from Canberra. Sessional journalists had to compete for the better hostel and hotel accommodation with other transients, particularly politicians. Social and entertainment opportunities were few, and this induced an introspective dependance on the resources and facilities of Parliament House. It was difficult to find adequate dining facilities in Canberra, and in the early years the capital was technically dry.

This meant either that hospitality had to be dispensed out of the cupboard or lengthy journeys had to be made to pubs across the border in New South Wales.

Inevitably, there were tensions between the established permanents who built comfortable niches for themselves, and the transients, who tended to absorb themselves in the routines and rituals of the Parliament. This generated a mild sort of Bohemianism which often came into conflict with the officialdom of the Commonwealth hostels, although the parliamentary officers were generally tolerant. Lack of diversion, apart from the easy access to the mountains, streams and snowfields, produced a preoccupation with politics and Parliament that bordered on obsessiveness.

The social and professional divergence between permanents and sessionals was one facet of the location of the Australian Parliament in a rudimentary capital city. Another was communication problems which were produced by the movement away from the resources of Melbourne. They were foreshadowed in the problems confronting newspaper coverage of the ceremonial opening of Parliament House by the Duke of York in May 1927. One journalist who participated in the elaborate press coverage described it feelingly as the most difficult event he had reported since the great Delhi Durbah of 1911.¹

When the parliamentary session began, many journalists had to adapt to routines of preparing material for transmission by telegraph. These processes were familiar to some members of the Melbourne Gallery, but many parliamentary reporters had been trained in a political environment close

¹ *Australasian Journalist*, 1927, p.83.

to their Melbourne offices. The logistics of preparing cable forms and lodging them at the Parliament House post office or the nearby General Post Office (GPO) took some adjustment. Copy for telegraphing was sent to the GPO in metal containers through a pneumatic chute. Not infrequently, the chute was blocked when containers were overloaded and copy was ejected and blocked the airstream.¹

The system of telegraphing newspaper reports imposed tremendous strains on Postmaster-General's Department staff who manned the telegraph machines. At the official opening in May 1927, just over 300,000 words were lodged in 24 hours.

A greater intensity of transmission was achieved on a notable occasion in 1931 when the Budget was brought down prematurely at 9.45 p.m. Much of the material had to be taken verbatim from the delivery of the Treasurer, Mr E.G. Theodore, in the House of Representatives. Between 10 p.m. and midnight, more than 100,000 words were supplied for transmission, and the total lodged at the Canberra Post Office during 24 hours was 162,000 words. Over a period of a fortnight in February 1931, the daily word counts fluctuated between a low of 5,000 words and a peak of 91,000.²

The Canberra Gallery during these years was dependent on the skills and co-operation of the PMG telegraphists. This was acknowledged by one senior journalist:

During the session there are 14 telegraphists engaged at the Post Office and they can generally get the messages away soon after they are lodged, but the staff is reduced to eight during the recess, and if a rush of work comes then that is a much more difficult matter. However, there have been so few

¹ H.S. Innes, ANL MS 4880. Typescript note on cable services, and daily wordages dispatched from Canberra.

² *Ibid.*

complaints that their work at times can be justly described 'as wonderful. Each telegraphist is a 'touch typist' and many thousands of words are sent away in an hour.¹

Increasing use was made of telephone services to newspaper offices in the cities, although the transmitting of copy by phone was discouraged except in emergencies or close to edition times. Evening papers in Sydney and Melbourne often resorted to phones to send stories from afternoon Question Time. The phone was used as well to supplement material sent by telegraph. Material obtained in advance could be telegraphed on a set and hold basis, with a quick phone call advising the office when it was appropriate to insert the material into the paper. This sort of treatment was particularly effective as a time saver when major parliamentary speeches were obtained in advance. Similar techniques were applied in later years when teleprinters came into use.

Train services were used to convey copy in certain circumstances. This worked particularly well with the overnight train service to Melbourne. Melbourne *Herald* journalists were able to complete copy in time to lodge it in the post box on the 9 p.m. train to Melbourne. This would reach Melbourne early next morning in time for incorporation in that afternoon's paper. Planes were chartered for special occasions such as parliamentary openings, but these were used mainly for pictorial purposes. The Sydney newspapers, in particular, used charter planes to send a photographer to Canberra, where he would take a quick series of pictures and return to Sydney in time for publication that afternoon.

Train services had other important influences on patterns of political coverage. Most parliamentarians travelled regularly to Sydney and

¹ *Ibid.*

Melbourne by train, as did the sessional journalists and, with reasonable frequency, the journalists stationed permanently in Canberra. The long train trip to Melbourne provided journalists with ample opportunities to mix with politicians in an often convivial atmosphere of cards and alcohol. In some ways, the trains supplanted the clubs and hotels of Melbourne as a venue for political contact and gossip. The trains also brought the daily newspapers into Canberra in these early years, and these were awaited with keen anticipation by the isolated politicians. Planes were not used extensively, although S.M. Bruce hired one to visit Queensland during the 1929 election campaign. Three Press Gallery journalists travelled with him, and many years later, one recalled the effusive congratulations of his colleagues when he returned safely to Canberra.¹

The most significant change in the nature of the work has been noted: the comparative lack of attention to departmental rounds and a sharpening of the focus on Parliament and the activities of the Executive Government within Parliament House. The presentation of political news was much the same as the traditional patterns in Melbourne. An account of what the newspaper offices expected from their parliamentary staffs in Canberra is given in a memo from the Chief of Staff of the *Sydney Morning Herald* to the paper's Head of Service in Canberra. The memo sets out in detail what would be expected from the *Herald's* first Canberra staff of four journalists:

Messrs Penton, Schwinghammer, and Wright left this morning for Canberra. They will be absolutely under your direction. Mr Penton will be required to supply daily three quarters of one column of Gallery notes similar to the notes written by

¹ *Ibid.*

him in State Parliament. He, however, has been instructed not to single out members for ridicule. What we want is a brightly written article free of all objectionable personalities - in short a word picture of the proceedings. We also desire him to include in his article a summary of the actual business transacted in the House of Representatives and the Senate.¹

Another reporter was assigned to assist the head of service in reporting the proceedings in the House of Representatives, and with 'rounds, deputations, commissions, etc.'. The head of service was advised that until this reporter picked up parliamentary experience, it would not be wise for him to do the parliamentary papers. The fourth member of the team was a junior reporter:

He will report the proceedings in the Senate and will be responsible for all local news, including sporting. You will be able to call upon him to do any work you require.²

He apologised for not sending a stronger team, 'but I think they will all pull together under your able direction'.³

For the most part, the work could be categorised along traditional lines: parliamentary notes, parliamentary proceedings, parliamentary papers, ministerial rounds and deputations, and departments and statutory commissions that were represented in Canberra. Long established co-operative arrangements were maintained; for example, between the *Argus* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, although there were no elaborate 'club' arrangements during these years.

The parliamentary sessions were strenuous on occasions, and taxed the skills and physical stamina of Gallery reporters. There were two

¹ Memo from Geo. J. Reeve, Chief of Staff, *Sydney Morning Herald*, to H.S. Innes, Head of the Canberra Bureau, 26 September 1927, Innes Papers, *op. cit.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

all-night sessions on 6 and 7 December 1933, with the House sitting until breakfast time after only half-hour breaks for luncheon, dinner and midnight supper. One journalist recalled trying to get some sleep wrapped in a rug on the floor of a vacant room in Parliament House, when W.M. Hughes climbed the stairs of the Press Gallery to complain to him that reports of his speeches in the House had not been published.¹

Rounds work adhered to the established pattern of regular calls on Ministers. These were facilitated because most Ministers worked in their parliamentary offices, although S.M. Bruce as Prime Minister worked in one of the nearby administrative blocks where a waiting room for the Press was established at Bruce's insistence. The relationship between Bruce and the Press Gallery seems to have been a particularly harmonious one, and Bruce was accorded a warm resolution of thanks when he left politics in October 1929:

This meeting of Pressmen employed in the gallery of the Commonwealth Parliament desires to place on record its appreciation of the courtesy with which Mr Bruce, the retiring Prime Minister, invariably met the Canberra representatives of the Australian newspapers and of the fair and impartial nature of his relations with them.²

In response, Bruce described his daily meetings with the Press Gallery as a pleasurable break in the routine of his office:

That I should have treated with courtesy those whose duty it was to come in daily contact with me was the very least that they might have expected. Recognising the extraordinarily difficult task that the Pressmen associated with Parliament have to carry out, my great desire has been to treat all of them with absolute impartiality, irrespective of the political views of the particular papers they represent.³

¹ Note from W.M. Hughes to H.S. Innes with an explanatory note by Innes, 7 December 1933, Innes Papers, *op. cit.*

² Innes Papers, *op. cit.* Copy of resolution from the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, dated 19 October 1929.

³ Letter from Bruce to H.S. Innes, 21 October 1929, Innes Papers, *op. cit.*

The pattern of daily press conferences was followed by Bruce's successors, Scullin and Lyons. Lyons tried to hold two press conferences a day, one before lunch for the evening Press and another at 5 p.m. for the morning Press. Lyons' amicable relationship with the Press Gallery has been described by Irvine Douglas, his press secretary and a former member of the Gallery:

Very often, he had nothing much to tell them but he always had a talk to them and very often he would give them background information which was very useful. Sometimes he'd give them things in confidence which no one, as far as I know, ever broke and very often he'd finish up his press conferences by inviting them into his anteroom and having a drink with them.¹

Lyons and his staff greatly assisted Gallery reporters during the abdication crisis of 1936, in some ways the most demanding news story of the first ten years of the Canberra Parliament. On the day that the abdication was announced, Lyons made contact with the British Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, as he prepared to enter the House of Commons at 1.20 a.m. (Australian time). The text of Baldwin's speech was dictated over the radio-telephone to Lyons' press secretary, Irvine Douglas, and two stenographers. In twenty minutes, the announcement was typed and handed to the Press twelve minutes before Lyons went on the air at 2 a.m. to read it to the nation.²

Relationships between the Gallery and Ministers also seem to have been cordial and co-operative, with a certain amount of mutual leg-pulling:

¹ R.I. Douglas. ANL Oral History Tape No. TRC.121/36.

² *The Journalist*. 11 December 1936. The trade paper of the AJA has been named at various times the *Australian Journalist*, the *Australasian Journalist*, and *The Journalist*.

In those days [early 1930s] Ministers were far more accessible than they are today to the Press. Of course, there weren't so many Press in those days, and we used to go around every morning and call on every Minister who was in Canberra and have a chat with them. We called on Latham one day, he was then Attorney-General in the Lyons Government, and someone said to him, 'Have you ever thought of bringing in uniform Australian divorce laws, Mr Latham?' He said, 'As a matter of fact I have. But I haven't really got down to it. One morning, when I have got a spare couple of hours, I will draft a law for uniform divorce in Australia.'¹

The rapport between senior Ministers and the Press dissolved to some extent during R.G. Menzies' first term as Prime Minister. Menzies found the routine of two press conferences a day extremely irksome and took few pains to veil his contempt for reporters:

. . . Menzies came in and scarcely apologised for being late, and then said, 'You know, I loathe the Press . . . do you know when I became Prime Minister I took over as press officer Dick Dawson who had been with Mr Lyons, and do you know, Dawson tried to tell me that I should see the Press twice a day? I ask you, twice a day. He told me that Lyons used to.' All this made my hackles rise and I said, 'Well, it didn't do you any harm did it?' All Menzies could say was 'I wonder, I wonder' and that was that.²

The initial enthusiasm of newspapers for stationing their own representatives in Canberra waned quickly after the early years. In many ways, the pessimistic forecasts of Gallery strength, which were given to the Parliamentary Committee in 1923, were fulfilled. There was a sharp contraction in Canberra representation, even though newspaper organisations had made considerable capital investment in the new city:

Newsgathering is one private enterprise with national ramifications that has been established at Canberra.

¹ Douglas Mope, *op. cit.*

² *Ibid.*

At first every Sydney and Melbourne Daily proposed to have its direct representative in Canberra, and some firms which have since made other arrangements still own cottages erected to house their staff Two years after the opening of the city, however, the resident staffs are adjusted on the basis that will probably stand for many years . . . the only newspapers directly represented in Canberra now are the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Sydney Sun*, *Melbourne Argus* and the *Melbourne Herald*.¹

This means that in the late 1920s and early 1930s the permanent Press corps in the Gallery was, at most, six or seven. Other newspapers obtained their Gallery service by special arrangements. The *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Argus* supplied the *West Australian* and the *Hobart Mercury*, the *Sydney Sun* looked after the interests of the *Telegraph Pictorial* (Brisbane), and the *Melbourne Herald* serviced the *Sa. News Pictorial* and the *Adelaide Register*. (All three papers were owned by the *Melbourne Herald* group.) Other newspapers were serviced by Australian United Press (AUP), an agency whose importance in the Gallery is taken up below.²

Gallery lists for this period seem not to have survived, but occasional references in the AJA journal, *The Journalist*, indicate a sessional strength of around 23 in March 1933. The Gallery was composed in this way: *Sydney Morning Herald* 4; the *Argus* 2; *Sydney Sun* 3; *Daily Telegraph* 1; the *Age* 1; AUP 4; *Melbourne Herald* and *Sun Pictorial* 5; *Labor Daily* 1; Federal News Service (W. Farmer Whyte) 1; National News Services (Reg Leonard) 1. Possibly, these figures are understated; another reference in *The Journalist* points to an AUP sessional staff of six. The figures do show the significant way in

¹ *Newspaper News*, 1 July 1929. 'At Canberra: Gathering and despatch of News. How Coverage is Arranged.' Written for *Newspaper News* by Manuka, p.3.

² *Ibid.*

which Gallery strength was augmented during parliamentary sessions. They also indicate a marked shift in the balance of influence from the *Argus* and the *Age* to the main Sydney dailies during session. Out of session, permanent representation was divided evenly between Sydney and Melbourne papers. Within Melbourne, the strength of representation had shifted from the *Age* and the *Argus* to the *Herald* and the *Sun Pictorial* which were flourishing during these years.¹

An important feature of the Gallery during these formative years in Canberra was the presence of a major news agency and the early entrenchment of syndication. AUP was not a member of the Melbourne Gallery, nor had it been a foundation member in Canberra. It had been established as an agency by a Sydney newspaper, the *Evening News*. The Victorian Provincial Daily Press which had provided agency services in Melbourne, established a Canberra office in 1927. It acquired the *Age* and Sydney *Daily Guardian* services and seemed destined to become an extensive organisation in Canberra. Its list of a dozen permanent and two temporary services was taken over by AUP which amalgamated its services with the Victorian Provincial Daily Press. This gave AUP a formidable listing of daily newspapers throughout Australia: Melbourne *Age*, Sydney *Daily Guardian*, Sydney *Evening News*, Adelaide *Advertiser*, Brisbane *Courier*, Brisbane *Daily Mail*, Brisbane *Telegraph*, Queensland Provincial Press, Melbourne *Herald*, Tamworth *Leader*, the Launceston *Examiner*, and Victorian provincial dailies.²

1 *Ibid.*

2 *Ibid.*

This meant that out of session federal political news was supplied to the bulk of Australian daily newspapers by one agency. There was some variation in the services supplied because of parochial needs, but all services contained substantial core elements. In session, some of these dailies sent their own representatives to Canberra, as we have seen, but many of the main dailies remained reliant on AUP. Even papers which were represented in recess by AUP but who sent sessional representatives to Canberra, retained close working links with AUP. It was common practice for AUP to supply papers such as the *Age* and the *Guardian* with duplicates known as 'flimsies' of the complete record of parliamentary proceedings and important rounds items. This service allowed these major papers to reduce their sessional staffs to a minimum and cut Canberra expenses to the bone.

Apart from AUP, temporary services were provided from other sources. The New South Wales Country Press Association had a working arrangement with the *Canberra Times* for the supply of news to a group of NSW country papers. These country Press services were also made available at various times to the (Sydney) *Labor Daily*, the Brisbane *Daily Standard*, the Adelaide *News*, Perth *Daily News* and Burnie *Advocate*.¹

It might be expected that this ready access to syndicated services would stultify competition in the Gallery, but this does not seem to have been the case. A trade paper, the *Newspaper News*, described the flavour of the Gallery at the end of the 1920s:

¹ *Ibid.*

Recent events have amply demonstrated the growth of Canberra's importance as a news centre, and although the elaborate arrangements made by newspapers at the outset have in some cases been considerably modified, more than one ineffectual journal has discovered that the absence of some form of competition in the national capital is a costly oversight. The [Press] representatives had the honour of being complimented recently by the Prime Minister on their keenness - and the Canberra atmosphere - perhaps because of the lack of city attractions, certainly makes them keen. Competition is strong and 'scoops' not infrequent, and there is a good spirit among them.¹

The presence of newsletter and miscellaneous press services organisations was a traditional part of gallery activity. The Farmer Whyte newsletter was a carry-over from the Melbourne Gallery of the 1920s, and its proprietor also did work for AUP and provided services to smaller newspapers. National News Services had a briefer life. It was the creation of Reg Leonard, an enterprising young journalist who had come to Canberra in 1926 before the Parliament was opened. As Canberra's first national reporter, Leonard had a lean time hunting for news on the construction sites, before a major strike brought his reporting to the attention of the national dailies. Before his venture into the proprietorial field, Leonard had initiated a daily political sketch for the Melbourne *Herald* and subsequently was the political correspondent for the *Star*, a short-lived evening paper published by the *Argus*.²

Gradually the number of newspapers represented in the Gallery increased, and this built up the journalistic strength. The *West Australian* and the *Adelaide Advertiser* were represented for the first time in 1936. This had the effect of augmenting the strength of the

1 *Ibid.*

2 *Ibid.*

Melbourne *Herald* group which was already a formidable element of the Gallery.

The seeds were sown for a much more significant expansion of the Gallery with the appointment in 1938 of the Australian Broadcasting Commission's first full-time journalist in the gallery. Previously, the ABC had had a stringer arrangement with Mr A.T. Shakespeare, the editor of the *Canberra Times*. The newspapers for many years had been apprehensive about the impact of radio news services on their traditional preserve. Since the mid-1920s there had been repeated suggestions for the establishment of 'talking newspapers' and for the use of the air-waves to transmit news to provincial and country newspapers, and for interstate services. The newspapers had reacted by enforcing a restrictive arrangement on the supply of news for radio use. With regard to the ABC a stringent 'Gentlemen's Agreement' was applied to the times of news broadcasts and the volume of news which could be broadcast. The ABC paid £200 a year for the right to broadcast newspaper material. This meant that morning announcers read the summaries which appeared on the front pages of the morning papers, and a solitary journalist re-wrote material from the *Sydney Sun* for evening broadcasts which could not be made until 7.50 p.m. because of the 'Gentlemen's Agreement'. The ABC was restricted to a limit of 200 words of overseas news a day, about two minutes of reading time. Independent news gathering, even during the hours outside those covered by the newspapers, was discouraged in the strongest terms.¹

¹ M.F. Dixon. 'Inside the ABC', ANL MS 667, pp.2-11. A version of this manuscript has been published.

In this repressive environment, the problems facing the establishment of an independent ABC news service seemed almost insuperable. Gradually the ABC built up a small news staff and evolved principles which governed the writing of news for audio presentation. It was some years before there was general recognition that it was futile to merely read newspaper stories over the air. The development of news writing and reading style was largely the work of the Commission's first news editor, M.F. Dixon.¹

The ABC's first Canberra correspondent was Warren Denning, a veteran of the Press Gallery as a former *Labor Daily* representative. Denning's familiarity with the gallery and with politics smoothed what would otherwise have been a rocky path. Even so, he encountered many frustrations. Journalists representing morning newspapers objected to Denning's presence at their interviews with Prime Minister Menzies on the basis that he could have the Prime Minister's answers broadcast some hours before their newspapers were able to publish them. Menzies agreed to an arrangement by which he saw the newspaper men, and then saw Denning separately as the sole representative of national broadcasting. From these exclusive interviews, Denning obtained a number of important stories which were missed by the newspaper reporters. Menzies also tired of an arrangement which duplicated his discussions with the Press, so it was agreed that Denning should meet the Prime Minister with other journalists. Denning later recalled the circumstances of this arrangement:

¹ *Ibid.*

When the double-interview was introduced, Mr Menzies saw the morning-paper men while I remained alone outside in the lobby; when they came out, I went in. It was all good-humoured and I think we all soon began to think it was a bit silly. The double-interview lasted, as I recall it, about six weeks. Then I joined the Trojans again. I don't know that there was any particularly brilliant work on my part. I can say that the ABC did not suffer by the arrangement. But it should be added that Mr Menzies himself soon got fed up with the double-barrel job.¹

Denning's problems were not confined to his relationship with his colleagues in the Gallery. There was strong opposition within the ABC to the broadcasting of hard news items which were collected directly by ABC news staff. M.F. Dixon recalled that on one occasion in 1939 when Earle Page had made a strong personal attack on Menzies, there was alarm and disgust among senior program officials when a summary of what Page had said was broadcast on mid-day news bulletins:

Frank D. Clemow, head of the drama department, condemned our use of the news; it showed deplorable taste, he argued; and he was more or less vehemently supported by several others.²

As the only ABC news representative in Canberra, Denning was given an arduous task. He was required to supply a summary of every important story that broke at Canberra, irrespective of the day or time:

To his credit, Denning honoured that assignment during the next couple of strenuous years [1938-40] until the sheer impossibility of one man being able to carry the burden became obvious, even to the Commission, and he was given help.³

¹ W. Denning. Letter to R.J. Bennetts, quoted in R.J. Bennetts. 'Development of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, 1901-1968', Master of Arts Qualifying Thesis, Department of Political Science, SGS, ANU, 1968, pp.51-52.

² Dixon, *op. cit.*, p.27.

³ *Ibid.*, p.35.

2. 1939-1945

World War II (1939-1945) imposed a series of strains on the Press Gallery, partly because of the demand for manpower but most importantly because of the use John Curtin as war-time Prime Minister made of the Gallery. War-time morale and propaganda were vexing issues to all Governments during these years. Menzies had attempted to solve the problems of co-ordinating war-time publicity by appointing the newspaper magnate, Sir Keith Murdoch, as Director of Information. The move came unstuck when Murdoch sought to impose a regulation which would have required a newspaper which published misinformation to publish with equal prominence the correct version which the Government might supply.¹ The move was strongly resisted by all newspapers other than Murdoch's own chain. His position became untenable and he resigned.

Curtin retained a Ministry of Information which developed a framework for the release of Government information. The department's responsibility for war-time censorship, and the appointment of a minister unsympathetic to the Press in A.A. Calwell were inhibiting factors in the effectiveness of the Ministry. There was also a disturbing scepticism on the part of the Australian public to the dissemination of war-time news:

. . . it would appear that both the Australian official radio news and the Australian Press were distrusted and disbelieved by a large number of Australians. The conclusion was moderately stated by the censor on 20 July 1942: 'That the people are becoming distrustful of official news disseminated by Press and radio is illustrated by comments made in their letters. Evidence that they are inclined to believe reports issued by the Axis propagandists in preference to that of their own is also seen.'²

¹ P.M.C. Hasluck. *The Government and the People, 1939-41*, AGPS, Canberra, 1952, p.240ff.

² P.M.C. Hasluck. *The Government and the People, 1942-45*, AGPS, Canberra, 1970, p.750.

In this discouraging environment, Curtin adopted the tactic of using the Gallery as his major information conduit to the newspapers whose support he construed as vital to a successful war effort. This meant that Curtin used the established framework of daily press conferences to brief a small group of senior and trusted journalists in an extremely detailed way on the conduct of the war. Such highly confidential information was intended to be transmitted back to the newspaper proprietors, and invariably it was, either verbally or through written reports. A number of reports of Curtin briefings have survived, and they convey a vivid impression of the thinking of a war-time Prime Minister.

One of this small group of Press Gallery journalists was Don Whittington, who described the significance of the Curtin press conferences in his autobiography:

A select band - he restricted his twice-daily press conferences to about ten or twelve heads of service - knew more about the secret history of the war than most members of Parliament excepting the War Cabinet and the Advisory War Council Apart from his wish to have editors informed through their senior representatives at Canberra, however, Curtin as a journalist himself, enjoyed talking to and confiding in people he felt he could trust At those intimate talks we were told, long before most others knew and long before it could be printed, of the departure of the AIF from the Middle East and its hazardous progress across the Indian Ocean to Australia We knew of the impending arrival of Douglas MacArthur, of the preparations being made for the hush-hush arrival of the first wave of American troops. Later Curtin confided the news of the Battle of the Coral Sea, the planned American landing at Gaudalcanal . . . plans for the counter offensive over the Kokoda Trail in New Guinea.¹

¹ Don Whittington. *Strive to be Fair: An Unfinished Autobiography*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1977, p.77.

Before MacArthur established his headquarters, all war communiques were issued from Curtin's office at Canberra. There were other major sources of war news in Canberra, particularly from the authorities which regulated the domestic front. Apart from Parliamentary sittings, the War Cabinet had to be covered, and this entailed frequent movement of Senior Gallery journalists from Sydney to Melbourne when Parliament was not sitting. Melbourne was also an important source of military news because much of the defence administration was still based there. Most of Australia's war transport passed through Melbourne's Spencer Street Railway Station. 'Curtin's Circus', as the Press entourage which attached itself to the Prime Minister was known, travelled constantly with him to Melbourne and, on occasions, to Western Australia.

There was no lack of newsworthy Ministers in the war-time Ministry, with mercurial figures like Calwell, Ward and Evatt. The surge of war-time political and military news had to be reported in a difficult context of war-time regulation and censorship controls. Despite these constraints and the constant pressures of the work, the war-time Gallery scrupulously respected the confidence imposed in them by Curtin, although there were occasional abuses engineered from the head offices of some metropolitan newspapers. Whittington attributed this meticulous observance of security to the respect of the working journalists for Curtin, and the enormity of the confidence he had given them:

There were any number of relaxed occasions when it could have happened, but it never did. I doubt that journalists even confided in their wives. Certainly no gossip circulated in Canberra, and journalists' wives are as liable to gossip as any other wives.¹

¹ *Ibid.*

Certainly Curtin was tremendously frank and forthright in the information he divulged to journalists and in the comments he made on the conduct of the war, as is illustrated in these excerpts from a series of reports on his press conferences:

The request on the one army question came to Curtin from MacArthur in Perth. Curtin does not want it said, however, that MacArthur actually asked for it because technically MacArthur should have no concern with a political matter. . . .

Mr Curtin is angry with Mr Ward's embarrassing statements in public speeches at various towns along the route of his present tour. He described his Labor Minister as a 'bloody ratbag' but indicated that he could not disturb national harmony by a controversy with him . . .

Mr Curtin indicated in a round-about way that Blamey's private life had nothing to do with his military office. He said that when Blamey was appointed the Government was seeking a military leader, not a Sunday School teacher.

He [Curtin] said that his position was different from other dominion PMs because he was subject, in effect, to a form of direction by a representative of another government.

He was gloomy about Russia. He read from a cable which said that it was no longer possible to say that the fighting power of the Russian army had not suffered. . . . the Prime Minister said: 'I hope you can get some comfort from this. I can't.'

Curtin also revealed that he had asked America to send three fully equipped divisions here He asked: 'What if Roosevelt said, "You will have to finance these divisions." 'Am I to say we cannot defend the country because we can't get the money?'

Curtin opened his outline by saying that he was 'profoundly disturbed at the replies from the Prime Minister [Churchill] and the President [Roosevelt]. 'They mean in effect that it is vain for these places to be made a major theatre. I am not surprised. You were told all this when I was in opposition. The bloody country was told what would happen long before the war came.'

Earlier in the interview, when asked about the latest criticism by Hughes that our men had not been taught jungle fighting, Curtin said that painting of uniforms green was 'All balls'.

The Curtin interview lasted more than an hour. He reiterated that he was profoundly disturbed, and he seemed glad to talk about his troubles.

Curtin revealed that some months ago, Darwin had been bashed to pieces by Jap bombers. At that time they had reached a position where they would have been able to establish a bridgehead on Australian soil. However, the position generally had improved since then.

Advice to editors to be careful about return of ninth division. Previously when it was known that the 6th and 7th were coming back, one newspaper advocated the return of the AIF.

Curtin said today that we could take Buna immediately if we were prepared for 3,000 to 5,000 casualties. We were not so we would go slowly and sensibly. Dead men were no use and [men] were not enlisted merely as cannon fodder.

Curtin gave an end of the year summing up of the position which indicated our limitations in disheartening fashion and which included a statement that Australia was Churchill's forgotten land. There is pretty clear evidence that American politics are coming into the question of aid for us.¹

Curtin was always tremendously quotable and it must have irked the Gallery members who attended his conferences that they could not make use of this wealth of material, or at best could use it only in a highly qualified way. Through these conferences Curtin conveyed an immense amount of intelligence material which he expected to be filtered back to the newspaper offices and find an unsourced outlet in editorial assessment of the war. Curtin was served superbly by S.M. Bruce as High Commissioner in London, and much of the information obtained by Bruce was passed on to journalists. There were occasional clashes between Curtin and journalists over stories which he felt had transgressed the guidelines of his conferences. For the most part,

¹ Frederick Smith. ANL MS 4675. Smith was Head of Service for Australian United Press (AUP) during the war years. He kept a record of more than 100 of Curtin's war-time press conferences. Smith typed out a report summarising what Curtin had said and including some of his pithier quotes. Each report was sent to Smith's head office in Sydney, and he kept a carbon copy. These brief excerpts have been selected to show the frankness of Curtin's disclosures and his serious approach to the Press. They could be multiplied many times.

the conferences fulfilled his purposes of carefully controlling the dissemination of Government attitudes, and giving the Press indispensable assistance at the highest level in reporting the war.

World War II was also a time of substantial increase in the prestige and effectiveness of the ABC. The Commission had become sandwiched between the different approaches of the two major political groupings. Although the UAP and Country Parties had supported the appointment of a Canberra correspondent for the ABC in 1938, during the war they bitterly opposed the creation of an independent news service. This partly reflected newspaper interests which had always opposed extension, but it was also a response to ALP support for an independent service. There were fears in the opposition that the ABC would be subjected to pressures for Government propaganda and misuse by Ministers. As it turned out, these fears were not unjustified.¹

At an early stage of the Pacific War, the ABC won approval for an eight-minute bulletin to be broadcast directly from Canberra when Parliament was sitting. This service was extended, and during the war news broadcasts were relayed directly from Canberra at 7.45 a.m., 12.30 p.m., 1.30 p.m., 7.10 p.m. and 10.15 p.m. This imposed pressures on obtaining extra staff, and in 1941, the Commission encountered problems with the Gallery and with the AJA over the employment of a woman typist on news gathering. The eligibility of this woman for AJA membership was questioned, and there was a strong expression of attitude from the Prime Minister:

Mr Curtin asked that it be generally made known that he would be staggered to think that any publishing organisation,

¹ M.F. Dixon, *op. cit.*, p.70.

particularly a state instrumentality, would ask him to receive a non-unionist at his press interviews anybody who was not a member of the AJA [sic].¹

According to ABC management, the woman would assist in the gallery, process copy from minor handouts, and perform other odd duties at the ABC office in Parliament House. In September 1941, a letter was sent from the Gallery seeking an opinion of the AJA sub-district on the 'desirableness or otherwise of women being admitted to the Parliamentary Gallery for Press work'. This was a rather extraordinary action because there had been at least one woman member of the Gallery during the 1930s. The resolution may have been directed at the woman's lack of journalistic qualifications as much as her sex. The issue was discussed at some length during the annual meeting of the AJA sub-branch, when it was decided that in the opinion of the meeting, 'the admission of women members to the Press Gallery is necessary in the general interests of the association'. The status of women in the Gallery was not challenged thereafter.²

The ABC did not repeat this attempt to appoint poorly qualified people as journalists in the Press Gallery. It built up an extremely competent staff of seven men in Canberra whose annual salaries totalled £3,500 a year. It was clearly necessary to maintain a substantial unit in the Canberra Gallery during the war, because much of the war news emanated from the federal capital. Despite the importance of the service and the reliance upon it which was built up among the Australian people, it was under constant threat. Late in the war, the

¹ Australian Journalists' Association, Canberra Branch, Minutes of Meeting, 22 September 1941.

² *Ibid.*

the Commission decided to buy a Canberra service from AUP, leaving only a skeleton staff in Canberra to cover special events. The Government imposed pressure and the ABC dropped the proposal.¹

Government pressure on the Canberra services of the ABC was exerted in other ways. Curtin believed that the ABC often failed in what he felt was its basic duty of reinforcing the case for the supremacy of the Pacific Theatre in the overall strategy of the allies. He often expressed this view forcefully but did not interfere directly in the operations of the ABC's war-time services. Some of his Cabinet were less subtle. Ministers such as Evatt and Beasley in particular watched closely what was transmitted on the ABC news broadcasts, and often imposed pressure to ensure that Government statements were used in full. M.F. Dixon commented with some asperity that one 7.10 p.m. news broadcast from Canberra consisted almost entirely of 'political controversy which, in the circumstances, no one outside the people directly concerned, wished to hear'.²

War-time demands imposed heavy physical strains on Canberra journalists and taxed the resources of all newspaper offices. Experienced Gallery members joined the forces, became war correspondents or were recruited to censorship and Department of Information posts. 'Curtin's Circus' absorbed much of the effort of the most skilled and experienced of the remaining journalists. There was considerable improvisation in the deployment of political journalists, particularly between Canberra and Melbourne. One Canberra head of service recalled how he was required to go to Melbourne each week-end to report to his office on war and political developments:

¹ Dixon, *op. cit.*, p.45.

² *Ibid.*, p.85.

I left that one-horse Canberra railway station at 9 every Friday night in the sleeping car, changing to the Spirit at Albury next morning and reaching Spencer Street at 11.30. The following Monday night the treatment would be reversed. I left Melbourne at 6.30 p.m. and reached Canberra about 9 a.m. on the Tuesday morning and plunged straight into work. Every week, therefore, I slept three nights at the Hotel Canberra, two nights at my Melbourne home, and two nights on the train.¹

During the war, the Melbourne train was more than ever an adjunct of the political round because travel was restricted mainly to those on official business.

One of the curious sidelights of the war was an increase in popular interest in political material, particularly of a lighter kind. Interest revived in one of the staples of political reporting, the parliamentary notes and collections of political chit-chat. This sort of political material seems to have been regarded as a form of escapism in the grim war-time environment. The demand for political notes and commentary increased the pressures on Gallery journalists:

Parliament has not yet met, but yesterday after travelling 500 miles all night I started at midday and with breaks for meals worked through till 1 a.m. today when I phoned the tax story through to the subs. If this were one isolated day, it wouldn't matter much, but today, because Spurr will go into the gallery, I have to cover the whole of the round myself (two mens' work) and on Thursday and Friday I will not only have to do all this again but write several columns of original matter. And so on next week and the next week.²

¹ J.D. Corbett. ANL MS 1011, Box Two. Fragments of an unpublished autobiography in typescript. Excerpt from Chapter 27, 'Canberra Commentary' (no pagination).

² Corbett, *op. cit.* Letter to E.A. Doyle, Managing Editor, the *Argus*, 27 January 1943.

CHAPTER 4

THE CANBERRA GALLERY: 1945-1978

The end of the war released the Gallery from the constraints of censorship, manpower shortages, and the strict demand for confidentiality imposed by the Curtin press conferences. It did not immediately bring any diminution in the volume of political news, although the burden of reporting military affairs was removed. The years of the Chifley Government from 1945 to 1949 were crammed with political drama and were intensive years for political reporters. With the consolidation of the Menzies Government the pace of government slowed appreciably, although there were occasional incidents such as the Petrov defection, the subsequent Royal Commission on Espionage, and the credit squeeze of 1960-61, which were covered in enormous detail from Canberra. As the Menzies Government stabilised, it became much more difficult to prise news stories out of it, and the focus of Gallery reporting switched to the Labor Party which had a sequence of turbulent years between 1954 and 1966. The pace and scope of federal political reporting revived when Menzies finally passed from the scene in 1966, and his successors gradually yielded the political supremacy which he had built up. During these years the Labor Party enjoyed a notable resurgence which culminated in its election to office from the end of 1972 until it was dismissed by the Governor-General at the end of 1975. The years from 1966 to 1978 were rich years for political reporting, although the Fraser Government which was elected in December 1975 showed a greater propensity to manipulate the flow of government news.

The account which follows of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery's development during these years has been organised to cover four main themes:

1. Technology and the rise of the electronic media;
2. Syndicated news gathering;
3. Expansion and changing structure;
4. Parliamentary and political relationships.

1. Technology and the rise of the electronic media

An important technological development which had an important influence on the work and structure of the Gallery was the introduction of the teleprinter at the end of World War II. This allowed direct communication between a Gallery office and the metropolitan offices of a major newspaper. It removed the intermediary of the post office and the telegraphist, although occasional use was still made of these services. The teleprinter also presented substantial logistical problems within the gallery. In particular, it imposed demands on increasingly scarce space. The Gallery offices previously had required little more equipment than chairs, tables, a few filing cabinets, typewriters and cable forms. Teleprinters were cumbersome implements and their noise required an element of separation from where journalists worked. Furthermore, teleprinters required operators, and this increased the number of women in the Gallery offices. The Australian Journalists Association (AJA) applied a policy that journalists should not be required to operate teleprinters except in emergencies. This policy was not always observed, and there were complaints that journalists had been forced to man teleprinter machines, particularly at week-ends.¹

¹ AJA Records, Minutes of Meeting, 21 May 1945.

Although the teleprinters introduced new problems, particularly in the offices where elaborate communication networks were needed such as AUP, AAP and the Melbourne *Herald* group, they also gave much greater flexibility to Gallery work. Teleprinters were more effective than PMG telegraph services in shifting large volumes of copy, particularly for offices which were fortunate enough to have skilled operators. They could be used in conjunction with telephoned copy when rapid coverage was required. (The teleprinter also played an important part in the growth of syndication which is discussed in the next section.)

The advent of the teleprinter was the last significant change in technology to have any lasting influence on the print media in the Gallery. Some experimental work was carried out by political reporters during the 1975 election campaign with Visual Display Terminals (VDTs). These devices use a keyboard similar to a computer terminal for the preparation and storage of newspaper copy which can be processed by a sub-editor using similar equipment. (Training in the use of VDTs is progressing in most major metropolitan offices at the time of writing [May 1979] but there have been a number of industrial disputes over their use.) Australian newspapers are on the verge of switching over to computerised preparation of copy to supplement the computerised typesetting which has transformed newspaper production. The introduction of VDTs and related processes into political journalism is not imminent, but undoubtedly it will bring very substantial changes when the technology is applied.¹

The development of radio and television reporting as a part of the Gallery's work was stimulated by technological development. The emergence of the ABC as a major political news gatherer was described earlier. The ABC's status was confirmed when the Government decided in 1946 that

¹ The issues associated with the introduction of VDTs were discussed at length in *The Journalist* during 1977-78.

the independent news service should be maintained and entrenched by powers defined in the Broadcasting and Television Act. (Section 66 of the Act provides that the ABC shall broadcast daily from all national broadcasting stations regular sessions of news relating to current events within the Commonwealth and in other parts of the world. The Commission is empowered to employ an adequate staff both in the Commonwealth and in overseas countries, for the purpose of collecting the news and information for broadcasting.)¹

During the war, the commercial radio stations had obtained their news on relay from the ABC. In 1945, the Government decided that commercial radio stations should run their own news services. Initially, these services were supplied mainly by journalists seconded from newspaper editorial staff. For example, the 2GB Macquarie network got its news between 1945 and 1949 from three senior *Sydney Morning Herald* reporters who were housed in the *Herald* office and wrote scripts for radio news, using the editorial copy flow of the *Herald*. *Herald* staff were instructed to turn all their stories over to the 2GB newsroom, and this included political staff in Canberra.²

In 1949, 2GB took over complete control of the radio newsroom and its staff. Station management had been influenced by American techniques, as had other prominent Australian radio stations. Some American radio journalists had been recruited, and attempts were made to develop distinctive styles for radio news.³ Here, the ABC, which

¹ Broadcasting and Television Act, 1942-73.

² Hugh Elliot (2GB News Editor), ANL MS 2941. Manuscript note by Elliot on the history of the 2GB news service. Elliot's papers comprise a folder of memos, press cuttings, and a log of operations in the 2GB newsroom kept by Elliot as news editor.

³ *Ibid.*

had had many years experience in writing news stories for radio broadcasting, was also an important influence in getting away from the mere re-writing of newspaper copy for reading over the air.

In the late 1940s, Australian radio stations made the first use of recorded news items. This important development has been described by a former radio news editor:

For example, if the Premier made an important announcement by means of press conference or a handout, we would ask him to record it on a tape recorder so that we could broadcast his voice making the announcement in our news session.¹

In practice it was difficult to achieve even 2GB's basic objective of ten of these recorded items a week, so the system was expanded to include eye witness accounts of news incidents, as well as actual voices making a news statement. A major technical breakthrough for the radio news services came in the early 1960s, when the Australian Broadcasting Control Board gave permission to record interviews and statements obtained by telephone.²

These technical developments impinged only marginally on the Canberra Press Gallery in the 20 years from 1945 to the mid-1960s. Journalists in Canberra offices of newspapers which had special arrangements with radio news services were required to supply their copy to their radio stations. In theory, this was an automatic process; a duplicate of every news story, whatever its source, was supplied to radio news. In practice, this obligation was often disregarded. Good news stories were marked 'not for radio' and kept for exclusive newspaper use. This happened frequently with political stories, as this extract from the log of a radio news editor illustrates:

1 *Ibid.*

2 Elliot, *op. cit.*, Newsroom Log Book entries for 1961-62.

Spoke to [newspaper editor] re failure of *Sydney Morning Herald* in Canberra to give us Menzies' statement last night on the Congo.¹

In theory, the duty of the newspaper office in Canberra extended to ringing the radio news service and passing on important stories, particularly where major news bulletins were concerned. This practice was observed most irregularly because the journalists involved were newspaper reporters who had not been trained for radio services. Their working habits were attuned to newspaper deadlines which were severe enough; in practice, it was extremely difficult to rationalise these deadlines with the much more frequent deadlines for radio news bulletins.

Such a system was clearly unsatisfactory to both newspaper offices and to the radio news services. Radio news men began making occasional visits to Canberra to cover special events as this 1955 blurb illustrates:

MONITOR TAKES YOU TO THE SEATO CONFERENCE IN CANBERRA.

Monitor news editor, Hugh Elliot, is in Canberra with Norman Banks reporting this vital conference for Monitor listeners. John Foster Dulles will speak for Monitor.²

The stations also began to look for ways of ensuring their own political coverage from Canberra. This could be done in a number of ways. A radio station could take a straight agency service from Canberra. AUP supplied a number of radio news services during these years and even in the late 1960s its head of service was accredited, also, to the Gallery as correspondent for 2UE Sydney. Alternatively, a station could make an arrangement with a newspaper allowing one of the Canberra staff to supply it with a service, including voice reports once official approval was given for taping from telephones. A radio station could make an

¹ Elliot, Newsroom Log Book, 17 February 1961.

² Press advertisement, 14 December 1956, in Elliot Papers, *op. cit.*

unofficial arrangement with a Gallery journalist to phone material to it. This was done frequently on a freelance basis by Press journalists who were prepared to accept the risk that their papers might disapprove of this form of moonlighting. In practice, it was no different from the stringing activities of the great majority of Gallery journalists (see Chapter 6). The final course was to station in the Gallery a journalist trained in the techniques of radio news gathering.

This final expedient was adopted only very reluctantly by the major radio networks. As late as 1967-68, the official Gallery list shows no journalist accredited solely to a radio station or network. Specialist radio journalists were not posted on a permanent basis in the Gallery until the late 1960s and early 1970s. Their presence was facilitated by technological developments: improved facilities for taping from telephones; the development of easier access to PMG radio landlines; the development of lighter tape recording units and the replacement of cumbersome tape reels with cassette recorders. By 1978, there were three specialist radio journalists stationed in the Press Gallery on a permanent basis. They represented three Sydney stations, but their voice reports and recorded interview material were made available to networks throughout Australia. Unofficial arrangements between radio stations and Press Gallery journalists also persisted.

A system of specialist radio commentaries on political issues had developed during these years, although on a relatively small scale. Radio commentaries on political issues went back to the famous broadcasts of 'The Watchman' on the ABC from 1930 to 1940, and subsequently on a commercial station. 'The Watchman' had an audience and an influence which has never been surpassed by any Australian media commentator.

W. MacMahon Ball has described his impact on the Australian listening audience:

No man in Australia has ever held such a power over the nation's mind. I came across a display advertisement in the newspaper of a provincial city announcing that those who wished to hear 'The Watchman's' mid-day talk could come and sit in the advertiser's cafe free of charge. I then discovered that in hundreds of other cafes, in hotels and radio shops, from Cairns to Fremantle there had for years been groups of people gathered, sometimes spilling out across the footpath obstructing passers by, intent to catch each word 'The Watchman' spoke.¹

There were early frictions between the ABC news service and 'The Watchman'. In the late 1930s, the news service was administered from Sydney while 'The Watchman' made his broadcast from Melbourne. The news service felt that 'The Watchman' should broadcast from Sydney where his scripts could be vetted by the news department in the interests of a co-ordinated news service. These tensions between news and commentary foreshadowed the subsequent animosity between news and public affairs departments of the ABC.

In later years, the concept of a Canberra commentary was developed most fully by the Macquarie network, which in April 1962 engaged a Gallery journalist, Frank Chamberlain, to provide a regular commentary. This came at a time when the network was planning to establish a news bureau in the Canberra Gallery. Although there were assurances from the management that the Chamberlain appointment would not interfere with this arrangement, Chamberlain remained the only accredited Macquarie member of the gallery until the early 1970s. Chamberlain did not devote his services on a full-time basis to Macquarie; he was the Australian

¹ W. MacMahon Ball, Preface to *Arrows in the Air*, Selected Broadcasts of the Watchman (E.A. Mann), John Bacon, Sydney, 1944, p.15.

head of an international news agency, Agence France Presse, and perhaps for this reason, he was not given access by the *Sydney Morning Herald* to its Canberra copy, although the *Herald* had an arrangement to supply news to 2GB-Macquarie.¹ Chamberlain's commentary, 'Canberra on the Line', was the most popular news commentary emanating from Canberra for more than ten years.

For the whole of this period, the ABC remained by far the most substantial of the radio news services in the Canberra Press Gallery. For much of this period, it was the biggest single office in the gallery, rivalled only by the *Sydney Morning Herald*. In 1950, the ABC had a permanent staff of four reporters, the same as the *Sydney Morning Herald*. This staff was supplemented by sessionals when Parliament sat. By 1960, it had increased to six, due to the need to service television news. The strength of the ABC in the Gallery was increased even further in the late 1960s and early 1970s when the news staff was augmented by public affairs reporters for television and radio.

As with commercial radio, the evolution of political reporting for television was largely a reflection of technological development. The ABC staff in the Gallery supplied news for ABC national television stations from the start of transmissions in 1956. Its entry in the gallery list described it as 'National TV, radio news'. The ABC was in a superior position with Canberra news because the early establishment of a national television station in Canberra gave it studio facilities and relay facilities which the commercial stations lacked. Despite these advantages, the television side of the ABC news bureau in the

¹ Elliot, *op. cit.*, Log Book entry, 28 April 1962.

Gallery developed only slowly. The ABC's parliamentary staff were deeply imbued with the traditional presentation of radio news. Much of the radio news transmitted to Sydney for the national news service was passed on to television news where it was rewritten hastily or used as it was. Use of camera interviews evolved only slowly, although there was no impediment placed on the use of parliamentary offices for interviews by the Presiding Officers or staff of Parliament House. ABC television news services were not upgraded until the news divisions began to feel the strong competition provided by ABC public affairs television, particularly with the establishment of 'This Day Tonight' which had its own representative in the Gallery from 1968.

Commercial television news services were just as dilatory in establishing national political coverage, although there was some extenuation in the logistical problems involved. Until the advent of the coaxial cable, material for news had to be filmed and sent by plane to the metropolitan offices for processing. With news bulletins at 6 p.m. or 6.30 p.m., this meant that very often political material had to be filmed at Parliament House or elsewhere in Canberra before 10 a.m. so film could be got onto planes to Sydney and Melbourne around mid-day. This imposed severe limitations on the sort of political news that could be gathered. The problems were sufficiently discouraging to cause the Channel 9 network, which was the first major network to establish representation in Canberra, to withdraw its staff in 1964 after less than a year of representation.

The arrival of the coaxial cable enabled TV to get immediate line reports from Canberra for the first time, although it did not supersede completely the plane shipments which persisted into the 1970s. For the first time, viewers in Sydney and Melbourne were able to see a Prime

Ministerial press conference. Sir Robert Menzies' final press conference as Prime Minister in 1966 was telecast live, much to the discomfort of inexperienced Gallery print journalists who did not show to advantage on national television.

Another technological advance was the use of satellite transmission to cover the overseas journeys of Australian politicians. Camera teams accompanied Prime Minister Whitlam on overseas tours in 1973-75, and by using communications satellites were able to have impressive visual material to air sometimes at least 12 hours before the first news coverage appeared.

Even more significant was the development of technology which permitted the installation of studio space in Parliament House. The first network to instal television equipment in the gallery was the Channel 9 network which bypassed the Press Gallery Committee, and converted space in the Consolidated Press Office early in 1972. Apparently, this was done by direct negotiation with the Speaker who was responsible for this part of Parliament. This was followed by the establishment of a small studio on the Senate side of the Parliament which was shared jointly by the Channel 10 and Channel 7 networks. The ABC established a small studio on the lower floor of the Parliament for use of both news and public affairs radio and television programs. In 1978 there was another reorganisation of Gallery space and Channel 7 established its own studio.

The development and characteristics of the electronic media are taken up more fully in a later chapter. The purpose of this section has been to indicate briefly the main factors which influenced the belated emergence of an important electronic element in the Press Gallery. In particular, technological factors were important determinants in the evolution of electronic reporting in Australian federal politics.

2. Syndication and Political News Gathering

It was pointed out in the previous chapter that a considerable volume of syndication had always characterised the Canberra Gallery. Representation of the major metropolitan dailies had built up slowly after the move to Canberra in 1927, and this had shaped an important role for AUP. There had always been an informal element of 'clubbing' within the Gallery and this in itself was a form of syndication. The activities of AUP had attracted little resentment, partly because it was not a heavily capitalised organisation, with its main support coming from provincial and rural newspapers. AUP had serviced a considerable number of metropolitan dailies in the years after 1927 but many of these services had been supplanted by other arrangements. Furthermore, AUP had become an integral part of the Gallery structure because of its early arrival, and because it had been a consistent source of journalistic employment. For all of these reasons, AUP was not seen as a threat, although it did provide a syndicated service.

These arguments did not apply to Australian Associated Press (AAP) which had been established in the late 1930s by a group of major newspaper proprietors headed by Sir Keith Murdoch of the Melbourne *Herald* group. AAP had been set up ostensibly to improve the flow of overseas cable news to Australia and it had built up close links with the Reuters Agency. As it developed, AAP showed greater interest in extending cable (or wire) services within Australia, and Canberra was a logical place for it to initiate a service. The development of teleprinter networks facilitated the operation of AAP and made its services more attractive to metropolitan newspapers.

The struggle between the Press Gallery and AAP began during the war and ended more than 25 years later when AAP became the single news gathering agency providing a complete service of federal parliamentary proceedings. It is an epic story and only the general aspects of the Gallery's response to this form of syndication can be treated here.

The initial fears of Canberra journalists about syndicated services seem to have been aroused by the manpower policies of the war-time Government. The implied threat of manpower controls was taken up by the Canberra Branch of the AJA in July 1942:

Although Mr Dedman did not substantially mention syndication, he indicated that fewer journalists were needed at Canberra, in the Gallery and on rounds.¹

A special committee was appointed by the AJA to prepare a report showing the need for retaining existing numerical strengths of staffs in Canberra. The committee also examined ways of conserving manpower in Gallery offices.

From an early stage the Gallery and the AJA used political pressure to resist syndication. In May 1943, a resolution was passed calling on the Government to state whether it considered that the best interests of the Australian people in wartime were served if every newspaper in Australia got only one syndicated account of federal politics and the national Parliament. The question was somewhat hypothetical because the same meeting of the AJA called on the union's Federal Executive to approach AAP for a statement of its plans, 'if any', on syndication of basic federal news from Canberra. There were rumours that an executive officer of the Melbourne *Herald* group had been in Canberra, preparing a

¹ AJA Records, Minutes of Meeting, 5 July 1942. John Johnstone Dedman was Minister for War Organisation of Industry from 7 October 1941 to 6 July 1945.

report for AAP and the Australian Newspaper Proprietors Association on whether syndication was workable, and what form it should take.¹

Gallery opposition hardened into a resolution that the AJA should refuse to negotiate agreement with the AAP for syndication of news from Canberra, and that 'we instruct all members to refuse to be transferred from their present employment to AAP, either temporarily or permanently'.² Members of the Gallery were encouraged because Curtin had proffered support, and two prominent Labor backbenchers, A.D. Fraser and L. Haylen (both former journalists and AJA members) had promised to lobby against syndication within the Parliament.

The attitude of members of the Press Gallery towards syndication moves was stated in the strongest terms:

The dangers of regimented news could lead to dictatorial powers being assumed by one individual over Parliamentary and political reporting, and the committee feels that news gathering is a strong protection against this.³

There was some recognition among the membership that a degree of syndication was inevitable and that it should be brought within the bounds of Gallery influence through the AJA. A senior journalist, Warren Denuing, moved a resolution that the Canberra district of the AJA should seriously consider entering into an agreement with AAP so that any agency service might be regularised and brought within the scope of specific agreement 'rather than permit agencies to grow up in a way which will serve all the purposes of agencies from the employers' point of view, but permit none of the safeguards which should be

¹ *Ibid.*, 28 May 1943; 7 July 1944.

² *Ibid.*, 30 September 1944.

³ *Ibid.*

possible in any agreement between the AJA and a distinct agency authority'.¹

These efforts at conciliation were largely rejected by the Gallery and the Canberra District of the AJA which maintained an implacable opposition to syndication through an AAP Canberra service. In March 1945, the Canberra District of the AJA objected vehemently to the placing of a draft log for an agreement with AAP before the Federal Executive of the AJA:

The submission of a log at this juncture discloses a weakness on our part and we consider there should not be any compromise and that the AAP scheme should be fought to the end.²

Although there was sympathy among the other districts to Canberra's resistance to an AAP political service, the Federal Executive of the union did not endorse its stand. This came to the surface in 1951 when the Federal President of the Union, reporting on discussions with AAP on syndication, referred to Canberra syndication 'to which we are all strongly committed'.³ The Canberra Branch pointed out that it was strongly opposed to Canberra syndication which it had resisted successfully for many years:

. . . if the AJA agrees to syndication in the reporting of federal politics, surely as important a branch of reporting as there is in Australia, and unlike Police Courts and stock exchanges, capable of an infinite variety of interpretation, it destroys the mainspring of its anti-syndication case and justifies completely syndication in other reporting fields That all districts be warned that Canberra syndication would be the thin edge of the wedge that will be driven ever deeper.⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, 27 November 1944.

² *Ibid.*, 19 March 1945.

³ *Ibid.*, 14 August 1951.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Canberra resistance could only delay the official recognition of an AAP service in Canberra; it could not prevent the making of an industrial award which covered AAP employment in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne. When the award was made in 1952, the Canberra Branch consoled itself with the thought that the case made out by it had at least ensured the preservation of hard-won AJA conditions. The President of the Canberra Branch summarised the position in his annual report for 1951-52:

To date, no change of any significance has taken place in the AAP set up in the Press Gallery, and we feel sure that the incoming committee and the AAP employees will maintain vigilance to see that there is no breakdown of conditions.¹

The nucleus of the AAP service had been the *Sydney Morning Herald* office in the Gallery. In effect, the AAP gallery service was based upon seconded *Sydney Morning Herald* reporters and other reporters assigned by contributing newspapers to the AAP service. For many years, the AAP service was relatively modest, providing a parliamentary service to a varying group of metropolitan newspapers. Apart from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, other participants were the *Age*, the *Argus*, the *Adelaide Advertiser* and the *West Australian*, all members of AAP. It had no permanent representation in the gallery until the early 1970s. An AAP team was assembled when the Parliament sat and disbanded when it rose. Out of session, there was no accredited AAP representative, although there was a Reuters representative who was also a senior member of the *Sydney Morning Herald* staff. AAP obtained news through the *Herald* office.

¹ *Ibid.*, President's Report, 30 June 1952.

Gallery hostility to AAP found frequent expression during these years. Syndication was a frequent subject at AJA committee meetings. In April 1955, the committee circulated a questionnaire designed to determine trends in syndication in the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery. For purposes of the survey, syndication was defined as 'any practice which tends to restrict or decrease the number of AJA members who might otherwise be economically employed in the gathering of news in Canberra'. These practices included the sale of Canberra news services by organisations represented in Canberra to organisations not represented there; the exchange of copy to a significant degree between the Canberra representatives of different organisations; and the private sale of Canberra news services by AJA members on such a scale that, but for the activities of these members, additional full-time journalists could and would be employed in Canberra.¹

Undoubtedly, there were strong elements of ambivalence and inconsistency in the stand taken by Canberra journalists against syndication. This led to differences with the Federal Executive of the AJA, which in 1957 sought to impose a ban on AUP for extending its Canberra services to the *Age* and the *Sydney Daily Mirror*. The Canberra District pointed out that syndication on a much wider scale than that proposed by AUP was evident in other organisations, particularly the Melbourne *Herald* group. It pointed out that if the *Mirror* and the *Age* were denied a basic service, to which they were entitled 'on practice already existing', they would secure alternative services. Alternative services such as AAP and the Melbourne *Herald* group presented a far greater threat to journalistic employment than AUP:

¹ *Ibid.*, 7 April 1955.

Exclusion [of AUP] represents assistance to syndicating organisations which are real threats to AJA employment against a small syndicating organisation which is no real threat.¹

There were periodic signs that the larger groups were trying to squeeze out AUP, and this would threaten the livelihood of up to 60 AJA members.² The threat to AUP was subsequently withdrawn by the Federal Executive.

The attitude of the Canberra District conveniently ignored the widespread existence of 'clubbing' that transcended all logical alignments of newspapers represented in the gallery. In practice, the Press Gallery was not a dozen or so disparate units, each engaged in fierce competition with the other. The Gallery was divided into groups which interlocked in complex ways, with each group competing, often in a desultory way, with other groups. These broad alignments were determined partly by tradition and partly by competitive logic. Quite clearly, newspapers which competed directly in the major cities such as the Melbourne *Age* and *Sun Pictorial* could not compete directly, but there was no reason why each should not link up with a group of other newspapers drawn from the broad Gallery spectrum. Among evening papers, the Melbourne *Herald* could work with the Brisbane *Telegraph* which was a member of the Melbourne *Herald* group, and with the Sydney *Daily Mirror*. Another afternoon pairing was the Adelaide *News* and the Sydney *Sun*. The only direct competition in the whole of this arrangement was between the Sydney *Sun* and the Sydney *Mirror*. Each benefited from access to the resources of at least one other evening paper.

¹ *Ibid.*, 24 September, 17 October 1957.

² *Ibid.*

The morning papers were grouped in a much more complicated way. The *Sun Pictorial* worked with its sister publications, the *Brisbane Courier-Mail*, the *Adelaide Advertiser* and the *West Australian*. It also had an unofficial arrangement with the *Sydney Morning Herald* to share news. This arrangement went beyond morning paper news gathering, because of the *Sun Pictorial*'s links with the other major paper of the Melbourne *Herald* group, the *Melbourne Herald* itself. As well as the *Melbourne Herald*, this gave it access to news gathered by the *Brisbane Telegraph* and the *Sydney Daily Mirror*. In effect, each member of this broad arrangement had access to the news gathering of ten metropolitan newspapers: *Melbourne Herald*, *Melbourne Sun Pictorial*, *Brisbane Courier-Mail*, *Brisbane Telegraph*, *Adelaide Advertiser*, *West Australian* (all owned by the *Melbourne Herald* group), *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Sydney Sun* (owned by the *Sydney Morning Herald*), *Sydney Daily Mirror*, *Adelaide News*.¹

This remarkable arrangement for pooling news included some notable ironies. The *Sydney Daily Mirror* and *Sydney Sun* were fiercely competitive on Sydney streets, and this competitiveness was to some degree reflected in the Canberra Gallery. Yet through the convoluted processes of 'The Club' both had access to a protective news gathering arrangement. The ramifications of these arrangements were considerable. The Club gave an extremely wide coverage because it included every mainland State.

¹ This account of 'clubbing' has been compiled from 'Annals of Shantytown', an unsigned article in *Nation*, 28 February 1959; from R.J. Bennetts, 'Development of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, 1901-1968', Master of Arts Qualifying Thesis, School of Political Science, SGS, ANU, 1968; and from interviews with Ian Fitchett, *Sydney Morning Herald* Head of Service, 1960-1971, and Kevin Power, *Daily Mirror* Head of Service, 1945-1963.

With the natural tendency of state-oriented politicians to give news to their home-state papers, a tremendous range of sources was available to 'The Club'. For many years the arrangement flourished at Budget time because of the extremely close relationship between a Brisbane journalist, Elgin Reid, and the Treasurer, Sir Arthur Fadden. (Reid subsequently ghosted Fadden's autobiography, *They Called Me Artie*.) In many ways, 'The Club' enshrined mediocrity. The fruits of the work of the most skilled became available to those who were less effective. In return, the better journalists had their flanks protected. There was little risk of any club member missing a major story within his edition times, and all were covered for bread and butter stories.

The formidable competitive strength of 'The Club' could make life difficult for outsiders. Within the Gallery, the main outsiders were the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, which maintained an indirect relationship with the *Brisbane Telegraph*, a member of 'The Club', and the *Age*. The *Sydney Daily Telegraph* was not notably discomfited because it was outside 'The Club', largely because of the story-breaking qualities of its principal political correspondent, Alan Reid. The *Age* also suffered little embarrassment from 'The Club' when its political correspondent was the equally formidable Ian Fitchett, but when Fitchett moved to the *Sydney Morning Herald* (ironically becoming a member of 'The Club'), the *Age* on occasions missed major stories, although it had a staff of some calibre. The *Age* retained some protective capacity because of its official arrangement with AUP and because it took the AAP-*Sydney Morning Herald* gallery service.

Although there were frequent tensions with 'The Club' and changing alignments were often threatened, the intricate arrangements persisted until the mid-1960s. The relationship broke down partly under the strain of competition from new entrants to the Gallery such as the *Financial*

Review and the *Australian*, and because of the arrival of a new breed of younger and more competitive journalists. Another death blow was the withdrawal of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, ostensibly under editorial direction. 'The Club' dwindled to a hard core of the Melbourne *Herald* group whose papers were compelled to co-operate because they were jointly owned and shared common communication services.¹

It is a pertinent question why the Gallery was so strongly opposed to syndication when it countenanced 'The Club' and the AUP services, two contrasting forms of syndication. The answer probably is that 'The Club' was a tacit arrangement and even its members were embarrassed by its existence. It had some of the characteristics of a lodge whose members banded together for safety despite the strong personal and professional antipathy that existed among them. In terms of numbers 'The Club' dominated the Gallery, and those who were contemptuous of it or who worked independently were not strong enough to challenge its existence. In any case, all of the arrangements and processes of 'The Club' were unofficial; it was an easy matter to deny its existence, or discount its arrangements if too much curiosity was shown about its activities.

There was a strong element of hypocrisy in the Gallery's approach to syndication, but it must be said that the main enemy had been correctly identified. AUP was not a threat because it was poorly capitalised and its news gathering resources outside of Canberra were not significant. It had a strong loyalty among journalists because it was a source of jobs and a refuge for those journalists who had fallen

¹ *Ibid.*

into disfavour with the dailies. The grouping together and the sharing of gallery services by the Melbourne *Herald* group was disliked but was seen as inevitable. On the other hand, AAP had very substantial resources behind it and clearly had the ability to establish a major news service in the Gallery.

As late as October 1967, the Gallery and the AJA were apprehensive about AAP, which had established an experimental service covering the Parliament and feeding Canberra copy into the same teleprinter service that carried AAP overseas news services. This was a much more elaborate service than had been supplied previously by the AAP Gallery team. Its implications were important because use was made of the networks carrying the AAP-Reuters services which went to most major newspapers and a number of radio and television stations. A report to the AJA by a Gallery representative suggested that the AAP service might prove to be 'its own worst enemy' because of the bank-up of Canberra copy. For this reason the service had not operated for the previous week.¹ In 1968 AAP changed its policy and allowed non-members to take its gallery service. The most important were the *Australian* and AUP.

The long-drawn out struggle over syndication services from the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery came to a swift and decisive resolution in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Reference was made earlier to the poor competitive position of AUP with relation to AAP. AUP was established only in Sydney and Melbourne, although there was a Queensland provincial press service with which it had some links. Its resources were meagre and its services were of variable quality.

¹ AJA Record. Minutes of Meeting, 30 October 1967.

As a consequence its country newspaper and radio station subscribers dropped in and out of the service. It lacked the national outlets and the international cable news inputs which AAP had built up. The persistent threat to AUP which had existed for more than 25 years was realised in 1971, when AAP took over AUP and its local news services. (For the preceding three years AUP had also taken the AAP service to supplement its Canberra coverage.)

This produced important changes in Gallery structure and practice. AAP was able to use the nucleus of the AUP organisation in the Gallery to develop its own permanent Gallery staff. An AAP head of service was appointed to the Gallery and the agency initiated a comprehensive political service, including rounds stories as well as its parliamentary coverage. Reporters of the old AUP were retained to continue the services which AAP had taken over from it.

The most important impact on the Gallery of the AAP staffing adjustments was in the parliamentary coverage. The importance of Parliament as a source of political news had dwindled significantly since 1945. This was partly a reflection of the consistent development of the powers of the Executive Government, and partly a reflection of the movement of a substantial part of the Commonwealth Public Service from Melbourne to Canberra. It was also a function of changing readership tastes and the responses of newspapers to them. Interest of readers in extended reports of parliamentary debates and columns of parliamentary notes or snippets had declined markedly. As a result, the rivalry between newspapers over parliamentary coverage had faded away. If the competitive spirit was manifested in the Gallery, it emerged in rounds reporting. No longer did each newspaper seek to provide an independent coverage of what happened in Parliament, as distinct from what happened in the lobbies, in Cabinet, or within the Public Service.

As a consequence of these changes, there was increasing emphasis on concentration and consolidation of parliamentary services. The demise of AUP reduced the number of full parliamentary services in the Gallery to AAP, the Melbourne *Herald*, and the ABC. After the News Ltd group acquired the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* service in 1972, a News Ltd service covering Parliament was initiated. This revived the independent gallery services which Australian Consolidated Press and News Ltd had supplied before 1967.

It was the last semblance of competition in reporting Federal Parliament. News Ltd had also sought to compete with AAP across the broader spectrum of Australian cable services but it could not match the resources and organisation of AAP to provide 24-hour news services. When the effort to compete with AAP was abandoned, the News Ltd gallery service was disbanded and News Ltd newspapers took the AAP parliamentary service. The Melbourne *Herald* group's gallery service was the last to succumb. A resolution by the Canberra District in December 1973 called on the Federal Executive of the AJA to inquire from the *Herald* and *Weekly Times* if any of its newspapers intended to take the AAP Federal Parliamentary gallery service, and what effect this might have on employment of journalists.¹ This was the last shot in the protracted efforts of the Gallery through the AJA to fight the entry of AAP into its ranks.

When the Melbourne *Herald* group abandoned its parliamentary coverage, the only other agency offering any sort of independent parliamentary service was the ABC. Its reporting of Parliament was limited because of the comparatively light demands of the radio and television news service for parliamentary copy. It was supplemented by the AAP service to which the ABC also subscribed. By 1977, AAP had a virtual monopoly on what

¹ *Ibid.*, 7 December 1973.

was reported from parliamentary proceedings, although representatives of all media still attended Question Time and the major parliamentary speeches. Quite often, independent stories were written on items from Question Time or, less frequently, from other parliamentary speeches and debates. One newspaper, the *Financial Review*, retained the practice of writing each day two or three brief parliamentary stories which were compiled by its staff independently of the AAP coverage. In 1978, the *Financial Review* introduced a daily parliamentary feature which focussed mainly on Question Time. These were minor exceptions to the overwhelming dominance which AAP had established on parliamentary coverage.

The history of syndication in the Press Gallery has been traced at some length because it is important to the contemporary structure and practice of the Gallery, and accordingly to the discussion of these issues in later chapters. Two points need to be made here. Firstly, the emergence of the AAP monopoly of parliamentary coverage would not have been possible if it had not been in accordance with changing trends in newspaper readership and newspaper content. The newspapers were content to relinquish an area where they saw no point in competing further. A basic parliamentary coverage could be obtained much more economically through an agency. Secondly, the growth of syndication did not reduce the number of jobs in the Gallery, which expanded significantly during these years (see next section). Syndication had abetted a major shift in resources within the Gallery from reporting parliamentary proceedings to covering the political rounds outside of Parliament.

3. Expansion and Changing Structure

From the previous account of change in the Gallery during the years from 1945 to 1978, it is possible to make a number of conclusions about the contemporary structure of the Gallery. Firstly, a strong electronics component of the Gallery had emerged in the later years, comprising just over 20 percent of the journalists working in the Gallery (excluding AJA members who gave technical support such as television sound and camera services, but were not accredited to the Gallery). In many ways, the interest of these electronic journalists was diverging sharply from those of print media, a theme which is taken up in later chapters. Secondly, AAP had emerged as a dominant force in Australian political news by its virtually exclusive coverage of parliamentary proceedings, and to a lesser extent by its provision of a basic political rounds coverage. Unofficial forms of syndication had flourished in the Gallery during the prime years of 'The Club', from around 1949 to the mid-1960s. In the ensuing years, 'clubbing' had declined and there was a much more competitive spirit in the Gallery. Finally, despite the growth of syndication, the Gallery had continued to expand, partly because of the emergence of the electronic Gallery and partly for other reasons which are discussed below.

The growth of the Gallery is set out in Table 1.¹ Its size remained relatively static between 1950 and 1960, although there were some minor changes in the relative balance of the components. It should be noted, also, that the Gallery Lists on which the table is

¹ The information contained in this and following tables has been compiled from Gallery Lists for the years indicated. These lists are prepared by the Press Gallery Committee, usually every twelve to eighteen months. They are distributed by the Joint House Department of the Federal Parliament as a Directory of Press Gallery members. (The tables are published on pp.132ff.)

based do not always reflect a consistent basis for compilation. In particular they do not always show whether the status of journalists is permanent or sessional. As noted earlier, a strong sessional component remained in the Gallery during the 1950s and much of the 1960s. Some offices in these Gallery Lists include their sessionals; others do not. For this reason, the aggregate numbers in the early lists can be misleading; it is likely that they under-state the total strength of the Gallery, although they reflect accurately its broad composition. Even allowing for an element of under-counting the dramatic growth of the Gallery between 1960 and the mid-1960s, and between 1967-68 and 1977 is evident.

Taking each component of the Gallery in turn, the most substantial growth of print media journalists occurred between 1960 and 1967-68. Even allowing for some under-statement of the earlier figure, the Gallery virtually doubled its strength during these years. One of the reasons was a decline in the use of sessionals which had been a perennial source of dissatisfaction, both to newspaper management and to journalists. The major problem was accommodation. Hostel and hotel accommodation were invariably at a premium in Canberra during the 1950s and early 1960s, and the records of the Canberra AJA contain frequent complaints about the standards of accommodation for sessionals. In many ways, sessionals lost their cost effectiveness; it became cheaper for newspaper management to station journalists permanently in Canberra, rather than moving them in and out each session. The rationale for this change in status was reinforced by increasing volume of work out of session.

The establishment of the *Australian* in 1963 as a national newspaper based in Canberra also increased print media representation in the Gallery. The advent of the *Australian* had other subtler effects. The paper was committed to developing national news and this rested heavily on Canberra news. The *Australian* espoused the aims of a more intensive coverage of the public service and of national organisations based in Canberra. These objectives were not always effectively implemented but the presence of the *Australian* in Canberra from 1963 to 1968 did act as a stimulus to the coverage of national institutions and organisations in Canberra, apart from Parliament House.

Changing staff patterns on metropolitan dailies are set out in Table 2. It is possible to identify trends which will be dealt with more thoroughly in a later chapter. In the years covered by this analysis, the most substantial changes in strength occurred in the offices of a few major metropolitan dailies: *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Financial Review*, *Melbourne Age*, *Melbourne Sun Pictorial* and *Melbourne Herald*. The grouping of newspapers into the three major groups of Australian newspapers - John Fairfax and Sons, *Melbourne Herald* group and News Ltd group - also reveals some interesting points about Gallery organisation. It shows how much the *Melbourne Herald* group papers depended on the two core Melbourne papers with the outrider papers in the other capitals (apart from Sydney) contributing only one representative each to the Gallery team. The emergence of a strong News Ltd group after 1972 shows up in changing patterns of staff allocation, due to an ambitious attempt to create a consolidated News Ltd Bureau to provide basic parliamentary and political rounds coverage for all members of the group. Consequently, the individual newspapers were stripped of journalists who were placed in a central bureau, leaving

usually a single reporter as political correspondent for each individual newspaper (except for the *Australian* which usually had three). The News Ltd Bureau dwindled in strength after the attempt to operate an independent parliamentary service was abandoned (see previous section).

Table 2 also points to the strength of the individual John Fairfax offices and the degree of independence which each possesses. The three major dailies - *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Melbourne Age*, and *Financial Review* - each has a strong bureau, and the pattern of staffing of the other offices (*Sydney Sun*, *Sun Herald*, and *National Times*) points to an absence of pooled resources.

Table 1 shows the firm development of weekly newspaper representation in recent years. This is partly a result of the sale of the former Australian Consolidated Press newspapers (*Sydney Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph*) to News Ltd. As a consequence, ACP had to provide staff in the Gallery to service its magazine interests, principally the weekly *Bulletin* which has a strong political content, and the *Australian Womens' Weekly* which has occasional features of political interest, perhaps two or three times a year. The ACP group of four journalists also works closely with the Channel 9 television network with which it has some common ownership. Other reasons for the increase in weekly representation are the establishment of new weeklies in the 1970s - *National Times*, *Nation Review*, and the *Sunday Press* - and changing fashions in news tastes of the readers of Sydney's popular Sunday papers. As Table 2 shows, there have been long gaps in the representation of the *Sun Herald* and the *Sunday Telegraph*, but both have been consistently represented in recent years. The *Sunday Mirror* was represented by its own correspondent in 1977, but has since reverted to casual representation.

Sunday newspapers in Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide have not been represented on a permanent basis, but have obtained political material through related offices in Canberra (for example, the *Sunday Mail* in Brisbane through the Melbourne *Herald* group). For much of the period, the Tasmanian papers were not represented by their own journalist, but in the 1970s the Hobart *Mercury* appointed a Gallery journalist who provided it with news stories while also servicing a Sydney radio station.

Table 2 also points to some of the casualites of Australian newspaper history. The most significant is the disappearance of the *Argus*, which had dwindled in political influence in the years before its ultimate demise in 1955. Other unsuccessful ventures were represented in the Gallery during their brief lives: the *Australian Financial Times*, established by ACP as a competitor to the *Financial Review*, *Finance Week*, and *Newsday*, a Melbourne evening paper established by the proprietors of the *Age*. *Newsday* had a Gallery office of two journalists who worked closely with the *Age* staff during *Newsday*'s brief life in 1969.

Table 1 sets out the staff of the news agencies during these years. Up to and including 1967-68, the sole agency was AUP, and the lists for the subsequent years in the table record the staff of AAP which took over AUP (see section 2 above on syndicated news gathering). Despite the changes in syndicated practice described above, agency staff in the Gallery remained remarkably consistent over this long period. This has been due partly to limited space; agency services make more demands on space because of their elaborate communications facilities.

Table 1 shows the dilatory growth of electronic news services up until the late 1960s, and the much quicker pace of development during the past ten years. Even so, the electronic media comprise only 22 percent of the Gallery's total strength, and their rate of increase is tapering off. Table 3 breaks down the growth of the electronic media into its component parts, and shows how even this comparatively modest development has occurred in the years since 1967.

Table 1 demonstrates the growth of another area of the Gallery which in some ways is even more impressive than the development of electronic media. This is a fringe area made up of news services, overseas correspondents, newsletters, and other disparate elements which for one reason or another are represented in the Gallery. The spurt of growth in this area of the Gallery after 1973 was largely due to an increased interest by overseas newspapers and news services after the Labor Government took office. For example, the accreditation to the Gallery of three representatives of the Hsinhua News Agency of the Chinese Peoples' Republic was a direct result of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Australia at the end of 1972. There are problems in assessing the real strength of this part of the Gallery because it includes accreditations which in some instances are nominal, and also contains elements of double counting because some overseas services are provided by print journalists on a 'stringer' basis. An attempt has been made to avoid these problems by counting the major services rather than individual journalists, and this is the reason for some apparent discrepancies in overall figures. Table 1 suggests that the strength of this part of the Gallery is starting to wane after the build-up which followed 1973. (The work of this fringe area of the Gallery is described in Chapter 6.)

The Gallery has grown very substantially since the mid-1960s. Much of the increase has been due to expansion of the electronic and miscellaneous services, although the print media have also made strong gains. The clear signs that the overall increase in Gallery strength has levelled out is apparent in the comparative figures for 1974 and 1977. This raises the theme of the Gallery's accommodation ceiling which is taken up in the next chapter.

4. Parliamentary and Political Relationships

Inevitably, the post-war years strained the traditional relationships and patterns of gathering news which had developed between the Gallery, the Parliament and politicians. The main source of strain was treated in the last section; the expansion of the Gallery meant that many old practices had to be abandoned. An example is the practice of rounds reporting by which reporters went in a group each day to Ministers and senior public servants. This procedure could be adopted only if the group of reporters was a manageable one. In its stead, there evolved other procedures adapted to the functioning of a large group of reporters, such as the handout and the practice of 'boxing' which is described in the next chapter.

The relationship with the Prime Minister did not change materially in the immediate post-war years, although Chifley did not meet the Press twice a day as had Curtin. Chifley's usual practice was to hold press conferences twice a week, once at a convenient time for the evening papers and the other to suit the morning papers. Like Curtin, Chifley followed the accepted conventions of talking 'on the record' (could be published and attributed to him), 'off the record' (could not be published), and 'background' (could be published without attribution).

There was no restriction on the number of journalists who could attend, although the customary practice was that only one representative from each organisation would ask questions. This allowed a head of service or his deputy to ask questions while a junior member of the same office acted as a scribe and took the note.¹

A thread of continuity between the relationship of Curtin and Chifley with the Gallery was provided by the presence in both their offices of a former Gallery journalist, D.K. Rodgers, as press secretary. There were many similarities between the practice of the two Labor Prime Ministers, although Curtin's relationship was much more intense, and as a former journalist and AJA official he shared a deep sense of kinship with journalists. Chifley lacked these professional ties, and he was much more imbued with the inimical attitudes of traditional Labor men towards the Press. This did not impair his relations with the Gallery which were invariably warm and amicable. Chifley's biographer, L.F. Crisp, has described his approach to the Gallery:

The Parliamentary pressmen . . . sensed in him a conviction that in general the public really had a right to know the condition and trends of public business and that as Prime Minister he did well to spend time discussing the issues of the day - indeed informally thinking aloud about and debating them - with those whose vocation it was to present and interpret political news to the people. His purposes in his press conferences were constructive and in this regard, at any rate, he displayed a shrewd sense of public relations.²

¹ Bennetts, *op. cit.*, pp.53-54.

² L.F. Crisp, *Ben Chifley*, Longmans, Adelaide, 1960, p.264.

Chifley also conducted his relations on a less formal plane. Crisp records that Chifley was often found yarning with journalists around the precincts of Parliament House:

A seriously asked question would almost invariably elicit not only a serious but an informative answer. He did not seek to score off the least prepared or least acute reporters in front of their colleagues.¹

Chifley displayed a shrewd sense of the tactics and techniques of political news gathering:

One or two [pressmen] complained that on occasion, when he knew or suspected some of them were on the scent of information which it would be inconvenient to have immediately publicised, Chifley, like Curtin, would volunteer the information 'off the record' in order to halt premature disclosure. Generally this was taken in good part as incidental to the natural manoeuvre and counter-manoeuve of their relationship. There was a similar mutual understanding of his motives in flying an occasional 'kite' through their despatches. This was accepted as a legitimate political tactic and use of the press.²

In some ways, Chifley was less receptive to the Press after his government was defeated and he became Opposition Leader, although his resentment was not directed at the Gallery but rather to newspaper management. In one incident, the *Sydney Morning Herald* sent its associate editor, Mr R.T. Foster, to Canberra for the parliamentary session of 1950. In a letter to Chifley, the Managing Director of John Fairfax Pty Ltd, Mr R.A.G. Henderson, set out Foster's role and requested the Opposition Leader and his colleagues to give him their co-operation:

1 *Ibid.*

2 *Ibid.*

Mr Foster will have no direct association with the day to day news from Canberra, the collection of which will continue to be controlled by our Canberra representative, Mr R.I. Douglas. It will be Mr Foster's task, however, to keep us informed of the political situation for policy and editorial purposes, and during his stay in Canberra he will contribute leading articles in addition to regular weekly articles.¹

In some ways, the duties assigned to Foster revived the practice of the Melbourne Gallery in early years, when leader writers sat in the parliamentary galleries and wrote their leaders from Parliament House.

Chifley agreed to co-operate with Foster but abruptly withdrew his assistance after one of Foster's articles angered him. He wrote rather stiffly to Henderson:

I agreed at your request to see Mr Foster personally in the hope that the articles from Canberra would at least bear evidence of impartial observation. I was warned prior to Mr Foster's arrival that his mission to Canberra was to boost the Government and, after reading this article, I can see strong grounds for believing that statement. It would appear that Mr Foster's mission is to act as unofficial publicity officer for the Government and, as it has not been the practice for either the Prime Minister or the Leader of the Opposition to accord personal interviews to the publicity officers associated with their opposite numbers, I would ask to be excused from any personal interviews with Mr Foster. I would like you to understand that I don't in any way resent Mr Foster's attitude, but I don't feel that in the circumstances I should continue to give him any personal background talks. Hope you are keeping well.²

One of the things that seems to have aggrieved Chifley was the access he had given to newspaper managements when he was Prime Minister. The newspaper companies had faced difficult problems with currency and in securing adequate stocks of newsprint, and Chifley could claim

¹ R.I. Douglas Papers, ANL MS 3797, Correspondence files, letter from R.A.G. Henderson to J.B. Chifley, 8 February 1950.

² *Ibid.*, letter from J.B. Chifley to R.A.G. Henderson, 6 March 1950.

justly that he had always given a sympathetic hearing and a measure of assistance. This reinforced the resentment he felt at the treatment given by the newspapers to his party and himself between 1945 and 1949.

During these years, Menzies as Leader of the Opposition was extremely conscious of publicity and receptive to the needs and demands of the Gallery. Journalists who found Menzies accessible and co-operative at this time in later years were resentful of the disdain the Prime Minister affected towards the Gallery and his increasing inaccessibility. Menzies soon reverted to the dislike of regular press conferences and frequent contact with reporters that he had shown during his first term as Prime Minister. Press conferences became increasingly rare during the 1950s and were usually unproductive as sources of news.

According to one account of a Menzies press conference held in 1957, the proceedings were taped and transcripts issued later to the Gallery:

As the journalists enter and dispose themselves in a semi-circle, some crowding to the desks as though to catch each falling crumb of wisdom and others standing back or sitting on the seats and arms of blue leather chairs, Mr Menzies surveys them, raising and lowering his remarkable black eyebrows In a tone more or less of invitation he says, 'Well now?' Somebody fires the first question and a series of questions follows; a few of them are pertinent, but some are surprisingly irrelevant and some are *mala-droit* The newcomer to Mr Menzies' press conference is liable to find the manner of the answers so fascinating as to distract attention from their substance. Analysis often proves this to be slight and the answers to be polite covert refusals of information.¹

In his later years, Menzies made effective use of television. He made direct statements for the cameras, usually on his return from an overseas mission. Reporters were permitted to attend and take notes of

¹ George Baker, 'Canberra Dateline', *Quadrant*, June 1957, p.11.

these statements, but questions were not allowed. Menzies also introduced media conferences which television and radio reporters attended as well as print journalists. The size of these conferences meant that they could not be held in the Prime Minister's suite, and the Government Party Room was used.¹ Although Menzies' public style had been moulded by the public platform, the bar, and the parliamentary chamber he adapted well to television, handling the presence of the new medium rather more competently than Gallery journalists who lacked electronic experience. Menzies' final televised press conference, at which he announced his retirement, was notable for the extremely unflattering impression it conveyed of the interviewing talents of the Gallery, apart from the professional television interviewers.

Harold Holt as Prime Minister was not inclined to make extensive use of general press conferences attended by both print and electronic media. His occasional televised conferences were held usually when he was on formal visits overseas or travelling in the Australian States. In some ways, Holt reverted to the sort of intimate briefing sessions which had been developed by Curtin and Chifley. Here, he could differentiate clearly between attributable material, or material which was background or off the record. Holt was concerned at the large numbers of journalists who attended these briefing sessions; many of them were not known personally to him. Accordingly, he informed the Gallery that he wanted a smaller group of journalists known to him and who could be accommodated in his office. Unlike Menzies, Holt regarded the Party Room as the preserve of party members and not for use by the

¹ Bennetts, *op. cit.*, p.55.

Executive Government. A set of rules was drawn up by the Gallery and Holt's press secretary to regulate attendance and procedure at the Prime Minister's briefing sessions.¹

An account of Holt's briefing sessions has been given by R.J. Bennetts, a senior Gallery journalist:

At these sessions Holt encouraged a lively exchange of questions, answers and views which were tape-recorded and transcribed by his staff. At the end of the session he quickly reviewed what he had said, and circulated to the Gallery a memorandum which indicated which statements were for attribution, which were for publication without attribution, and which were 'off the record'. This procedure allowed Holt second thoughts and an opportunity to avoid publication of ill-considered replies to unexpected questions.²

Holt also introduced another innovation in relations with the Gallery. If he made an important statement for attribution at a briefing session, he would call down radio and television reporters and repeat it at a separate meeting. Usually these items were recorded, but sometimes the radio statements were transmitted 'live'. According to Bennetts, Holt would not go beyond what he had already said for attribution at the previous briefing in his electronic media statements.³

The ground rules governing attendance at Holt's press briefings created frictions within the Gallery. It had been agreed that only the head of service or his deputy and one other journalist would represent each organisation. Some heads of service took other members of their staff to take the record rather than to ask questions.

¹ *Ibid.*, p.57.

² *Ibid.*, p.58.

³ *Ibid.*

It could be argued in support of this practice that there was long-established precedent with the Chifley press conferences (see above). The Gallery was reluctant to lay down a set of hard and fast rules where precedent existed, and so Holt's office decided that attendance would be on a 'by invitation' basis. Accordingly, invitations were issued only to two representatives of each organisation from the Gallery. This achieved Holt's intention of restricting the number of journalists to a group whose members were known to him.¹

The electronic media was instrumental in J.G. Gorton's election as Prime Minister. In a series of television appearances before the ballot, the little-known Gorton had shown considerable skill in projecting himself by television. He was much more adept than his predecessor, Holt, who had not been a confident performer, and he was much more steeped in media techniques than Menzies had been. As Prime Minister, Gorton favoured a continuation of media formats which allowed him to exploit his gifts for intimate communication. Accordingly, he avoided as much as possible the briefing sessions of Holt and the major televised conferences which Menzies had introduced. Gorton tried to present himself where possible by direct television interview, favouring a format which gave him as much time as possible to develop themes and project a favourable image. As well, he encouraged individual journalists to approach him for background information. In effect, Gorton wanted bilateral arrangements with the Gallery journalists, both electronic and print.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp.58-59.

The practice of non-attributable briefing of individual journalists had its dangers, both for the Prime Minister and for the journalists he briefed on an individual basis. It provided journalists with information which they used at their own risk, because the Prime Minister was able to repudiate it if he wished. It also raised problems for the Prime Minister if he sought to use an unattributable briefing to criticise one of his colleagues or to fly a kite which got away. The problems of control of material were great on either side. (Of course, this did not apply solely to the Prime Minister but to any Minister or politician who resorted to non-attributable background briefings.) Gorton developed this system of briefing senior journalists on a non-attributable basis at the expense of a commitment to regular meetings with a defined group of journalists, the practice preferred by the Gallery. When wider briefings were held, Gorton followed Holt's practice and invited only a small group of heads of service. Attendance was confined to one journalist from each organisation, and this aroused protests from some journalists who were reliant on the note-taking of a subordinate.

With one exception, all of the major news organisations in the Gallery attended Gorton's occasional briefings. The one organisation which was excluded specifically was Business Press Services, whose proprietor, Maxwell Newton, had been the centre of a furore over his Gallery membership (see Chapter 5). For a variety of reasons, the Gallery was dissatisfied with Gorton's press arrangements, and at a general meeting in October 1967 it resolved that Gorton be asked to 'arrange for weekly press conferences and that at such conferences representation be not limited to heads of bureaux but open to all Gallery members to represent their bureaux'.¹ This reiterated the traditional

¹ *Ibid.*, p.60.

approach of the Gallery to Prime Ministerial Press Conferences.

Gorton's preference for individual and non-attributable briefings was an instrumental factor in his downfall as Prime Minister. This sequence of events is much too complex to summarise even baldly here, but his use of non-attributable background briefings was crucial in an extended controversy which involved the Minister for Defence, J.M. Fraser, and the Chief of Staff of the Army, General T. Daly. It was inevitable that much of the background material disseminated by Gorton became public and was sourced back to him and so the dangers of this technique were fully exemplified.

After an impressive debut at a general televised conference when he was elected Prime Minister, William McMahon also avoided formal contact with the Gallery. McMahon's press conferences were even rarer than those of Sir Robert Menzies, and McMahon also shunned non-attributable briefings, no doubt influenced by the fate of Gorton. Contact with the Gallery was less regular and less frequent under McMahon than with any other post-war Prime Minister. McMahon tended to rely on management of the Gallery by his office. He also maintained phone contacts with some senior journalists and, much more frequently, with their editors and proprietors. Although by no means an indifferent television performer, McMahon also avoided the electronic media until the 1972 election campaign. In effect, McMahon had about 20 months to salvage the reputation of the coalition government by introducing new policies to match the Labor Party. His media strategy seems to have been based on avoiding harmful exposure, while manipulating as far as possible a favourable newspaper coverage. In the circumstances, this strategy had some merit. When McMahon committed himself to electronic media during the 1972 campaign, he made some unfortunate mistakes, including disparaging comments about his Ministry. In

retrospect, this clumsiness indicates that McMahon was well advised to avoid the electronic media, although it must be acknowledged that even so, he came extremely close to staving off the Labor challenge.

As Opposition Leader, E.G. Whitlam had made a firm commitment to the Gallery that he would hold a full-scale televised Press Conference each week that he was in Canberra. This commitment was largely honoured during the three years that Whitlam was Prime Minister. These conferences were held initially in the Government Party Room and later in a large committee room on the Senate side of the Parliament. All members of the Gallery, including foreign journalists, were permitted to attend the conference and question the Prime Minister. The only ground rule applied was that each journalist should identify himself and his organisation, and should confine himself to only one question, although occasionally follow-up questions were allowed. Television stations used Outside Broadcast units to transmit these Press Conferences direct or to record them for subsequent broadcast. Each television and radio network was anxious to get their representative on record directly questioning the Prime Minister. The televised record in particular showed a considerable development in the interrogative ability of Gallery members. This could be attributed to the development of reporters with multi-media skills; more of the print journalists were experienced in television and radio reporting, and some were accomplished media performers. The gaucheries of the Menzies press conferences, when print journalists inexperienced in electronic techniques had been exposed to television audiences, were things of the past.

These general conferences usually lasted about half an hour, although some were longer. Whitlam began by announcing Cabinet decisions and other Government initiatives. For the most part, he was

an informative and effective communicator, although occasionally he was evasive or displayed irritation at the questions of individual journalists. The main defects of these conferences for journalists were the lack of opportunity for follow-up questions, and problems in securing co-ordinated questioning on important issues. Whitlam remained very much in command of proceedings, and his control rarely faltered. All in all, the general televised conference gave fair and equal access to all members of the Gallery, and it was the medium for regular communication with the Prime Minister most favoured by a majority of the Gallery.

J. M. Fraser as Prime Minister initiated a new balance in the process of regular contact with the Gallery. He abandoned the practice of regular televised conferences with the whole of the Gallery and introduced a pattern of relationships which was largely his own devising, although it had some resemblance to what Holt and Gorton did. As we have seen, Holt would hold a briefing for the print media at which he would make attributable statements. On important occasions, he would summon electronic reporters and read the attributable statements for them to record. Fraser turned this process on its head. Where he had a major statement to make, he would call the electronic media, make his statement and briefly answer questions. Sometimes, these electronic media conferences were followed by a press briefing on the same subject, but more often the statement was distributed as a handout, or the print media were referred to the transcript of the electronic broadcasts. In this way, Fraser tended to divide the Gallery into electronic and print media, and there was never any doubt that radio and television were the preferred media. Like Gorton,

Fraser also made himself accessible to individual journalists who wanted background, or an 'on the record statement' on a specific issue, or an answer to a query. Like McMahon, he placed great reliance on regular contact at editorial and management levels. These contacts were developed into formal processes by Fraser as Prime Minister. (These themes are dealt with at greater length in Chapter 6.)

During these years, the increasing frequency of Prime Ministerial travel, both within Australia and overseas, opened further opportunities for access to successive Prime Ministers. This was not a new phenomenon. Gallery journalists had accompanied previous Prime Ministers on long train journeys and election campaigns within Australia for many years. As we have seen, this gave journalists opportunities to engage politicians, including the Prime Minister, in extended conversation. These transitory contacts were transformed by the rapid development of air travel and the Government's acquisition of its own VIP air fleet during the post-war years.

The practice of travelling overseas with Prime Ministers was largely unknown before Menzies became Prime Minister for the second time in 1949. Overseas trips in earlier years were extended safaris based on steamer services; Hughes, Bruce and Scullin were absent from Australia for periods of up to six months during the post World War I peace conferences and imperial conferences of the 1920s and early 1930s. Even if these absences were tolerable to the political parties and the electorate, they were not acceptable to newspaper management.

In his early years as Prime Minister during his second term, Menzies was happy to have Press representatives on his overseas missions. He was uncharacteristically effusive about the reporting of E. H. Cox of the *Melbourne Herald* who accompanied him overseas in 1952, writing to

the newspaper's proprietor Sir Keith Murdoch in rhapsodic terms:

I would be doing Harold Cox an injustice if I did not write personally to you to pay a tribute to his work on my mission abroad. His sense of responsibility, his preoccupation with the main issues, his disregard of trivialities, and his restrained treatment of the material which he dug out - sometimes, I confess, to my personal consternation - deserved warm praise and I am happy to give it. Yours sincerely, Bob.¹

Murdoch replied:

Dear Bob Menzies,

Many thanks for your kind note about Harold Cox. He certainly got a magnificent press for you here. Our own papers published nearly everything he wrote - and you know he is a thorough and prolific writer.²

Despite the apparent benefits of Gallery journalists accompanying the Prime Minister on overseas missions, Menzies became cooler towards this practice in the years that followed. Gallery representatives were warned that if they travelled with the Prime Minister, they could expect no special treatment or assistance. This and the cost of overseas travel were sufficient discouragements to news organisations until the early 1960s when newspaper management, particularly the *Melbourne Age* and the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, began to send senior political journalists overseas with Menzies who accepted their presence. Even with the development of the VIP aircraft fleet, Gallery travel with Menzies within Australia was confined mainly to election campaigns.

In the mid-1960s, the attitude of news organisations became much more favourable to sending their representatives overseas with Prime Ministers. This tendency was reinforced by the news value of Asian countries to Australia during these years, particularly with the involvement of Australia in the Vietnam War. Large Press parties went in 1966

¹ K.R. Murdoch Papers, ANL MS 2823. Correspondence file, letter from R.G. Menzies to K.R. Murdoch, 2 July 1952.

² *Ibid.*, K.R. Murdoch to R.G. Menzies, 7 July 1952.

and 1967 with Prime Minister Holt to Vietnam and to other Asian countries. Sufficient news was gathered to encourage the news organisations to continue, and it became standard practice for Gallery journalists to travel with the Prime Minister. Large contingents of journalists travelled with Gorton, McMahon, Whitlam and Fraser to Europe, America and Asia. In the early years, print journalists predominated, but with developing technology, the television and radio networks sent teams with the Prime Minister. In particular, the development of lighter cameras and recording equipment, and access to international communications satellites encouraged the electronic media to cover Prime Ministerial visits overseas. Within Australia, it became increasingly common for Gallery representatives to travel with the Prime Minister whenever he moved out of Canberra.

In terms of hard news, these Prime Ministerial circuits were often extremely barren, particularly for the print media. Their main value lay in the ready access they gave to the Prime Minister, to Ministers, and to the senior officials who accompanied them. Within Australia, a two-day visit by the Prime Minister to a remote area might produce no news other than some local colour, but the long travelling hours provided opportunities for discussions in a relatively relaxed and even congenial atmosphere. This access was expanded during the long hauls of overseas travel, and there was the additional bonus of contacts with departmental Secretaries and senior bureaucrats in an environment conducive to lengthy background talks.

The relationship between the Gallery and the Parliament was subjected to intensive pressures during the years from 1945 to 1978. It was noted in Chapter 1 that only once, in the Everingham case, did the Parliament exclude a member of the Gallery. All previous examples

of friction between the Gallery and the Parliament had been the result of direct action by Gallery members, either through stories written by Gallery members or other overt criticisms of the Parliament such as the 'Lousy List'. After 1949, the Gallery came under direct challenge from Mr Speaker Cameron, even though it did not contravene the standing orders of either chamber or transgress the accepted conventions governing the relationship between Press and Parliament.

With Cameron as Speaker, the status of the Press Gallery within the Parliament changed in one significant respect. When Cameron took up his office, he found that under the previous government, a rental of 1/- a square foot of office space had been paid by newspaper organisations represented in the Gallery. In essence, this was a peppercorn rental, but Cameron found it objectionable that even a symbolic impost should be exacted from the Press:

Holding the view that the press was here by grace and not by right, I abolished the rental. No rental is now paid. If people pay rental, they have tenant rights and, in my view, the press should never have a tenant right in this place.¹

As a result of Mr Speaker Cameron's decision, media organisations have not paid a rental, although they have funded the installation and maintenance of equipment in their Gallery offices.

Mr Speaker Cameron was much preoccupied with the status of the Press in Parliament. In 1954 he replied at length to a question on this subject from a member of the House of Representatives:

No limit has ever been placed upon the number of journalists, newsletter writers or party publicity men who may use the

¹ CPD HR, 10 November 1954, p.2783.

press galleries and the facilities of the House. I have been informed that the number of journals represented here, including overseas newspapers, is steadily increasing. Every honourable member of this House has entered it per medium of the ballot box, and has received electoral approval. Press men are chosen, I presume, by their editors. So far as I can learn, no attempt has ever been made to examine the relationship of the Press to this Parliament. The status of the press and the freedom of press men within this building are matters within the control of the President of the Senate and of the Speaker, until the Parliament determines otherwise. I believe that the purpose of the press in Parliament is to report parliamentary proceedings fairly and accurately in order to enable the public to judge the facts. I believe that certain portions of this building, especially on sitting days, should be exclusively reserved for the use of members [of Parliament]. I think that the House might well establish a committee to examine the relationships which exist between press and Parliament.¹

This was a thoughtful and constructive assessment of the status of the Press and its relationship to Parliament. Members of the Press Gallery were to feel the prick of Mr Speaker Cameron's goad in more irksome ways. Over the years, the Gallery had quarrelled with the Presiding Officers on a number of occasions but these disputes had invariably arisen over what had appeared in print. Within its own accommodation in Parliament House, the Gallery had been given virtual autonomy to regulate its own affairs (see Chapter 5). Mr Speaker Cameron took a rather more sweeping view of his responsibilities within Parliament House than had his predecessors. On one notable occasion in 1950, he ascended into the Gallery precincts and found a group of journalists playing cards in the common room. This produced a stern warning by the Speaker that while he would take no action on the occasion in question because he had not previously declared his policies, in future he would act severely against journalists found misconducting themselves

¹ CPD HR Vol. 215, 7 November 1941, p.1645.

in Parliament House. This action was consonant with other puritanical actions taken by the Speaker, including the removal of racehorse pictures from the parliamentary barbershop. The Press Gallery President issued a statement defending his members on the grounds that they were relaxing in a harmless way between arduous stints of parliamentary coverage. The Gallery had no option but to accept the Speaker's surveillance in this matter and to guard against a repetition.¹

Of greater importance to Press Gallery journalists in their daily work was an edict from Mr Speaker Cameron excluding them from the newspaper reading room of the Parliamentary Library. Use of the Parliamentary Library and of the reading room in particular had always been one of the zealously guarded privileges of the Gallery. The journalists could argue cogently that it was essential to their duties that they keep up with all editions of the metropolitan dailies, and this could only be done in the reading room where the newspapers were displayed as they arrived. Mr Speaker Cameron's action was taken after parliamentarians had complained that journalists had eavesdropped on their conversations within the reading room, and had buttonholed them in conversation at a time of reflection and meditation when they did not want to be interviewed. The ban lasted for several weeks until a meeting between Gallery representatives and the Parliamentary Library Committee modified the exclusion order to allow senior members of the Gallery to use the reading room ante chamber of the Library.²

¹ Sydney Daily Telegraph, 26 May 1950, p.5.

² Bennetts, *op. cit.*, p.31.

These incidents induced in Gallery journalists an antipathy towards Mr Speaker Cameron which was never directed to any other Presiding Officer. The Gallery found Mr Speaker Cameron to be so repugnant that it would not even approach him on matters which were considered vital to the future of the Gallery, as this AJA resolution on syndication illustrates:

This committee believes that due to the fear that an approach to the Speaker might lead to unjust arbitrary action in the future against individual AJA members, the division reluctantly and as a matter of tactics decides that no approach should be made to Mr Speaker Cameron on the question of Gallery passes for AAP men.¹

This gives some measure of the intense hostility with which members of the Gallery regarded Mr Speaker Cameron, although these attitudes were modified in the later years of his term.

There were two other incidents in the mid-1950s which caused some strains within the Gallery and affected its relationship with the Parliament. The first was the defection of Vladimir Petrov. The 'Petrov Affair' was a notable political news story which dragged on for many months during the Royal Commission hearings. It also had important implications for the Gallery because one of the central documents which Petrov had brought with him from the Russian Embassy was a brief report on the Gallery and its members. This so-called Document H had been prepared by a former member of the Gallery, Fergan O'Sullivan, who subsequently had worked as Press secretary for the Opposition Leader, Dr H.V. Evatt. The document described inter-relationships between Gallery members and suggested possible political allegiances. It also

¹ AJA Records, Minutes of Meeting, 14 February 1952.

commented rather scurrilously about physical characteristics and personal quirks of Gallery members. The document was not made public, but sufficient of its contents became known to arouse fears within the Gallery of penetration by security agents and possible subversion of its members. The feelings were expressed in a tough resolution by the AJA condemning O'Sullivan and declaring him unfit to be a member of the union:

That this division lodge a complaint with the Federal Executive under rule 51 that Fergan O'Sullivan by his sworn evidence before the Royal Commission on Espionage has shown that he is disloyal to the AJA, has acted detrimentally to the interests of the association and of its members, and has been guilty of misconduct and an act discreditable to the profession of journalism and the association; and that pending Federal Executive's decision on this matter, the division suggests that membership of Fergan O'Sullivan be suspended.¹

O'Sullivan's departure from federal political life had another indirect influence on the Gallery. Evatt did not replace O'Sullivan as press secretary for some years and there were frequent complaints about the channels the Opposition Leader used to disseminate his statements:

The committee unanimously agreed that the President and Secretary should seek an interview with Dr Evatt, and point out the industrial issues involved in his practice of phoning Gallery members and asking them to put out statements on his behalf while he doesn't employ any AJA member as press secretary, although provision is made for [the] position.²

The second incident was the Fitzpatrick-Browne case of June 1955 which imposed much greater strains on the relationship between Parliament and the Gallery. Raymond Edward Fitzpatrick and Frank Courtney Browne were cited to appear before the bar of the House of Representatives to

¹ *Ibid.*, 16 July 1954.

² *Ibid.*, 16 June 1955.

answer charges of breach of privilege. The essence of the charges was that they had published in a Sydney suburban newspaper material intended to influence and intimidate a member in the performance of his duties. The House accepted a report from the Privileges Committee that Fitzpatrick and Browne had committed a serious breach of privilege, and both were committed to gaol for three months by its resolution. Although Browne and Fitzpatrick were not members of the Gallery and were not members of the AJA, the incident had disturbing implications for the Gallery. It revealed the arbitrary power that the Parliament had to punish any breach of its privilege, and as we have seen the position of the Press in Parliament was based on a complete disregard of privilege. The Browne-Fitzpatrick case revived all of the uncertainties of an ill-defined area of parliamentary custom.

The Gallery responded cautiously to the circumstances of the gaoling of Fitzpatrick and Browne, again using the AJA to articulate an official attitude. In particular, it sought to stress the lack of control the union had over journalists who were not members and who did not subscribe to the AJA ethics code. There was grave concern among Gallery members that the incident would weaken its status in the Parliament and bring it into disrepute with parliamentarians. These attitudes were summarised in a report to the annual meeting of the Canberra District of the AJA in October 1955:

. . . the [AJA] committee believes it is in the interests of the profession and the public that all working journalists and especially those writing political copy should be subject to the aims, objectives and ethics code of the AJA Since the [Fitzpatrick-Browne] privileges case, the committee has watched for signs of any dangerous deterioration in the

relations between press and Parliament. It has found no cause for action so far but believes continued vigilance is necessary.¹

Despite the apprehensions of the Gallery, the Fitzpatrick-Browne case did not produce any fundamental changes or lasting fissures in the relationship between it and the Parliament. There were subsequent complaints of breach of privilege; in some cases these were investigated by the Privileges Committee and the appropriate chamber acted upon them, usually in the form of a reprimand and demand for an apology, less frequently by calling publishers and editors to the bar of the chamber for rebuke. For the most part, these cases did not involve Gallery journalists, although there were constant tensions between the Gallery and Parliament over premature publication of parliamentary reports and committee proceedings. In 1971 the editors of the *Sunday Australian* and *Sunday Review* were summoned to the bar of the Senate and rebuked by the Deputy President. Their offence was publication of findings and recommendations of a Senate Committee on drug abuse before they had been presented to the Senate.² This and similar incidents have instilled a cautious approach in Gallery journalists to the treatment of these documents.

The problems created by parliamentary privilege were summarised rather dryly by the Clerk of the House of Representatives to a Conference of Parliamentary Presiding Officers:

From time to time, problems arise. Reference has been made to Browne and Fitzpatrick. Browne was a journalist of some sort but not in the ordinary sense of the word. There have been inquiries - privilege cases - from time to time in relation to things stated in the Press, and appropriate

¹ AJA Records, Report of the President of the Canberra Branch, 16 October 1955.

² CPD Senate Vol.48, 1971, pp.1864, 1935.

action has been taken. The most famous of these was probably the one last year resulting from the publication of a BMC advertisement extolling the virtues of the Morris Mini Minor car being a photograph that had been taken of the House of Representatives sitting. In a balloon emerging from the mouth of Mr Calwell was a statement that you could not get better value than a mini-Minor. One of the interesting things about this, I understand, was that at some stage one of the persons responsible for the advertisement was asked did he not think it rather odd that the words should have been put in the mouth of Mr Calwell. He replied: 'That is rather odd. I thought it was Mr Holt.' This is a somewhat striking commentary.¹

From the mid-1960s onwards, the main strains in the relationship between Gallery and Parliament swung to less abstract issues than parliamentary privilege and the conceptions of parliamentary purity advocated by Mr Speaker Cameron. The rapid growth of the Gallery which we have traced in these years, the emergence of the electronic media, the definition of eligibility requirements for Gallery membership - all of these imposed new pressures on a traditional relationship. These themes are taken up in the following chapter which describes the mechanics of the Gallery.

¹ Sir Alan Turner, Clerk of the House of Representatives, 'Report of the First Conference of Australian Presiding Officers and Clerks-at-the-Table', Canberra, 23-25 January 1968, p.173.

TABLE 1

GROWTH OF THE FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY PRESS GALLERY - 1950-1977

<u>Year</u>	<u>Metropolitan dailies</u>	<u>Weeklies</u>	<u>Agencies</u>	<u>Electronic</u>	<u>Overseas, news ser- vices and others</u>	<u>Total</u>
1950	25	2	5	5	1	38
1960	24	2	4	6	3	39
1966-67	45	1	4	8	12	67
1967-68	45	1	5	9	16	76
1973	58	5	4	20	18	105
1974	54	7	4	27	26	117
1977	56	11	5	27	24	120

Source: Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery annual lists for 1950, 1960, 1966-67, 1967-68, 1973, 1974, 1977.

Note: There is some double counting because when two important services have been represented by one journalist, the services have been counted as two and not the journalist as 1.

TABLE 2
GROWTH OF THE PRINT MEDIA - 1950-1977

	1950	1960	1966- 67	1967- 68	1973	1974	1977
<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	4	3	5	5	8	8	8
<i>Sydney Sun</i>	3	2	4	4	3	4	4
<i>Financial Review</i>	-	1	4	4	5	5	5
<i>National Times</i>	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
<i>Age</i>	2	2	4	4	5	6	7
<i>Canberra Times</i>	-	-	-	1	3	2	2
<i>Sun Herald</i>	-	1	-	-	-	1	1
<i>Melbourne Sun Pictorial</i>	2	2	4	4	5	5	5
<i>Melbourne Herald</i>	3	2	2	3	5	5	5
<i>Weekly Times</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
<i>Adelaide Advertiser</i>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Brisbane Courier-Mail</i>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Brisbane Telegraph</i>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>West Australian</i>	-	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Perth Daily News</i>	-	-	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Hobart Mercury</i>	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
<i>ACP-Bulletin</i>	-	-	-	-	3	3	4
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	3	3	6	6	1	1	1
<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	1	1	-	-	-	1	1
<i>Australian</i>	-	-	7	5	3	3	3
<i>Sunday Mirror</i>	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
<i>Daily Mirror</i>	3	2	3	3	1	1	
<i>Adelaide News</i>	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
<i>News Ltd Bureau</i>	-	-	-	-	14	8	9
<i>Sunday Press</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
<i>Argus</i>	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Financial Times</i>	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Nation Review</i>	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
TOTAL	26	26	44	44	64	61	67

Source: Gallery lists.

TABLE 3

GROWTH OF THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA - 1950-1977

	1950	1960	1966- 67	1967- 68	1973	1974	1977
ABC	4	6	6	6	8	9	8
TDT	-	-	-	1	2	2	1
2UE	-	-	1	1	1	1	1
2GB Macquarie	-	-	1	1	1	1	1
AM/PM	-	-	-	-	2	3	2
National 9 News, Current Affair	-	-	-	-	2	3	4
2UW, 3AK, 4IP, 5KA (Capital Network News)	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
2SM	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
2CH	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
7 National News	-	-	-	-	2	3	3
0/10-Network	-	-	-	-	-	2	3
Radio Networks (Chamberlain)	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Radio Australia	1	-	-	-	-	-	1

CHAPTER 5

THE MECHANICS OF THE GALLERY

1. Constitutional Issues

For the first forty years of its existence, the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery was organised in a comparatively informal way. As we have seen in Chapter 3, there was a committee structure which became more prominent during the 1920s. The President of the Gallery and his committeemen were responsible for negotiations with the Presiding Officers and for internal Gallery matters which required adjudication. In the main, this structure was imposed on the Gallery without any irksome bonds. There was no formal constitution, and the broad aims were to keep relationships with the Parliament and the conduct of domestic affairs on as free and easy a basis as possible.

The deliberate cultivation of a loose and informal structure has been described by a former President of the Gallery, A.D. Fraser:

I liked the idea of the House of Commons Gallery, in which I had worked as a young man, and in which there were no written rules. You were known by your face and reputation, and once your face was known to the attendants you moved freely in and out of the Parliament building. I wanted the most generalised and non-specific gallery organisation. I liked very much the House of Commons approach by which a journalist, by length of service and good reputation, could achieve an unwritten but unrecognised status in the Parliament.¹

Most of Fraser's peers as Gallery President were just as much in favour of a 'generalised and non-specific' Gallery. The first

¹ R.J. Bennetts, 'Development of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, 1901-1968', Master of Arts Qualifying Thesis, Department of Political Science, SGS, ANU, 1968, p.62.

constitution of the Gallery was not adopted until 1940. It cannot be described as a detailed or rigorously defined document.¹ It confirmed the name of the institution as the 'Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery' and stated its objectives as to 'safeguard and further the rights, interests and privileges of members . . . and to take any such action as may be consistent with these objectives'.² Two types of membership were defined. Full members were those holding a current Gallery pass issued by either House and engaged permanently in the Gallery in the collection and preparation of news. Associate members were members of the AJA employed at Parliament House and engaged as 'liaison officers' between the Gallery and the 'official political parties'. The committee comprised a President who had to be a full member; a Vice President who had to be a resident pressman (as opposed to a sessional), three committeemen and a secretary-treasurer. These officers were to be elected at the annual general meeting of the Gallery held during the Budget session of Parliament. The quorum at general meetings would be 50 percent of full members 'actually known to be present at Canberra at the time of the meeting'. Other Gallery meetings would be held whenever a meeting of the officers or a majority of them thought it was necessary.³

This constitution did not exercise any profound influence on the conduct of Gallery affairs. Its text was lost for many years and was not re-discovered until the mid-1960s when a constitution review committee was appointed. Meanwhile, Gallery committees met in accordance with vague notions of what the constitution contained, or, in the case of one

1 See 'Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery Constitution', Appendix 1.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

committee, in conceded ignorance that the Gallery even had a constitution. The constitution finally came to light in 1966 when an undated copy was found in an old minute book, partly obscured by minutes pasted over it. According to R.J. Bennetts, who was President at the time, a journalist who helped draft the original attested to the document's accuracy.¹

These rather slapdash procedures worked well enough while the Gallery was comparatively small and predominantly a print media organisation. As the Gallery grew in size and as problems of membership and accommodation became more complex, the need for a more elaborate constitution became apparent. It was recognised in particular that the development of the electronic media and the risk of penetration by lobbyists would require the need for more precisely defined membership provisions. After a series of lively meetings, a new constitution was adopted by the Gallery on 25 August 1966.²

The 1966 constitution retained the definitions of basic objectives which were set out in the earlier document. It re-wrote very substantially the definition of full membership of the Gallery and transformed the concept of associate membership. Full membership was restricted to AJA members who were engaged full-time at Parliament House, either as permanents or sessionals. Their work was defined as the collection and dissemination of parliamentary or government or political news for:

- (a) an Australian newspaper or publication or group of newspapers or publications which were available to the public on an unrestricted basis;
- (b) Australian radio or television broadcasting stations or systems, or;

¹ Bennetts, *op. cit.*, pp.63-64.

² *Ibid.*, p.67.

(c) recognised Australian news services with the Gallery's Executive Committee deciding, as the need arose, what constituted a recognised Australian news service.

Associate membership was restricted to representatives of overseas media who were engaged in similar functions to those prescribed in the definition of full membership. A category of temporary associate membership was set out for journalists who were performing these functions on a temporary basis for Australian or overseas media. Associate membership gave an entitlement to facilities extended by the Gallery Committee and, subject to the approval of the Presiding Officers, included access to Gallery premises, use of a mailbox and admission to the press galleries of the two chambers. Associate members were not given the right to attend and vote at Gallery meetings, to stand for Gallery office, to have access to exclusive office accommodation in the Gallery, or to a 'specific permanent seat in the press galleries of either chamber'.¹

The membership of the Gallery Committee was extended by the addition of a Secretary, and a fourth committeeman to represent sessional members of the Gallery. It was stipulated that all of the other members of the Committee should be permanent members of the Gallery. The constitution also recognised the status of Heads of Service in allocation of accommodation within the Gallery or in other matters of corporate rather than individual interest. In these matters, the Committee was empowered to call a meeting of Heads of Service to 'ascertain and consider their views'. A Head of Service was defined as a permanent member of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery who was the senior representative employed full time for, and whose salary was paid by, the news

¹ See 'Constitution of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery', adopted 25 August 1966, Appendix 2.

gathering organisation which accredited him to the Gallery and who was designated as a Head of Service by the Committee. The provision for annual general meetings and committee meetings remained broadly the same as in the earlier constitution, although the quorum at general meetings was reduced to one-third of the number of the last membership roll.¹

Attempts were made to amend this constitution after the controversy within the Gallery over the membership of Maxwell Newton in 1968 (see below). The main recommendation was the addition to the membership requirements of a clause by which every member of the Gallery would sign a statutory declaration within ten days of his applying for membership. The draft resolution stated that the form of the statutory declaration should be determined from time to time by the Committee of the Gallery and should lay down the principles of 'legitimate journalism which members shall abide by while a member of the Gallery'.²

The proposed amendments included the recognition of a new category of overseas membership, for persons engaged full time in the collection and dissemination of parliamentary news at Parliament House for overseas media. Associate membership was re-defined to cover journalists engaged part-time in covering politics at Parliament House for Australian media. Temporary associate membership was defined in broadly similar terms to the previous formulation. It was proposed that two important disciplinary powers should be added to the constitution. The Committee should review the membership status of each member every two years, and the Committee should have the power to expel any member of the Gallery for good and sufficient reason. A right of appeal against re-classification or expulsion was included.

1 *Ibid.*

2 Recommended changes in 1966 constitution, Appendix 3.

An alternative to the Heads of Service provision was suggested under the heading 'Organisations'. It provided that in dealing with the allocation of accommodation within the Gallery or other matters in which the Committee deemed there was an organisational rather than an individual interest, the Committee should call a meeting of representatives of Bureaux to ascertain and consider their views. Each six months, the Committee should compile a list of members divided into Bureaux, and the names on each list should be supplied by the Bureaux which should also determine an order of seniority. In effect, it was sought to remove the special status given to the Heads of Service committee.¹

These proposals aroused some opposition within the Gallery, particularly the requirement for a statutory declaration enshrining principles of 'legitimate journalism'. Interest in revising the constitution along these lines slackened, although desultory attempts were made to hold special meetings of the Gallery to consider it. The Gallery President's report for 1970 alluded to the problems of changing the constitution:

The committee made two unsuccessful attempts to hold general meetings to continue the program of amending the Constitution, then gave it up. I believe the project should be forgotten until another crisis creates some interest in it.²

The Gallery constitution raises five issues which are dealt with in the sections which follow. These are:

- (a) Eligibility for membership;
- (b) Gallery accommodation;
- (c) Status of Heads of Service;

¹ *Ibid.*

² David Solomon. Typescript. President of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery's Annual Report, 1970, contained in general file for 1970, Press Gallery Records.

- (d) The role of the President and the Gallery Committee; and
- (e) The role of the Annual General Meeting.

The issues of membership and accommodation are closely interlinked, and no attempt has been made to separate them into strictly defined compartments in the following examination.

(a) Eligibility for membership

The question of who was eligible for membership of the Gallery was not a difficult issue until the mid-1960s. There was ample space in the Gallery and applications for membership were mostly clear-cut. Where the Gallery was made up mainly of the major metropolitan dailies, the ABC, and a handful of agencies and news services, there was no difficulty in deciding eligibility, although there were occasional disputes over accommodation. It was common knowledge that many Gallery journalists engaged in stringing for organisations other than their principals. Both the media organisations and the Gallery turned a blind eye to this sort of 'own time' activity and the bona fides of Gallery members was never questioned, even though part of this 'moonlighting' bordered on public relations and lobbying activities.

The straightforward character of Gallery eligibility changed from the mid-1960s onwards. One reason was the need to incorporate increasing numbers of radio and television journalists. There was also an increasing interest by overseas media organisations in reporting the Australian Government. Surreptitious 'stringing' by Gallery members was accompanied by the growth of part-time representation on an official basis, and there were increasing numbers of transitory journalists who wanted access to Gallery facilities and privileges for brief periods. One result of these pressures was the revised constitution of 1966.

Another was the increasing fear that the Gallery was vulnerable to penetration by lobbyists and public relations interests.

The suspicion that the Gallery could be used as a base for lobbying and business activities which were not related to the reporting of parliamentary, government or political news culminated in a series of incidents involving the journalist, Maxwell Newton. Newton had been Head of Service of the *Sydney Morning Herald* bureau in the Gallery during the early 1960s. He had edited the *Australian Financial Review* and was the foundation editor of the *Australian*. A gifted but erratic journalist, Newton had been largely responsible for the development of economics reporting from Canberra, and in large measure for its increasing prominence in the Australian press. After severing his connection with the *Australian*, he had established a news service organisation in Canberra and had been re-admitted to the Gallery.

Early in 1968, articles appeared in a number of Sydney newspapers stating that Newton had a contract with the Japan Trade Centre to supply it with information. According to a story in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Newton had entered into a contract with the Japanese to prepare material for submission to the Tariff Board, and to be available for consultation as required. The article included a statement by Newton that he provided a tariff information service to which the Japan Trade Centre subscribed. According to Newton, the income from the contract represented only two percent of his annual income.¹

When this information became public, complaints about Newton's activities were made to the Gallery Committee by two senior Gallery

¹ Jonathon Gaul. President of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery. Report to the Gallery on the activities of Maxwell Newton, March 1968. Copy held by J. Gaul.

members. The Committee consulted the Clerk of the House of Representatives who suggested that the Gallery obtain outside legal advice on Newton's position. The advice provided by a Canberra solicitor was emphatic that the Committee as such did not have the power to expel members:

. . . The most the Committee can do if it considers that the circumstances exist warranting the expulsion of a member, is to call a General Meeting in order to have the question considered. This of course would be fraught with problems, particularly if some members are rather emotional in their approach to the question.¹

In discussions with the Committee, Newton conceded that he had been unwise to sign the contract with the Japanese. He denied that he had ever prepared submissions to the Tariff Board, and said that the information he supplied had been part of a routine tariff service prepared by a junior member of his staff. Newton indicated a willingness to reach some agreement with the Committee about the terms of work which would not embarrass the Gallery. Alternatively, he suggested that he might resign and designate a member of his staff to succeed him as Head of Service of his organisation, Business Press Services.²

The Newton incident deeply divided the Gallery and there was a sequence of stormy meetings, both of the Committee and of the full Gallery. Newton was disliked intensely by sections of the Gallery but he had strong support. The issue was clouded by Newton's involvement at this time in the political events which followed the death of Prime Minister Harold Holt. The Leader of the Country Party, John McEwen, had vetoed the Deputy Leader of the majority Liberal Party, William McMahon, as Holt's

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

successor, ostensibly because of McMahon's close links with Newton, who had incurred McEwen's enmity.¹ Inevitably, there were suggestions that the political battle waged over Newton had spilled over into the Gallery.

Attempts to work out a suitable compromise were unsuccessful. Newton agreed to resign from the Gallery but insisted that he should nominate a member of his staff in his place. Influential elements in the Gallery insisted that Newton should resign, and the Gallery would then consider a separate application for his successor. There was also a move to eject Business Press Services and its staff of journalists completely from the Gallery.²

The wrangle over Newton's status created considerable public interest:

At this point it was clear that the issue had become one of intense speculation, both within and without the Press Gallery. One notice had appeared on the Gallery Board, and two articles had appeared in *Nation Magazine* Having heard both sides in good faith and to the best of its ability it was up to your elected Committee to make the decision, within the framework of the Constitution, which it considered to be in the best interests of the Press Gallery. . . . The Committee resolved by four votes to one . . . that Mr Newton should be informed that the Committee was prepared to accept his resignation concurrently with accepting an application from Mr Farmer [the journalist designated to replace Newton as Head of Service]. It resolved further to impose the condition of a written undertaking in the form of a declaration of bona fide journalism on new members. The following day, Mr Newton was informed by letter of these decisions and notified that Mr Farmer was requested to provide such declaration with his application.³

A sequence of stormy meetings of the Committee and of the Heads of Service failed to resolve the question of the status of Mr Newton and

¹ The background to this struggle is given by Alan Reid in *The Power Struggle*, Shakespeare Head Press, Sydney, 1968.

² Gaul, *op. cit.*

³ *Ibid.*

his organisation. The position was summarised by the President of the Gallery:

The incidents at the Head of Service meeting had confirmed the earlier judgment of a majority of the Committee that a special general meeting might be fraught with problems damaging to the best interests of the Gallery as a whole. The committee's actions should be seen against the background of this quite basic judgment, together with the fact that Mr Newton had not accepted the course of offering his unconditional resignation. At this point, the majority of the Committee in its judgment of an extremely complex situation, and limited by inadequate rules, was proposing, subject to the additional proviso of a written undertaking, to accept the application of Heads of Service status concurrently with Mr Newton's resignation. The Committee had no reason to believe that in the situation of an unconditional resignation by Mr Newton, and a later application from Mr Farmer, that such application would not in any case succeed, Mr Farmer having already been a Gallery member.¹

The issue was further clouded when a number of members of the Gallery questioned Mr Farmer's bona fides because of an implied connection with a research organisation which had published a booklet for a lobbying group. Differences in approach among the Committee led to the resignation of one member. The issue was resolved ultimately by a special general meeting called after a petition was signed by the requisite number of Gallery members. The purpose of the special meeting was to 'discuss the situation of Mr Newton and the Press Gallery'. The special general meeting on 12 March 1968 accepted Mr Newton's resignation and agreed that Mr Farmer should assume his status as Head of Service of Business Press Services. The meeting also directed the Committee to draw up a standard statutory declaration, which would provide that the person signing it was 'engaged in legitimate journalistic activities' and was not associated with 'public relations, lobbying or business

¹ *Ibid.*

representation work. It was left to the Committee to define 'legitimate journalistic activities' and every member of the Gallery would be required to sign such a declaration.¹ These resolutions were drafted as constitutional amendments, but as we have seen they were never incorporated into the constitution.

It is difficult to disentangle all of the threads of this incident from the wider political controversy involving Maxwell Newton. Disregarding personal animus towards Newton and discounting the possibility that the Gallery might have been used as part of a wider political battleground, it is possible to discern two distinct approaches to Gallery membership.

The first approach contended that the Gallery was largely the preserve of the established media organisations, predominantly the print media and the ABC, and a small group of long accepted news services. It was conceded rather grudgingly that accommodation would have to be made for the growth of electronic media, but any other extension of the Gallery to admit smaller organisations should be discouraged. This approach reflected the attitudes of most, but not all, Heads of Service. It was a traditional conception of the Gallery, and although it was tinged by selfish considerations, it did reflect a journalistic ethos which firmly rejected any notion that the Gallery should be tainted by association with public relations or lobbying activities.

The alternative attitude was just as firmly entrenched in the Gallery. It was based on the belief that any bona fide journalist or news organisation should have access to the facilities of the Gallery. It was

¹ *Ibid.*

a philosophical approach which insisted on equal access to all media organisations, whatever their dimensions, for reporting federal politics. An officer of the Gallery expressed it in this way:

The Press Gallery should not be a party to any policy whereby bona fide journalists are denied access to information emanating from Parliament and the Government . . . Joe Bloggs has as much right to collect and distribute information as John Fairfax and Collins Street [Melbourne *Herald*].¹

Stringent interpretation of the rules for Gallery membership was regarded in emotional terms as denying jobs to working journalists. One of the main arguments in support of Newton was that he employed a number of permanent journalists and had engaged Gallery journalists as stringers at various times.

The Newton Affair left a sour taste in the Gallery but the feelings it engendered gradually simmered down. In the subsequent years, the expansion of the Gallery was accomplished without any similar incidents. Despite the enthusiasm of many Gallery members for the small operator, few were able to find the necessary resources to mount an operation from the Gallery. The Gallery's increase in numbers derived mainly from the growth of the electronic media and an expansion of the traditional print media offices, as we saw in Chapter 4. The Newton incident induced a wariness among small news services or newsletter publications with diverse interests which included some public relations or lobbying activities. An applicant for membership whose organisation was called 'Rural Public Relations' was rejected flatly on the basis that the Gallery constitution made no provision for public relations. The journalist-proprietor insisted that 'Rural Public Relations' was a one-man outfit

¹ Minutes of Meeting, Press Gallery Committee, November 1973, contained in file of Press Gallery business, 1973, held in Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery Records.

whose registered title had been chosen to include a wide range of journalistic activities. His organisation was not admitted to even a partial use of Gallery facilities until it was re-christened 'Rural Press Services'.¹

The main problems with Gallery membership occurred after the Presiding Officers, J.F. Cope and Senator Sir Magnus Cormack, imposed a freeze on Gallery numbers and accommodation early in 1974. The freeze meant that existing members of the Gallery could not increase their staff but only make replacements, nor would it be possible for new applicants to be given space or facilities in the Gallery. With a ceiling on space, the Gallery could not increase in overall size, although the components within it might change.

This freeze absolved the Gallery Committee from making decisions about a number of difficult membership applications. One of the questions was whether a throwaway newspaper qualified for Gallery membership in terms of the definition in the constitution. A possible challenge could also be made to newsletters by asking whether they were publications which were available to the public on an unrestricted basis. In short, was there a distinction between a publication on sale at a news-stand and one that was posted to subscribers at a substantially higher tariff? Another vexed question was the status of news services which had never been defined adequately in the constitution. One Gallery President, after an examination of the constitution, decided with some exasperation that a news service was whatever the Gallery chose to define as a news service.²

¹ Correspondence between Roger Stewart, proprietor of Rural Press Services, and the President of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery. Held in General Business files for 1973-74, Press Gallery Records.

² David Barnett. Press Gallery Applications for Membership file, 1973-74. Note on current applications for Press Gallery membership.

Also a problem was the access to be given to part-time stringers, whether for domestic or overseas publications. As we have noted earlier in this chapter, a considerable amount of stringing was done on a part-time basis by Gallery journalists who represented major Australian news organisations. The sharp increase in political interest which followed the election of the Labor Government in 1972 produced a wave of applications from organisations as diverse as the *Jersey Herald*, a Hindu weekly newspaper, the national student newspaper *National U* and the *Jewish Times*. In theory, these applicants had the right to cover Parliament and Government from the Gallery as long as they appointed bona fide journalists who were members of the AJA. In practice, they could not be accommodated or given facilities.

One of the arguments propounded at this time was that part-time journalists could work without access to Parliament or the Gallery. They could use the telephone to contact members or departments, and they could put their names on departmental mailing lists. It was suggested that the National Press Club which opened in 1976 could be used as an alternative to the Gallery for the dissemination of news material. None of these expedients were satisfactory alternatives to the Gallery, and particularly the access it gave to the daily information flow through the boxes (see below).

At the time of writing, the question of Gallery membership is dictated by the freeze on numbers and on accommodation. The space and facilities of the Gallery are finite as long as it remains within the present Parliament House (now expected to be another ten years). A decision to make a major extension to the existing building or to build a new Parliament House would, of course, re-open the question of membership. The only way in which the existing membership could be changed in

any substantial way would be by expulsion of existing members and the addition of new organisations. This would require a detailed scrutiny of the bona fides of existing organisations, and the Gallery has been loath to grasp this nettle. Undoubtedly there are organisations within the Gallery which have the status of full membership, when on a strict interpretation of the constitutional provisions they would not be entitled to it. This has been conceded by a former Gallery President.¹ A major re-examination of credentials would shift some members and organisations into different categories; it might even disbar some long standing members from the Gallery.

The freeze on Gallery numbers and space has solved some of the Committee's problems but it has brought others. The Committee lacks the power to enforce a freeze on numbers. Although the overall number of members has remained relatively steady in recent years, some offices have increased their strength by one or two members. This applies particularly to major print media organisations such as the *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and to the television networks. When major media outlets ignore the ban and add a staff number to their strength, the Committee has no option but to accept the fait accompli and issue the new member with a pass. It could not enforce a prohibition on extra staff in established offices without embroiling the Presiding Officers and provoking a major row with the management of the media organisations.

The Committee has applied the freeze on accommodation with more success, although occasional instances of squatting are not unknown. Because there is no more accommodation to distribute, applications for

¹ *Ibid.* There are similar expressions in minutes of meetings and notes in the Press Gallery Records.

accommodation can be dealt with expeditiously. As a consequence, the focus of applications for Gallery membership has shifted to access to the Press Gallery boxes which channel the daily flow of handouts and other material to accredited members.

The two conflicting approaches to Gallery access which were identified earlier have been most marked in recent years with regard to these boxes. There was a strong feeling that because there was no accommodation and the major news organisations were so well entrenched, then smaller organisations should be given a box. The contrasting approach was that no more organisations should be given boxes and that the Committee should look after the existing membership which had traditional interests in the Gallery. These conflicting approaches have produced some notable disagreements in the Gallery. In general, a balanced approach to distribution of boxes was adopted. The granting of a box to a new Canberra radio station, 2CC, was balanced by granting a box to a Canberra public affairs radio station, 2XX, and to *Monitor*, a small newsletter which specialised in social welfare issues.¹

The position has now been reached where the available boxes have been fully allocated. This has made it impossible to grant a basic facility to new applicants such as public access and community radio stations, and ethnic media groups. The situation could be resolved by the construction of more boxes, as has been done on previous occasions, but suitable space is limited. In any case, there are problems in servicing the sixty or so existing boxes; there are frequent complaints from Gallery members that particular items have not been placed in their box. An alternative is to rationalise the existing boxes.

¹ Interview. Kenneth Randall, President of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, 1976-78.

For example, the ABC has five boxes for news, rural programs, AM and PM, 'This Day Tonight', and Radio Australia. It has been argued that one box could be provided for the ABC and subsequent distribution made to individual organisations by photo-copying. A rationalisation and re-allocation of boxes would clear the way for more access to smaller organisations.

Another troublesome aspect of Gallery membership is the constitutional stipulation about AJA membership. The status of non-AJA members emerged as an issue in 1977 because of a dispute over union membership between Mr P.D. Samuel, the *Bulletin* representative in the Gallery, and the AJA. Mr Samuel resigned from the union and his resignation was affirmed by a court hearing which directed him to pay union dues up to the time of his resignation. The AJA informed the Gallery Committee of Mr Samuel's status, and the Committee wrote to the Presiding Officers pointing out that under a strict interpretation of the constitution, Mr Samuel was not entitled to membership. Here the matter rested. The Presiding Officers took no action, and the Gallery Committee was unable to exclude Mr Samuel, who retained access to accommodation and the facilities of the Gallery. This incident demonstrates the impotence of the Gallery Committee in enforcing membership provisos without the backing of the Presiding Officers.¹

¹ *Ibid.*

(b) Accommodation

Strains on Gallery accommodation did not emerge until the rapid growth of membership in the mid-1960s. In the preceding forty years the Gallery had been housed comfortably in the original premises allocated on the upper floor of the House of Representatives wing of the building, supplemented after World War II by additional rooms in the Senate wing. On occasions the Gallery was embarrassed by having too much space at its disposal, particularly on the Senate side which was some distance from the boxes and House of Representatives galleries. This resulted in smaller organisations taking up generous allocations of space, and this created problems in later years.

By the late 1960s, the Gallery was approaching an accommodation crisis, mainly because of the growth of the electronic media, but also because of the steady expansion of print media staff. In 1969, the Gallery became aware of intentions to make extensions to the parliamentary building, particularly a proposal to build onto roof areas adjacent to the two segments of the Gallery. The Senate and House of Representatives arms of the Gallery were joined by a catwalk over the roof which was closed each day at 5 p.m., effectively bisecting the Gallery.

The building proposal was directed to the erection of additional office space along part of this catwalk, with the intention that it be used mainly for staff of parliamentary committees. The Gallery Committee saw it as a means of alleviating its accommodation problem, and drew up a submission to the parliamentary authorities setting out the case for an extension of Gallery space. This was approved in principle on the condition that a satisfactory distribution of the new space could be made, and that the Gallery made provision for a radio-television interview room.

Cabinet approved the additional wing which gave the Gallery an extra 1500 square feet of usable space, increasing the total space available by 30 percent. The Gallery was asked to prepare a distribution as quickly as possible so detailed planning for partitioning and other structural work could begin. One plan was drawn up which met with some objections, so another was drafted which made use of more accurate estimates of space. This allocation was accepted by Gallery members, so it was adopted formally by the Committee and given to parliamentary officials.¹

The main feature of the allocation was the consolidation of the John Fairfax publications in the new premises. (These were the *Age*, *Sydney Sun*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Sun Herald* and *Financial Review*.) This cleared the way for the conversion of the former *Financial Review* rooms into a radio and television interview room, as required by the parliamentary authorities. Meanwhile, arrangements were made to accommodate two short-lived daily newspapers, the Melbourne *Newsday* and the *Canberra News*, in the existing Gallery space.²

Completion of the new wing was delayed until 1973. In the intervening years, the accommodation pressures on the Gallery had intensified, partly because of the interest in Australian politics kindled by the change of Government at the end of 1972. The need to make some provision for overseas journalists and to provide adequate working space for electronic media forced the Committee to scrap plans to provide a Gallery common room once the new rooms were available. It also forced the Committee to look again at the distribution of space

¹ Allocation of space prepared by the Press Gallery Committee. Contained in draft recommendation in Press Gallery general business files for 1969-70.

² *Ibid.*

and, for the first time, to look at ways of taking space away from established members of the Gallery. It was intended that this would permit the accommodation of more radio journalists, and clear the way for a small common room which overseas journalists could use.

The most controversial decisions related to two long-standing members of the Gallery, Specialist News Services, whose principal was Mr Roger Rea and Mr Jack Fingleton, a famous Australian cricketer who serviced a group of overseas newspapers. Mr Rea and Mr Fingleton had been granted space on the Senate wing at a time when it was freely available. The Committee argued that both Mr Rea, who employed one other full-time journalist, and Mr Fingleton, who was a sole operator, had much more space than the average of 50 to 60 square feet notionally allocated to Gallery journalists. Accordingly, they proposed that both Mr Rea and Mr Fingleton should relinquish part of their space to accommodate two radio journalists.¹

This attempt to take space from long-serving Gallery members was debated at a stormy meeting of Heads of Service. Mr Rea rejected the right of the Gallery Committee to allocate space in the Gallery. He said that in the past, these decisions had been made by the Heads of Service, who were responsible to their organisations. As a proprietor, he could not be bound by decisions made by the employees of other proprietors. Mr Fingleton also affirmed that his accommodation was part of privileges given to him by the President of the Senate, and he did not intend to observe any Gallery direction to give up accommodation.²

¹ Recommendations for re-allocation of Press Gallery space, contained in a draft document prepared by the Gallery Committee. General Business files for 1973-74, in the Press Gallery Records.

² Transcript of meeting of Press Gallery Heads of Service to discuss accommodation, 26 February 1973. Held in General Business file for 1973-74, in the Press Gallery Records.

Mr Rea's interpretation of the role of the Heads of Service in making accommodation decisions was correct in the historical sense. In earlier years, Heads of Service had made these decisions and the right of the Heads of Service to be consulted on matters which affected their organisations had been written into the Gallery constitution. That the power to allocate accommodation had been delegated by the Presiding Officers to the Gallery Committee was confirmed in an exchange of letters between the President of the Gallery and the President of the Senate:

Because of Mr Rea's refusal to accept the decision of the Committee we reluctantly ask you, Sir, whether you would be prepared to intervene in this matter. If the Gallery Committee does not have the authority to act in this case, as Mr Rea suggests, the situation could well arise where many other organisations may well decide to stake a claim for more room, or to resist changes which must be made as more organisations seek space to properly report Parliament.¹

The letter noted that one media organisation had recently made a direct approach to the Presiding Officers seeking space but had been referred back to the Gallery Committee.

In reply, the President, Sir Magnus Cormack, agreed that it had been the practice for the President of the Senate to delegate to the Parliamentary Press Gallery Committee authority to allocate space to individual members of the Gallery:

This has always worked well and I wish the arrangement to continue. Mr Rea therefore is bound to abide by the Gallery Committee's decision on accommodation.²

¹ Letter from D. Solomon, President of the Press Gallery to Sir Magnus Cormack, President of the Senate, 4 August 1970. General Business file for 1970, Press Gallery Records.

² Sir Magnus Cormack to D. Solomon, 11 August 1970. General Business file for 1970, Press Gallery Records.

This confirmation by the President buttressed the Gallery's authority to make accommodation decisions, but it did not serve the immediate purpose of getting Mr Rea to give up part of his office space. Mr Fingleton also wrote to the President of the Senate and received an assurance that his privileges would not be impaired or reduced.¹ The apparent anomalies in the attitudes of at least one of the Presiding Officers were not resolved because the Gallery Committee declined to press the issue. Mr Rea retained all of his space, and Mr Fingleton remained in his office as sole occupant until he retired in 1978.

The accommodation freeze imposed by the Presiding Officers in 1973-74 saved the Gallery Committee from exposure to similar embarrassments by trying to enforce a re-allocation of space. Some changes in accommodation were made by consent in 1978. A television facility on the Senate wing which had been shared by the Channel 7 and Channel 10 networks was allocated to the Channel 10 network, and Channel 7 converted the Sydney *Sun* office, where it had previously occupied a desk, into a TV studio and storage area (see Chapter 6). The Sydney *Sun* moved to a Senate wing office which had been vacated by a re-adjustment in the representation of overseas groups and one Australian weekly.²

The approach of the Presiding Officers when imposing the freeze on accommodation in Parliament House was based partly on the assumption that space would be available in the National Press Club Building. This assumption misunderstood the rationale of the National Press Club which had been established as a forum for distinguished guests and as a social

¹ Kenneth Randal. *op. cit.*

² *Ibid.*

and recreational facility (see section 4). Although the Press Club building had considerable space available, it was rental space at prime rates. Meetings between the Gallery Committee and the Board of the National Press Club were held to find out what facilities the club would make available to supplement the Press Gallery. At these meetings it became clear that the Press Club did not regard its function as providing space and resources for parliamentary, political and government reporting from Canberra. If media organisations wanted accommodation in the Press Club building, then they would have to rent it at market rates.¹

Another alternative was for media organisations to move their offices from the Gallery while retaining access to its facilities such as the boxes and gallery seats. Some of the smaller news services and agencies had taken office space outside the Gallery - Agence France Presse, Specialist Press Services, Objective Publications, Australian Press Services. The major media organisations with their massive resources showed no inclination to move from the Gallery. The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Sir Billy Snedden, in an address to the National Press Club in 1978 gave a strong hint that the Gallery should resolve the lack of space by an agreement that some organisations should move out of the Gallery.²

In Chapter 2, the role of the Gallery Committee in defining the requirements of the Gallery in the new Parliament House in Canberra was discussed in some detail. In 1967-68 and again in 1976-78, the Gallery

¹ Correspondence in General Business file, 1974-74, Press Gallery Records.

² Sir Billy Snedden, Address to the National Press Club, 8 June 1978, ANL TRC 287.

was required to draw up plans for accommodation in a 'new and permanent Parliament House'. In December 1967 and April 1968, a Joint Select Committee heard evidence from Gallery officers and from representatives of the newspaper and electronic media organisations about media requirements in a new parliamentary building. In broad terms, the attitudes expressed on behalf of the working journalists of the Gallery favoured a separate press building close to the new parliamentary building. Premises removed from the parliamentary building would not be suitable. As well, journalists would require working areas in the new building for electronic media interviews and for the print media to contact Ministers, members and Senators. Reporting galleries in the two chambers would be needed.¹

The recommendations of the Committee on a 'New and Permanent Parliament House' were never implemented. In 1976, the erection of a new Parliament House or a substantial increase in the accommodation of the existing building were canvassed again as the 'temporary' building of 1927 became increasingly overladen. The Gallery was asked to prepare projections of its requirements up until the year 2000. In September 1978, the Gallery called a series of Heads of Service meetings to begin the process of preparing submissions for another round of parliamentary committee hearings on a new Parliament House. The Prime Minister, J.M. Fraser, announced at the end of 1978 that a new and permanent Parliament House would be built by 1988.

¹ Bennetts, *op. cit.*, p.84.

(c) The Gallery Committee

The preceding discussion on the Gallery constitution, membership and accommodation has implied a number of weaknesses in the powers and functions of the Gallery Committee. The most obvious deficiency in the working of the Committee was the lack of any semblance of corporate authority. The Gallery was a voluntary organisation and it had no power to enforce its decisions except with the support of the Presiding Officers. The members of the committee mostly represented major media organisations. In any conflict of loyalties, the organisation took first place. One major media organisation, the John Fairfax group, had given a firm directive to Gallery staff that if they took part in Gallery affairs, they had to support the interests of the organisation first and the Gallery second.¹ The Committee's lack of teeth was revealed in a discussion in 1970 about whether the Gallery could enforce a decision to strike a levy to pay for Christmas drinks for parliamentary staff. The Gallery President said that the Gallery was a voluntary organisation and if someone refused to pay a levy, it would have to consider the situation; the Committee had no direct authority to compel payment, although it was recognised by the Speaker and President as looking after the interests of members.²

In these circumstances, the Committee performed a useful liaison and co-ordination function. Its limited resources were drawn overwhelmingly from an annual dues payment by all Gallery members. This was a flat rate payment of \$4.85 during the 1960s and 1970s, but it

¹ Randall, *op. cit.*

² Minutes of Annual General Meeting, October 1970.

was increased to \$6 in 1978. In 1977, no dues were collected because the Gallery had a healthy credit balance of \$560. Extra funds were raised for special functions such as Gallery dinners and Christmas drinks for parliamentary staff. The Gallery financial statement for 1969-70 showed total revenue of \$881.69, derived from an inherited balance, contributions from annual dues, charges for an annual dinner, and a levy for a staff Christmas party. The main disbursements were for Christmas drinks (\$145.90), the Gallery dinner (\$393.23), television hire (\$94.51), payment to a fund for the family of a Gallery member who died (\$50).¹ The Gallery budget was similar to the budget of any small community, social or sporting club. It was a very modest operation.

The Gallery Committee usually met on a formal basis once a month, although occasionally there were longer gaps between meetings. In 1973-74 when the accommodation crisis was particularly acute, the Committee met formally a dozen times with another dozen informal meetings.²

The Committee's ability to take any disciplinary action was at all times subject to the overriding authority of the Presiding Officers. This emerged when the Presiding Officers barred Mr Barry Everingham from the Gallery in 1973. Although the Press Gallery Committee felt that an injustice had been done to Mr Everingham, there was nothing they could do to mitigate the severity of the action. In a subsequent incident in 1976, the Gallery Committee acted quickly when a complaint was made by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr E.G. Whitlam, about a photograph which appeared in the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*. The picture purported to show

¹ Treasurer's Report, Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, 1969-70 financial year, General Business file for 1970, Press Gallery Records.

² Minutes of Meetings, Press Gallery Committee, September 1973-April 1974, General Business file, 1973-74, Press Gallery Records.

Mr Whitlam alone and deserted in the ALP party room at Parliament House. In fact, the picture had been taken in Mr Whitlam's office at a press conference where the taking of pictures had been expressly prohibited. The Committee felt that if it did not respond promptly, action would be taken out of its hands, as had happened in the Everingham incident. Consequently, it recommended to the Presiding Officers that the photographer be expelled from the Gallery for a month. The Presiding Officers imposed a penalty of a week's expulsion. The incident created considerable resentment within the Gallery on the basis that a committee of journalists should not be responsible for initiating sanctions against a colleague who was a Gallery member, and complaints were lodged with the Canberra District of the AJA.¹

In another incident in 1978, the Gallery Committee was again excluded from involvement in disciplinary action by a Presiding Officer. A journalist was found late at night in the office of the Prime Minister, Mr J.M. Fraser, and a complaint was lodged with the Speaker, Sir Billy Snedden. The Speaker resolved the matter by suspending the journalist for a day and rebuking the Head of Service of the organisation for which he worked. This action was taken without any reference to the Committee which heard about it indirectly.²

The Committee has on occasions acted in a policy role on behalf of members. In 1970 a submission was prepared on Sunday liquor trading hours in the ACT, and presented to a Parliamentary Committee by the Gallery President. At the request of a Parliamentary Committee on

¹ *The Journalist*, May 1976, p.3.

² Randall, *op. cit.*

Pecuniary Interests, the Gallery Committee also conducted a plebiscite of its members on attitudes to disclosure of their pecuniary interests. This plebiscite aroused resistance from an element of the Gallery which felt that such an exercise should properly be conducted by the AJA.¹

Apart from serving as Chairman of the Committee meetings, the Gallery President acted as the principal spokesman for Gallery interests. He was the principal intermediary with the Presiding Officers, although on occasions the whole Committee met with the President and Speaker to discuss important issues such as accommodation. The President, assisted by the Secretary, was also the main link between the Gallery and the Joint House Department which administered a wide range of services within Parliament House, including refreshments. The President was also responsible for the extremely important work of liaison with the Commonwealth Electoral Officer and his staff. Federal elections and referenda in recent years have involved a large amount of detailed planning, and the Gallery Committee, largely through the President, has been responsible for negotiating media seating and other facilities in the national tally room.²

The main social functions arranged by the Committee have taken a traditional form. Each year at Christmas, the Committee has funded a keg of beer for parliamentary staff in the non-members' bar, and a cocktail party for parliamentary officers, ministerial staff, library staff, and Hansard reporters in one of the parliamentary committee rooms. The holding of the annual dinner has become more erratic in recent years, although it remains an important part of the Gallery tradition.

¹ Annotations on notice placed on the Press Gallery Noticeboard, contained in General Business File for 1975, Press Gallery Records.

² File on 1974 Elections, Press Gallery Records.

Before World War II, the dinner was invariably a social highlight attended by senior politicians. Special songs were composed for these often boisterous occasions:

D'ye ken Joe Lyons with his mane so gray,
 D'ye ken Joe Lyons at the head of the fray,
 D'ye ken Joe Lyons, he'll be made to stay
 With the Gallery boys till the morning.

CHORUS:

For tonight he is ours and he can't go to bed,
 He's often kept us till we nigh dropt dead,
 So he must take his chance of a rare sore head,
 And the risk of a row in the morning.¹

This sort of bonhomie was punctured on occasions by rowdier incidents. In 1946, a meeting of the AJA Committee discussed the format of the Gallery Dinner and one member moved that the Committee should 'endeavour to impart some dignity into this year's function'. The Committee also agreed that a serve of sherry should be available at the start of the dinner and a light wine such as chablis or sauterne should be served during the meal. Beer would not be 'brought on' until the meat course was reached.² It is not clear whether these instructions were due to post-war shortages or to curb the exuberance of the occasion.

The Gallery Dinner achieved considerable notoriety in 1968. The Prime Minister, Mr John Gorton, was the official guest at the dinner, leaving it in company with a young woman journalist who he took with him on a late call to the American Embassy. This incident caused a considerable stir at the time and was used against the Prime Minister by his political opponents. In the following year, the Gallery Dinner caused

¹ Typescript note, R.I. Douglas Papers, *op. cit.* (undated).

² AJA Records, Minutes of Meeting, 18 November 1946.

further problems when an invitation was extended to the Governor-General, Sir Paul Hasluck. This aroused the ire of Gallery members who were critical of Sir Paul for his generally poor media relationships and his strong criticism of journalists. In the event, Sir Paul rejected the invitation, possibly because he was aware that an acceptance would arouse further controversy. In the 1970s, the annual dinner was held less regularly, and there were attempts by the Gallery Committee to devise informal luncheons at which Gallery members would meet officials and public servants who were likely to be useful to their work.¹

In summary, the Gallery Committee functioned as a relatively low-key operation; in view of the constraints imposed on it by its members it could not be more assertive. The Committee represented a Gallery of extremely divergent interests and one which had competitive elements. In the circumstances, there was a limit to what it could achieve and its aspirations were pitched at a low level. Its main functions were the analysis and processing of requests for membership, allocation of accommodation, and liaison with the Presiding Officers, the Joint House Committee, the Commonwealth Electoral Office and with senior politicians over press conferences. It defended the Gallery's interests successfully in a variety of routine matters, but it lacked the authority to assert any effective disciplinary powers, and it was subject always to the plenary powers of the Presiding Officers. Individual committee members were exposed to conflict of interest between the Gallery and their organisation.

¹ The Gallery Dinner was revived in November 1978 when the function was held in the National Press Club. The official guest was the President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, Mr R.J.L. Hawke.

(d) Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting, held during the Budget session each year, was the Gallery's supreme constitutional authority, but in practice it functioned mainly as a supplement of the Committee meetings. The annual meeting did give Gallery members an opportunity to discuss policy issues at some length. It was the usual practice for the meeting to be presented with a detailed report from the President on the year's activities, together with a financial statement from the Treasurer. The results of the annual Gallery elections were ratified by the meeting.

On occasions, broad policy matters affecting the Gallery were brought up at the meeting, often arising out of the President's report. The 1972 Annual General meeting defined a set of guidelines for the use of the television radio interview room. This was followed by a lengthy discussion of Prime Minister McMahon's media briefings and the need for more regular conferences.¹ Inevitably, the meeting discussed the Gallery dinner: how it should be conducted and who should be invited. Detailed consideration was given to the reporting of these dinners, and the 1974 meeting adopted this resolution:

That as a matter of professional principle, the Press Gallery should not provide public figures with forums which preclude the normal processes of reporting and comment. Notwithstanding decisions which individual members may have to make in the course of their work about background information and attendance at non-reportable events, the Gallery's collective policy is clearly and strongly for public access to information. At a function sponsored by the Gallery and open to non-members, assurances of confidentiality neither can nor should be offered.²

¹ Minutes of Annual General Meeting, Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, November 1972, General Business file 1972-73, Press Gallery Records.

² Minutes of Annual General Meeting, November 1974, General Business file 1974, Press Gallery Records.

Apart from the Annual General Meeting, meetings of the whole Gallery were comparatively rare. An example of a special meeting of this sort is the emergency meeting called to discuss the crisis over Maxwell Newton's membership and which recommended a series of constitutional recommendations which were never implemented. (See above.)

(e) Heads of Service

As noted earlier, a provision for meetings of Heads of Service was written into the Gallery constitution. The status of Head of Service had been recognised since the early days of the Canberra Gallery. Head of Service was the customary label in the Gallery for the senior representative of a news organisation. The annual Gallery List included as well as a roll of all Gallery members a separate listing of every Head of Service. This was important for social and official reasons as well as the practical purpose of designating the head of each bureau. As the Gallery expanded, organisers of official government and diplomatic functions limited their invitations to Heads of Service as shown on the Gallery List. By the mid-1960s the Heads of Service list had grown to 23. The ceremonial and hospitality officers of the Prime Minister's Department warned the Gallery that if the list became too great, some Heads of Service would have to be excluded from important functions. Accordingly, the Gallery dropped the practice of separately listing Heads of Service, and noted on each list of resident journalists that the most senior man in each office was listed first. This left it to the discretion of function organisers whether they invited all Heads of Service or whether they made their own selection. The Gallery refused to discriminate between its members in such a delicate area.

This attempt to rationalise invitation lists did not resolve the problem. The report of the Gallery President in 1969 referred to problems which had arisen over invitations to official functions in Parliament House:

The Government in the form of Mrs Gorton undertook a review of the invitations list because of rising costs and rising numbers. The Gallery suffered badly. While the position used to be that Heads of Service and their partners were invited to major Parliamentary occasions Mrs Gorton proposed instead that only the President of the Gallery and four other members should be invited. We were able to persuade her to increase this to 14. There is no possibility of this being revised upwards, although it may be possible in individual cases to get one or two additional places.¹

Apart from its social and official importance, the Heads of Service as a group were significant because they were the members of the Gallery most directly involved with the major media organisations. A Head of Service had a quasi-executive status, and he had important administrative tasks to undertake. As a comparatively senior member of his organisation, he had at all times to be conscious of its interests. This was the rationale behind the constitutional provision that the Heads of Service should meet and discuss issues of major significance to their organisations. (As mentioned earlier, there were occasions when the Heads of Service had taken the major role from the Gallery Committee in matters such as accommodation.) Although the wording of the constitutional provision implied that the role of a Heads of Service Committee was advisory and that any Heads of Service meeting was always subsidiary to the Committee, the recognition given to Heads of Service did invoke a threat to the supremacy of the Gallery Committee. There have been

¹ D. Solomon. President of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, typescript notes for Report to Annual General Meeting of the Gallery, November 1969, Press Gallery Records.

occasions when the Gallery has been on the verge of dispensing with the Committee and replacing its authority with a Heads of Service Committee. In September 1969, the President of the ACT District of the AJA reported to a committee meeting of the district that as a result of a dispute in the Press Gallery, there was a move to have the Press Gallery Committee dissolved. This would mean leaving to the AJA or to Heads of Service the task of negotiating with parliamentary officers on questions of accommodation and conditions. The meeting resolved that the President should be authorised to oppose this move at the annual meeting of the Press Gallery.¹ The threat to the existing constitutional structure did not materialise but tensions between a democratically elected Committee and a committee based on professional status are part of Gallery decision-making.

2. Rules of Conduct

The broad authority of the Presiding Officers over members of the Gallery is exercised by the principal administrative officers of the two chambers, the Serjeant-at-Arms and the Usher of the Black Rod. The Serjeant-at-Arms has always taken the more prominent role. The traditional entry cards which have been the basis of press admission to the Parliament are issued each year by the Serjeant-at-Arms according to a list supplied by the Gallery President. The subsequent issue of passes during the course of the year is made by the Serjeant-at-Arms on the basis of a written request from the Gallery President. Although issued by an officer of the House of Representatives, the passes have been recognised by officers and staff of the Senate. A former Serjeant-at-Arms has explained the principles adopted in this credentialling of journalists:

¹ AJA Records, Minutes of Meeting, 15 September 1969.

We issue the cards in accordance with the list of journalists issued to us each year by the Gallery. We have the right to issue cards at our discretion, of course, but usually we issue them only to journalists recommended to us by the Gallery. If a journalist comes first to us, we send him to the Gallery to seek a recommendation.¹

This pass has been sufficient until recent years to identify a member of the Gallery and to admit him to the parliamentary galleries and the precincts of Parliament House. Journalists were rarely called upon by parliamentary staff to show their pass. This relaxed environment changed in 1978 when security at Parliament House was strengthened. With all other workers within Parliament House, journalists were required to wear identification cards which incorporated a photograph and details of name and place of work.

Over the years the guidelines which govern the privileges of journalists within Parliament House have evolved from an unwritten code to a set of written rules. These are set out in a document entitled 'Rules for the guidance of new members of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery and journalistic, TV, radio, and cable service visitors to Parliament House'. The document is attributed to the President of the Parliamentary Press Gallery but is issued to new Gallery members by the Serjeant-at-Arms. These rules reflect an agreement which was reached following the resolution of a dispute between Mr Speaker Cameron and the Gallery over use of the Parliamentary Library, although the principles established were not embodied in a formal document until 1966. The rules have since been expanded to include special provisions relating to the work of electronic journalists. (A copy of these rules is appended as Appendix 4.)

¹ A.R. Browning, cited in Bennetts, *op. cit.*, p.18.

The rules prescribe areas of the Parliament which are totally prohibited to journalists, particularly the areas around the Prime Minister's office and the Cabinet room. Procedures are also set out for passage of journalists through Government and Opposition lobbies, and for contacting Senators and Members. Attempts have been made at various times to supervise the access of journalists to the rooms of parliamentarians, but these have irritated journalists and have not been enforced consistently. For the most part, journalists have been free to go to the office of members, although parliamentary attendants have intervened where large groups of journalists congregate outside members' offices. There have been recent complaints to the Gallery about journalists, some with electronic equipment, waiting outside Ministers' offices for unsolicited interviews. As a consequence, the Gallery Committee has asked its members to avoid these electronic huddles within Parliament House.¹ Gallery members are permitted to use the library, subject at all times to the priority rights of parliamentarians.

Photographers and TV cameramen are allowed to use their cameras by invitation in private rooms. Taking of pictures or filming elsewhere in the building is prohibited except with the specific permission of the appropriate Presiding Officer. There have been occasional incidents where journalists have infringed this provision, mainly through ignorance. On one occasion, the Speaker intervened to stop a television interview in Kings Hall, directing the Serjeant-at-Arms to confiscate and expose the film. The journalist had assumed that the normal

¹ Notice posted on Press Gallery noticeboard, June 1978.

restrictions did not apply because of the ceremonies for the opening of Parliament.¹ A similar provision is applied to radio journalists, who are not allowed to tape interviews in Kings Hall or the corridors of the building.

The central area of the landing and steps at the front of Parliament House have been the subject of occasional disputes between photographers and television cameramen and the parliamentary officers. On one ceremonial occasion the Secretary of the Joint House Department ordered photographers from a traditional vantage point on the steps because there had been public complaints that they made the front of Parliament untidy.² The steps have been an area favoured by television crews in particular, and there has been some sensitivity on the part of Presiding Officers and politicians because they are an extremely public area. Politicians engaged in this area by electronic journalists have found it hard to disengage themselves without creating an unfavourable public impression. Conversely, the area is favoured by journalists because most visitors to Parliament arrive or leave through the front door. The rules state that 'television cameramen should avoid using the centre area of the landing and steps outside the front entrance to the building for the purposes of interviewing Members of Parliament or other persons'.³ This rule has been disregarded to an increasing extent. The informal status of the steps and landing as an *ad hoc* interview room has been established by

¹ Colin Parkes. Note of explanation to Gallery Committee (undated). General Business file 1971. Press Gallery records.

² Letter from John Allan, Editor of the *Canberra Times*, to Press Gallery Committee, 22 August 1969, contained in General Business file, 1969, Press Gallery Records.

³ See 'Rules for the guidance of new members of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery and journalistic, TV, radio and cable service visitors to Parliament House', Appendix 4.

the installation of special power points for electronic media use at the front of the building.¹

Members of the Gallery are not permitted to enter the Members' Bar or the adjacent guest rooms, although the prohibition on the guest rooms has not been strictly applied. Gallery members are allowed to enter the guest dining room at the invitation of members.

The formal rules conclude with a stipulation which is phrased in terms so contradictory as to be meaningless:

The Parliamentary Officers administer the above rule[s] with sympathy and flexibility but such an attitude can be preserved only if Gallery members and visitors to the Press Gallery observe the rules meticulously.²

Apart from these broadly framed rules, the only other professional constraint on Press Gallery journalists is the AJA code of ethics which emphasises such matters as scrupulous fairness and accuracy in the reporting and interpretation of news, and the maximum protection of sources.

3. Gallery Facilities

(a) The boxes and 'boxing'

The traditional focus of the Gallery premises is a point where the corridors outside the House of Representatives gallery converge and where a staircase from the Opposition lobbies and a lift terminate. One corridor leads through the Gallery premises on the House of Representatives side to another lift and staircase to the Government

¹ Interview. Laurie Wilson, Secretary of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, and political correspondent, Channel 7 network.

² (Original emphasis.) See Appendix 4.

lobbies; another leads through more Gallery offices to debouch in corridors which lead to members' offices; a third corridor leads to the entrances of the two House of Representatives galleries and other Gallery offices in the new wing on the rooftop and the Senate wing.

This central point of the Gallery is dominated by a set of about sixty wooden pigeon holes which are fitted to the wall. A secondary medium of communication is the adjacent Gallery noticeboard to which are fixed Gallery Committee notices, copies of statements, notices of impending press conferences and briefings, and other relevant material. The boxes were installed initially as simple receptacles for the distribution of mail, and they still fulfill that function. More importantly, the boxes have become the vehicle for a comprehensive flow of information from a multiplicity of sources to the Gallery.

In earlier chapters, reference was made to the growth of the hand-out system as the Federal Government became too big to be handled by the traditional 'rounds' style of personal contact. Emphasis on the 'handout' of printed material became more prominent during the war. According to one senior Gallery journalist, J.A. Alexander:

With the coming of war, access [to Ministers] began to be whittled down excepting in the case of Prime Minister Curtin. Handouts began to replace direct access to other ministers. Unfortunately this change was acquiesced in virtually without objection¹

Although handouts were regarded with contempt by older Gallery hands, they had elements of convenience which ensured their increasing acceptability. They facilitated the flow of information from Ministers and put ministerial relations with the Gallery on a more orderly footing.

¹ Bennetts, *op. cit.*, p.44.

While the better journalists discounted handouts, there was a certain amount of basic information in them which had to be incorporated into even the most original of interpretative pieces. Handouts provided a stock of data which otherwise would have had to be gathered by hard grubbing. As well, they ensured that information from Ministers was available simultaneously to all members of the Gallery.

The medium for dissemination of ministerial handouts was the unsophisticated system of pigeon-holes known simply as 'the boxes'. Multiple copies of each handout were prepared, and one was placed in each pigeon-hole which was marked with the name of an organisation represented in the Gallery. For many years the distribution of a statement in this way was signified by pushing a nearby buzzer which brought journalists out of the warren of Gallery offices to collect it. The close relationship with theories of stimulus-response as exemplified by Pavlov's dogs was often pointed to in a rather unflattering way. The buzzer was used to assemble Gallery members for important announcements, usually from the Prime Minister's press secretary. With the dispersal of the Gallery into new wings, the practice of sounding the buzzer faded away.

Gradually the scope of the material distributed through the boxes expanded from ministerial handouts. Matter from a wide range of other sources within the Parliament was fed into the boxes - Opposition handouts, copies of answers to questions, parliamentary reports, photocopies of documents, notices of Parliamentary Committee meetings. Outside organisations and lobby groups became aware of the value of these centrally-placed boxes as a means of access to the media. Departments and other Government authorities routed their material through the boxes, as did a number of the diplomatic embassies.

In this way, the practice of 'boxing' generated a unique information flow which was provided ostensibly for the media but was also a valuable commercial asset. There was no other facility at the disposal of the Australian media giving first access to such a diversity of information, much of it of considerable importance.

The range of material flowing each day through the boxes is indicated in Appendix 5 which lists each item which went through the boxes over a period of one week (27 May-3 June 1978). It is not intended to analyse this mass of material in any detail, but some simple statistical points can be made. Over the seven days of the study, 251 individual releases went through the boxes. These can be grouped into four broad categories, as set out in Table 4:

TABLE 4

GALLERY RELEASES, 27 May-3 June 1978

Government	208
Opposition	17
Industry groups	18
Other groups	8
TOTAL	251

Government statements are broken down into eight categories in

Table 5:

TABLE 5GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS, 27 May-3 June 1978

Answers to Questions on Notice	69
Ministerial statements	41
Departmental statements	19
Agencies, statutory authorities (including Hansard)	28
Bureau of Statistics	27
Parliamentary Committees	19
Government Party Committees	1
Others	4
<hr/>	
TOTAL	208
<hr/>	

These figures show the dominance which the Government exercises on the information flow. More than 80 percent of the total material channelled through the boxes related to Government activities, either in the form of direct ministerial and Government party releases, or by parliamentary and departmental statements. (Additional tabulation is provided in Appendix 5.)

The development of 'boxing' has created problems for the Gallery and for the Committee in particular. The boxes are a frequent source of complaint, for a variety of reasons. One journalist who ran a one-man bureau insisted that he had to have a box at eye level or below so that he could check it quickly as he passed; lack of staff and evening paper edition times did not permit the delays caused by checking a box above

eye level.¹ There have been frequent complaints that important releases and parliamentary reports were not placed in many boxes, because insufficient copies had been prepared. Parliamentary officials and departmental public relations officers were advised frequently of the number of releases required and asked to pin a copy to the Gallery noticeboard if they looked like running out. Undoubtedly there was an element of selectivity about which boxes were serviced with certain material. Distributors naturally tended to put releases in the boxes of organisations which were most likely to give them a run. There were instances of theft of material from Gallery boxes, possibly by outside organisations wanting to tap the information flow.

Initially, the use of the boxes was restricted exclusively to Gallery organisations. For reasons of goodwill, the Committee decided that a limited number of boxes should be made available to units providing services within the Parliament. Accordingly, boxes were granted to Government public relations, the Opposition, and the Parliamentary Library.

Reference was made earlier in this chapter to the importance of access to the boxes in terms of the Gallery's membership and accommodation problems. A crude test of the bona fides of Gallery organisation was how often it cleared its box. Frequency of clearance varied from every few minutes by the major news organisations with approaching edition times to weeks or even months for other organisations. The Committee made occasional checks and challenged the bona fides of organisations which did not regularly clear their box. Two examples

¹ T. Max Hawkins. Brisbane *Telegraph* correspondent. Memo to Press Gallery Committee (undated). Contained in General Business file for 1974. Press Gallery Records.

were the Communist weekly, *Tribune*, which had held a box for many years and had made a practice of sending a journalist to Canberra from Sydney each week that Parliament was sitting. During the early 1970s the visits became rarer and *Tribune's* box was cleared irregularly. Another was the ABC Current Affairs program 'This Day Tonight' whose federal political correspondent moved to Sydney in 1977 and visited Canberra each week.¹ These occasional challenges did increase the frequency with which badly cluttered boxes were cleared, but many boxes still were not cleared at regular intervals.

The arguments for greater access to the information flow passing through the boxes was discussed earlier in the chapter. A cardinal point about 'boxing' was that a minute proportion of the vast amount of material placed each day in the boxes found its way into the major media outlets. These media organisations were extremely selective in what they used from the boxes, and material transmitted to head offices was subjected to further selection. From the point of view of the major media outlets to which the material was directed, a tremendous amount of unusable material, whether for print or electronic media, went through the boxes. Yet virtually every item was of intense interest to some economic or community group. This was the rationale underlying the argument that greater access should be given to smaller groups. Undeniably, the boxes were an inefficient way of targetting media material, but their efficiency would increase proportionately as more organisations were provided with boxes.

¹ Randall, *op. cit.*

A counter argument was the vulnerability of the boxes to exploitation for commercial purposes. It was argued that the information flow derived from 'boxing' was a valuable asset and it would be a perversion of Gallery principles and practice for it to be used in this way. This approach overlooked the fact that some long-established groups within the Gallery which qualified as news services had for a number of years used the boxes to service special interest groups, including commercial organisations (see Chapter 6).

The ramifications of the boxes and the practice of 'boxing' have been dwelt on at some length because it constitutes the most basic resource at the Gallery's disposal for the collection and dissemination of news. It is a formal resource because access to it is controlled by the Gallery through the Gallery Committee. It has important implications for the fringe media services from the Gallery which are dealt with in Chapter 6. As with membership and accommodation, there has been an increasing tendency on the part of the Gallery to preserve the status quo and maintain Gallery privileges predominantly for those who now possess them.

(b) The Galleries

The rationale of the galleries in the chambers of Parliament was discussed in Chapter 2. They are at once the basic privilege and the basic facility of the Press in Parliament. In Canberra's Parliament House the main attention is directed to the two galleries made available for the Press in the House of Representatives. The Gallery Committee is responsible for allocating the total of 50 seats available in the galleries, a process which is often as troublesome as allocating accommodation or boxes.

The principal gallery overlooks the chamber from above the Speaker's chair. It gives a commanding view of the floor of the House, but there are a number of blind spots, particularly in the seats directly over the chair. For this reason, these seats are not highly prized and there have been anguished reactions from journalists who have been allocated to them. One senior journalist complained that it was preferable for him to listen to proceedings over the radio than to try and pick up asides and interjections from such a seat. For this reason, many Gallery reporters prefer the Opposition gallery which looks directly across the House to the Government benches. The Opposition gallery does provide an excellent perspective of the Ministry and the Government members, and it is generally easier to pick up across-the-floor badinage from this point. It has the disadvantage that most Opposition members can be seen only from the back or in profile. Audibility is a problem for both galleries, and repeated efforts have been made over the years by use of microphones and earphones to provide a better sound level in the galleries.

The Speaker's Gallery is divided into two tiers, with the front tier ranged along the front rail of the Gallery, and a shorter tier above it. In previous years, the practice was for journalists actually reporting proceedings to sit in the front row while Heads of Service, who were not taking detailed reports but observing and interpreting, were ranged behind them. This practice is still followed to some extent, although a strict observance has broken down because of the need to provide more organisations with Gallery seats. The biggest single units allocated seats are the ABC and AAP, which provide the most comprehensive coverage of parliamentary proceedings, and News Ltd which represents the biggest group of individual newspapers.

The presence of outsiders in the galleries has always been a source of irritation to working journalists. Traditionally, the Gallery agreed that ministerial press liaison officers should be admitted to the galleries. Indeed, these officers were regarded as members of the Gallery, as is evident from the 1940 constitution (see Appendix 1). Although these officers are no longer Gallery members, it has been customary for press secretaries and other ministerial staff to watch parliamentary proceedings from the galleries, although only working journalists have been allocated seats. By the early 1970s these concessions had imposed tremendous strains on the galleries as increasing numbers of ministerial staff used them, particularly at Question Time. This was justified on the basis that there was no other area which these officers could use, and it was essential for them to be in close touch with the performance of their superiors in the Parliament.

There was merit in these arguments, but this did not reduce the irritation felt by journalists in having to move to their seats through narrow corridors crammed with ministerial staff. After frequent complaints, the Serjeant-at-Arms imposed a limit of one staff member from each ministerial office, and this was enforced by a system of passes. The pressures of ministerial staff on gallery accommodation were reduced by the extension of internal broadcasting services which piped parliamentary proceedings directly into parliamentary offices.

The galleries were supervised by a parliamentary attendant subject to the authority of the Serjeant-at-Arms. The attendant was required to ensure that only Gallery members, authorised ministerial staff, and other persons whose admission had been approved by the Gallery Committee and the Serjeant-at-Arms, were admitted to the galleries. The instructions

to attendants directed them to prohibit certain conduct in the galleries: reading newspapers and magazines, eating or smoking, taking photographs, sitting on the balustrades or blocking the stairways, acting in a way to interrupt the proceedings of the House. He was directed to ensure that men in the galleries were properly dressed, and wore a suit coat or jacket, and that no conversation was carried on in the galleries that was audible on the floor of the House below.¹ Conduct in the galleries was mostly orderly, although there were occasional incidents. On one occasion a senior journalist interjected loudly that Prime Minister Gorton was lying as he made a parliamentary statement which involved the actions of Press Gallery journalists. The incident was resolved by apologies to the Prime Minister and Speaker.²

Seating in the galleries was a factor in the competition between newspaper groups in the Gallery. Tensions emerged after a substantial part of the Gallery was moved to the new wing in 1973-74. This disadvantaged some organisations because they were moved further away from the boxes and the galleries. Evening newspapers in particular could be affected detrimentally if extra time was taken in getting from offices to the boxes and the chambers. Some of these problems were pointed out in a letter to the Gallery Committee by the Head of Service of one of these newspapers, the *Sydney Sun*:

As you know we are in keen competition with the [Sydney] *Mirror* and it now enjoys advantages by being considerably closer to the boxes and the venues of most important announcements. We wish to retain our present seating to ensure that we have somebody more likely to be in the vicinity of the boxes more frequently than if we moved to

¹ Directions to Parliamentary Attendant in the Press Gallery, 14 August 1972, General Business file 1972, Press Gallery Records.

² Interview, Alan Ramsay, Head of Service, *The Australian*, 1966-70.

the other end of the Gallery. We also wish to retain our present seating because it is closer to the scene of the action in the House, and it is easier to pick up asides at the table. As an evening paper we do not have time to run around and check these in the same manner as morning newspapers and newsagencies. As the *Mirror* has seating near the chair, I insist on the same right. This competition with the *Mirror* is of great concern to us and we hope that the Committee will not bow to pressures which will further disadvantage us.¹

Distribution of seating within the galleries was one of the problems which the Gallery Committee had to resolve as equitably as possible. This did not apply to the Senate gallery which usually was attended only sparsely, although there has been a tendency to give the Senate more attention in recent years.

4. The AJA and the National Press Club

In previous chapters, there have been occasional references to the relationship between the Gallery and the Australian Journalists Association, the federal union which represents the interests of journalists from all media. From its formative years, the AJA had been linked closely with the Gallery. One of its founding fathers in 1910 had been B.S.B. Cook, the political roundsman for the Melbourne *Herald*, and political journalists had been strongly represented on the list of original members. Until 1941, journalists working in the Press Gallery had retained membership of their State Districts. The main problem about forming a Canberra Branch was that the majority of journalists were sessionals and it was felt that the number of permanent journalists did not warrant a separate Canberra district. In 1941, a Canberra branch of the AJA was formed from a meeting held in the Press Gallery as a sub-district of the NSW District. It was not given autonomous status as a district until 1959.

¹ Letter from N. O'Reilly, Head of Service, Sydney *Sun*, to the President of the Press Gallery, 4 August 1972, General Business file, 1972, Press Gallery Records.

In the first twenty years of its existence, the AJA Branch in Canberra was identified very closely with the Gallery. Most of the members were Press Gallery journalists, and the AJA held its committee meetings and annual meetings in Press Gallery premises. Much of its business was Press Gallery business. This created occasional objections from the parliamentary authorities. In 1955, a notice appeared in the *Canberra Times* stating that a general meeting of the AJA would be held in the Press Gallery to consider a strike levy. The notice was drawn to the attention of Mr Speaker Cameron who ruled that the 'practice of holding such meetings in the Parliament buildings be discontinued'. This ruling was later supported by Mr Speaker McLeay.¹ Although general and emergency meetings were held at other venues, the AJA committee continued to meet surreptitiously in the Gallery because most of its members were from the Gallery. The practice did not cease until the 1960s when the balance of membership began to swing against the Gallery due to expanding employment of journalists in the Public Service.

The writing into the 1966 constitution of a provision that members of the Gallery should be members of the AJA created resistance from some Gallery members. They warned that Parliament or its Presiding Officers might veto the provision and insist that the Gallery had no right to enforce unionism by making union membership a condition for access to parliamentary facilities. Conversely, it was argued that Parliament had never raised any previous objection, that the AJA had a formal code of ethics, and it was particularly important that this ethics code should apply to the treatment of political news. It was argued that if the requirement of AJA membership was dispensed with, some newspapers would move quickly to instal staff men at the head of their Canberra Bureau and

¹ Bennetts, *op. cit.*, p.67, fn.

this would be detrimental to the Gallery. The AJA was then engaged in an important industrial award hearing on behalf of all Australian journalists and it was pointed out that any weakening of the status of the AJA in the Gallery could weaken the union's case at this hearing.¹ Conservative Governments have never shown any disposition to interfere with the establishment of a union closed shop, although the Samuel incident mentioned earlier suggests that the Presiding Officers are unwilling to help the Gallery out of any embarrassment that union membership might produce.

As an industrial organisation, the AJA is a much more powerful institution than the Gallery which is a weak and often divided voluntary organisation. The Canberra District of the AJA has been the vehicle for much of the militant spirit in the Gallery, most notably in the strong stand against syndication which was discussed in Chapter 4. The Canberra District has supported industrial action in the head offices of the major media organisations, particularly in Sydney and Melbourne. A staff man who came to Canberra to represent the Sydney newspapers during a major newspaper strike in 1955 found himself 'about as popular as a harlot at a Sunday School picnic'.² Gallery journalists also supported a major strike in 1967 and a strike by News Ltd journalists in November 1975, over issues arising out of the coverage of the election campaign.³

Although both print and electronic journalists are members of the AJA and the Gallery on the same status, their segments of the industry are

¹ *Ibid.*, pp.67-68.

² R.I. Douglas, *op. cit.*, letter to Frank Betts, 17 August, 1957.

³ See C.J. Lloyd. 'The Media and the Elections', Chapter in H. Penniman, *Australia at the Polls, 1975*, American Institute for Public Policy Research, 1977.

covered by different awards. This means that on occasions print and electronic journalists have struck because of disputes in their respective industries. The whole of the membership has not been involved. In 1978, Gallery television journalists joined their colleagues in the other districts in a series of 24-hour strikes over a national award for television journalists.¹

The National Press Club has been mentioned in connection with Gallery accommodation. The Club was formed in 1963 as a forum where prominent figures could address a luncheon meeting of journalists and submit themselves to questioning. This format proved extremely popular and National Press Club functions built up a considerable following. Its luncheons were not confined to politicians, although one of the Club's more important functions was to provide a vehicle for the interrogation of party leaders during election campaigns. The Club moved to its own building close to the Parliamentary Triangle in 1976, but the Club Board was careful to stress that it did not see its role as supplementing the facilities and services of Parliament House for the Gallery. The Club provided a convenient venue for press conferences and other functions, but its establishment had only a minimal impact on the workings of the Gallery.

¹ Interview. Laurie Wilson, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER 6

THE CONTEMPORARY GALLERY

This account of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery so far has treated it as an integrated institution because it includes all journalists who work in the Federal Parliament without discrimination as to their function or their particular branch of the media. It differs from the British Parliament where political journalists are differentiated on the basis of function. The Westminster Gallery consists of only political journalists who report parliamentary proceedings. A separate group of journalists known collectively as the 'Lobby' is responsible for reporting the executive government, political parties and other functions of Westminster. The Lobby as an institution takes its name from the members' lobby outside the House of Commons which accredited journalists can enter as part of their work. Lobby journalism has developed as a distinct branch of political journalism with its own organisation, rules and customs.¹ The Canberra Gallery is markedly different from the United States Congress where the huge press corps of more than 2,000 journalists is divided into four galleries, each representing a different medium of communication: Daily Press, Periodical Press, Radio and Television, and Still Photographers.²

The reasons for the integrated nature of the Canberra Gallery have been indicated in earlier chapters. The Gallery has developed slowly

¹ See Jeremy Tunstall. *The Westminster Lobby Correspondents*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1970.

² Robert Blanchard (ed.). *Congress and the News Media*, Hastings House, New York, 1974.

and for much of its life has been small in numbers and with a predominance of journalists from the print media. Because of its size, there has been no reason to divide the Gallery on the basis of daily or weekly publication. The loose and non-coercive structure of the Gallery constitution has enabled it to accommodate increasing numbers of electronic journalists. Furthermore, the Gallery has evolved in a way that has made a division on functional lines into Gallery and Lobby an irrelevant exercise. The balance of Gallery reporting has swung from parliamentary reporting to what might be termed 'Lobby' or rounds reporting, but both functions have been accommodated within the traditional framework without discomfort.

This does not mean that the Gallery has been free from strains and tensions between the different branches of the media. In many ways, the Gallery is a deeply divided institution. It has survived as an integrated institution largely because of the lack of teeth in its constitutional powers. All branches of the media have accepted that the Gallery is indispensable to represent their interests in a relatively narrow area. It has been accepted without demur that the Gallery should not develop a corporate identity, nor should it interfere in how Gallery members do their job, unless ethical principles are breached.

The aim of this chapter is to look at the contemporary Gallery not as an integrated institution but on the basis of its main components. These have been grouped broadly as the main print media, the electronic media, and the fringe media. The main themes touched on are those which have emerged persistently in the earlier chapters: structure and organisation, syndication, technology, professional trends, relations with the Parliament and politicians.

1. Main Print Media

This section is confined to daily and weekly newspapers. Other print media, such as newsletters and overseas publications, are treated as 'fringe media'.

It has been stressed repeatedly that the Gallery has been predominantly a print media institution for most of its life. Despite the growth of the electronic media in recent years, the main print media are still the dominant force in the Gallery. They maintain a majority of members on the Gallery Committee, although representation of the electronic media has increased in the past few years. The traditions of the Gallery are almost exclusively those of the newspapers, and its great folk heroes are the political correspondents of the newspapers, the news services and the news agencies.

Australian newspaper history has determined the structure of the main print media within the Gallery. Three major print media organisations have emerged in Australia: The Melbourne *Herald* group, the John Fairfax group, and the News Ltd group. These three groups divide between them the Gallery space available to the main print media. Each group's daily and weekly newspapers are grouped together in Gallery office space.

There are marked differences in the organisational framework of each of the three groups. The John Fairfax group is made up of a series of offices which, although located in close proximity, work as completely autonomous units. The main offices of the groups are housed in adjacent rooms along the central corridor of the new Gallery wing: Melbourne *Age*, Sydney *Sun* (until late 1978), Sydney *Morning Herald*, and the *Financial Review*. The office of the weekly *Sun Herald*, which maintains a one-man bureau, is across the corridor, and the *National Times* which has had a

staff of one or two representatives in the Gallery is nearby in the Senate wing. The only office outside this Fairfax cluster is the *Canberra Times* whose two journalists are accommodated in a small office in the old wing. Although there is a clearly identifiable Fairfax territory in the Gallery, it does not function as an entity but as a group of autonomous units which co-operate in some ways, but work for the most part on a highly competitive basis.¹

The Melbourne *Herald* group is much more coherent in its organisation of space and staff. Its core is one of the largest offices in the Gallery, occupied by the staff of the Melbourne *Sun Pictorial*, and the single political correspondents of the group's main morning newspapers, the *West Australian*, *Adelaide Advertiser*, and *Brisbane Courier-Mail*. The evening papers of the group are not integrated to the same extent and each maintains an individual office. The group's flagship, the Melbourne *Herald* is one of the larger offices in the Gallery with a permanent staff of four to five journalists. The Perth *Daily News* and the Brisbane *Telegraph* maintain separate one-man offices with their own political correspondents. These three evening papers collaborate, although in the main they work more independently than do the morning papers of the group. This applies particularly to the Perth *Daily News* which has a three-hour time lag for part of the year (when Western Australia does not adopt summer time) and a two-hour lag during most of the period that Parliament is sitting.

¹ Late in 1978, the Sydney *Sun* office was moved to the Senate wing, and its office in the main Fairfax corridor was converted into a television studio for the 7 Network, which is linked through Sydney's Channel 7 to the Fairfax organisation.

The News Ltd group is the most closely integrated of the three in its use of Gallery space. When News Ltd acquired the Sydney newspapers of the Packer group (*Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph*) in 1971, all of the group's newspapers were brought together. The traditional office space of the *Daily Telegraph* was yielded to the remaining interests of the Packer group (the *Bulletin* and Channel 9 Television network), although not without some bickering over the territorial imperative. With the group's existing newspapers (Sydney *Daily Mirror*, Adelaide *News* and the *Australian*), these were organised into a News Ltd Bureau.¹ When its parliamentary service was abandoned in 1976, the bureau format was retained for rounds coverage. The News Ltd group has a separate framework of political correspondents for each of its major papers.

These broad organisational structures have been outlined to set a physical context for an examination of the way in which these major offices deploy their resources for news gathering within the Gallery. Before this can be done, it is necessary to develop briefly some of the historical themes which were touched on in previous chapters.²

It was suggested earlier that much of the impetus for the expansion of the newspaper offices in the Gallery came from the establishment of the *Australian* as a national newspaper in Canberra in 1964. The only daily newspaper in Canberra had been the *Canberra Times*, a paper of worthy provincial standard but with neither the resources nor the aspirations to jolt the introspective complacency of the Gallery. The *Australian* assembled a force of experienced reporters and allotted them to cover departments and government agencies with a systematic

¹ See the account of syndication in Chapter 4.

² See the account of the establishment of the *Australian* in Chapter 4.

thoroughness that had not been brought to this sort of rounds work in Canberra before. The *Australian's* ambitious aim of a national political coverage, while often falling short of its aspirations, did stimulate a more competitive spirit among parochial Gallery offices oriented to their head offices in the capital cities, and whose ambit of coverage rarely strayed beyond Parliament House.

The *Australian* had another important influence in reinforcing a trend which was already emerging in the Gallery. Economic reporting at a national macro level had never been a strong feature of Gallery reporting, nor indeed of Australian journalism in general. Newspapers had conceptualised economics reporting as an adjunct of the Stock Exchange and had relegated it to the finance pages. Australia's first specialist financial newspaper had not been established until the early 1950s, when the *Financial Review* was set up as a weekly. Although it had a one-man Canberra bureau it did not make any radical break with time-hallowed patterns of financial coverage. Gallery journalists had never felt any need to develop economic expertise beyond the extraction of a few paragraphs from Commonwealth statistics.

A major influence on changing this neanderthal approach to economic reporting was Maxwell Newton, an economics graduate with experience in the Treasury and banking activities. Newton sponsored a greater emphasis on national economic interpretation in his own work from the Gallery as political correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. His influence was reinforced by the credit squeeze of 1960-61 which it was difficult to report adequately without some attention to macro-economic principles. Newton moved from Canberra to edit the *Financial Review*, strengthening its Canberra office which was given additional responsibility when the paper appeared daily from 1964. When Newton became the foundation

managing editor of the *Australian*, his emphasis on national economic reporting was an important influence on the new paper.

Although Newton was a principal exponent of national economic reporting in the Gallery, he was exemplifying a trend as much as creating one. The growth and diversification of the national economy during the 1950s forced a greater role as economic interpreters on Gallery journalists. This was conceded in 1962 by R.J. Bennetts, then Head of Service of the Melbourne *Age*:

To cope with the greater complexity as well as the greater volume of Canberra news the Canberra correspondent needs more background knowledge than ever. That is particularly so in the economic field. No longer can he report the Federal Budget in August and then virtually forget about the economy for the next twelve months.¹

The competitive influence of the *Australian* and the stimulus it gave to economic reporting are clearly discernible in the working patterns of the major print media today. This account looks in turn at the Fairfax group, the Melbourne *Herald* group, and the News Ltd group.

The Melbourne *Age* had moved towards a structure with some attempt at a broad delineation of function by the early 1960s, although it had a permanent staff of only three journalists to deploy:

In the *Age* bureau we attempt a measure of specialisation. I'm primarily responsible for keeping in touch with the main policy-making departments - Prime Minister's Department, Treasury, Defence, and External Affairs Departments. My two colleagues split up the coverage of other departments and federal agencies. But it should be obvious that because of the work involved in direct coverage of Parliament and other meetings, and in processing handouts, we are simply not able to maintain contact with the departments as regularly as we should if we are to know what is going on. What we aim at is for each of us to

¹ R.J. Bennetts. *Press, Parliament and Public Interest*, A.N. Smith Memorial Lecture, Melbourne, 1962, p.11.

have a half day each week or fortnight free from routine chores so that we can go about our traps.¹

By 1967, the *Age* staff had increased to four and a more formal pattern of organisation was adopted. The Head of Service was responsible for three of the main policy-making departments mentioned above, and for Cabinet meetings, parliamentary party meetings, and the federal organisations of the political parties. His deputy specialised in defence reporting, and also took much of the burden of the routine administrative work, drawing up rosters and allocating assignments. In effect, he operated as the Chief of Staff of a small unit. One of the two roundsmen covered a broadly defined trade area made up of the Departments of Trade, Primary Industry and Customs, the Tariff Board, and lobby groups. The other roundsman covered education and research establishments, and did general reporting which was not related to political journalism.

This form of organisation was the nucleus of the present organisation of the *Age* office in the Gallery, although the staff has expanded, encouraging a more rational allocation of rounds work. As well, a significant economics component has been added to the office. For the most part, the Chief Political Correspondent (also Head of Service) is left free to concentrate on the main political story of the day and other national stories of importance. The number two journalist operates as a Chief of Staff, allocating assignments and organising the copy flow, as well as covering one or more rounds. The remaining rounds are divided between the other three general reporters in the office. As well, there is a National Economics Editor whose time is

¹ *Ibid.*, p.9.

devoted solely to economic commentary. Straight economic news is reported by another specialist economics journalist who is also available at a pinch to help out with general political stories.¹

The *Sydney Morning Herald* is of much the same size and operates in a broadly similar way, except that the Chief of Staff function is performed by the number three journalist in the office, leaving the Head of Service and his deputy free to concentrate on major stories and commentary. Since the early 1970s the *Herald* bureau has included a specialist economics writer in its Gallery team.²

The *Financial Review* is the most specialised newspaper in the Gallery, although its Canberra coverage mingles political and economic elements; it is more in the realm of traditional political economy than strict economics. Much of its work is devoted to a fundamental area which includes the Treasury and Department of Finance, the Taxation Office, the Departments of Business and Consumer Affairs, Trade and Resources, and Primary Industry, the Industries Assistance Commission, the Restrictive Trade Practices and Prices Justification Tribunals. This core has been supplemented by the reporting of other areas which have varied according to the inclinations or the expertise of individual reporters.³

Work patterns are much less clear-cut in the conglomerate offices of the other two groups. The Melbourne *Herald* group, as we have seen, is essentially a loose knit collection of State-based newspapers,

¹ Interview, Michele Grattan, Head of Service, Melbourne *Age*.

² Interview, Michael Steketee, Gallery journalist for the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

³ Interview, Brian Toohey, *Financial Review*, Head of Service.

sharing common management and services, and organised broadly on morning and evening newspaper lines. Accordingly, their Gallery reporters work on a collegiate basis which is encouraged by the presence of all of the morning paper representatives in the one large office. The linchpin of this organisation is the Head of Service of the Melbourne *Sun Pictorial*, who acts as an unofficial chief of the whole outfit.

The strength of the Melbourne *Herald* group throughout Australia is the resources it can deploy to gather news, drawing on the newspapers it controls in each State except New South Wales. This depth of resources is reflected in its Gallery organisation which can draw directly on them to supplement its coverage. Within the Parliament, its journalists have special leverage in securing access to parliamentarians from their home States. In theory, this gives the group considerable depth in obtaining information from Cabinet and Party meetings in particular, because its potential range of access is so much greater. The outrider representatives also have the advantage of drawing on the coverage of the larger staff of the Melbourne *Sun Pictorial*. This leaves them free to develop specific angles for their State audiences or to write State-oriented features or to dig for their own stories. The results of these endeavours depend on the initiative and skills of individual journalists. In theory, the morning paper group hinged on the Melbourne *Sun Pictorial* has considerable resources to throw into a major story, particularly if time is short. In practice, the results are often disappointing with all too often a consistent sameness in the stories which appear from State to State. The success of this sort of collegiate endeavour depends very much on the skills of the group's principal political

correspondent, the Melbourne *Sun Pictorial* Head of Service, whose by-lined stories on occasions appear in all of the group's morning papers.

The two-tier structure of the News Ltd Gallery office is a source of mystification to other sections of the Gallery. The system has developed to meet the disparate needs of a mixed group of morning, evening and weekly papers from three States. One tier consists of the political correspondents for the individual newspapers; the other is made up of a corps of roundsmen whose work is theoretically at the disposal of other members of the group.

The focal point of the News Ltd system is the supply of copy to the two morning papers, the *Australian* and the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*. Both have strong traditions of political journalism, although since the *Telegraph* was acquired by News Ltd its political interests have waned. Three members of the staff are deputed to write specifically for the *Australian*, the political correspondent, the economics writer, and the Head of the News Ltd bureau. The *Telegraph* has a separate political correspondent. Both papers draw on the services of the bureau, although most stories are written with the *Australian* in mind. The *Telegraph* has the option of using these stories if it chooses, and stories are transmitted at the same time to both papers. Bureau staff have a tacit understanding with the *Telegraph* that if substantial changes are made to stories, whether for stylistic or other reasons, their by-lines are omitted.¹

The resources of the bureau, which has seven journalists, are also at the disposal of the group's two evening papers, the *Sydney Daily*

¹ Interview, Gary O'Neill, Gallery journalist for the *Australian*. A second economics writer was added to the bureau in 1979.

Mirror and the *Adelaide News*. Each has its own political correspondent, and there is a separate correspondent for the *Sydney Sunday Telegraph*. Each member of the bureau is allocated to a specific round and is subject to the overall authority of the bureau chief who also does a considerable amount of writing. Members of the bureau are given liberal powers to initiate stories and to contact head offices in Sydney to sell their stories at executive level.¹

The News Ltd group has been one of the less stable areas of the Gallery in recent years, and there has been a considerable turnover of staff. Early in 1977, the *Australian* transferred two State political correspondents to the Gallery to work in tandem as national political correspondents. This arrangement persisted for a year, then it was abolished at the direction of the group Managing Director, K.R. Murdoch, who re-arranged its Gallery office after a visit to Canberra. The titular head of the group is the *Australian's* political correspondent, although this journalist does not function in conventional terms as a head of service. The most substantial authority in the News Ltd office is exercised by the Head of the News Ltd bureau who functions as a Chief of Staff and, with the *Australian* political correspondent, maintains the direct links with senior executive levels in Sydney. (A political correspondent for the *Weekend Australian*, published on Saturdays, was appointed late in 1978.)

Despite its complexity, this framework has some advantages. It provides machinery for meeting the routine requirements of newspapers with different styles, deadlines and readership. This is done in such

¹ *Ibid.*

a way as to give the group of political correspondents and the economics writer considerable freedom to do the major stories of the day, to develop interpretative features, and to hunt for new stories. Obvious disadvantages are problems of co-ordination and demarcation. The political correspondent for the *Australian* has a brief to do any story of national political significance. These stories can fall within the round of a bureau member, who is resentful if the story is pilfered from him. Much depends on the restraint and goodwill of the political correspondent not to horn in on the specialist area of another. In other cases, demarcation disputes can be resolved by co-operative effort and joint by-lines.

The organisational patterns of the three groups are too diverse to admit of very much meaningful comparison between them. Some generalizations can be made. The most important point is that these methods of organising political coverage are a response to the peculiar circumstances of interlocking newspaper ownership and not to the demands of the Gallery or of political journalism. They reflect in miniature the broader organisation of Australia's three great newspaper groups. The patterns of management of these offices show an overwhelming emphasis on political rounds reporting. All offices encourage specialisation where possible, although it is subordinated to the routine demands of political news gathering. This specialisation is extremely flexible, although it is accepted that basis areas such as defence, foreign affairs, and the Treasury should always be allocated to rounds. The sort of specialisation that emerges is not forced on individual journalists but, for the most part, is left to their training and inclinations.

Basic administration varies from the relative formality of the Fairfax offices which have adopted systems of accountability and control, although flexible ones, through the two-tiered structure of News Ltd to the looser collegiate structure of the Melbourne *Herald* group. Competition within the major print media of the Gallery is evident between these three groups and between the individual newspapers of the Fairfax group. Although there is a measure of co-operation between the Fairfax newspapers, competition between them over major stories is as intense as it is with the Melbourne *Sun* and the *Australian*, the principal newspapers of the other groups. The club arrangements which were discussed earlier have not re-emerged in the contemporary Gallery and there are no informal arrangements which cut across the firm lines drawn between the three groups.

Although the bulk of parliamentary material now flows to the major print media through the AAP service, there has been a slight yet perceptible trend on the part of these newspapers to maintain some direct representation within the Parliament. The *Financial Review* has initiated a daily column on the Parliament, which concentrates primarily on Question Time. The *Age* has established a column called 'Gallery Watch' which is written by one of its roundsmen and appears each day on the parliamentary pages. The *Sydney Morning Herald* bylines one or two stories each day from its Parliamentary Reporter, and these are mingled with stories of AAP origin on the parliamentary page. The principal political correspondents and specialist roundsmen may also write stories on parliamentary proceedings as part of their prescribed duties, although these stories will usually be based on AAP copy. These vestigial remnants of the Gallery's role as the reporter of Parliament should not be over-stressed.

This account of the Gallery has given considerable attention to the emergence of AAP and the long-fought struggle over syndication. AAP occupies a central role in the Gallery, although it is treated with some condescension by journalists of the major print media. AAP now supplies a parliamentary coverage to every major newspaper in Australia, and a full political coverage to major radio and television stations, as well as a string of provincial and country papers which were once serviced by AUP. Apart from the proceedings of Parliament, AAP's parliamentary service includes a cover of all meetings held by parliamentary committees and of every report tabled in Parliament. The parliamentary coverage includes every question asked in the House of Representatives and the main questions from the Senate. Major debates are covered with extensive reports of the speeches made by Ministers and opposition spokesmen, and a brief report of most other speakers. AAP also provides the political coverage for three major overseas news services - Associated Press, United Press International and Reuters - and for several specialist economic services.¹

The political impact of AAP has not been confined to Canberra. It has covered the overseas visits of the Prime Ministers and major Ministers; ten of these official visits were reported by the agency in 1977. This area of coverage developed from the early 1970s. In 1971, the AAP Head of Service covered Opposition Leader E.G. Whitlam's inaugural visit to China and his verbatim account of the conversation between Whitlam and the Chinese Premier, Chou En Lai, was featured in newspapers around the world. In 1974, the agency initiated a

¹ David Solomon. *The Australian Parliament*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1978. Draft manuscript supplied by the author, Chapter 9, 'The Press Gallery', p.226. (This reference may not tally with the published version.)

comprehensive coverage of Australian elections and this service was continued in 1975 and 1977. AAP is also of considerable importance to radio and television news services, providing a 'rip and read' service by which a news bulletin can be ripped off the teleprinter and read straight over the air if necessary. During the 1977 election campaign, AAP also provided a tape service for radio stations.¹

The attitude of Gallery journalists to AAP is rather ambivalent. There is some professional contempt about the agency, its journalists, and the service it provides, although the competence of the senior journalists in the AAP Canberra office is acknowledged. It is felt by Gallery journalists that the service relies too much on inexperienced reporters who are brought from metropolitan newspapers for the parliamentary session. There are also traces of the traditional attitudes of newspaper journalists that agencies such as AUP and AAP are where you go when you cannot get a job anywhere else. Gallery journalists often complain about skimpiness and inaccuracies in AAP stories.²

Another important aspect of AAP coverage is the wire service convention that all stories have to be sourced. This rules out the unsourced speculation and background comment from unnamed spokesmen which appear frequently in the political journalism of all major print media journalists. The aim of AAP is to give a basic coverage based on hard fact. It can also claim with justice that it is the last area of political journalism where accurate note-taking is required, although shorthand is a declining art even among AAP parliamentary reporters.

¹ *Ibid.*

² Interviews, Michele Grattan, Kenneth Randall, *op. cit.*
Interview, Paul Kelly, Political correspondent for the *National Times*, 1976-78.

AAP reporters also point to the vested interest of their service in scrupulous accuracy. Any mistake is certain to be picked up somewhere on the agency's elaborate communications network.

AAP copy has become an indispensable tool for Gallery journalists, even those who place the most reliance on interpretative reporting. Blacks of all AAP parliamentary copy are available to each office which subscribes to the service, and these now include all of the major print media. Political correspondents building up a major story incorporate AAP material when they quote directly from what happens in Parliament. Roundsmen take the AAP coverage of Parliamentary Committees and use it as the basis of specialist news reports. The germs of many stories which appear under by-lines in the major newspapers come from bald AAP reports, invariably without acknowledgement. Head offices of the newspapers in the capital cities constantly vet the AAP services flowing through the teleprinters, and use them as the basis of requests for new stories and follow-ups from their Canberra offices. The impact and influence of AAP permeate every aspect of the reporting of federal politics.

The composition of the corps of journalists reporting federal politics for the main print media has changed markedly over the past fifteen years. In 1962, a senior journalist made predictions about the future staffing of the Gallery:

The top jobs in the press gallery now are nearly all held by men who are over 45, who have been in Canberra 15 years or longer, and who have worked for two or more newspapers. They have a wealth of technical knowledge When they retire these men will not readily be replaced. Unless the newspapers start looking ahead and training suitable men for political journalism there is going to be serious decline in press gallery competence - at a time when more than ever, this country needs competent reporting and interpretation of great national issues.¹

¹ Bennetts, *Press, Parliament and Public Interest*, *op. cit.*, p.16.

This rather pessimistic forecast was not substantiated. Certainly there was a dramatic change in the personnel of the Gallery in the mid-1960s which gathered momentum during the years of the Holt Government (1966-67). Rather than diminishing in calibre, there is a general consensus that the quality of the Gallery improved sharply and even rose to some sort of a peak during the five or six years that immediately followed (1966-67 to 1973). This period is looked back on now with nostalgia as some sort of golden age.¹

Part of the reason for the injection of new vitality into the major print media was mentioned in Chapter 4: the emergence of greater competition because of the dismantling of The Club and the establishment of the *Australian* in Canberra. Another major factor was the advent of a group of younger and, in some cases, better educated journalists, at the head of the major print media offices. The surging of a new wave became part of the Gallery mythology:

In the calmer days of the long Menzies years in office, with political news less prominently used and slabs of Hansard filling space these days occupied by comment and interpretation, Canberra was a cosier place for journalists Then, in the middle and late 1960s bureau chiefs' jobs went to a new breed . . . energetic, iconoclastic, self-confident and eloquent, they transformed political reporting in Australia.²

This sort of appraisal does scant justice to either the new breed or the old. Certainly, the Gallery in previous years had been marked by periods of sluggishness, complacency and mediocrity. Certainly its performance had been marred by the application of restrictive trade

¹ See John Edwards. 'Canberra Press Gallery 1: An Isolated Community', *New Journalist*, 11 November 1973; Geoff Allen. 'How That News Leaks Out', the *Age*, 23 January 1975; and 'How the Gallery Operates', the *Age*, 24 January 1975; Peter Smark. 'Gallery Conflict', the *Age*, 13 June 1977.

² Smark, *op. cit.*

practices with regard to the gathering and dissemination of news. Given the limitations of technology and the accepted conventions of political journalism, there had also been periods of excellence. Even during the bleakest days when news had been hard to get, there had been journalists in the Gallery with the considerable capability required to beat the system and break political news stories.

Another incorrect assumption that is usually made about the 'renaissance' of the mid 1960s is that it was based on a group of young journalists with better educational qualifications than their predecessors. There had always been a proportion of university-trained journalists in the Gallery, even though the majority were trained in the conventional sink or swim environment of Australian newspapers. One of the early members of the Canberra Gallery, Warren Denning, has left a vivid oral memoir of the education he acquired at the embryonic Canberra University College in the early 1930s.¹ Another distinguished Gallery journalist and war correspondent entered political journalism after some years of legal training. There are other examples of political journalists with a sound academic training. The influx of new Heads of Service and other senior journalists in the mid to late 1960s included a number who had degrees, but it included just as many who did not. The new elite of Heads of Service was split about equally between those with university training and those who had made their way in a difficult profession by training on the job. A number of senior journalists who had worked in the Gallery for more than fifteen years were still there during these years and added to its lustre. The Periclean period from the mid-1960s to 1973 was not solely the work of the 'Young Athenians'.

¹ Warren Denning, ANL TRC 399.

These were also the years of the rise to power of the Labor Party. The decline of a long-entrenched Conservative Government and the revival of a long moribund Democratic Socialist Opposition provided the material for vivid reporting and incisive interpretation. These opportunities were seized eagerly by the new breed of commentators. The firm trend to greater interpretation and analysis was given impetus by the growing usurpation of straightforward reporting by the electronic media. This picture of the Gallery during these years conveys something of the flavour of this change in the role of the main print media, although it over-emphasises the university training:

To compete, political writers have to give their readers something different for breakfast. What they can do better than television is explain and analyse the events heard about the night before. Interpretative analysis makes greater intellectual demands on journalists. This may be why, ahead of the same trend in the profession as a whole, there is a new wave of university-trained journalists in the gallery taking over from the older police round trained craft journo.¹

These effulgent years had started to lose their gleam by the time of the election of the Labor Government in 1972. Some of the senior journalists had been transferred to executive posts back at their city offices. The Labor Government recruited heavily from the Gallery to man its publicity staff. The relative stability of personnel in the Gallery which had lasted for almost seven years ended rather abruptly, and there was a rapid turnover of personnel which accelerated during the years of the Labor Government. One of the consequences was that Heads of Service became even younger; several were under thirty. The Gallery consolidated briefly for a period following the change of

¹ Allen, the *Age*, 24 January 1975, *op. cit.*

Government at the end of 1975, but there was another wave of changes in senior personnel during 1978. At the end of 1978, only a handful of journalists who had seen the installation of the Labor Government in December 1972 were still in the Gallery. There were even fewer survivors of the 1960s.

Comparison of a relatively turbulent period with one of considerable stability has been inevitably to the detriment of the contemporary Gallery. Part of the criticism levelled at the present Gallery is justified. Perhaps in reaction to the trumpeted excellence of the 'university trained' journalists, there was some revival of cruder journalistic practice. One study of the Gallery conducted in 1977 found evidence of these attitudes:

Most Gallery journalists have been trained as generalist reporters before commencing as political journalists. It was emphasised by each journalist that good political reporting was based on writing skill and good 'news sense'. Reporting politics was seen by them as no different from reporting any other area. As one journalist said, 'The principles used in reporting are the same whether you are reporting a crash on the corner or the coup of 1975'. And as another journalist explained, 'A lot of people make the mistake of thinking politics is something completely different to say police rounds or court reporting, but it's not. I was trained basically as a police roundsman. Now that training, the old foot in the door technique, chasing people, getting contacts, that's the basis of any good reporting.'¹

This sort of fundamental journalism which has not changed since the era of H.L. Mencken, or Hecht and MacArthur's 'Front Page', has always been a part of the Press Gallery, just as it has always been part of professional journalism. At the other extreme is an insistence on

¹ Pamela Steele. *Political Journalism at the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, Canberra*, APSA Conference, Adelaide, 1978, p.14.

academic training as the basis of political or politico-economic reporting. Somewhere in the middle is the sort of professional approach which mixes a respect for the basics of the craft with a recognition that excellence in political journalism is possible only through educational improvement, whether by self education or through the academy. All of these attitudes and any number of gradations in between are present in the Gallery today, just as they have always been a part of political journalism in Australia.

In terms of professional standards, the present Gallery is perhaps inferior to the Gallery of the early 1970s in its ability to concoct plausible interpretative pieces. By matching Head of Service with Head of Service it is possible to draw the conclusion that pound for pound the Gallery was rather better ten or even five years ago. These comparisons are misleading because the contemporary Gallery is a substantially different institution from even the Gallery of 1972. Another yardstick can be applied. The conventional test of a Gallery correspondent's standing is his ability to break stories. On this gauge, the contemporary Gallery would be superior to most of its predecessors, judged by the creditable performance of its principal news breakers during 1977 and 1978. The important point is that the Gallery is subject to cyclical changes as it continues to evolve. The present Gallery is neither better nor worse than previous Galleries; it is merely different.

The rapid turnover in Gallery personnel during the past five years makes it possible to draw only a few general conclusions about the characteristics of the main print media journalists. The trend to younger Heads of Service reached a bottom point in 1973-74, and there

has been a renewed emphasis on the appointment of older journalists. The median age of Heads of Service would now be well into the thirties while three or four years ago it would have hovered around thirty. The median age of all of the sixty or so main print media journalists in the Gallery has remained below thirty for at least the past six years.

The number of women in the Gallery has increased steadily over the past ten years, although their proportion of the whole Gallery is still minute. In 1960 there were no women among the thirty-nine journalists included in the Gallery List. By 1977, the figure had climbed to ten out of the 109 journalists listed. Most of these women were reporters for the main print media, so the percentage of women in this category is rather higher than for the Gallery as a whole. The first women Heads of Service were not appointed until the mid-1970s. Two have so far attained this status, and they are among the Gallery journalists most admired by Federal parliamentarians, according to this assessment by a Liberal back-bencher:

One of the most striking features of being an ex-journalist MP is in comparing the professional activity of your former colleagues with what you know the real story to be. On this basis, apart from two women Gallery chiefs and a couple of senior male journalists, the standard of general coverage of Parliament is not very high.¹

This comment expresses as well the general feeling of parliamentarians that their activities are poorly reported. Members of the House of Representatives in particular feel aggrieved that the proceedings of their chamber are not reported more fully. They are acutely aware that apart from Question Time and a few major speeches, the galleries are

¹ Michael Baume, MHR, *Canberra Times*, 28 May 1978, p.2. A third woman head of service was appointed early in 1979.

unoccupied save for the AAP and ABC reporters, and one or two journalists from the main print media. Senators have always suffered from neglect in reporting of their chamber and they are less sensitive on this point. In many ways, the Senate is better reported now than it has ever been, particularly the Estimates Committees and the Sub-Committees of the Senate Standing Committees. The consciousness of media apathy is the main characteristic of the present relationship between the Gallery and the Parliament.

The main channel for this relationship between Gallery and Parliament runs between the Gallery Committee and the Presiding Officers of the Parliament. This has flowed smoothly in recent years, and there have been no major incidents since the Everingham expulsion in 1973. Such harmony is certain to be subjected to intensive strains in the years ahead as planning intensifies for the accommodation needs of a 'New and Permanent' Parliament House.

The course of formal relationships between Prime Ministers and Press Gallery was traced in Chapter 4. Gallery reporting for the major print media is also dependent on a range of informal contacts. As an example, evening newspaper journalists used to wait at the top of the front steps to catch Prime Minister Holt as he arrived each morning to enter his office. This gave an opportunity for a brisk exchange which often provided the basis for afternoon stories. In recent years most Prime Ministers have entered through a side door leading directly into the Prime Ministerial suite, and they have been exposed to interception mainly by the electronic media. The opportunities for informal access by main print media journalists have varied from Prime Minister to Prime Minister.

Whatever reservations the Gallery has had about its formal access to the Prime Minister, main print media journalists have found that direct access to Prime Minister Fraser on a particular issue or a specific query has been good. Fraser has usually been prepared to see them, give them background information, and, on occasions, to make complaints about the treatment of particular stories. There is some suggestion that this access may be granted somewhat selectively; it is part of the Gallery mythology that News Ltd journalists enjoy the most frequent and ready access to the Prime Minister. Another senior journalist who had not tried to get direct access to the Prime Minister felt that if her insistence was strong enough and if the matter were sufficiently important, then she would be able to see the Prime Minister. On a one-to-one basis, it is felt that Fraser is an accessible Prime Minister for senior main-print media journalists.¹

Fraser's approach to the main print media has been structured at three levels. The informal access given to Gallery journalists is one level. At a higher level, the Prime Minister is in regular contact with newspaper editors by phone and through the calling of occasional assemblies of editors in Canberra, usually over dinner at the Prime Minister's Lodge. Such briefings have been organised on the basis of bringing together all of the editors of each group at separate functions; the Melbourne *Herald* group one evening, News Ltd another, John Fairfax another. These occasions have been erratic in their production of newsworthy material. On one occasion, an editor interpreted an observation by the Prime Minister that he might spring an election as confirmation

¹ Interviews, Michele Grattan and Paul Kelly, *op. cit.*

that there would be an election in the spring, and this story was run prominently in his paper. Undoubtedly, these gatherings have served the Prime Minister's purpose of getting his message through to the main print media at executive level. At a higher level still, the Prime Minister maintains links with the most elevated echelons of newspaper management. Little is known of the nature of these vital contacts although there is a trove of Gallery lore about their impact.

The importance of the relationship between the main print media and the electronic media within the Gallery is taken up in the next section, and again in the conclusion. An important point is that the technology of the electronic media has developed very rapidly in recent years, while the technology of the main print media in the Gallery has remained basically unchanged since the introduction of the teleprinter. Newspapers have the potential for a rapid increase in computerisation and electronic production which will transform traditional reporting when eventually they are applied. It will be some years yet before this technology has any impact on the Gallery.

2. Electronic Media

Important aspects of the emergence of the electronic media in the Gallery have been touched on in earlier chapters: the creation of the ABC news service, the tentative development of commercial radio news services, introduction of television to Australia in the mid-1950s. Reference was made to the lethargic approach of the electronic media to political coverage. As late as 1971, there were no television facilities in Parliament House. A perceptive account of the role of the electronic media in Parliament House has made this comment on their belated entry:

The electronic media were surprisingly late entrants to the Gallery, and their presence was certainly not influenced by the capabilities of technology, as it was, in fact, the older of the two, radio, which was last to appear in strength . . . It was not till 1973 that radio networks outside the ABC began employing their own representatives in the Gallery.¹

Much of the responsibility for the lack of electronic media interest in the Gallery is attributable to the traditional news gathering techniques of the ABC. It had established Australia's first independent news service, and it had developed a style of reporting and writing which was suited to the peculiar needs of that service. ABC news was written to be read with precision and accuracy by announcers who articulated excellently. Furthermore, because the ABC was an official news service, it did not indulge in speculation or conjecture. It was as strict as a wire service in applying the principles of sourcing: material had to be backed by an authorised handout or it had to be sourced to an official spokesman in a way which was irrefutable. Over the years, the ABC Canberra bureau had assembled an idiosyncratic team of reporters who were admirably suited to the traditional needs of ABC radio, but who did not adjust readily to television.

As a consequence, television news was regarded as an adjunct of radio news, even in the late 1960s. A senior journalist was deputed to conduct television interviews and he was assisted by another staff member. The equipment available was heavy and antiquated, mainly consisting of discards from Sydney and Melbourne. Interviews were sought with sporadic intensity, usually on matters raised in Question Time.

¹ Derek Woolner, 'Change and Continuity in the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery', essay for Sociology, SGS, ANU, 1976, p.11.

When major news events occurred, such as the retirement of Sir Robert Menzies or the overthrow of Prime Minister Gorton, Outside Broadcast (OB) units were dispatched from Sydney.¹

Reference was made earlier to the rivalries between the ABC news service and the ABC Public Affairs Department. Each ran radio and television programs which quite often duplicated material and got badly in each other's way. In 1967, the Public Affairs Department had established 'This Day Tonight' (TDT) a current affairs program which went to air on national television each night after the 7 p.m. news. TDT was represented from the outset by its own correspondent in the Gallery, and the professionalism of TDT's political coverage was distinctly superior to the often awkward presentation of news staff trying to get basic interview material for television as well as handling radio news assignments and coping with multiple deadlines.

For the comptrollers of the ABC news service, the last straw came early in 1971 when Prime Minister Gorton was overthrown after a sequence of dramatic events. The application by the ABC Canberra office of the traditional principle of no report without sourcing meant that developments inside the Government party room which led directly to the dismissal of Mr Gorton were not reported by ABC news. The absence of the Gorton story from major ABC news bulletins did not escape the viewers and there was a heavy volume of complaints to ABC management. As a short-term expedient, reporters and an OB van were dispatched from Sydney to cover the wash-up of Gorton's dismissal. As a longer-term measure, a political correspondent was appointed to the ABC's Canberra bureau with the objective of avoiding a repetition of this embarrassing incident.

¹ Interview, Colin Parkes, Political correspondent for Radio Station 2SM, Sydney, and former ABC journalist.

He was given a completely open brief, but told not to rock the boat. The appointment ended a generation of traditional news coverage by the ABC news service.¹

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the commercial television networks relied on improvisation for their Canberra coverage. The Channel 7 network was the first to appoint a permanent representative, although there were breaks in continuity of representation. During one of these interregnums, the Seven network was represented by a freelance journalist who used to set up his camera in front of Parliament House, line up an interview, set the camera in motion by use of a delayed timing device, and rush hastily to his subject and conduct the interview. Another network used a still photographer and his commercial studio in conjunction with a print media journalist from the Gallery. The national 10 network had, for a number of years, an arrangement with a Gallery news service for television film coverage.

These ad hoc arrangements were supplanted in the early 1970s by more ambitious arrangements. There is substantial agreement that the advent of the Labor Government was the catalyst which lifted the quality of electronic media coverage and the resources devoted to it. This was partly due to Whitlam's regular press conferences, where the networks had excellent opportunities to display their staff representative questioning the Prime Minister. It was also due to the sheer newsworthiness of the Labor Government:

Furthermore, some of the electronic media journalists claim, the period of ALP Government was ideally suited to the development of television and radio reporting. They were

¹ Interview, Ken Begg, ABC Political correspondent, 1970-77.

full of visually exciting incidents. Events that would have occupied a few lines in a newspaper, stating that the Prime Minister had gone to Government House to seek a double dissolution, could for TV become a major production, showing him leaving the House, inter-acting with supporters, and physically driving into the night and his 'appointment with history'.¹

This account perhaps under-states the amount of newspaper coverage that a double dissolution would generate, but it correctly expresses the opportunities for television coverage in the drama of such an event.

Each of the three television networks appointed permanent Canberra representatives during these years (1972-75). These journalists were reinforced by technical staff; cameramen, sound and lighting assistants. This development brought a new breed of media representative to the Parliament:

They seem to work out of a small caravan of station-wagons which can usually be seen parked around the Parliament, adorned with the logos of the various media groups Younger, more casual in their dress (they don't have to enter those areas of Parliament where a coat and tie is still a necessary passport), they may seem more inclined to turning their talents to making a surfing movie than writing [reporting] . . . on the latest development in politics.²

The 'paparazzi' qualities of technical staff and the restriction of their working areas mainly to the front steps and side entrances to Parliament House distinguished these electronic media workers from the Gallery. As the majority of them were not members of the AJA, they were not admitted to the Gallery. These distinctions were broken down gradually, and as the electronic media assumed a permanent place in the Gallery, most cameramen and technical assistants joined the AJA and were admitted formally to the Gallery.

¹ Woolner, *op. cit.*, p.13.

² *Ibid.*, p.4.

The networks in these early years faced immense technical problems in getting Canberra material to air. The schedule of gathering film material for mid-day plane flights has been described. Gradually the deadlines were forced forward and through better communications and processing techniques, it became possible to film political material in the afternoon and transmit to the networks for the evening news bulletins around 6-6.30 p.m. each night. The most important development for communications was the establishment of coaxial cable and microwave links which allowed film material to be fed to Sydney and Melbourne as late as 5.15-5.30 p.m. Allowing an hour for film processing, the TV teams could film quick interviews after Question Time in time for the evening news. The only one of the three commercial networks with studios in Canberra was Channel 7, whose studios were awkwardly located at the top of Black Mountain in the heart of Canberra. On occasions, 7 network reporters were able to inveigle politicians to make the trip 'up the mountain' during their dinner break for a studio interview which went directly to air. The 7 network also made studio space and facilities for processing and transmitting available to the other networks. The ABC had its own studios in Canberra.

In many ways, these studio resources were unsatisfactory, and the networks moved to establish themselves in Parliament House. The 9 network established a miniature studio as part of the Consolidated Press office in the Gallery during 1971 (see Chapter 4). Channel 7 and Channel 10 were given a joint studio facility in 1974, and this served the demands of their networks for Canberra material until 1978. A re-arrangement of Gallery accommodation enabled the 7 network to establish its own studio in the vacated Sydney *Sun* office, and Channel 10 became sole occupant of the studio which it had used jointly with 7.

The ABC had access to studio facilities in Parliament House because of its responsibility for Parliamentary broadcasts. This had given it some leverage within the Parliament, and it was able to establish a joint radio and television facility on the lower ground floor of the parliamentary building, two floors below the Press Gallery where the other studios were located and considerably closer to Kings Hall and ministerial offices. Both news and public affairs used this facility for radio and television programs, so its resources were strained, particularly during the evening rush period from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. By the end of 1978, each of the four electronic networks had within Parliament House facilities which represented a considerable investment, given the limitations imposed by space.

The expansion of television reporting during the 1970s owed much to other technological developments. The most significant was the introduction of electronic cameras allowing the videotaping of material which, in certain circumstances, could be got directly to air. These cameras were themselves a response to another technological development which transformed the Australian television industry - the advent of colour. The commercial television stations reaped tremendous rewards from the turnover which colour generated, and part of this was ploughed back into new equipment. The electronic cameras cost around \$100,000 each; some models were rather more expensive. At the end of 1978, the Channel 7 network had allocated two of these electronic units to its Canberra office. The other commercial networks had one each.¹

¹ Interview, Laurie Wilson, Political correspondent, Channel 7 network.

Although television equipment had been refined progressively in the preceding years from the monolithic units which had been used in the 1960s and early 1970s, there was no precedent for the quantum leap which the electronic cameras brought to political coverage. Even the most mobile of the film cameras had required a basic crew of three (including the interviewer) and in some cases more. Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser had noted rather pointedly during the 1975 election campaign that of the television teams that interviewed him regularly, the ABC crews always contained more manpower than the private enterprise commercial teams. Interview material was usually sound on film which was difficult to edit. The other staple of television reporting was voice-over commentary which was projected over film of such events as politicians arriving at Parliament House or sitting around a conference table.

The electronic cameras could at a pinch be operated by one man, although usually two were employed. There was no problem with sound equipment, because the single unit combined the sound and picture functions, nor was there the same requirement of elaborate lighting for interviews shot indoors. Film was replaced by videotape cassettes which could be used half a dozen times or more. Although the initial investment was high, it was more than recouped by subsequent savings, particularly the elimination of film processing and the high cost of film (\$80 to \$100 for a hundred feet of film, compared with a cassette for about \$30).¹

¹ *Ibid.*

The electronic cameras provided tremendous logistical gains for television reporters who used them. They eliminated the need for processing, which previously had enforced a deadline of around 4 p.m. for film material. They removed the need for frequent trips to studios and processing facilities which were 'up the mountain' or at other inconvenient locations. Above all, they opened the way for a new era of flexibility in the presentation of political material for television.

The electronic cameras could record material that would then be fed to the network using the conventional coaxial cable links which had been installed in the Parliament House studios. In certain circumstances, the cameras could be used to shoot material that went directly to air. This required the use of special plugs which were installed at four points in Parliament House - the Prime Minister's office, the front steps area, and two Senate Committee Rooms where major press conferences were held. Plugging in the electronic cameras at these points provided a direct line to the studios in the Gallery upstairs, and from there to the network via the coaxial cable.¹

In theory, this gave the commercial networks the ability to put political material directly to air at any time. This flexibility was limited to some extent by network programming that scheduled news services around 6-7 p.m. In 1977-78 the networks began experimenting with later news services. Sydney's Channel 9 tried a later bulletin during the summer months, and Channel 7 in Sydney introduced a news service for half an hour each night at 10.30 p.m. The electronic cameras and coaxial cable links made it possible to insert items from Canberra directly into

¹ *Ibid.*

these news bulletins, or to break into regular programs with news flashes from Canberra. To give an hypothetical example, it would be possible for a television station with a 10.30 p.m. news bulletin to include direct coverage from its Canberra office of the House of Representatives adjournment debate which begins at 10.30 p.m. each sitting night. The notional deadlines for the television stations are now rather later than newspaper deadlines which are usually around 9.30-10 p.m. for copy from the Gallery.

Granted the formidable technological underpinning that has emerged, it is pertinent to examine briefly the patterns of political coverage which have been applied by television journalists from Canberra. Reference was made earlier to the traditional code of radio reporting which was observed by the ABC and how this restricted the coverage of politics for television. The impact of TDT, the first television current affairs program to apply a systematic coverage of national politics, was also indicated. TDT commentators mixed straight comment pieces with extended interviews, either on a one to one basis or with a panel which was representative of broad political groupings. These segments varied in length from around two minutes for a straight comment piece to five minutes or even longer for an interview or panel discussion.

The advent of TDT created problems for the ABC news service by its use of straight comment on political developments, including party and Cabinet meetings. It also aroused tensions and resentments because of the inevitable competition for interviews that occurred between the two ABC programs. News was at a competitive disadvantage because TDT could offer more time to develop a theme, and more professional interviewing. It was difficult for news to obtain a minute or so of filmed

material when the subject could get up to five minutes of prime time on TDT. It was not unusual for the 7 p.m. news bulletin to be scooped by the current affairs program which followed it. All of these factors were involved in the decision of the ABC News Service to appoint a political correspondent whose reports would be used on television and on radio. He was given a specific injunction to upgrade the quality of the ABC's political coverage, to compete directly with TDT and to break stories where possible.¹

This correspondent approached the job of writing for television news in much the same way as writing for newspapers. In effect, he wrote 15-20 paragraph news stories in a format which derived from newspapers and read these stories to the camera. No attempt was made to dress up the presentation or to give a sense of omniscience by the use of audio cues or other devices which assist apparently spontaneous commentary. The success of this sort of austere presentation depended on the skills of the correspondent, and it proved an extremely successful vehicle for political reportage. The format permitted a full range of sober speculation about what had happened in Cabinet, party meetings and other secret conclaves; it also permitted the gossip of the lobbies and the Gallery to be adverted to without any trace of scurrilousness. These brief commentaries by the political correspondent became the political linchpins of both television and radio bulletins. They were supplemented by interviews and the use of conventional voice-over commentary pieces. Although the format did not provide as much time as TDT either for commentary or interviews, it allowed rather more than had

¹ Begg, *op. cit.*

been customary on either ABC or commercial television bulletins. During the dramatic years of the Labor Government, particularly the constitutional crisis of late 1975, segments of up to three minutes were used from the political correspondent. Because no attempt was made to present them as spontaneous comment, and with the correspondent occasionally averting his eyes from the camera to look at his notes, the segments conveyed a rough-hewn authenticity which was a refreshing contrast to blander styles of news presentation.

The servicing of ABC radio and television made taxing demands on the resources of the ABC political correspondent. Quite often, he began work at 7 a.m. updating morning papers to provide voice material for the early morning radio bulletins. The daily schedule provided an incessant writing and up-dating of the major stories for successive radio bulletins and for the nightly television news. These demands were increased when the ABC News Department initiated a 15-minute news program called 'News Voice' at 5 p.m. each afternoon. He also received requests for 'light' material from the ABC's rock station, 2JJ, and for occasional stories from Radio Australia. There was some easing of these pressures when the radio news agreed to run the text of the television commentary, relinquishing any right to its own independent story. During the constitutional crisis and the weeks which preceded it, the commentaries of the political correspondent were inserted frequently into regular program schedules. On one occasion, seven of these inserts were made into programs between 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. during a dramatic day in which Cabinet changes were made and one Minister refused to vacate his portfolio.¹

¹ *Ibid.*

In the early 1970s, the ABC radio news service had come under challenge from the establishment by the Public Affairs Division of morning and evening current affairs programs, AM and PM. AM ran for 30 minutes and was broadcast each morning at 8 a.m. PM ran for 25 minutes and went to air each evening at 6.05 p.m. The programs competed directly with radio news. The main ABC bulletin at 7.45 a.m. each morning preceded AM and its shorter 6 p.m. bulletin preceded PM. The 15 and 5 minute ABC bulletins could not match the scope of AM and PM which often devoted five minutes or even longer to an important item. AM and PM relied heavily on Canberra material and the joint programs had two staff reporters working in the Gallery. They obtained the services of some excellent interviewers who were able to match the efforts of the more incisive TV interviewers. Using the light tape recorders of the radio journalist, these interviewers were more mobile than TV teams and they could slip in and out of Parliament House offices with a minimum of fuss and disruption when collecting material.

With regard to the timing of political news material, AM and PM had distinct advantages over ABC news. Much of the daily news gathering ritual is focussed on the crucial period from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. when the TV stations are preparing their bulletins and putting them to air, and the main print media are weighing up available material and how it should be printed. Consequently, the release of much political material is timed to catch it. Another factor is the conclusion of the afternoon sittings of the Parliament at 6 p.m. when more politicians become available. The objective of embargoes on use of material has been to free it for the 7 p.m. ABC news, although this traditional focal point has receded in importance. Accordingly, PM had an advantage over the 7 p.m. ABC news bulletins in access to material. One of the reasons for

the introduction of 'News Voice' by ABC news at 5 p.m. each afternoon was to try to pre-empt the impact of PM.

This inter-action of ABC news and current affairs radio programs caused strains and resentments among ABC Gallery staff, although these were not as intense as in the main metropolitan offices of the ABC. The Public Affairs Department had given the conventional and somewhat staid News Department a nasty jolt with its vigorous entry into current affairs programs for radio and television in the late 1960s and early 1970s. After initial discomfiture, News reacted well and its political services improved as a result. The traditional rivalry between the two departments did not disappear, although the two reporters for AM and PM were accommodated in the ABC News Bureau in the Gallery and generally got on well enough with their colleagues.

The rivalry between the two ABC departments reached a climax when the Labor Government was dismissed on 11 November 1975. PM came on air early in the afternoon of that dramatic day with a special coverage from its reporters at Parliament House. This was resented by News staff who claimed that the Public Affairs Department had usurped its charter for coverage of parliamentary and political news. News journalists held a stop-work meeting in Sydney and there were threats of industrial action, but the issue blew over without any resolution of the long-simmering problems of demarcation between the two departments.¹

The techniques of the commercial television networks were influenced by the current affairs programs, particularly TDT, but for the most part they were confined to a stricter format than applied even with ABC news.

¹ *The Journalist*, January 1978, pp.2-3.

The segments of political news supplied for television bulletins were generally briefer than those on the ABC. The maximum segment was around 90 seconds but quite often less time was available. A television journalist could either film four or five minutes of a political interview in the hope of getting 90 seconds of controversial or at least usable material, or if time were short, he could take a stab and put one or two questions to a politician on the steps of Parliament House and accept what emerged. There were few politicians with the skills necessary to provide crisp or meaningful answers in such a time span. The end result was often 90 seconds of filibustering or irrelevancies; quite often the answer had nothing to do with the cue question. With this sort of requirement, it was impossible for even the most skilful television interviewer to display his talents. His role was confined basically to lining up the interview, asking a cue question, and squeezing in one or two other questions if he had the time, then hoping for the best. Similar time constraints applied to the stand-up comment pieces which were supplied by television journalists. Very often, the main impression supplied by commentator and the politician interviewed was one of breathlessness as each sought to cram the maximum wordage into the allotted time.

This standard format for television news was a source of frustration to some television journalists, who sought outlets in current affairs programs or in other programs where they were given more time. The years of the Labor Government were the green years of TV current affairs programs with the ABC's TDT, and 'State of the Nation', and 9 network's 'Federal File' and 'Willesee at 7', 7's 'Current Affair' and the 10 network's 'Darcey and Power' (a combined program which covered NSW State

politics and federal politics). Some of these programs were specialist political programs but the general current affairs programs also included a large component of federal politics. This emphasis on current affairs programs and political television fell dramatically after 1975 and most had disappeared by the end of 1978. It meant that political reporters for the commercial networks were forced back to the news bulletins as the main vehicles for their talents.

Because of the restrictions of their format and lack of opportunities, television journalists were often regarded as of inferior status by main print media journalists. They were seen as 'Prits' who tended to ask easy questions which let a politician off the hook, whether at a general press conference or in a one-to-one interview situation. It was also argued that their role was confined to setting up interviews, and in effect providing a cue for a politician to deliver an often uninterrupted spiel. These criticisms were unfair to television journalists working in a format which favoured the politician and where there were few chances for crisp or incisive questioning. There was the added problem for the commercial networks that political coverage by its nature was confined to talking heads; there was little that could be done to dramatise it visually, and for this reason it was less appealing to audiences than more striking visual material. When television journalists were given greater scope, as in current affairs programs or in extended interview and commentary pieces, their performance was invariably competent. It was the demands of the news format rather than any lack of ability which inhibited political coverage by television journalists.

Earlier in this section, reference was made to the comparatively late arrival of commercial radio representation in the Gallery. During the 1970s radio coverage built up only gradually. At the end of 1978 there were four accredited radio journalists in the Press Gallery. All represented Sydney commercial stations: 2UE with one reporter, 2GB with one, 2SM with two. These reporters also serviced associated networks. Other networks and stations were serviced by a variety of stringing and other ad hoc arrangements. Many radio networks and individual stations have ownership links with the main print media groups, and have been able to draw on the services of main print media offices in the Gallery. Other journalists in the Gallery have assembled clienteles of independent radio stations which can be serviced by phone. Radio reporting was given a boost by the introduction of the STD telephone service which allows uninterrupted contact between the Gallery and the recipient of the service.¹

The technology of the radio news reporter is a simple one, and this has given radio reporters considerable mobility and freedom within Parliament House. The only essentials are a simple cassette recorder which can be slung over the shoulder, a telephone and regular access to the coaxial cable for transmission of taped material to the studio. For urgent demands, a radio reporter can quickly phone a report to his office, and he is within easy reach to meet a sudden request from a talk-back or current affairs program. The Sydney station, 2SM, has embarked on an ambitious experiment in Canberra presentation with a leg-man collecting interviews by tape-recorder and a commentator whose home is linked to

¹ Parkes, *op. cit.*

the studio by land-line. A certain amount of pooling goes on between radio reporters. It is a comparatively simple matter to transcribe material from a tape and interpolate questions as required. This sort of unofficial co-operation allows a greater coverage, particularly during peak periods, and saves politicians from the annoyance of giving the same interview to three different radio reporters. As with the commercial TV networks, items for commercial radio are usually extremely brief, although interviews can run a little longer.

Commercial radio has moved away from current affairs programs in recent years, although it has a long and in many respects creditable tradition in this genre of broadcasting. Commercial radio, and the Macquarie network in particular, has done much to develop commentary on current affairs, and this has included a considerable amount of political comment of varying quality. The twice daily political commentaries on the Macquarie network by Frank Chamberlain from the Gallery achieved a vast listening audience through the 1960s and early 1970s. Current affairs comment and political analysis has been supplanted on commercial radio by talk-back programs which make frequent use of politicians and are an interesting if unreliable guide to what is agitating the electoral consciousness. The talk-backs have been extremely important in recent election campaigns, but the Gallery input into them has been slight, and it is not proposed to discuss them here. The content of talk-back is blander and invariably less informed than the programs of idiosyncratic and highly opinionated commentators such as Ormsby Wilkins, Claudia Wright and Norman Banks.

Coverage of overseas visits by the Prime Minister has become an important part of the work of the electronic media, particularly television. Each of the four national television networks has accompanied the recent journeys of the Prime Minister to Asia, Europe and America. Television teams have usually comprised a journalist and cameraman-technician who accepts all responsibility for moving equipment and getting film footage back to Australia. It has not been possible for television teams to use the electronic cameras overseas because of technical problems and lack of processing and transmitting facilities in many of the countries visited. This has thrown the networks back onto film with its processing problems and expense. These technical limitations have been more than compensated for by the arrival of 'satelliting', the use of international communications satellites to get material back to Australia. Feedback by satellite was used with success for the visits of Prime Ministers Whitlam and Fraser to China. On European and American trips, the usual practice has been to send film back to London for processing and the daily satellite feedback to Australia, usually getting to the network head offices at around 9.30 a.m. On occasions, a direct input to the satellite has been used, but this is an expensive process. Direct satelliting of ten minutes of material from Washington costs around \$A4,000.

On overseas trips, the television teams work closely with the international agency, Visnews which is a major supplier of overseas television material and still photographs. Visnews has been responsible for film processing and 'satelliting', and a senior officer of the agency has travelled with the Prime Minister's party to liaise with the television networks. 'Satelliting' has given the television networks

tremendous advantages over Press coverage of these visits. Quite frequently, film material has gone to air before the first Press reports arrived back in Australia.¹

Radio coverage has an insuperable advantage because voice reports can be phoned back quickly to radio offices in Australia. This has been an occasional source of embarrassment. On one occasion, Prime Minister Whitlam briefed a press conference in Washington about possible establishment of diplomatic relations with Cuba, a marked change in Australia's diplomatic stance. This story was filed by the ABC political correspondent with his offices in Australia where it was picked up and broadcast by the ABC's Radio Australia service which in turn was monitored by the State Department in Washington. It caused consternation in the US administration and among Foreign Affairs officials travelling with the Prime Minister's party who had not been advised that he intended to drop this story. The head of the Foreign Affairs Department searched unsuccessfully for the journalist who wrote the story to issue an official denial. In Canberra, the Acting Prime Minister complained to the General Manager of the ABC and threatened the imposition of a D notice to prevent further publication. (D notices prohibit publication in certain security sensitive areas. They are voluntary restraints accepted by media organisations.)²

The relationship between main print media journalists and electronic journalists in the Gallery has many elements of tension. Newspaper journalists frequently have a closer affinity with radio journalists who often have been recruited either directly from newspapers or have spent part of their career working for the Press.

1 Wilson, *op. cit.*

2 Begg, *op. cit.*

Television journalists have usually been trained for their medium and have worked solely within its parameters, although there have been important exceptions. The major print journalists regard themselves as the main stream of the Gallery and tend to be contemptuous of the qualifications of television journalists, and the milieu in which they work.

Undoubtedly, print media journalists have little comprehension of the technical problems of television reporting. The main concern of television journalists within Canberra has been to service their offices with material which has the technical competence and the relevance to be put quickly to air. This involves skills and teamwork of an order unfamiliar to main print media journalists who work to a different drum-beat.

Television journalists in recent years have tended to be contemptuous of the way in which main print media journalists have acquiesced in the media policies of Prime Minister Fraser. The frequent use by Fraser of electronic snippets to present his statements without the pressures of media interrogation has perplexed television journalists who have wondered how long newspaper journalists would let the Prime Minister 'screw them' in this way.¹ Although Fraser's approach benefits the electronic media, both television and radio journalists have backed efforts by their newspaper colleagues to guarantee equal access to all media. The issue generated most heat with the announcement of the 1977 election campaign. There is some confusion about who was responsible for a series of electronic media interviews which were given by both party leaders when the

¹ Kelly, Parkes, Wilson, *op. cit.*

announcement was made. According to one version, a number of electronic media representatives made requests for interviews with both leaders, and newspaper journalists became upset, even though they had not asked for interviews. Another version has it that both Fraser and Whitlam called the electronic media to their offices without notifying the print media. Whatever the circumstances, representatives of the main print media approached the electronic media and sought a concerted approach to the two political leaders, insisting that they should hold press conferences open to all media during the election campaign. This approach was formally ratified at a special meeting of the Gallery which adopted a resolution in these terms. Fraser and Whitlam generally adhered to this principle during the election campaign, although there were occasional strains between the different media and the political leaders.¹

More recently, attempts have been made to overcome divisions in the Gallery and achieve a greater coherence by bringing all of the media closer together. The electronic media have not been strongly represented on the Gallery Committee and attempts have been made to give them a greater say. The offices of the major print media have been more flexible in their attitudes to accommodation. The Sydney *Sun* office showed notable self-abnegation by relinquishing its office space in the new wing for the construction of a new studio by the 7 Network. Although the Fairfax organisation which owns the Sydney *Sun* also has a controlling interest in Sydney's Channel 7, the sacrifice of prestige accommodation in the Gallery context for a smaller office in the older Senate wing was resisted at the executive level of the newspaper in Sydney. It was a realistic recognition of the inter-locking media interests of one of Australia's four major media conglomerates.

¹ *Ibid.*

There is also increasing recognition among the major print media journalists that the emergence of television studios in Parliament House and the allocation of substantial investment by the television networks to equipment and other facilities must consolidate the position of television within the Gallery. If there is any reduction in Gallery accommodation, then the television networks will stay because of the costly infra-structure they have provided. The pressure would be on the major print organisations to justify their retention of space and explain why they should not move part of their operation outside the Gallery.

Despite divisions between the media within the Gallery, there is little likelihood that the electronic media might break away and form a separate Gallery. With the overall size of the Gallery increasing only very slowly, there is not a numerical justification for separate institutions. The electronic media have consolidated their place in the Gallery and have obtained accommodation and facilities within Parliament House which enable them to do their job with as much efficiency and economy of means as is possible in an antiquated building. With this sort of stability assured, the interests of the electronic media are best achieved by an organisation which recognises the complementarity of the media within Parliament House. It has been demonstrated that a joint approach by all media can protect their overriding interests. Although there are many points at issue between the different media, it is advantageous to have a common umbrella organisation which can represent them in negotiations with parliamentary officers and politicians.

3. The Fringe Media

This comprises a miscellaneous group of news and political services which are linked predominantly to the print media, although they have some links with the electronic media. It is a group on the fringe of the two main components of the Gallery, the main print media and the electronic media.

It is a fringe group in terms of its function and not of its status; most of its members have the same status in the Gallery as the main print media and the electronic media.

News services have been represented in the Gallery at least since the 1920s. These services have developed in two streams, one flowing into the agencies and syndicated services such as AAP and AUP; the other into a variety of small and often specialised services.

An important aspect of the fringe media is the establishment of political newsletters which are sold on a subscription basis. In some ways, these newsletters are related to traditional political pamphleteering, but they are also a derivation of the columns of political notes which were once the staple of political coverage in Australian newspapers. These notes have largely disappeared from newspapers but the tradition is maintained in a small group of newsletters issued from the Gallery.

There are two organisations whose place in the Gallery is based on newsletters with a strong flavour of politics and federal administration. One is Australian Press Services, publishers of the longest-running newsletter, *Inside Canberra*, which has been published for almost thirty years (see Appendix 6). *Inside Canberra* is a four-page newsletter which appears every week and is supplied to more than 1,200 subscribers and a free list of politicians, public servants and businessmen. At \$80 for a

year's subscription, *Inside Canberra* is a small but profitable venture for a two-man operation. It is devoted to general items of political news with an orientation to the important trade, resources and manufacturing areas of government. Most of its news items are brisk, although occasionally it runs longer items which contain details of administrative structures and changes in public service personnel. *Inside Canberra* is respected for its reliability and for its insights into an important area of Government, and it is widely read by politicians and public servants.

Australian Press Services publishes three other newsletters: *Canberra Commentary*, which is published each month in a similar format to *Inside Canberra* but with each issue devoted to an extended analysis of a single topic, usually of a trade or business nature; *Money Matters*, a financial and commercial newsletter which is compiled largely by resources outside the Gallery; and *Inside Asean*, a new venture devoted to economic and political news from South East Asian countries. It also services a number of country weekly and bi-weekly newspapers, a range of other publications on a stringer basis, and the Sydney radio station 2CH. In previous years Australian Press Services provided a Canberra service for the Channel 10 television network before it appointed its own representative in the Gallery, and for the major American news agency, United Press International (UPI).¹

The other major newsletter organisation is Objective Publications which inherited newsletter operations of Maxwell Newton who had established a regular newsletter called *Incentive* during the late 1960s.

¹ Interview, William Pinwell, Gallery freelance journalist.

This was succeeded by another newsletter, *Objective*, which was established by former employees of Newton. *Objective* was abandoned in 1977 and Objective Publications introduced a more elaborate newsletter, the *Laurie Oakes Report*, in August 1978 (see Appendix 7). This newsletter was moulded around the reporting skills of a senior Gallery journalist who had been the political correspondent for the Melbourne *Sun* for ten years. The *Oakes* newsletter was rather more ambitious than the modest *Inside Canberra*. Each issue ran to eight or so pages, and it included longer stories of up to one thousand words, as well as the conventional notes and snippets. It was more flexible in its format with some use of pictorial material, by comparison with *Inside Canberra*, which was plainly functional in its design. Like *Inside Canberra*, the *Oakes* newsletter was oriented to the business side of government, although its orientation was more to productivity, consumer affairs, and commercial law than to trade, resources and manufacturing. At the end of 1978, the *Oakes* newsletter had built up a subscription list of around 240 at a yearly fee of \$120. Objective Publications also publishes a specialised newsletter called *Energy* which has 240 subscribers at an annual fee of \$60 a year. It covers the oil, natural gas, uranium, and energy related industries.¹

There are other newsletter activities within the Gallery. *Monitor*, the social welfare newsletter, was mentioned earlier. It is not overtly commercial and was directed mainly to community groups at a modest fee. The extensive newsletter area outside Canberra, particularly in Sydney, is serviced by stringers in the Gallery.

¹ Interview, Jonathon Gaul, Proprietor, Objective Publications.

Newsletters of this sort have been made viable by new printing techniques, particularly advanced offset printing and typesetting procedures. Unlike newspapers, they can be produced cheaply and the techniques of newsgathering employed are similar to those of the other print media. All newsletters emphasise the breaking of stories in their chosen areas of expertise, and they are often successful in this endeavour. The technology that has made them economical also makes them vulnerable. Because of its format, it is possible to reproduce a newsletter in full by means of a photocopier. This means that multiple copies can be distributed through a government department, or other institution, although only one subscription is paid. In this way, the potential market of newsletters is cut back severely. They also face the obvious problem of all weekly or monthly publications relative to the daily press: much of their exclusive material is unlikely to hold until publication. Despite these problems, there is a growing demand for newsletters and it is an area of the Gallery where modest growth is likely.¹

Foreign newspaper coverage of Australia has been organised mainly through news agencies or Australian correspondents stationed in Sydney and Melbourne. Permanent representation in Canberra has not been a significant pattern. In the late 1950s the London *Times* established an office in Canberra, and its correspondent worked from the Gallery until the early 1970s when the *Times* reverted to a stringing arrangement. In the early 1960s, the Agence France Presse (AFP), one of the leading international news agencies, appointed an Australian correspondent who

¹ Bennetts, *op. cit.*, p.84.

worked from the Gallery. AFP is still represented in the Gallery, although it has moved its office from the Gallery to a nearby office block.

The Gallery has accredited a range of foreign correspondents, although almost all of them are based in Sydney or Melbourne, or make only occasional visits to Canberra. There was a surge of interest in the Gallery after Labor's victory at the end of 1972, and a number of American and European newspapers appointed correspondents, some of whom made regular visits to Canberra and used Gallery facilities. This interest gradually faded away. Correspondents were withdrawn and even as important a newspaper as the *New York Times* reverted to a stringing operation.

An important part of foreign representation in the Gallery has been the presence of accredited representatives of Government-sponsored news services. The Russian newspaper, *Pravda*, and its official newsagency, Tass, the Indonesian news service, Antara, and in recent years the Chinese Hsinhua have been accredited to the Gallery. Most of these journalists have worked from their embassies, relying on access to a box and to the galleries for their work, but Antara was given accommodation in the Gallery during the 1960s when the Government was trying to develop better relations with Indonesia. The Gallery accepted this without demur despite its traditional attitude that the Gallery's first responsibility was to those reporting the proceedings of Parliament for Australian daily newspapers and news services. R.J. Bennetts has provided an interesting surmise on the reasons for the Gallery's acquiescence in seating a representative of the official news service of a foreign government:

The Minister for External Affairs and his department, very anxious at that time to develop good relations with Indonesia, were reportedly very pleased The Gallery records do not disclose how or why these arrangements were made. But the episode demonstrates, perhaps, the flexibility of the Gallery and its recognition of the ultimate authority of the Parliament, and the influence of the executive branch of government, in determining the allocation of facilities for the journalists working in the Parliament building.¹

Frequent references have been made to the stringing arrangements made by Gallery journalists. It is difficult to trace these informal arrangements with any accuracy, because quite often they are unknown to the media organisations which employ Gallery journalists, and journalists have a vested interest in keeping them confidential. There is a feeling among journalists with lengthy experience in the Gallery that the volume of stringing has increased.² An important principle of stringing was that the arrangement followed the office rather than the individual journalist. For example, the string for the *Christian Science Monitor* was done by a senior *Financial Review* journalist and this persisted even when the personnel in the office changed. In recent years, stringing has become more flexible and there has been more mobility of stringing arrangements around the Gallery offices.

Another tendency has been for various strings to be grouped together in a way that constitutes a formal arrangement with one journalist working full-time to service several strings. Such an arrangement can only be organised around one major string which provides a basic retainer. The most substantial arrangement of this sort was built up by a journalist who serviced the *Financial Times* (a major London daily),

¹ Bennetts, *op. cit.*, p.84.

² Randall, *op. cit.*

Le Monde, the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, and other lesser strings. This loose arrangement dissolved when the journalist moved to other employment and the strings were re-allocated among the Gallery. Most of the strings are serviced through the international telex at the Canberra Post Office which is close to Parliament House.¹

The presence in the Gallery of Specialised Press Agency was referred to in the discussion on accommodation. Specialised Press Agency provides a service based on speed and comprehensiveness to a group of clients who pay for it. It is staffed by two partners and another journalist; apart from the Gallery office it maintains a supporting office in a Canberra suburb. Details of fees and the extent of its clientele are regarded as confidential business matters by its partners, although it is generally regarded within the Gallery as having a basic list of around 50 clients, including some of Australia's major corporations. The basis of the service is information obtained from the boxes, from parliamentary proceedings, and from official documents such as the Commonwealth Gazette. This material is vetted not with potential publication in mind, but for its interest to a particular client or a group of clients. The presence of Specialised Press Agency in the Gallery has aroused occasional objections, particularly over accommodation. There is general acceptance that the Specialised Press Agency was established in the Gallery for legitimate reasons, and that it is entitled to retain its place on historical grounds. A similar service, *Economic Press Services*, was established in the Gallery in 1969, again without serious challenge from the Gallery or its members. The founding father

¹ *Ibid.*

of Economic Press Services was a Head of Service in the Gallery, and it was run by his wife. The service built up a small clientele and was sold subsequently to another journalist who linked it with a number of press and radio stringing interests.

One final aspect of the fringe media deserves some reiteration. The vulnerability of the Gallery to lobbying was discussed earlier in the dispute over Maxwell Newton's membership of the Gallery. It was noted there that the Gallery had rejected applications from organisations with overt lobbying or public relations interests. A problem of a different sort is the acquisition of lobbying or public relations activities by organisations already represented in the Gallery. An example was Objective Publications, discussed above in the context of newsletters. In 1977, it established an affiliate, Canberra Liaison, which conducted public relations activities for a number of clients, including two government departments.

Both Objective Publications and Canberra Liaison worked from outside the Gallery, but Objective Publications had a box and its journalists had regular access to Parliament House and the Gallery. The activities of Objective Publications aroused occasional mutterings within the Gallery, but it was never challenged. There was recognition that it was difficult to draw a firm line with Gallery members whose bona fides had always been acceptable. Subsequent diversification into other activities, which were at best on the fringes of journalism, was not seen as a reason for disqualification from the Gallery, as long as there was differentiation of function. Access to the boxes was essential for publication of political newsletters, and it was also an important information bank which could be used for the benefit of

private clients. There was no way of rigorously enforcing a strict usage of the boxes solely for journalistic purposes.

One of the cards always held by organisations with lobbying connections is that part of Gallery stringing has been directed to the preparation of reports and other project material for private firms. This sort of work is closely related to the activities conducted quite openly by lobbyists and public relations firms. There are other common areas between the two professions; the lobbying of members of Parliament for business interests by procedures such as implanting ideas for questions and giving them speech material is not all that different from some journalistic techniques, although the end product differs. These factors make it difficult to enforce a strict purity on the uses of the Gallery.

In summary, the fringe journalists have an assured, although relatively minor, position in the Gallery, sanctioned by traditional usage. Numerically, it is not an important segment of the Gallery, although there are some prospects for modest growth in newsletter production and overseas representation. The fringe areas of the Gallery were hit particularly hard by the squeeze on Gallery accommodation, and most requests for access after 1973-74 were rejected. Most importantly, the fringe contains the seeds of future tensions over penetration of the Gallery by lobbyists, although it seems certain that established organisations will not be challenged.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The status of the media in the Australian Parliament is extremely ambiguous, completely lacking any semblance of constitutional or even formal justification. The Parliament tolerates the presence of the media within its precincts, and an intricate relationship has developed which is based on accepted conventions. The origins of this conventional basis have been described succinctly by a former Clerk of the House of Representatives (quoted also in Chapter 1):

The Gallery seems to be here because it is here. The Federal Gallery probably inherited the status and privileges of the Victorian Press Gallery when Federal Parliament occupied the State Parliament building in Melbourne. And I suppose the State Gallery simply carried on the traditions of the House of Commons when the Victorian Parliament was formed on the Westminster model.¹

The tolerance extended to the media has been in defiance of every canon of parliamentary privilege. As long as the Australian Parliament shirks the task of codifying its privileges, or defining in a formal way the basis and nature of its relationship with the media, the presence of the media within Parliament will rest on conventional foundations. Admittedly, these conventions are well established and there is no reason to believe that there is any threat to them, although the attitudes of the Presiding Officers is rather bellicose on occasions:

¹ A.G. Turner, quoted in R.J. Bennetts, 'Development of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, 1901-1968', Master of Arts Qualifying Thesis, Department of Political Science, SGS, ANU, p.5.

We have a sort of attic system in Parliament House which is infested by newspaper proprietors' hirelings. ABC people seem to have more there than all the newspapers of Australia put together. Newspaper people think they have an absolute right to go where they like in the pursuit of information. We will have to bring these people under control.¹

The ultimate supremacy of the Presiding Officers has been asserted with considerable force over incidents such as the 'Lousy List' and the Everingham expulsion. The media in Parliament has also been subject to considerable pin-pricking by the Presiding Officers, particularly Mr Speaker Cameron. These examples of self-assertion should be kept in perspective. On two notable occasions, Presiding Officers were not able to enforce a prohibition of journalists. With both the Alexander incident of 1931 and the expulsion of *Sunday Telegraph* journalists during World War II, a face-saving formula was adopted to resolve disputes. The Parliament has been relatively unassertive in its attitude to the media within its precincts. It has exercised occasional discipline over the Press through the Privileges Committee, but otherwise it has been content to leave the formal relationship with the media to the Presiding Officers. Despite this complaisance, it is always within the prerogative of Parliament to take this formal relationship out of the hands of the Presiding Officers and prescribe whatever form of relationship it wants. That this has not been done indicates parliamentary acceptance of the importance of the media in its processes, and an acknowledgement that it should be given special privileges and assistance in discharging its functions. This is the rationale for the generosity

¹ Sir Magnus Cormack, President of the Senate, *Sixth Conference of Presiding Officers and Clerks-at-the-Table*, Darwin, 18-20 June 1974, p.173.

of the Parliament in picking up each year a substantial bill for Gallery accommodation, cleaning, lighting and maintenance. It approved in the late 1960s a substantial expansion of the Gallery's accommodation, financed from the public purse. With such a broadly benevolent and permissive approach, the Gallery is given considerable freedom and flexibility in running its own affairs. The relationship with the Presiding Officers is of paramount importance in establishing the parameters for the Gallery's operation.

The most important restraint imposed by the Presiding Officers was the freeze on accommodation and membership prescribed in 1973. With the ceiling of Gallery membership established, its structure has acquired a measure of inflexibility. There is no reason to expect any relaxation of this rigidity while the Gallery remains in the present Parliament House. For this reason, the Gallery is likely to remain a status quo institution during the next few years.

Space has always been a major determinant of the Gallery structure and its working. It has been a principal theme of this thesis. Initially, the Gallery took over the Press accommodation of the Victorian State Parliament. The emergence of the Commonwealth produced a modest extension of Press space within the parliamentary chamber, and the available office space sufficed for the Gallery's needs during the next twenty-seven years. This was due to the adjacence of additional office space and a wide range of facilities in the Melbourne newspaper office, and because most of the rounds work was done outside Parliament. For these reasons, the Gallery accommodation was adequate while Parliament sat in Melbourne. With the move to Canberra, a larger Gallery was anticipated, but for a number of years the space supplied exceeded the demands of metropolitan newspapers and agencies for Canberra coverage.

The development of the Gallery over the forty years from 1927 is largely the story of its gradual expansion to fill the available space. In the process, accommodation was made available for small proprietors and organisations which formed the basis of a 'fringe' element, distinct from the main print media and the electronic media.

The move to Canberra had other consequences. It integrated the two branches of political journalism, parliamentary reporting and political rounds, into a unitary Gallery whose work was concentrated on Parliament House, the home of both the Parliament and the Executive Government. Within this integrated Gallery, the importance of parliamentary coverage gradually diminished. An electronic dimension was given to a Gallery which had been comprised exclusively of print media journalists by the introduction and extension of radio news services, and in later years by television.

Canberra brought a much greater transitory component to the Gallery, which had been built around the stability of the great Melbourne dailies, the *Age*, the *Argus*, and, to a lesser degree, the *Herald*. Canberra was a great leveller to the extent that it removed the supremacy of the Melbourne dailies and put all of the metropolitan dailies on much the same footing. Perhaps the Sydney newspapers enjoyed a relative advantage because of easier access by rail and embryonic air services, but this advantage was not significant. The establishment of the Gallery in Canberra also put much greater emphasis on communications and the technology for transmitting press copy.

In the early years in Canberra, the quota of journalists based full-time in the capital was extremely small as the newspapers found it more economical to move reporters in and out of Canberra according to

the demands of the parliamentary session. As the session dwindled in importance, and as the executive met more frequently in Canberra, the balance between permanents and sessionals also changed. Permanents, or journalists based full-time in Canberra, came to dominate the structure of the Gallery. It was not until the 1970s that the tenure of major print media journalists in the Gallery became more volatile as newspaper managements showed a great propensity to move members of their federal political staff more frequently.

In the years following World War II, the Gallery began to diversify its activities and to increase in size, at first almost imperceptibly, and then with growing rapidity. Until the late 1960s, this expansion was predominantly due to the growth of the major print media. The electronic media made an appearance in the Gallery which was belated in terms of technological development. Only in the years from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s did the electronic media begin to make an impact upon political coverage from the Federal Parliament. Television has now reached something of a peak in its political work from Canberra, but radio journalism still falls short of its potential coverage.

A main theme in the development of the post-war Gallery has been the steady encroachment of syndicated services, despite a spirited resistance from the Gallery and the Canberra Branch of the Australian Journalists Association. It is now accepted practice that the fundamental coverage of the Parliament is provided by one agency, Australian Associated Press. There is a strong possibility that over the next few years AAP will make further encroachments into the traditional Canberra services, and that more political news will be supplied by syndicated services. The growth of syndication, the development of the electronic

media, and an increasingly cursory attitude to the main print media by political leaders have caused something of a crisis in morale for newspaper journalists. This has been reflected in an extremely rapid turnover of newspaper staff, and a general perception by journalists from the main print media that their position in the Gallery is no longer a dominant one. There is a common feeling that the Press component of the Gallery has deteriorated in quality, although it is difficult to substantiate this argument except, perhaps, for interpretative analysis. With basic news gathering, there has been no demonstrable loss of quality in the work of the main print media.

As well as freezing the size of the Gallery, the Presiding Officers have solidified its structure by their imposition of a ceiling on growth. Until the ceiling is lifted, the Gallery will remain what is essentially a closed shop. The demands of new media outlets such as community newspapers, ethnic radio, community access radio, and cable television services will not be met because of the limitations on growth and lack of accommodation. For this reason, the Gallery is likely to lag behind developments in communications during the next few years. It also raises the risk of enshrining in the Gallery interests which were vested for reasons which were justifiable at the time, but are now less relevant to contemporary requirements.

It has been argued that the impact of the accommodation freeze would be alleviated if a substantial part of the Gallery were moved from Parliament House. This option has been closed off by the announcement that a new and permanent Parliament House will be built in Canberra by 1988. The Gallery has begun planning its submission for accommodation and facilities which it will require in a new parliamentary building.

The focus of the Gallery has shifted from its role in the present building to safeguarding its rights in the new building. In effect, the Gallery will mark time in its present quarters until the constraints on accommodation and facilities are removed by movement to a new Parliament. The amount of space available and the way in which it is distributed have been principal driving forces which have governed the development of the Gallery. The importance of these distributive forces and of the access they provide to media facilities will again dominate the processes of the Gallery as it prepares to occupy a new parliamentary building.

Quite clearly, the future composition of the Gallery will become much more fluid once the present constraints of space and membership are removed. It will bring pressures to break down the present integrated structure of the Gallery, perhaps by splitting it on Gallery/Lobby lines after the Westminster pattern. Such a division has been foreshadowed by a former Clerk of the Parliament, Sir Alan Turner:

At this stage Lobby passes are not issued and all representatives have equal rights. In a new Parliament building where a particular Lobby could be set aside for this purpose, a division between gallery reporters and lobby men would be favourably considered.¹

It is also conceivable that a new parliamentary building would exclude rounds and public service reporting from the Gallery, in effect compelling a revival of the traditional work of the Gallery, the reporting of Parliament. The fusion of the Executive Government with the Australian Parliament is deeply entrenched, and it would be rash to speculate that the movement of the Parliament to a new building would

¹ Letter from Sir Alan Turner, Clerk of the House of Representatives, to E. Richmond, Esq., Chairman of the Press Gallery Association, Salisbury, Rhodesia, 23 March 1965, p.2. Appended to Bennetts, *op. cit.* as Appendix C.

break the nexus between them. Another possibility is that the Gallery might be broken up into smaller units, as is the practice in Washington. This would depend on the ultimate emergence of a Gallery several times the size of the present one, an unlikely prospect for many years.

Another important factor in the composition of the Gallery in a new Parliament House is the future pattern of technological development for both the main print media and the electronic media. Over the next few years, electronic technology will continue to develop, but it is unlikely to repeat the rapid evolution of the past decade. The television and radio networks now have the facilities to put political material instantly to air. An electronic infrastructure has been installed in the Gallery which is not lavish by the standards of the metropolitan studios, but is elaborate and advanced in terms of the Gallery's accustomed technology.

By contrast, the technology of the main print media has changed little during the 78 years of the Gallery's existence, Newspapers are still produced by techniques which would be perfectly comprehensible to Gutenberg and Caxton. This relative backwardness will not last much longer, as the print media enter a period of substantial technological change. The use of VDTs and computerised production of newspapers will transform newspaper technology over the next few years, and this will have a tremendous impact on every facet of journalism, including political journalism. The main print media journalists will move to a new parliamentary building armed with new techniques which will mean that the technology gap is much less pronounced than the one that now exists between them and electronic journalists.

Another aspect of the tight control over membership which the accommodation freeze has given to the Gallery is the power to scrutinise closely the bona fides of applicants and exclude those who do not meet the requirements. Such a screening need not be done in an offensive way because the Gallery Committee can always fall back on the ultimate authority of the Presiding Officers. In this way, the Gallery can enforce the purity of its composition by keeping out all organisations and individuals with traces of lobbying or public relations connections. The enforcement of strict membership requirements will not be so easy when more accommodation and facilities are made available, and inevitably the demand for membership increases.

The Gallery is not an impressive institution in terms of its authority and influence. It is subservient to the media organisations which employ journalists and to the AJA which is the industrial protector of the working journalist. The loyalty of Gallery journalists to their employers is often more intense and less tinged with healthy scepticism than that of the journalists who work in the metropolitan head offices of the newspapers. It often seems that for journalists posted to the Gallery, the tyranny of distance is less important than the distance of the tyranny. Separation from the head office conveys a greater sense of loyalty and identification. The days have gone when Canberra Heads of Service acted as personal agents for their proprietors, intervening with Ministers and departments on their behalf, and reporting directly to them with political intelligence. Nevertheless, most Gallery journalists retain a strong commitment to their employers. Many of them have been earmarked for executive positions and a posting to Canberra is an integral part of their movement up through the hierarchy. The interests of the employer are always paramount over the corporate identity of the Gallery. The AJA is not regarded as one of

Australia's more militant unions, but its industrial leadership has been accepted by Gallery journalists, even when a dispute has not involved them directly. Major problems affecting the Gallery and which warrant more than a routine response inevitably are passed on to the union.

This leaves only a relatively modest role for the Gallery through its constitution and its committee. The main function of the committee is to represent the interests of the Gallery to the Parliament, the Presiding Officers, the Joint House Department, and other institutions with which it has regular dealings. The committee is useful for making arrangements on the Gallery's behalf with government agencies such as the Commonwealth Electoral Office, and in handling machinery matters such as press conferences and accreditation of members. As an institution, the Gallery is riven with competitive rivalries, both between the different media groups and within them. This also limits what the Gallery can achieve through its formal structure and accordingly, the Gallery Committee has adopted a role based on compromise and consensus. It cannot enforce any decisions it makes, and it has no effective disciplinary powers. At best, it can adjudicate and suggest reasonable courses of action, or if a matter is serious enough, pass it on to the AJA. Above all, it is the intermediary of political journalists with the Parliament and the Presiding Officers who have absolute control over them. Beyond these limited functions, there is little it can do as a corporate entity except in the most routine sense.

The work of the political journalists has been incidental to this thesis, which has been concerned mainly with the status of the Gallery in the Parliament and with the historical development and organisation of the Gallery. The sociological study of political journalists and how they do their work are largely beyond the scope of this thesis, although

these themes have been given passing consideration in the account of how the Gallery is organised for news gathering. The picture given has been one of sharp differentiation of function between political journalists according to the medium in which they work. In the years ahead, and particularly with the establishment of the Gallery in a new Parliament, there is likely to be less specialisation among political journalists and an increasing trend to expertise in all of the branches of the media. Political journalists will spread their skills across a much broader spectrum. Electronic media journalists will contribute more frequently to the print media, and newspaper journalists will develop greater skills in the electronic media and appear on them much more frequently. Both print and electronic journalists will become more involved with a developing market for political and administrative newsletters. Already, there are discernible signs of such a trend. One political television journalist writes a weekly column for a daily newspaper. A freelance journalist who is a member of the Gallery writes a weekly political newsletter, writes occasional stories and columns for two major metropolitan dailies, appears regularly as a political commentator on a television current affairs program, and broadcasts on political events throughout the day for a major radio network.¹ Political journalism is entering a period of greater diversity and versatility on the part of its practitioners.

Political journalism has been a neglected area in the study of Australian politics. This is remarkable when it is recalled that the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery is as old as the Commonwealth.

¹ The journalists are George Negus and Laurie Oakes.

Its origins can be traced back much further to the late 1830s in the New South Wales Parliament, and at least a hundred years earlier in the British Parliament. The Gallery is an extremely venerable political institution by Australian standards. It is an important part of the Australian political process and one whose institutional history warrants careful study. The importance of the Gallery and of the journalists who work within it have been expressed most appropriately, if rather sombrely, by Sir Paul Hasluck:

The political reporter . . . has a hard path for most of the conditions of his daily work would lure him into falsehood and I would imagine that personal honesty and good intentions would not be enough, but that only a man armoured by intellectual power, supported by a strict professional code and unencumbered by malice or ambition could succeed. There are not many good political journalists.¹

¹ Sir Paul Hasluck, 21st George Adlington Syme Oration, 'Telling the Truth in a Democracy', University of Western Australia, 19 August 1958.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

RECORDSRecords of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, Canberra

Held by the President and Secretary of the Gallery, Parliament House, Canberra.

The surviving records are contained in a number of manilla folders, which are loosely organised according to subject. The main files used were essentially correspondence files, although they contained other documents, and are referred to here as General Business Files. These files broadly cover the years from 1969 to 1978, although there are documents from years as early as 1966. These other files were used in the preparation of the thesis:

File on Barry Everingham (undated).

Press Gallery Applications, 1973.

The 1974 Elections.

Press Gallery Seating (undated).

File on Australian Associated Press (AAP), (undated).

Some minutes of Gallery Committee meetings are contained in the General Business Files. The Gallery's minute books and other records appear to have been lost.

Records of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, held by Jonathon J.

Gaul, former Gallery President. These comprise:

File on Maxwell Newton, 1968.

Miscellaneous file, including minutes of Gallery and AJA meetings, and transcripts of industrial hearings involving the AJA.

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- Leon V. Sigal. *Reporters and Officials: The Organisation and Politics of Newsmaking*, Heath, Lexington, Massachusetts, 1973.
- David Solomon. *The Australian Parliament*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1978.
- Jeremy Tunstall. *The Westminster Lobby Correspondents*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1970.
- J.S. Weatherston. *Commonwealth Hansard: Its Establishment and Development*, AGPS, Canberra, 1975.
- Don Whittington. *Strive to be Fair: An Unfinished Autobiography*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1978.
- Larry Zolf. *Dance of the Dialectic*, J. Lewis and Samuel, Toronto, 1973.

PAMPHLETS, PAPERS AND LECTURES

- 'Partners in Parliament, A Report to the Press Gallery', London (undated).
- R.J. Bennetts. 'Press, Parliament and Public Interest', A.N. Smith Memorial Lecture, Melbourne, 1962.
- P.M.C. Hasluck. 'Telling the Truth in a Democracy', G.A. Syme Oration, Perth, 1958.

Maxwell Newton. 'The Public Service, the Press and Propaganda', Address to the ACT Group, Royal Institute of Public Administration, Canberra, 1968.

Pamela Steele. 'Political Journalism at the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, Canberra', Paper presented to APSA Conference, Adelaide, 1978.

NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

Melbourne Age

Melbourne Argus

Sydney Morning Herald

Sydney Daily Telegraph

The Bulletin

New Journalist

Forum

Melbourne Punch

Nation

Quadrant

INTERVIEWS WITH POLITICAL JOURNALISTS

(Notes held by author)

Robert Haupt, 3 December 1975.

John Edwards, 6 December 1975.

Ben Hills, 6 December 1975.

Colin Parkes, 20 November 1977.

Michael Stekettee, 1 December 1977.

Ken Begg, 2 December 1977.

Brian Toohey, 5 January 1978 and 3 February 1978.

Jonathon Gaul, 4 May 1978.

Kenneth Randall, 16 June 1978.

Paul Kelly, 17 June 1978.

Michele Grattan, 5 July 1978.

Laurie Oakes, 7 July 1978.

Norman Bennell, 8 July 1978.

Ian Fitchett, 10 July 1978.

Kevin Power, 10 July 1978.

Bill Darcy, 12 July 1978.

Gary O'Neill, 17 October 1978.

Laurie Wilson, 17 October 1978.

A P P E N D I C E S

APPENDIX 1

FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY PRESS GALLERY CONSTITUTION

Name: The name of this institution shall be 'The Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery'.

Objects: To safeguard and further the rights, interests and privileges of members of The Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, and to take any such action as may be consistent with these objects.

Membership: Full membership shall be confined to all persons in possession of a CURRENT gallery pass issued by the Senate or House of Representatives permanently engaged in the gallery in the collection and preparation of news. Associate membership of The Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery shall be confined to all persons employed at Parliament House, Canberra, who are members of the Australian Journalists' Association and engaged as liaison officers between the official political parties and the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery.

Subscriptions: Subscriptions may be levied and collected from time to time as determined by a full meeting of the Gallery.

Officers: The officers shall be (1) a President elected from among the FULL members (2) a Vice-President who shall be a resident Pressman (3) three committeemen (4) a Secretary-Treasurer. These officers shall be full members and shall be elected by ballot at the annual general meeting during the Budget Session of Parliament and shall hold office until the election of their successors.

Affiliation: The Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery may affiliate with any similar organisations in other countries.

Quorum: The quorum at general meetings shall be fifty per cent of the number of full members actually known to be present at Canberra at the time of the meeting.

Meetings: Meetings shall be held whenever a meeting of the officers or a majority of them think necessary. Meetings other than the annual meeting shall be attended only by full members. The annual meeting shall be held during the Budget Session and all members may attend provided that Associate Members shall not vote.

Voting: All voting at general meetings, except on matters of formal procedure and/or matters relating to social activities shall be by secret ballot. It shall rest with the President to define a social activity and to rule if necessary whether the matter in question relates to formal procedure.

Amendments of Constitution: An amendment of the Constitution shall be considered only by a special meeting called by the President for that purpose at the written request of five full members and shall be made only with the approval of a four-fifths majority of the members present at the meeting.

APPENDIX 2

CONSTITUTION OF THE FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY

PRESS GALLERY

ADOPTED AUGUST 25, 1966

Name

The name of this organisation shall be 'The Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery'.

Objects

To safeguard and further the rights interests and privileges of members of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery and to take any action that may be consistent with these objects.

Membership

Full membership of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, hereafter called the Gallery, shall be restricted to members of the Australian Journalists' Association who, either permanently or during the Parliamentary Sessions, are engaged full-time at Parliament House, Canberra, in the collection and dissemination of Parliamentary or government or political news, or in commenting upon Parliamentary or government or political news for -

- (a) an Australian newspaper or publication or group of newspapers or publications which are available to the public on an unrestricted basis;
- (b) Australian radio or television broadcasting stations or systems, or
- (c) recognised Australian news services, with the Gallery's Executive committee deciding, as the need arises, what constitutes a recognised Australian news service.

Associate membership of the Gallery shall be restricted to persons who are engaged full-time in the collection and dissemination of Parliamentary, government, or political news at Parliament House, Canberra, for overseas media similar to those specified above in (a), (b) and (c).

Temporary associate membership shall be restricted to persons who on a temporary basis are covering events at Parliament House, Canberra, for Australian or overseas media similar to those specified in (a), (b) and (c) above, and while working in Parliament House, Canberra, these temporary

associate members shall be subject to the same restrictions and rules as those applying to both Full and Associate Gallery members.

Associate membership shall entitle the holder to such facilities as may be extended by the Executive Committee, and may include - subject to Mr President's and Mr Speaker's approval - access to Gallery premises, use of a mailbox, and admission to the Press Galleries in the chambers of the Senate and the House of Representatives, but not the right to attend and vote at Gallery meetings, to stand for Gallery office, to exclusive office accommodation in the Press Gallery, nor to a specific, permanent seat in the Press Galleries of either Chamber.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall consist of (1) a President, (2) a Vice-President, (3) a Secretary, (4) a Treasurer, (5) three committee-men (who shall all be permanent members of the Gallery) and (6) a fourth committeeman (who shall be a sessional member of the Gallery). Full members, permanent or sessional who are financial have the right to vote in determining who shall occupy all offices. The officers, who collectively comprise the Executive Committee, shall be elected by secret ballot annually during the Budget Session of Parliament and shall hold office until the election of their successors.

Heads of Services

In dealing with the allocation of accommodation within the Gallery or other matters in which the Executive Committee deems there is an organisational rather than an individual interest, the Executive Committee, shall call a meeting of Heads of Services to ascertain and consider their views. A Head of Service is a permanent member of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery who is the senior representative employed full-time for, and whose salary is paid by, the news-gathering organisation which accredits him to the Gallery and who is designated as a Head of Service by the Executive Committee.

Meetings

The annual general meeting shall be held during the Budget Session of the Parliament, subsequent to the election of the Executive Committee. Otherwise, meetings shall be held whenever a meeting of the officers, or a majority of them think necessary. The President must within seven days call a special meeting if ten members in a written request petition him to call such a meeting.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions may be levied and collected from time to time from all members as determined by the Executive Committee.

Roll

The Secretary shall each Budget session draw up a roll of full Gallery members which he shall revise each Parliamentary session.

Quorum

The quorum at general meetings shall be one-third of the number of the last roll of membership.

Amendments of the Constitution

An amendment of the Constitution shall be considered only by a special meeting called by the President for the purpose at the written request of ten full members and shall be made only with the approval of a majority of the enrolled membership.

The rules of debate shall be those of the Australian Journalists' Association with the Chairman having a casting vote.

PRESS GALLERY CONSTITUTION

Proposed Revision of 1968-69

PRESENT CONSTITUTIONRECOMMENDED CHANGES1. Name

The name of this organisation shall be 'The Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery'.

2. Objects

To safeguard and further the rights, interests and privileges of members of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery and to take any action that may be consistent with these objects.

3. Membership

Every member of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, hereafter called the Gallery, shall sign a statutory declaration within 10 days of his applying for membership. The form of the statutory declaration shall be determined from time to time by the Committee of the Gallery and shall lay down the principles of legitimate journalism which members shall abide by while a member of the Gallery.

(i) Full membership of the Gallery shall be restricted to members of the Australian Journalists' Association who, either permanently or during Parliamentary Sessions, are engaged full time at Parliament House, Canberra, in the collection and dissemination of Parliamentary or government or political news, or in commenting upon Parliamentary or government or political news for-

(a) an Australian newspaper or publication or group of newspapers or publications

which are available to the public on an unrestricted basis;

(b) Australian radio or television broadcasting stations or systems; or,

(c) recognised Australian news service, with the Gallery's Executive Committee deciding, as the need arises, what constitutes a recognised Australian news service.

(ii) Associate membership of the Gallery shall be restricted to persons who are engaged full time in the collection and dissemination of Parliamentary, government or political news at Parliament House, Canberra, for overseas media similar to those specified above in (a), (b) and (c).

(iii) Temporary associate membership shall be restricted to persons who on a temporary basis are covering events at Parliament House, Canberra, for Australian or overseas media similar to those specified in (a), (b) and (c) above, and while working in Parliament House, Canberra, these temporary associate members shall be subject to the same restrictions and rules as those applying to both Full and Associate Gallery members.

B. Overseas membership shall be restricted to persons who are engaged full time in the collection and dissemination of Parliamentary, Government or political news at Parliament House, Canberra, for overseas media similar to those specified in (a), (b) and (c).

Associate membership shall be granted to people engaged part time in the collection and dissemination of Parliamentary, government or political news at Parliament House, Canberra, for Australian media similar to those specified above in (a), (b) and (c).

Temporary associate membership shall be restricted to persons who on a temporary basis are covering events at Parliament House, Canberra, for Australian or overseas media similar to those specified in (a), (b) and (c) above, and while working in Parliament House, Canberra, these temporary associate members shall be subject to the same restrictions and rules as those applying to all other categories of membership.

(iv) Associate membership shall entitle the holder to such facilities as may be extended by the Executive Committee, and may include, subject to Mr President's and Mr Speaker's approval access to Gallery premises, use of a mailbox, and admission to the Press Galleries in the chambers of the Senate and the House of Representatives, but not the right to attend and vote at Gallery meetings, to stand for Gallery office, to exclusive office accommodation in the Press Gallery, nor to a specific, permanent seat in the Press Galleries of either Chamber.

Membership in all categories shall entitle the holder of such membership facilities as may be extended by the Committee, subject to the approval of Mr Speaker and Mr President.

The right to stand for office and to vote in any matters affecting the Gallery shall be limited to those persons who have been given Full membership.

The Committee shall review the membership status of every member every two years.

The Committee shall have the power to expel any member of the Gallery for good and sufficient reasons.

The Committee shall be obliged to hear an appeal against the classification or expulsion of a member. A person making an appeal shall do so by lodging the appeal, in writing, with the Committee within 14 days of the Committee making its decision public. The Committee, within 14 days of the receipt of the appeal shall begin to hear the appeal and meet with the appellant during the course of the appeal.

4. Executive Council

The Executive Council shall consist of (1) a President, (2) a Vice-President, (3) a Secretary, (4) a Treasurer, (5) three committee men, (who shall all be permanent members of the Gallery)

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall consist of (a) a President, (2) a Vice-President, (3) a Secretary, (4) a Treasurer, (5) three committee men (who shall be permanent members of the Gallery) and (6) a fourth committee man

and (6) a fourth committee man (who shall be a sessional member of the Gallery). Full members, permanent or sessional members who are financial have the right to vote in determining who shall occupy all offices. The officers, who collectively comprise the Executive Committee, shall be elected by secret ballot annually during the Budget session of Parliament and shall hold office until the election of their successors.

(who shall be a sessional member of the Gallery). Full members, permanent or sessional members who are financial have the right to vote in determining who shall occupy all offices. The officers, who collectively comprise the Executive Committee, shall be elected by secret ballot annually during the Budget session of Parliament and shall hold office until the election of their successors. A quorum of the Committee shall be four.

Alternatively to this recommendation, the Committee should be increased to 10, with five as the quorum.

A Committee position shall become vacant if a person failed to attend three consecutive meetings without the leave of the Committee.

5. Heads of Service

In dealing with the allocation of accommodation within the Gallery or other matters in which the Executive Committee deems there is an organisation rather than an individual interest, the Executive Committee shall call a meeting of Heads of Service to ascertain and consider their views. A Head of Service is a permanent member of the Gallery who is the senior representative employed full time for, and whose salary is paid by, the news gathering organisation which accredits him to the Gallery and who is designated as a Head of Service by the Executive Committee.

Organisations

In dealing with the allocation of accommodation within the Gallery or other matters in which the Committee deems there is an organisational rather than an individual interest, the Committee shall call a meeting of representatives of Bureaux to ascertain and consider their views.

The Committee each six months shall compile a list of members, divided into Bureaux. The names on the list shall be supplied by the Bureaux. Any order of seniority on the list shall be determined by the individual Bureau.

6. Meetings

The Annual General Meeting shall be held during the Budget session of the Parliament, subsequent to the election of the Executive Committee. Otherwise, meetings shall be held whenever a meeting of the officers, or a majority of them think necessary. The President must, within seven days call a special general meeting if ten members in a written request petition him to call such a meeting.

7. Subscriptions

Subscriptions may be levied and collected from time to time from all members as determined by the Executive Committee.

8. Roll

Delete clause 8.

The Secretary shall each Budget session draw up a roll of full Gallery members which he shall revise each Parliamentary session.

9. Quorum

The quorum at general meetings shall be one-third of the number of the last roll of membership.

10. Amendments to the Constitution

An amendment to the Constitution shall be considered only by a special meeting called by the President for the purpose at the written request of ten full members and shall be made only with the approval of a majority of the enrolled membership. The rules of debate shall be those of the Australian Journalists' Association with the chairman having a casting vote.

APPENDIX 4

R U L E S

for the guidance of new members of
the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery and
journalistic, TV, radio and
cable service visitors
to Parliament House

On the House of Representatives side the area from the foot of the Gallery stairs in the Government lobby around to the office of the Clerk of the House is prohibited territory. We are not allowed to pass through this area in any circumstances.

We are allowed to pass through the Government and Opposition lobbies of either Chamber but are asked not to linger or to engage Senators or Members in conversation in these areas. If a Senator or Member initiates a conversation with a member of the Gallery in the lobbies this, of course, is quite acceptable. When party meetings are in progress, the prohibition on lingering is absolute.

Members of the Gallery wishing to speak to a Senator or Member in Parliament House should:

- (a) ask the Attendants stationed at the King's Hall entrances to the Chambers to pass a message to a Senator or Member indicating that they would like to speak to the Member, or
- (b) arrange with the Senator or Member by telephone to speak to him in his room, or
- (c) approach the Senator or Member in King's Hall.

Members of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery are allowed to use the

Parliamentarians' newspaper reading room. The agreement we have with the Parliament is that we do not seek to engage Parliamentarians in conversation in this area and that we limit our use of the room to the minimum necessary to do our work. Parliamentarians have priority in the use of the files at all times.

Photographers and TV cameramen may take pictures or film on invitation in private rooms but the taking of pictures or film anywhere else in the building is prohibited except with the specific permission of Mr President and/or Mr Speaker.

Radio journalists may similarly make tapes on invitation in private rooms but taping anywhere else in the building is prohibited except with the specific permission of Mr President and/or Mr Speaker.

Television cameramen should avoid using the centre area of the landing and the steps outside the front entrance to the building for the purpose of interviewing Members of Parliament or other persons.

No members of the Gallery are permitted to enter the Members' Bar Guest Rooms.

The Parliamentary Officers administer the above rule with sympathy and flexibility but such an attitude can be preserved only if Gallery members and visitors to the Press Gallery observe the rules meticulously.

PRESIDENT

Parliamentary Press Gallery

APPENDIX 5LISTING OF 'HANDOUTS' PLACED IN
FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY PRESS GALLERY BOXES

27 May 1978 to 3 June 1978

28 May 1978:

Statement by Senator Wriedt - speech on international arms control.
Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia press release.
Pharmacy Guild of Australia - 'Pharmacy Welcomes Medication Enquiry'.
AIDA statement re retirement of Mr Callaghan and appointment of Mr Geoff Allen.
Statement by Lionel Bowen re Malcolm Fraser and story in Financial Review.
Prime Minister's Electorate Talk.
Statement by Ralph Hunt re Long-stay Patients.
Statement by Dr Klugman re Long-stay Patients.

29 May 1978:

Pamphlet from Arab Republic of Egypt Embassy.
Bureau of Transport Economics Report: Mainline Upgrading: Evaluation of a range of options for the Trans Australia Link, and news release by Peter Nixon.
Reply to Senator Walsh from Ralph Hunt re long term patients.
Press Statement by Senator Walsh: 'Shadow Minister Warns of Threat to Small Country Hospitals'.
New China News.
Department of Health HR Question No. 1073 re bulk billing.
Department of Health HR Question No. 673 re storage and disposal of radioactive materials.
Department of Health HR Question No. 209 re experiments on animals.
Opening Address by Minister for Environment, Housing and Community Development at the Environmental Economics Conference, ANU, 29 May 1978.

Minister for Productivity HR Question No. 726 re information in Appendix III of the First Annual Report of the Administrative Review Council.

Department of the Northern Territory HR Question No. 1111 re payment of home telephone rentals or charges by the Department.

Minister for Home Affairs HR Question No. 1095 re imports of scotch whisky to Cocos Island.

Minister for Home Affairs HR Question No. 1121 re payment of home telephone rentals or charges by the Department.

Minister for Home Affairs HR Question No. 1089 re Chairmen of Trustees of the Australian War Memorial from 1945 to the present.

Department of Veterans' Affairs HR Question No. 172 re recommendations of Mr Justice Toose who conducted the Independent Enquiry into the Repatriation System in October 1971.

PM Press Release: 'Grant to the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences'.

Department of the Capital Territory HR Question No. 1023 re overseas travel by Mr Ellicott since 11 November 1975.

Department of the Capital Territory HR Question No. 1024 re overseas travel by Mr Ellicott by aeroplane or ship since 11 November 1975.

Urban and Regional Development (Financial Assistance) Act 1974 - Agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and the State of Tasmania re provision of financial assistance for Urban Expansion and Redevelopment and Sewerage.

Australian Apple and Pear Corporation Report 1977.

Pacific Basin Economic Council press release: New Japanese Leader of PBEC.

Press statement by Executive Director, Australian Confederation of Apparel Manufacturers re reports of tariff cuts.

ABS Daily Publications advice.

Minister for National Development HR Question No. 939 re coal suitable for conversion to oil or gas.

Minister for National Development HR Question No. 755 re bodies responsible for nuclear energy research and development and for the regulation and safety aspects of the use of nuclear energy in the UK, USA, West Germany, Japan, France and Canada.

List of Senate Committee meetings 29 May - 9 June 1978.

Media release by the Joint Council of the Australian Public Service re 59th meeting of the Joint Council of the Australian Public Service.

Press release by Senate Standing Committee on Trade and Commerce re Trade Commissioner Inquiry.

Department of Foreign Affairs, Australian Foreign Affairs Record, March 1978.

News release by Barry Cassell, Cattlemen's Union of Australia, 'Extract of Address to meeting of cattle producers, Gilgandra, NSW'.

Press release by Reserve Bank of Australia, 'Volume of Money'.

ABS Catalogue No. 6411.0, 'Price index of materials used in manufacturing industry March 1978'.

ABS Catalogue No. 8508.0, 'Receipts, sales and stocks of new tractors December quarter 1977'.

HR and Senate Hansards.

30/31 May 1978:

Australian Farmers' Federation Media Statement: Tariff Cuts.

Media Release: International Conference on Industrial Democracy - address by Ian Macphee, 30 May 1978.

Report of the Ad Hoc Working Committee on Australia-Japan Relations and Press Statement by the Prime Minister.

Interim Annual Report 1976-77, Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation.

Industry and Commerce Press Release: Small Business Survey.

Minister for Productivity HR Question re Nomad.

Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs Note to Heads of Bureaux re tabling of Galbally Report and subsequent press conference.

Treasury handout re duplicate copy of the Annual Agricultural Census form - HR Question on Notice No. 1160.

Prime Minister HR Question on Notice No. 765 re recommendations of the Scott Committee.

Prime Minister HR Question on Notice No. 1077 re Tax Sharing - Stage II Arrangements.

Department of the Northern Territory HR Question on Notice No. 1200 re travel overseas by aeroplane since 11 November 1975.

Statement by the Treasurer: Commonwealth DF1 300 Million Borrowing in The Netherlands.

Statement by Dr Doug Everingham re Aboriginal land rights in the Northern Territory.

ABS Catalogue No. 6212.0, 'Employed Wage and Salary Earners March 1978 (Preliminary)'.

ABS Catalogue No. 5629.0, 'Stocks Owned by Private Enterprises in Australia March Quarter 1978 (Preliminary)'.

ABS Catalogue No. 7205.0, 'Meat Statistics, Australia, March 1978'.

ABS Catalogue No. 6213.0, 'Employment and Unemployment, February 1978'.

ABS Catalogue No. 7603.0, 'Fisheries 1976-77'.

'Hot Line' (ACOA Publication).

Foreign Affairs HR Question on Notice No. 1164 re Denuclearized Zones: Antarctica and Outer Space.

Foreign Affairs HR Question on Notice No. 1166 re Australian Participation in International Agreements on Hijacking and Piracy.

Foreign Affairs HR Question on Notice No. 1177 re Special Session of the General Assembly on Disarmament.

Foreign Affairs HR Question on Notice No. 1163 re Special Session of the General Assembly on Disarmament.

Tom Uren - Address to the Shires Association of NSW, Sydney, 30 May 1978.

Joint Statement by Ralph Hunt and Brian Dixon: Commonwealth Money for Victorian Women's Refugees.

Parliamentary Joint Committee of Public Accounts: Public Inquiry, Auditor-General's Reports 1976-77.

Department of Finance HR Question on Notice No.36 re Department advertising.

Statement by Ian Armstrong, NSW Chairman, Cattlemen's Union of Australia: Saudi Arabian Mission.

Media Release: Employee Participation - The National Approach - Extracts of Address by the Minister for Productivity at the International Conference on Industrial Democracy.

Department of Transport news release: Fiftieth Anniversary of Southern Cross Flight.

Prime Minister Statement on migrant services and programs.

Third report of the Joint Standing Committee on the New and Permanent Parliament House.

Office of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition handout - after hours phone numbers.

Minister for Science media release: Acting Director Appointed.

Department of Aboriginal Affairs media release: Arakun and Mornington Island Co-ordinating Committees to meet this week.

Department of Aboriginal Affairs media release: Territorians Misinformed on Land Rights.

Department of the Special Trade Representative HR Question on Notice No. 590 re staff canteens.

Department of the Special Trade Representative HR Question on Notice No. 1119 re payment of home telephone charges or rentals by the Department.

Primary Industry media release: Visit by Tunisian Delegation.

Primary Industry media release: Sugar Price Change.

Minister for Primary Industry: release re tentative pattern of sitting days for Budget session.

Defence Press Release: Names Selected for New Patrol Boats.

Defence Press Release: Diggers Fire with British and German Armies.

Minister for Health HR Question on Notice No. 915 re allowable income to unemployed persons and TEAS recipients.

Minister for Health HR Question on Notice No. 1106 re payment of home telephone charges or rentals by the Department.

Office of the Commissioner for Community Relations statement re address to the Multicultural Education Action Association's inaugural conference.

Committee of Privileges report on the appropriate means of ensuring the security of Parliament House.

Department of the Special Trade Representative HR Question on Notice No. 1119 re payment of home telephone charges or rentals by the Department.

Minister for Post and Telecommunication HR Question on Notice No. 766 re the Schools Commission.

ABS Catalogue No. 5602.0, 'Savings Banks (Preliminary) April 1978'.

ABS Catalogue No. 5320.0, 'Foreign Investment in Enterprises in Australia March Quarter 1978 (Preliminary)'.

ABS Catalogue No. 5621.0, 'Life Insurance - December 1977'.

ABS Catalogue No. 5614.0, 'Finance Companies March 1978'.

ABS Catalogue No. 5617.0, 'Financial Corporations Statistics March 1978'.

ABS Catalogue No. 5621.0, 'Life Insurance - December 1977'.

ABS Catalogue No. 3304.0, 'Perinatal Deaths 1976'.

Aboriginal Land Fund Commission Annual Report 1976-77.

ANZ Bank Business Indicators.

Commonwealth Serum Laboratories, Operations and Capital Works Program, Report of the Independent Inquiry, April 1978.

Parliamentary Joint Committee of Public Accounts: 169th Report of the Public Accounts Committee.

Second Reading Speech by the Minister for Primary Industry - States and Northern Territory Grants (Bluetongue Virus Control) Bill 1978.

Joint Statement by Senator Guilfoyle and the Hon. Ron Payne: South Australian Family Support Services Scheme.

Press release from Government House: Award of Australian Bravery Decorations.

Industries Assistance Commission Report: The Music Recording Industry in Australia and Press Release.

AFCO Media Release: Sugar Price Rise - Consumers' Reaction.

Minister for Environment, Housing and Community Development news release and booklet re World Environment Day, 5 June.

Minister for National Development HR Question on Notice No. 179 re report by the medical team from the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine which undertook analysis of medical surveys at Lucas Heights.

Minister for Transport News Release re State Government financial assistance to the dairying industry.

Department of Transport HR Question on Notice No. 376 re expenditure on works associated with Proserpine Airport.

Department of Transport HR Question on Notice No. 1060 re passenger movements at Sydney Airport.

Department of Transport HR Question on Notice No. 1084 re the establishment of an Australian Transport Literature Information System.

Minister for Health HR Question on Notice No. 1130 re Employment of Field Officers.

Foreign Affairs HR Question on Notice No. 975 re issue of passports to certain classes of public servants.

Department of Transport HR Question on Notice No. 1083 re National Times article on Vietnamese refugees.

Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations HR Question on Notice No. 570 re staff canteens operated by his Department.

Department of Transport HR Question on Notice No. 1058 re conditions of the curfew at Sydney Airport.

Department of Education HR Question on Notice No. 626 re research grants to institutions investigating matters in which animals are used.

Prime Minister HR Question on Notice No. 200 re chartering of aircraft for use by Prime Minister since 11 November 1975.

Department of Transport HR Question on Notice No. 910 re freight equalisation payments on Tasmanian beer and cider.

Criminology Research Council news release re grants totalling \$54,500 for research.

Parliamentary Joint Committee of Public Accounts: 169th Report of the Public Accounts Committee (released twice).

Leader of the Opposition in the Senate press statement re State Income Tax legislation.

Minister for Social Security: Second Report of the National Advisory Council for the Handicapped.

ABS Daily Publications Advice.

Minister for Construction Media Release: \$2.6m contract for new law courts, Alice Springs.

Minister for Primary Industry Media Release: Rural Industry Information Papers 1978.

HR and Senate Hansards.

1 June 1978:

Department of Foreign Affairs News Release: Visit by Singapore Musician-Artist.

Press Statement by Alan Cadman and Senator Chaney re Cadman's election at Chairman of Liberal and Country Parties' Chairman's Group following Chaney's resignation.

Department of Special Trade Representative HR Question No. 1201 re overseas travel by Mr Garland since 11 November 1975.

Department of Special Trade Representative HR Question No. 1202 re overseas travel by aeroplane or ship since 11 November 1975.

Media Statement by Wal Fife: Oil Industry Conference.

Defence Press Release: North West Cape.

Press Release by Ralph Willis re Government's economic policies.

Statement by Barry Cassell, National Director, Cattlemen's Union of Australia: Cattlemen to seek public support.

Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs news release: New Settlement Centres for Migrants.

Minister for Foreign Affairs news release: Appointment of Australian Ambassador to Denmark.

Radio Talk statement by the Deputy Prime Minister re Multilateral Trade Negotiations.

Department of Veterans' Affairs news release: Address by the Minister to the Annual Congress of the RSL, NSW Branch, 31 May 1978.

1/2 June 1978:

Media Release, Minister for Productivity: 'Safety Award'.

Treasury HR Question on Notice No. 959 re income tax and primary producers.

Government House release: The Queen's Birthday Honours 1978.

Australian Film and Television School Annual Report 1976-77.

Australian Farmers' Federation media release: 'New IAC Appointments'.

Australian Tobacco Board Twelfth Annual Report 1977.

Report of Parliament on the operations of the road safety and standards authority.

The Australian Forestry Council: Summary of resolutions and recommendations of the sixteenth meeting.

Statement by Leader of the Opposition re McGregor Royal Commission.

Department of Health HR Question on Notice No. 1094 re quarantine restrictions on the entry of eggs and egg products.

Department of Health HR Question on Notice No. 629 re pesticide poisoning.

Export Sugar Committee press statement re Export Sugar Rebate Payable.

Ministerial Statement, Hon. Doug Anthony: Uranium Export Policy.

Department of Finance HR Question on Notice No. 535 re Departmental libraries.

Department of Defence HR Question No. 920 re prisoners of war in Nagasaki.

Department of Defence HR Question No. 715 re Leopard Tanks.

Treasury HR Question No. 967 re rate of variation in the volume of money known at 'M3'.

Treasury HR Question No. 670 re the Financial Corporation Act 1974.

Treasury HR Question No. 1045 re public sector borrowing requirements.

Treasury HR Question No. 969 re establishment of import letters of credit by trading banks.

Treasury HR Question No. 972 re percentage of total amount of letters of credit established for import transactions.

Treasury HR Question No. 821 re fluctuations in the value of the Australian dollar.

ABS Catalogue No. 6405.0: Export Price Index March 1978.

ABS Catalogue No. 8501.0: Retail Sales of Goods: Australia April 1978 (Provisional).

ABS Catalogue No. 6302.0: Average Weekly Earnings, March Quarter 1978.

ABS Catalogue No. 8404.0: Minerals and Mineral Products February 1978.

ABS Catalogue No. 6311.0: Wage Rates Index, March 1978 (Preliminary).

ABS Catalogue No. 8402.0: Mining Establishments Details of Operation 1976-77.

ABS Catalogue No. 5506.0: Public Authority Finance Taxation 1976-77.

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APPENDIX 6

Inside Canberra

INSIDE CANBERRA

Managing Editor
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Founding Editor 1947-1977
DON WHITTINGTON
24 November, 1978

Vol. 31 No. 45

CONCERN ON JAPAN RELATIONS

On the eve of next month's major series of negotiations between Australian coal suppliers and Japanese steel mills, relations between the two Governments are deteriorating. It would be going too far to describe the relations as strained, but they certainly are not sound or based on mutual trust. The Government has implicitly recognised this by appointing a high powered Consultative Committee on Relations with Japan, charged with monitoring on a continuing basis relations between the two countries.

Chaired by Mr R.G. Jackson of CSR, the committee consists of R.D.G. Agnew (Agnew Clough), Sir John Crawford, R.J. Kirby (MTIA), R.T. Madigan (Hamersley Iron), Sir Malcolm McArthur (formerly of Meat Board), S.B. Myer (Myer Emporium), P.I. Nolan (ACTU) and six departmental heads -- N.S. Currie (Industry and Commerce), N.F. Parkinson (Foreign Affairs), J. Scully (Trade and Resources), Sir Frederick Wheeler (Treasury), A.J. Woods (National Development), G.J. Yeend (Prime Minister's) and K.C.O. Shann (former Ambassador to Japan). Announcing the committee, the Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr Andrew Peacock, said "the Government's intention was to ensure that all aspects of Australia's relationship with Japan, which was of such crucial importance, were effectively managed and co-ordinated".

POLITICS MUST BE SET ASIDE

Although this is clearly a good committee, "Inside Canberra" believes, as do many in Parliament and in the Public Service, that relations with Japan must be de-politicised as a domestic issue and that an unwavering bi-partisan approach should be striven for. The Labor Party turned these relations into a political issue with its hysterical and xenophobic opposition to the signing of the 1957 Agreement on Commerce with Japan. The present Government, when in Opposition, further politicised the relations with its hounding of the late Mr R.F.X. Connor because of his handling of minerals policy (a policy that looks remarkably akin now to that of Mr J.D. Anthony).

"Inside Canberra" does not often editorialise, but believes as a first step towards reaching a bi-partisan approach, two Labor men should be appointed to the consultative committee. The obvious choices are the shadow Minister for Trade, Mr Lionel Bowen and the shadow Minister for Minerals and Energy, Mr Paul Keating. Two senior Government back-benchers should also go onto the committee, possibly Senator Harold Young, chairman of the Government Members' Resources Committee and Mr John Moore (Lib Qld) who has taken a close interest in Japan. Until Japan is absolutely satisfied it will be treated consistently by Canberra, no matter which party is in office, it will not tie itself to any greater degree to Australia as a major supplier than it does now. Tremendous opportunities will be lost if action is not soon taken.

FAIRFAX BUYS A LEMON

John Fairfax and Sons' serialisation of Sir John Kerr's memoirs, reportedly at a fee of \$85,000, seems likely to be one of the major publishing flops of recent years. To date the book has been not only boring, but remarkably uninformative. In Parliament House, where it would be imagined that serialisation would have been read most avidly, a majority had already given up reading the extracts by Tuesday. A senior ministerial

A PRIVATELY CIRCULATED WEEKLY REVIEW OF AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL AFFAIRS
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staffer told "Inside Canberra" this week that Sir John Kerr's account of why he did not take up the UNESCO appointment in Paris caused wry smiles among senior Ministers. Sir John says he did not take the job because he would have been prevented from replying to his opponents. The senior staffer assured "Inside Canberra" that Sir John was "pushed" and had to be pushed hard, what's more, before he gave up the appointment.

URANIUM
PASSED
BY ACTU

The meeting in Canberra this week of the inter-State executive of the ACTU marked the end of effective union resistance to the development of the uranium mining industry. The debate on whether the ACTU should sponsor a ban on the industry was summed up by one of the leaders of the left wing faction, Mr Roy Gietzelt (representing the service industries) who asked the rhetorical question: "What is the point of a ban you can't enforce". Mr Gietzelt's views were generally endorsed around the table. The ACTU is going through the motions of showing concern -- next week a small delegation led by Mr R. J. Hawke, will meet the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Peacock, the Minister for National Development, Mr Newman, and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Viner, to discuss uranium issues. A representative delegation from the ACTU will also go abroad soon to study the safety of operation of nuclear plants and proliferation and waste disposal problems.

CHANGES
AT FIN.
REVIEW

Ann Summers, a front rank writer for the National Times, is to become the Head of Bureau for the Australian Financial Review in Canberra. She will replace Brian Toohey, who will take over early next year from Robert Haupt as the Review's Washington correspondent. Mr Haupt will be returning to take up a job on the Review's Sydney editorial staff.

AVIS-HERTZ
IN BOX
SEAT

In the next few weeks Federal Cabinet will make a decision on long term car rental franchise arrangements at airports. It will almost certainly decide to franchise two national operators -- Avis, which now has exclusive franchise rights, and Hertz, now controlled by TAA (as exclusively forecast by "Inside Canberra" Vol. 31 No. 38). Avis has already notified the Government that it will not argue against two national operators. But the Government might make a concession to Budget by franchising that operator nationally on the basis that it would not have an airport office, but would have a phone booking service at each airport.

From the point of view of Avis and Hertz, the key issue to be decided by Cabinet is what percentage of revenue the Commonwealth will take from them. Avis has provided the Government with detailed operating figures of its own, and also of Hertz and Budget, which Avis claims to be very accurate. On the basis of these figures, Avis claims that two operators would only achieve reasonable profitability if the Commonwealth took no more than five percent of revenue. Currently, as the sole operator, Avis is paying eight percent.

NEW STATUS
FOR BMR
LIKELY

A bureaucratic battle of considerable significance to the mining industry has ended with a defeat for the CSIRO and a victory for the Department of National Development. The recommendation by the Australian Science and Technology Council (ASTEC) that the Bureau of Mineral Resources be re-organised as a statutory authority responsible to the Minister for National Development was made against strong opposition from CSIRO. The CSIRO executive urged that "a more effective and certainly less costly approach" would be the transfer of BMR's research activities to CSIRO. Rejecting the Executive's suggestion, ASTEC said the appointment of an Advisory Council for BMR should ensure that no overlap occurs between the two organisations. This council would comprise an independent chairman, a member nominated by the Chief Government Geologists' Conference, representatives of the petroleum industry, the mining

- 3 -

industry, the universities, and CSIRO, the permanent heads of National Development and Trade and Resources, and the BMR Director. Cabinet is unlikely to consider the ASTEC report this year, since some of its recommendations involve negotiation with State bodies, but it is believed the Government will endorse the new status of BMR.

PURCHASING
INQUIRY TO
SEEK VIEWS

A flood of complaints from industry about Government purchasing policies and methods is expected when the subject is investigated by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Expenditure. A sub-committee of Mr Ken Aldred (Lib Vic), Mr Frank Stewart (ALP NSW) and Mr Roy Braithwaite (NCP Qld) will seek submissions from industry as well as Government departments and statutory bodies. Public hearings will begin in February. Among the complaints which have provoked the inquiry are lack of standardisation in documents, slow payment of bills, unclear policy guidelines -- particularly relating to local content arrangements, the deliberate exclusion of Australian manufactures by the way specifications are drawn up, and the delays in the purchasing process. Some manufacturers are also questioning the value and the cost effectiveness of the public tendering system, pointing to the success of negotiated contracts and registers of suppliers as practised overseas.

CAI HITS
BACK AT
CRITICS

The President of the Confederation of Australian Industry, Mr Max Dillon, has responded to critics of the organisation who, he says, are "peripheral and ill-informed" and who have been vocal in their disbelief that such diverse interests could possibly come to common conclusions. Mr Dillon quoted the CAI submission to the Crawford study group as an example of CAI solidarity, even though this submission was the subject of a blistering complaint by the Victorian Chamber of Manufactures (Vol.31 No.33).

Having extolled the solidarity of the CAI in his speech to the NSW Employers' Federation, he said: "If a general consensus view on some issue in the future means a watering down of strong attitudes held, then the Confederation will not hesitate to express to Government a majority and a minority attitude to that section of the particular issue involved". Whilst Mr Dillon's frankness is appreciated by top people in Government, they believe the CAI would be well advised never to come to Government with a majority and minority view. This would only serve to strengthen doubts about the CAI's claim to represent the voice of all Australian business.

BEEF FOR
FISH IMPASSE

The next round of talks between Australian and Japanese officials on fishing rights in the 200 nautical mile zone begins in Canberra on December 11. There appears only one important sticking point at the moment -- the insistence by the Australian side that the fishing agreement contains a form of words which acknowledges that other commodities, aside from fish, can be brought into future negotiations on catch sizes etc. This is interpreted by the Japanese as suggesting a beef for fish deal at some time in the future and Tokyo is resisting. However the acceptance by Japan that other commodities could come into fishing negotiations would have important political implications for the National Country Party.

LIGHTING
CAMPAIGN

The lighting industry is preparing to ward off potential attacks on it from energy conservationists. The Lighting Group of the Australian Electrical and Electronic Manufacturers' Association is carrying out a study of the size and shape of the industry in preparation for justifying its use of energy. Of concern to the industry is the "turn off a light" campaign in the United States. The industry believes this is of little use as lighting takes only one to two percent of total energy requirements in the Northern hemisphere. The aim of the lighting industry is to persuade the community that good lighting makes a major contribution to human satisfaction in work and in leisure. It will also emphasise that the trend is for greater luminosity from reduced energy use. In short, the industry will argue that future technological developments will allow even higher standards of commercial, domestic and community lighting for less energy.

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MAZDA IN
TROUBLE

The additional Customs levy of 12.5 percent on goods under import quota which the Treasurer, Mr Howard, said was not intended "to have any additional protective effect" is going close to driving several car companies out of business. Mazda is in particular trouble and Honda is struggling. Mazda has mounted a massive lobbying campaign for removal of the 12.5 percent levy, and its representatives have seen every Minister of importance from the Prime Minister down, so far to no effect. Mazda holds about one third of car quotas due to its outstanding sales performance in the base year 1973-74, but now cannot sell enough cars to take up the full quota. It has been damaged by its inability to compete with new models and, like all Japanese cars, by the escalation of import costs caused by the appreciation of the yen against the Australian dollar.

DEALERS
HARD HIT

For Mazda, and to a lesser extent, most Japanese makers, the 12.5 percent Customs levy was almost the last straw. Added to Mazda's trouble is the plight of their dealers, about 90 percent of whom have exclusive Mazda franchises and cannot look to other models to save them. With the Liberal Party's concern about small business, the position of dealers is of particular concern.

A number of Ministers, including the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Mr Lynch, are sympathetic, but there is no apparent solution. The 12.5 percent Customs levy cannot be totally abolished -- apart from the fact that it is worth a valuable \$87 million dollars -- because to end it now would be seen as yet one more embarrassing retreat from the Budget strategy. Nor can the levy be selectively abolished. If the motor industry was relieved of the levy, at a cost of \$45 million, there would be overwhelming demands by importers of other products to have the levy removed.

US POLLS
AID REAGAN
CARTER

The results of the US elections of November 7 are seen as strengthening the hand of Mr Ronald Reagan for the Republican Presidential nomination in 1980. His extensive and effective campaigning on behalf of candidates has put a number of them in his political debt, and he remains the Republican front-runner at this stage. Of the other contenders, both Senator Baker of Tennessee and Governor Thompson had impressive wins, while former Treasury Secretary John Connally chalked up some more political IOUs. On the Democrat side, President Carter emerged best, mainly because he seems closest to the conservative trend shown in the election results. Governor Brown won well in California, partly by adopting more right wing positions, but he still lacks any real power base. Senator Edward Kennedy worked hard on behalf of five Senators, all of whom lost.

NO BIG
MONEY FOR
NZ LABOUR

While the Australian Labor Party was pleasantly surprised by private enterprise response to its recent fund-raising drive ("Inside Canberra" Vol.31 No.41), its New Zealand counterpart has not fared so well during the election period just ended. Our Wellington correspondent reports that the substantial donations which NZ Labour has received in the past from manufacturers and other large enterprises have been slow in appearing this year.

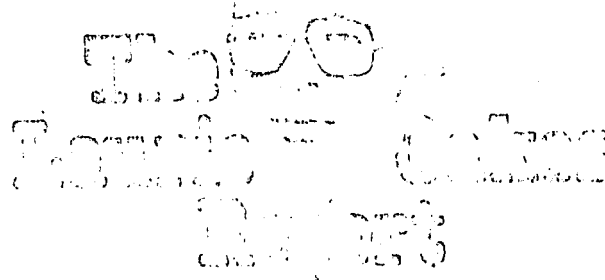
FA MISSES
ON TRADE
AMBITIONS

The Senate Standing Committee on Trade and Commerce has blocked the ambitions of the Department of Foreign Affairs to take over the Australian Trade Commissioner Service. In a report to the Parliament on the Service, the committee came down firmly on the side of the Trade Commissioners remaining under the administration of the Department of Trade and Resources. In its report the Committee said that there should be a necessarily close relationship between the Service and the Department of Foreign Affairs. The general support given the Service should assist Secretary of Trade and Resources Department, Mr Jim Scully, in plans to expand the Service posts in the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

APPENDIX 7

The Laurie Oakes Report

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7,000 jobs could be in jeopardy: Components makers fight the GMH plan

Local components makers are preparing a strong rearguard action against the GMH export complementation plan. They claim that up to a quarter of the Australian components industry in five States could be wiped out by export credit aspects of the complementation plan. This would occur, say the components makers, if GMH is allowed by the Federal Government to implement its plan to reduce local purchase of components dollar for dollar with exports sales by watering down the 85 percent local content motor plan.

Unofficial estimates of the net benefits versus disadvantages of the complementation plan have resulted in the following rough balance sheet: On the credit side, the GMH proposal would represent a \$130 million investment creating about 3,000 jobs between now and 1985. Engines would be produced more efficiently in a new plant. On the negative side, however, it is calculated that the loss of up to a quarter of the local components industry would translate into 7,000 less jobs and the phasing out of \$100 million worth of investment. This is without taking into account regional dislocations.

Advisory body bypassed

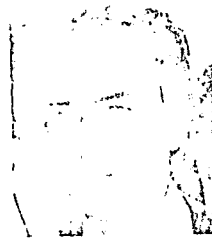
Component makers this week are meeting the senior officials in Canberra who comprise a special task force set up by the Prime Minister after he was first informed of the complementation deal by GMH at the beginning of January.

In the absence of detailed answers to requests for information from GMH, they will be asking for specific advice from the task force on the government's assessment of the impact of the export complementation on the total automotive industry and its allied industries in Australia.

They are also pressing the relevant Minister — the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Mr Lynch — to summon a meeting of the Automotive Industry Advisory Council. This body includes representatives

Continued on Page 7

INSIDE



Is the Dunstan decade nearly over for South Australia? Special report, Pages 4-5.

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THE ATOMIC ENERGY Commission has advised the Government against committing itself at this stage to particular enrichment technology..... Page Three

THE GOVERNMENT has been warned an increase in petrol prices is inevitable as a result of the Iran crisis ... Page Three

THE ICI DECISION to go ahead with its petrochemical plant in Victoria was more naive than political despite Premier Dunstan's claims of "dirty pool" for the Victorian election..... Page Three

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT Minister Kevin Newman has intervened at a crucial stage to block or delay the third phase of vehicle emission controls. The decision is due on 23 February..... Page Five

SENIOR MINISTERS told Mr Wal Fife to put the National Companies HQ in Melbourne to help the Victorian Liberal election campaign Page Six

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THE WEEK⁰⁰⁰

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The Victorian Premier, Dick Hamer, told his Cabinet on Monday last week that he had decided on 5 May as the State election date. Next day he gave the news to a meeting of his backbenchers. Then he returned to his office to find a telex message from the Federal Government signalling a rise in interest rates. It was hardly the ideal way to begin an election campaign. On the Wednesday came an ICI announcement of its decision to build a petrochemical plant at Point Wilson, but in terms of political impact the question of interest rates will almost certainly prove to be more important. It will be a long-running issue, whereas the ICI development is a once-only thing.

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In terms of market realities, the proposal to the loan council that there be an immediate increase in interest rates on Commonwealth Bonds and local and semi-government authority bonds was inevitable. And, as far as overall economic trends are concerned, the interest rate increase involved may be nothing more than a "hiccup" or a "blip" — to use two of the highly technical economic terms favoured by Federal Government spokesmen. But from the viewpoint of its political effects, the upward move in interest rates is a serious matter. Apart from anything else, it does further damage to the credibility of the Prime Minister, Mr Fraser — something he and the Government can ill-afford. The yawning Fraser credibility gap is undoubtedly one of the major reasons for the Government's low opinion poll ratings.

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Many people will see the interest rates decision as another example of Mr Fraser breaking an election pledge. He claims now that he never promised during the federal election campaign that interest rates would fall by two percent, but merely said there could be reductions of up to that amount. Even if that were so, he certainly intended to give voters the impression that he would get interest rates down, and this is what matters. Voters built up certain expectations which are now not being met. However, the truth of the matter — to coin a phrase — is that Mr Fraser and other senior Ministers did make definite statements about interest rate reductions. On 2 December 1977, for example, Mr Fraser referred to a two percent drop in interest rates over the ensuing year and added: "It is a target that can be and will be achieved." And on 25 November the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Anthony, made his extensively reported statement that interest rates would come down at least two percentage points in the next 12 months or he would eat his hat.

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People who do not believe that the Prime Minister deliberately misled them are still likely to form the opinion from the interest rates issue that he does not really know what is happening with the economy. Coming on top of a series of Budget miscalculations, repeated inaccurate forecasts about unemployment, and incorrect predictions about the inflation rate, it must undermine faith in the Government's claim to expertise in economic management.

That the Government's economic predictions retain any credibility at all following the bungle over the impact of the Budget on the December quarter consumer price index is little short of amazing. What most people do not realise is that, whereas Treasury's estimates proved to be ridiculously wrong, the predictions made by the Federal Opposition leader, Mr Hayden, in his Budget debate speech were almost spot on. The Treasurer, Mr Howard, said of the indirect tax changes in his Budget speech: "In terms of the consumer price index, those increases seem likely to be more than offset by the effects of the changes to the financing of health services." And statement number two presented with the Budget said: "These forecasts embody a reduction in the December quarter CPI as a result of Budget measures. According to Treasury sources, the actual fall expected was about 0.5 percent. A week later Mr Hayden tabled a chart showing he expected the indirect tax measures in the Budget to add 0.6 percent to the December quarter CPI. The actual impact turned out to be an addition of 0.4 percent. Mr Hayden's estimate of the CF's effect of excise increases on beer, spirits and tobacco products was 1.4 percent. The actual figure turned out to 1.6 percent". Mr Hayden estimated that the direct impact of the oil levy would be 0.7 percent. It turned out to be exactly that amount. The estimates used by Mr Hayden were based on calculations by an economist on his staff, Dr Geoff Jackson. When one Opposition staffer can do so much better than the Treasury, it is time some questions were asked.

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Mr Hayden and his staff have not only proved themselves adept at economic projections of late. They have also clearly got access to some inside information. Last Thursday Mr Hayden issued a press statement saying: "The Australian people are looking to the Prime Minister to honour his promise of a two percent cut in interest rates. If Mr Fraser is to maintain any credibility at all, the promise must be fulfilled no later than the end of the financial year." A day later the Financial Review carried news of the Federal Government's loan council telex on interest rates. It was not luck which enabled the Labor leader to score so effectively. He issued the Thursday statement because he had learned of the move to raise bond rates.

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Which brings us back to Mr Hamer and the Victorian election. The interest rates issue will not help his Government in what looks like a tough campaign. The Liberals in Victoria, however, do have one huge advantage over the Labor Opposition. While the ALP is embarrassingly short of funds, the Liberals have money coming out of their ears. Labor is so hard-up that it cannot even afford to retain an advertising agency to prepare its campaign commercials and advertisements. The Liberals, on the other hand, have the firm of Masius, Wynne-Williams & D'Arcy-McManus (Australia) Pty. Ltd. working for them flat out. They have decided that in the early stages of the campaign they should concentrate their television advertising on Sunday nights, and over four Sundays they have scheduled 72 30-second spots on Melbourne's three commercial channels. That's saturation advertising, and there is no way Labor can match it. If elections can be bought, the Hamer Government should survive despite interest rates or any other issue that may emerge.

RESOURCES

Enrichment options should be open - AEC

The Atomic Energy Commission has advised the Government against committing itself at this stage to any particular type of uranium enrichment technology. In a report to the National Development Minister, Mr Kevin Newman, it strongly recommends that Australia keep all options open for as long as possible on the enrichment technology question. The AEC report is at present highly classified, and has not yet been distributed to other Ministers. Mr Newman, however, is expected to send a copy to the Prime Minister, Mr Fraser, soon.

According to a highly-placed source, the AEC's advice on the issue can be summed up as: "Let every flower blossom." It suggests that Australia should study all the research which is going on in the enrichment area, some of which could result in important technological breakthroughs. This should be taken into account in the feasibility studies the Government has ordered on the establishment of a commercial uranium enrichment industry in Australia.

Further stage of Japan study

The Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Anthony, announced last month that the Government had decided to press ahead with uranium enrichment feasibility studies with potential collaborators including the URENCO consortium, Japan, France, and other interested Governments. The 23 January announcement said: "Uranium enrichment is a highly complex industry, and substantial feasibility studies are required before consideration can be given to any commitment to its establishment. Environmental factors will be taken into account in these studies."

Federal authorities have promised that State Governments and interested private companies in Australia will be included as fully as possible in the evaluation of enrichment proposals from foreign governments and organisations.

The next move on uranium enrichment following the AEC report is likely to be a further stage in the joint enrichment feasibility study with Japan.

ENERGY

More petrol price rises inevitable

The Federal Government has been warned that an increase in petrol prices in Australia is inevitable as a result of the Iran crisis. Officials have told the Government that, although oil companies will have to convince the Prices Justification Tribunal of the need for another use, they will have no difficulty in making a case. This will add to the difficulty of controlling inflation, though the likely increase being mentioned — about 18 cents a barrel — is not large. The effects of the situation in Iran are expected to start flowing through the world price system and affecting Australia by about May.

The governing board of the International Energy Agency (IEA) will hold a special meeting in Paris on 1

March to consider the crisis, and Australian representatives from the National Development Department are expected to attend. As revealed in last week's Oakes Report (Vol. 2 No. 3, 7 February 1979), Australia has lodged an application for membership of the IEA, and the Government believes this will be formally approved before the special meeting. It was the need to prepare for the IEA governor's meeting which prompted the National Development Minister, Mr Newman, to call oil company executives to Canberra for a conference yesterday. Mr Newman wanted the collective view of the oil industry on the effects of the situation on Australia. He was also seeking details from individual oil companies of their stock and supply situation.

Hayden: effects on Australia

The Federal Opposition Leader, Mr Hayden, was the first prominent politician to discuss publicly the likely oil price effects of the political instability in Iran. He told the Australian Institute of Energy conference in Newcastle last week: "Iran normally produces six million barrels of oil a day. Current production is negligible. Assuming that political stability is restored to Iran under a new administration, the level of production is estimated to reach no more than three million barrels a day — or half previous output — for reasons which include technical difficulties created by the loss of technicians who have left the country during the current unrest. Most are unlikely to return.

"A more permanent and significant factor is, that under a new administration, Iran is likely to buy far fewer armaments. If this should happen, Iran will be able to maintain living standards and an adequate industrial development program at a lower level of export income.

"The impact of these developments is that already non-contract petroleum supplies from other countries are attracting an additional \$4.00 a barrel premium, and clearly this must push up world prices generally. In the short-term, therefore, Australia, like most other countries, cannot avoid the problems of oil pricing and supply caused by what is happening in Iran."

Further increase by OPEC

Government advisers confirm Mr Hayden's analysis. They concede that, as well as an oil price rise caused by the Iran situation, the Australian economy will also have to absorb another increase later this year when the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is again expected to jack up prices. The OPEC increase will be passed on to Australian consumers because of the Government's policy of maintaining local oil prices at world parity level.

BUSINESS

ICI's timing more naive than political

Despite claims by the South Australian Premier, Mr Dunstan, of "dirty pool", the ICI decision to go ahead with a \$500 million petrochemical plant at Point Wilson near Geelong seems to have had little or nothing to do with the Victorian election campaign. The timing of the announcement a day after the Victorian Premier, Mr Hamer, named the election

Continued on Page 6

POWERS THAT BE

Is the Dunstan decade nearly over for South Australia?

In South Australia these days, supporters of the Premier, Mr Don Dunstan, have begun to criticise what they call "project fetishism". This is the belief that the State needs to attract a big development of some sort — a major uranium, gold and copper mine at Roxby Downs or a Redcliff petrochemical complex — to get it out of trouble. The SA economy, they say, has not been going badly over the last three months or so. But people have now been conditioned to expect Mr Dunstan to solve all the economic problems by pulling a rabbit out of a hat. This, they concede, is largely the fault of the Dunstan Government itself, which has tended to play up and possibly exaggerate the importance of individual projects such as Redcliff to the economic future of the State.

It is an interesting view, but one which is gaining force mainly to rationalise Mr Dunstan's failure to deliver the sort of projects SA voters have come to consider necessary to ensure their future prosperity. That failure was highlighted in a most dramatic way in the few days following Mr Dunstan's return from his uranium "fact-finding" tour of Britain and Europe at the beginning of last week. The Premier himself, having dangled Roxby Downs before the electorate a little over two weeks before, snatched it away again. Or so it seemed. And the Redcliff dream appeared to be shattered, following ICI's Wednesday announcement of a decision to build a \$500 million petrochemical plant at Point Wilson in Victoria.

Prospect of defeat

When Mr Dunstan was taken from Parliament to hospital on Thursday looking run-down and frail, the state of his physical health matched his political condition. Were it not for the low standing of the Liberal Opposition leader, Dr David Tonkin, defeat for the Dunstan Government at the next State election would be almost a foregone conclusion. And, while he may be the victim of circumstances beyond his control in the case of Redcliff, Mr Dunstan cannot blame others for the embarrassment he now faces on the uranium issue.

Experienced Labor strategists find it hard to believe the mess Mr Dunstan has got himself into over uranium. A month ago there was no heat in the issue, but now — as a result of the Premier's own efforts — it is the subject of considerable political controversy in SA. And Mr Dunstan's chopping and changing on the matter has damaged his credibility and his image. Supported by his Minister of Mines and Energy, Hugh Hudson, Mr Dunstan came out on top in a Parliamentary debate on uranium 24 hours after returning from his overseas trip, but that was more a result of Opposition ineptitude than a convincing performance by the Premier.

The message Mr Dunstan delivered during the debate was that the problem of disposing of nuclear

waste was far from solved in any of the countries he visited, and his Government was not going to allow any commitments to uranium mining and processing until safety conditions could be met. "Commitments can come only after a satisfaction of the Parliament and the people of South Australia on the safety matters," he said. "I believe that we can go on and make studies and evaluations, set up our program, and ensure that we know what is there and what the future implies, but no commercial commitment can be made until the conditions can be satisfied, and those conditions must be public, known and certain."

All of which may sound highly principled. But it differs markedly from the attitude Mr Dunstan expressed privately to a number of people before leaving on his trip. In those conversations he left no doubt that the two-week tour was to be the first move in the process of modifying the Labor Party's hard-line anti-uranium policy — a policy he himself had helped persuade the 1977 national ALP conference to adopt. Mr Dunstan conceded privately to colleagues that on his return the likelihood was that he would be lobbying for the adoption of a softer policy at the next national conference to be held in Adelaide in July.

Started by a heavy selling job

So it is clear that, between departure and return, Mr Dunstan has changed his mind. In fact, according to one well-placed SA source, he actually changed his mind several times during the trip. The question is why. Two factors seem to have influenced him. To begin with, it appears that someone had done a heavy selling job to convince Mr Dunstan that the technology of nuclear waste disposal had improved considerably. What he saw and heard on the trip did not live up to what he had been told — and believed — beforehand.

Rivalry from Duncan

The political factors, however, were probably more important. Mr Dunstan was certainly notified while he was in Britain during the first week of the trip that resistance to any watering down of policy on uranium was building up in the SA Labor Party branch. Insiders say the advice he received from party officials was that he would almost certainly fail to get the numbers for a policy change at the SA State ALP Conference, a prerequisite for any attempt to alter the party's national policy. This was probably an unduly pessimistic assessment, but it was accepted. A related factor was the Premier's somewhat jaundiced view of the young SA Attorney-General, Mr Peter Duncan, who was assuming leadership of the anti-uranium forces. Mr Dunstan would not have wanted to risk boosting Mr Duncan's support within the State ALP.

As a result of Mr Dunstan's clumsy handling of the whole matter, a softening of Labor's national policy on uranium is now not in prospect this year. But, by bringing the issue into prominence again, Mr Dunstan has given the non-labor parties at both the South Australian and Federal level a stick with which to beat the ALP. In the SA context it could prove to be an effective electoral weapon if the Liberals managed to find themselves a credible State leader. The word from Adelaide is that manoeuvres are under way in a bid to do just that, and an attempt to replace Mr Tonkin is likely in the next few months. With Mr Dunstan now committed to fighting the next State election with a policy which effectively prevents the development of the huge Roxby Downs mineral deposits — a project which would bring investment worth something like \$2000 million to SA — his government must be considered extremely vulnerable.

"Project fetishism" criticised

The apparent loss of Redcliff as a result of the ICI announcement will increase that vulnerability — despite Mr Dunstan's claim of "dirty pool" by the Federal Government favouring Victoria — because it adds to the impression that he is no longer in control of events. In political terms it could prove to be a more blow. There is no getting away from the fact that industry is drifting away from SA, and Mr Dunstan is not proving effective in coaxing it back. Even if it is true — as claimed by the critics of "project fetishism" — that one big project would not boost employment and economic activity in the State as much as is generally believed, it would at least help to refurbish Mr Dunstan's image. But it looks unlikely to happen.

Wran gets on better with business

One of Mr Dunstan's most serious problems is that his relations with the business world are somewhat strained. This is illustrated by the way many businessmen tend to contrast the SA Labor Premier with Mr Neville Wran in NSW. Mr Wran has set about cultivating the business community and has done it skilfully, whereas mention of the Dunstan Government seems to produce a hostile reaction in any business gathering. One of the reasons for this is the industrial democracy policy of the SA Government. The fear many businessmen have of this policy may be based on a misconception, but that does not make it any less real.

INDUSTRY

Macphee plays larger industry policy role

The Productivity Minister, Mr Macphee, will have a key role in the newly established Industry Policy Committee of Federal Cabinet. At meetings of the Committee he will not only present the Productivity Department's brief, but the considerably more important brief of the Industry and Commerce Department as well. The Industry and Commerce Minister, Mr Lynch, who is chairman of the Committee, will present the views of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The terms of reference of the Committee are: to consider matters arising from reports of the Industries Assistance Commission and the Temporary Assistance Authority; to oversee Government purchasing policy, including the acquisition of ADP capability;

and to deal with matters affecting Australian industry generally. The Ministerial Committee will be backed up by a committee of four permanent heads — the Secretaries of the Prime Minister's Department, Industry and Commerce, Business and Consumer Affairs, and Treasury.

Apart from Mr Lynch and Mr Macphee, Ministers appointed to the Committee by the Prime Minister, Mr Fraser, are: Mr Sinclair (Primary Industry), Mr Street (Industrial Relations), Mr Killen (Defence), Mr Robinson (Finance), Mr Viner (Employment and Youth Affairs), Mr McLeay (Administrative Services), Senator Webster (Science and the Environment), Mr Fife (Business and Consumer Affairs), and Mr Garland (Special Trade Representations). The Immigration Minister, Mr MacKellar, is also a member — representing the Treasurer.

Decisions on the tariff

The Industry Policy Committee will make many of the decisions on matters such as tariffs which used to be left to the full Cabinet, and its establishment is seen as strengthening Mr Lynch's clout within the Government. Certainly it increases his control of the governmental machinery dealing with industry.

The increasing involvement of Mr Macphee in industry policy matters is understood to be at Mr Lynch's initiative. According to Government sources, Mr Lynch is an admirer of Mr Macphee's ability. Late last year he supported Mr Macphee's formal appointment as Minister Assisting the Minister for Industry and Commerce.

Newman supports case against emission laws

The National Development Minister, Mr Newman, has joined the campaign to block or at least delay the implementation of the proposed third phase of emission controls on motor vehicles. His intervention comes at a crucial stage, with the issue scheduled to be decided at a meeting of the Australian Transport Advisory Council on 23 February. South Australia and NSW are the Governments pressing hardest for phase three to go ahead, but Mr Newman's department has prepared a strong case against this in line with the Federal Government's proposed oil conservation campaign.

Mr Newman gave an indication of his Department's thinking in an address to the first national conference of the Australian Institute of Energy in Newcastle last week. One of his central themes was that energy conservation in transport presented the Government with difficult decisions which had to be faced. Unfortunately, from an energy viewpoint, the direction of some policies related to transport seemed destined to result in increased consumption of liquid fuels, Mr Newman said. Some policies could develop in the opposite direction to fuel economy, and it was necessary to canvass very thoroughly the implications of such policy moves before they were accepted.

Average 10% fuel penalty

"One such example is in the field of emission control of motor vehicles — the ADR 27A regulations," Mr Newman told the conference. "According to tests carried out by the Department of Transport, the implementation of the regulations so far has increased consumption of vehicles in city driving by an average of 10 percent in the vehicles fitted with

the equipment. There have been suggestions that the introduction of the third phase would add further fuel penalties. The question to be addressed is should we proceed?

"I do not want to stand before you tonight and say no we should not. I do not believe that anyone at this time can give a fully considered reply in favour or against. I do suggest, however, that there is a clear need for a most careful assessment of the fuel usage implications in an overall benefit — cost analysis, under today's conditions. Moves that were judged to have been in the community's interests when oil was \$2 a barrel may well be inappropriate at \$13. Let us find out.

"There are a number of such difficult problems in the energy field. Decisions must be taken that provide the proper balance between the need to maintain an environment in which we can all flourish and the need to guarantee that meeting our future energy needs does not impose such a burden on our economy that we must drastically alter our life style or our economic way of life. The community must face up to difficult decisions such as this."

BUSINESS

Fife told where to put companies HQ

The Federal Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs, Mr Fife, is under firm instructions that the headquarters of the National Companies and Securities Commission is to be in Melbourne. The instructions were issued to him at the beginning of last week after senior Liberals in the Government — principally the Prime Minister, Mr Fraser, and the Industry and Commerce Minister, Mr Lynch — decided the matter had been stalled for too long. Mr Fraser and Mr Lynch had discussed it the week before. Mr Fife was told specifically that Melbourne was to get the Commission HQ to give a boost to the Hamer Government in the campaign for the 5 May Victorian election.

Until then Mr Fife had been attempting to judge the competing claims of Sydney and Melbourne on their merits — gathering information, discussing the matter with interested parties, getting advice from the experts in his department, and generally dealing with the issue in an impartial manner. He was, in short, acting as a Minister should. But the Liberal "heavies" decided that Mr Fife was being altogether too Ministerial and ordered him, in effect, to stop messing about. He was told it was the duty of the Federal Liberals to help their counterparts in Victoria.

As a result Mr Fife immediately sent a telex to State Attorneys-General telling them he wanted the issue of the location of the commission headquarters settled once and for all at the meeting at Tanunda in South Australia last Thursday and Friday. A quick decision was necessary, he claimed, because accommodation had to be arranged and staff had to be recruited in time for the commission to begin operations from 1 July. At the Tanunda meeting, however, the Attorneys-General of the three Labor States managed to secure a further delay by threatening to walk out if there was any attempt to force the issue to a vote. They suspected, correctly, that the sudden urgency was due to the Victorian poll.

SIX

NSW Libs prefer Sydney

Mr Fife's position is presumably somewhat uncomfortable because prominent figures in the NSW Liberal organisation are strong advocates of siting the commission in Sydney. They are among those arguing that Sydney is the logical location because it has a bigger population than Melbourne, more registered companies, more listed companies, and more stockbroking firms. Mr Fife's seat of Farrer is, of course, in NSW — though it is situated mid-way between Sydney and Melbourne. He must now join forces with the Victorians who argue that Melbourne has the largest merchant banks, the headquarters of most of the major banks and companies, and a stock exchange which handles a bigger volume of trading than Sydney's.

As a result of the stand taken by the NSW, South Australian and Tasmanian Attorneys-General at Tanunda it was decided that the question should be deferred until the next meeting of Federal and State Ministers responsible for company matters in Hobart on 23 February. The official explanation for this is that several Attorneys-General at last week's meeting were not in a position to commit their Governments. It appears, however, that the Labor States may again prevent a vote in Hobart and try to delay the whole matter until the Victorian poll is out of the way.

Bjelke could dump Melbourne

There seems to be more involved than a determination to stop Mr Hamer getting an election kick-along. It is just possible that the timing of the vote on the commission's location could affect the outcome. The numbers are apparently fairly evenly balanced, with the three Labor States expected to vote for Sydney while Victoria, Western Australia and the Federal Government would vote for Melbourne. The Queensland attitude is reported to be crucial. The word is that, in a vote held before the Victorian election, Mr Bjelke-Petersen would probably opt for Melbourne. But after 5 May he would not be under the same pressure and just might be persuaded to come down on the side of Sydney.

ICI DECISION NAIVE

From Page Three

date was the result of ICI naivete rather than political collusion — though Mr Hamer was no doubt grateful for it. Mr Dunstan was nevertheless correct in believing that the Prime Minister, Mr Fraser, had favoured the Point Wilson development over the proposal for a petrochemical complex at Redcliff in SA. The Industry and Commerce Minister, Mr Lynch, is also understood to have taken the attitude that Point Wilson was a better proposition from the Federal Government's point of view.

The ICI and Redcliff proposals, together with a third plan for a major plant at Altona, also in Victoria, have all been discussed at various levels by the Federal Government over a long period. Redcliff, involving the Dow Chemical group, was first out of the trials, and was regarded by the Federal Government as acceptable if there was nothing else in the field. Messrs Fraser, Lynch and other senior Ministers, however, took the view that Redcliff would almost certainly not proceed if a proposal was developed for a similar petrochemical complex in the eastern states.

Redcliff's infrastructure costs

The Federal attitude was that issues such as regional unemployment should be ignored, and the

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proposal with the best footing in the market should be the one to get help. Redcliff had two strikes against it. One was the cost of infrastructure works which would be necessary. The other was a fear that, if the project went off the rails for any reason, the Government would find itself caught on what one official described as "a monstrous financial hook". There was, in other words, concern that the Federal Government would be expected to mount a rescue operation if, say, infrastructure costs got out of hand.

The ICI project, as far as is known, will not require special infrastructure help. The Federal Government will have no obligation and no liability, and therefore is keen to see Point Wilson (plus ICI's proposed \$400 million extension to its Botany Bay plant) go ahead. At the same time, given that it is about to launch a campaign to encourage the conservation of liquid fuels, the Government will not be comfortable responding to one of Mr Dunstan's criticisms. This is that the ICI project will mean the waste of energy resources in the Cooper Basin gas field and extra imports of crude oil to provide feedstock for Point Wilson and Botany Bay.

Petrochemical politics

Mr Dunstan and his advisers are still clinging to the hope that the Point Wilson announcement was merely a manoeuvre in the game of petrochemical politics — part of a propaganda battle. They believe the decision may not be as firm as the announcement suggested because it was considerably vaguer than the Botany Bay announcement in certain respects. There was, for example, no information provided on the capacity of the proposed Point Wilson plant. For this reason Mr Dunstan has not totally written off Redcliff. Information from SA suggests Dow Chemicals has not given up completely. But there seem to be few doubts in Victoria, even among State Labor politicians, that the Point Wilson development will go ahead.

③ COMPONENTS MAKERS

From Front Page

of the Federal Government, vehicle and components manufacturers, unions, consumers, retailers and Government and Opposition parties. Along with about a dozen other advisory councils, it was established by the coalition government in 1976 as a direct channel of advice on industry issues. The feeling now is that with the sudden emergence of precisely the type of issue for which the council was established — export complementation — there is a danger of it being bypassed because of the 28 February deadline which GMH is attempting to impose.

Pressure on Mr Lynch to call a meeting of the Automotive Industry Advisory Council is also coming from the ACTU through its nominated delegate to the council, Mr Laurie Carmichael. Within the motor industry itself, the vehicle builders union has not raised any unexpected objections to the GMH proposal. But the reaction which has caused surprise are the criticisms from the ironworkers' Mr Laurie Short.

Components industry sources also point out that it is only a matter of weeks — mid-November last — since Mr Lynch addressed the annual convention of the Federation of Automotive Products Manufacturers (FAPM) and provided assurances that there would be no change to the 85 percent local content motor vehicle plans before they were due to expire in 1984. They contrast this with Mr Lynch's statement

on the GMH proposal last week which came out in support of changing the motor plan almost immediately.

The relevant section of the 6 February Lynch statement read: "Mr Lynch confirmed that the companies envisaging new export programs had each proposed to the Government that measures to facilitate exports of automotive products be incorporated in the present Motor Vehicle Plan. But, he said, it would not be appropriate for him to make public information on the detailed proposals which individual companies had put to the Government. However he could say these proposals essentially involved some production for export sale being treated similarly to production for domestic sale for the purpose of meeting local content requirements under the Plan. The Government was aware that there was concern in some areas of the industry that they could be disadvantaged by these developments although other areas would have improved prospects. The Minister said the Government, in response to these new developments, would carefully consider the balance of advantage in relation to all interests in the industry and the Australian community as a whole."

Within the motor industry, feeling is that complementation developments along the lines of the GMH world car engine plant are inevitable in Australia. Similarly, the strong indications in Canberra are that the government will go along with the GMH move.

If this turns out to be the case, some fundamental structural changes are equally inevitable in the components sector. If GMH, followed by the other engine plants in Australia at Nissan and Chrysler (Mitsubishi) go the way of international complementation towards world-scale engine manufacture, the components industry during the 1980s will be obliged to follow the same pattern of big plants geared to large-scale production of specific components, and the importation of most of the remainder of components needed to assemble cars in Australia.

In Australia this would mean expansion of engine-oriented components manufacture such as piston rings, pistons, engine bearings, hang-on electricals, timing chains and gears and so on. But on the other hand, it would mean the virtual disappearance of components manufacturing in Australia in whole areas like transmissions and trim for vehicles.

One of the difficulties of public debate about the motor vehicle plans is the misleading nature of the complicated and detailed regulations involved and their actual effect. Many people tend to assume that the term "85 percent local content plan" means what it seems to — that 85 percent of parts from which Australian built cars are made come from Australia.

This is not the case at all. Of the 100 percent represented by the wholesale price of an Australian-built car, local independent component makers provide only about 20 percent by value.

Of the "85 percent local content" by value, the other 65 percent goes on plant, labour and imported raw materials (20), tooling and machine costs and transfer payments for designs (15), profit margin, advertising and distribution costs (15), and components made in-house in the big motor plants as distinct from the independent component makers (15). In this situation, proposals to source another say, five percent of components overseas instead of in Australia sound innocuous enough to the general public. But they could mean the loss by local firms of up to a quarter of their market.

DEEP THROAT

Killen's Waterloo

During his recent overseas trip, Defence Minister Jim Killen made it known that he was not inspecting the residences attached to various diplomatic missions in countries he visited. He also let it be known, perhaps wistfully, that he had not been measuring House of Lords seats for size. Despite these protestations, Jim actually met his Waterloo. While in Brussels to see N.A.T.O. heavies, he was taken on the obligatory tour of the site of the famous battle at which Napoleon was finally defeated. The party lunched at a nearby hostelry where drops of a suspiciously coloured liquid splattered into the Minister's soup from a damp ceiling. Jim pushed his plate aside with a worried reference to water and loos.

Grim visages

Remember the outcry from the Liberals about personality cults when Fred Daly, as the responsible minister, was alleged to have had photographs of Prime Minister Gough hung up in all Australian overseas missions. Large photographs of a grim-faced Malcolm Fraser now grace the walls of some missions, including the offices of the Permanent Mission to the United Nations on New York's Second Avenue.

Pearls of pedantry

If Gough Whitlam had fun settling old scores in his book "The Truth of the Matter", he also enjoyed himself with the index. A reader who wants to look up references to The Queen or Prince Charles, for example, will find them listed under the family name. Windsor, Edward VIII and George V are listed under Wettin. Included in the index are Claudius (Nero Germanicus) and Tiberius, as well as Julius Caesar Germanicus, Gaius (k/a Caligula). The very first entry is Achaemenides, Cyrus II.

More than meets the eye

Victorian ALP officials could hardly believe their luck when the Liberal Party produced its major pamphlet for the State election campaign. The pamphlet lists achievements of the Hamer Government, but the title is unfortunate, to say the least. It is "More Than Meets the Eye". Labor Leader Frank Wilkes is not noted for his wit, but even he should have no trouble getting laughs by referring to corruption in Government land purchases and other similar matters which were not meant to meet the eye of the electorate. The Victorian Liberal Party President, Mrs Joy Mein, revealed in an ABC radio interview that "More Than Meets the Eye" would be one of the party's election campaign slogans, and received an immediate reaction. Interviewer Elizabeth Bond and State ALP Secretary Bob Hogg, who was on the same program, found it impossible to conceal their amusement. The other Liberal slogan "Hamer's Vital for Victoria" should prove just as easy for Laor to turn to its own advantage because Mr Hamer's plan to quit politics soon whether he wins or loses has been widely known for some time.

Gough's no vote-winner

People involved in planning the Labor campaign were less pleased, however, by the media prominence given to Gough Whitlam's merciless bagging of Sir John Kerr, Sir Garfield Barwick, et al. And the thought of the former Prime Minister stamping the country repeating the performance at every opportunity as part of the promotion of his book makes them decidedly nervous. The reason is an opinion survey the party commissioned late last year on voter perception of Mr Wilkes and the overall image of the ALP in Victoria. The results showed that, even though he has retired from Parliament, Mr Whitlam is still one of Labor's biggest image problems. Mr Whitlam still alarms many voters, and this affects the way they view the party he once led. The Victorian ALP would like to see Mr Whitlam leave for his American university appointment as soon as possible.

Dunstan's annual D-day

The South Australian Premier, Don Dunstan, had to ride out a huge political crisis last year after he dismissed the State's Police Commissioner, Mr Harold Salisbury. The sacking of Salisbury was announced on 17 January 1978. It was on 17 January 1979, that Mr Dunstan announced his decision to rush overseas to investigate the latest advances in the technology of nuclear waste disposal. Small wonder a prominent SA Labor Party personality now refers to the trip and the political controversy it caused as "our annual disaster".

Uranium and re-shuffles

The fuss over uranium policy in the South Australian Labor Party may force Mr Dunstan to delay a planned re-shuffle of his Cabinet. As the man who led the anti-uranium forces when it seemed Mr Dunstan was intent on having the policy watered down, the Attorney-General, Mr Peter Duncan, has strengthened his position significantly. There is now concern among Dunstan supporters that Mr Duncan, regarded as on the Left-wing of the party, might be sufficiently powerful to beat the "establishment ticket" in a Caucus ballot to elect new Ministers. Four Ministers plan to step down, and Mr Dunstan has picked out the four backbenchers he wants elected to the Ministry to replace them. The changes were expected at the end of the present Parliamentary session, but are likely to be delayed by the Premier if he believes there is any likelihood of one of Mr Duncan's supporters being elected instead of one of his own proteges.

Aunty showed the right one

It appears that Enterprise Colourvideo Productions may really be in the Prime Ministerial doghouse over the minor error it made last month — delivering the film of Mr Fraser's 1978 Australia Day address to television stations instead of the 1979 version. Certainly the firm was not used to produce Mr Fraser's most recent television homily, which was an appeal for funds to send Australian athletes to the Olympic Games. Mr Fraser actually got the ABC to produce this little talk to the nation which was shown last Saturday afternoon, and he is understood to have been pleasantly surprised at the trouble-free and professional way it was done. What's more, the ABC managed to send out the film dealing with the 1980 Moscow Olympics — not the 1976 games in Montreal.