

POLITICS, PROTEST AND THE PRESS

**POLITICS, PROTEST AND THE PRESS: NEW RIGHT HEGEMONY
CRISIS DISCOURSE, AND THE 1997 ONTARIO TEACHERS' STRIKE**

By

JOSHUA L. GREENBERG, B.A.

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AUTHOR: Joshua L. Greenberg, B.A. (University of Guelph)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Graham Knight

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ABSTRACT

Politics, Protest, and the Press: New Right Hegemony,
Crisis Discourse and the 1997 Ontario Teachers' Strike

Joshua L. Greenberg
McMaster University, 2000

Supervisor:
Graham Knight

This thesis is a discussion of the discursive construction of an education crisis in Ontario under the Progressive Conservative government of the 1990s. It first describes the historical emergence of New Right hegemony in Ontario and pays critical attention to the formation and meaning of crisis and crisis response. Second, it discusses the role of the mass media, and the press in particular, in the construction of crisis, by describing the ways in which events are reported and understood in their journalistic context by newsreaders. The empirical component of the thesis is served by a content and critical discourse analysis of 'mainstream' news text and photographs from the 1997 Ontario teachers' strike. It is argued that crises are compositional arrangements that depend crucially upon the active participation of a variety of individuals and groups who, in their unity, help to transform the balance of political forces that delineate and govern social and political change.

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Introduction

Since its electoral victory in 1995, the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario has addressed its beliefs in a strong centralised state and free market by implementing a series of ‘difficult but necessary’ social and economic reforms. In addition to slashing rent control, de-regulating environmental protection, sending young offenders to boot camps, and intensifying the surveillance of welfare recipients, another of its goals has been to restructure a bureaucratic and costly education system that “still fails to make the grade.”¹

In 1995, former Minister of Education, John Snobelen was reported to have said that a ‘crisis in education’ would help the government to achieve its objectives of political and economic restructuring. Moving swiftly, the Conservative government legitimated several education reforms by repeatedly arguing that the public school system was in a state of *risk*. In response, some critics – namely concerned parents, academics, and the Unions representing the province’s 126,000 teachers – have interpreted the change as oppressive, anti-democratic, and authoritarian (*inter alia* Kozolanka 1998). The concerns are not only about the neo-conservative nature of the reforms, but of the neo-liberal implications as well.²

Minister Snobelen’s statement that the education system is at risk is illustrative of a general anxiety about the value of education vis-à-vis rapid changes in technology, demography, and politics – a feeling that has been articulated with each successive change in governmental power in the last fifty or so years. Structurally, the current concerns have led to the appointment of a number of expert commissions, arm’s length agencies legislated to preside over and implement the government’s recommendations for

reform. However, more than just structural change has occurred, as the anxiety over the value of education has been articulated in largely ideological terms as well.

The attention to socio-economic turbulence, brought on by ‘unprecedented rates of change in technology’, address the concern that a society previously organised around the social distribution of goods has given way to a society that is increasingly and systematically re-distributing risk (Beck 1992; Giddens 1994). In the West, education has served as a means through which individuals may develop into responsible, informed, and rational citizens. Thus, for some, a formal education is a vehicle of emancipation, providing ‘opportunities’ and ‘capital’ in the form of skills and knowledge. Yet, what happens when we hear reports about an education system that fails to be held responsible or accountable for its performance? How are we to feel about the value of education when we are told that the public system may indeed be placing our children at risk? What do we do when we hear reports that across the province, students in public and publicly funded Catholic schools are failing to demonstrate the knowledge necessary for becoming competitive and industrious citizens in these modern, high-tech times? Who is to blame when parents report an ‘abundant lack of confidence’ and ‘feel disturbed by the crisis in our schools’? These kinds of questions pose images of crisis and an unacceptable reliance on the status quo – the public school system is depicted as unstable, unaccountable, and tenuous, at best.

As I have argued elsewhere (Greenberg 1999), the approach taken by the government to reach a consensus about the need for education reform has involved the articulation of both risk and security. Playing the consensual desire for security off on the fear of risk, the Conservatives’ common sense revolution fuses the principles of

accountability and responsibility into a series of education ‘problems’ that are to be debated and negotiated by the public (ibid). This adequately represents what for Foucault are the positive demands of risk: that in managing it, one opens oneself up to “the possibility of richer, more numerous, more diverse, more flexible relations with oneself and one’s environment, while guaranteeing to each individual real autonomy” (1988:161). Implicit to the government’s goal of improving institutional accountability has been to prepare an educational field more amenable to certain kinds of change. In this sense, what is being governed is not simply a population of people, but a field of education that can be made more efficient and, at the same time, meet the desires of a ‘rational, pragmatic, and free thinking’ electorate.

This thesis is broken down into four chapters, although each chapter entails several smaller discussions. The first chapter frames the current education crisis within the much broader context of New Right governance in Ontario, and it draws primarily upon Antonio Gramsci’s theoretical problematic of hegemony. Central to successful hegemony is the active participation, that is the enrolment and mobilisation of influential groups. This first chapter discusses some of these groups and the roles they assumed in the construction of a ‘crisis’. Although the perception of an education crisis surely existed prior to the electoral victory of the Conservative Party in 1995, its New Right ideology and governing practices surely refined the contours of what we mean by the notion of a ‘crisis’ in the school system.

In addition to the active participation of influential groups, the logic of hegemony depends crucially upon the consent of those who are to be governed. Chapter 2 is

concerned with discussing the role and function of the mass media, but especially the press in the enrolment and mobilisation of newsreaders to State projects. Continuing along the Gramscian trajectory, the chapter also addresses the Althusserian notion of interpellation to account for the possible ways in which newsreaders participate actively in the constitution of an education 'crisis'. But it does so in such a way that will free the Althusserian framework of much of its theoretical and strategic shortcomings.

Chapter 3 is a largely descriptive account of the methods that were employed in the formal analysis of the news coverage of the strike by the *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, and *Toronto Sun*. Chapter 4 details the findings of this excavation.

CHAPTER 1

New Right Hegemony and the Ontario Education Crisis

Introduction

This chapter discusses New Right (NR) hegemony and the construction of an 'education crisis' in Ontario. The reasons for the trajectory are twofold. First, since the 1980s, there has been a veritable growth of interest in the political concept of NR vis-à-vis the destabilisation of the consensus underpinning the regime of accumulation associated with the post-WWII welfare state. Since the election of a Conservative government in 1995, the province has experienced on both structural and ideological levels, not just a shift in 'governmental' power but also a transformation in 'state' power. Secondly, more than in any other sphere, the education system has been the site *par excellence* for the exercise of NR hegemony in Ontario. The Conservative's election manifesto, *The Common Sense Revolution*, surely planted the seeds for state transformation, but only within the context of the 'crisis,' the zenith of which was the two-week strike by the province's 126,000 teachers, did NR hegemony reach both its structural and ideological apex.

Hegemony and the Ontario State

In theorising the struggle over education, this chapter draws primarily on the Gramscian problematic of hegemony. Hegemony consists of a strategy of moral and intellectual leadership that is contingent upon several factors: first, the ability of a class or class fraction to articulate its economic and ideological interests as natural and universal to the whole of society; second, the class or class fraction's success in gaining consent

from those who are to be governed, i.e. in *enrolling* and *mobilising* other fractions and social groups; and third, in *constructing* an opportunity for intervention that will help to secure the objectives of the dominant group (Gramsci 1971; Anderson 1977; Sassoon 1982; Jessop 1990; Carroll and Ratner 1989). My goal is not to provide a critical reading of hegemony theory, but to merely discuss the significance of Gramsci's theoretical insight to the contemporary scene in Ontario.³

In a very general sense, the objective of hegemony is to secure state power by consent and without recourse to violence. In doing so, successful hegemonic projects take as their aim the transformation of state and civil society, the restraint or de-legitimation of opposed projects and the group interests they support, and the shifting of the overall balance of state power as a whole (Johnson 1982; cf. Carroll and Ratner 1989; Hay 1992). In doing so, successful projects will cement an 'historic bloc' whose organic relation will bring about a contingent correspondence between economic and non-economic relations, and whose unity is not necessarily the product of a single essential principle, i.e. solely material interests (Jessop 1990; Laclau and Mouffe 1985).

By the same token, however, an organic relation cannot be realised unless embedded within an organic crisis, an "incurable structural contradiction" (Gramsci 1971:178), whereby the prevailing historic bloc is called into question and challenged by a new bloc with a new vision (Heffren 1982:155; Carroll and Ratner 1989:31). Crisis is, as Hay has termed it, "dusk and dawn" (1996:255). It is at once the moment of intervention and transformation, in which the balance of forces will shift, and where hegemony will form the basis of a "new pattern of alliances" (Simon 1982:40).

So constituted, this theoretical schema allows for the specification of a hegemonic project, any political movement that aims to create or maintain hegemony by attempting to overturn an historic consensus in favour of a new consensus. As Carroll and Ratner have argued, however, “the concepts of hegemonic project and historical bloc are only meaningful as guideposts in the concrete analysis of conjunctures in which political contention occurs” (1989:31). It is the purpose of this chapter to discuss the NR project by placing its current characteristics against the historic backdrop of a challenge to the accumulationist regime of Fordism in Ontario, and to discuss the construction of the education crisis as a critical ‘moment’ of state transformation.

The History of the Present: New Right Hegemony in Ontario

This chapter argues that current Conservative governance in Ontario is characteristic of a relatively recent emergence of NR ideology in the West. In doing so, it behooves this discussion to first clarify what is meant by the term, ‘new right’. As Thompson has argued, the difficulty lies primarily in acknowledging that the NR “is far from being a homogeneous discursive or political entity” (1990:1). In his study of Thatcherism, Gamble (1988) shows how NR politics hybridises the anti-statist belief of neo-liberals in absolute freedom and natural rights, with the neo-conservative belief that a stable society lies not in securing “end of state” concerns like equality, but on a deeply-rooted, common culture (*inter alia* Nozick 1974). In her discussion of the rise of the ‘radical right’ in Europe, Chantal Mouffe has equated new right politics with a ‘new’ type of voter, whose experience of growing disaffection and alienation from traditional political parties “could be channelled in unexpected directions” (1995:500). The term has

also been used in a more circumscribed manner to refer to a strategic shift away from 'frontal' authoritarianism and toward ideological 'passivity' (Hall et al. 1978; Poulantzas 1978; cf. Jessop et al. 1985; Jessop 1990). Rendered empirically, the NR has been variously labelled as Thatcherism, Reaganism, neo-conservatism, neo-liberalism and, recently, Harrisism; the terminology expresses the generic notion of the manifestation of a *new* social and political reality (Teeple 1997).

Understanding the current Ontario 'education crisis' requires an outline of the historical, geographic and political contour of NR hegemony in Canada.⁴ As the locus of the country's manufacturing sector and its most populous province, Ontario has been a vanguard of welfare state activity since roughly the end of WWII. As the province adjusted to the maturation of Fordism in the 1950s and 1960s, it successfully assembled the appropriate "clientele" and "social proletarians" whose participation would be necessary for ensuring the continued maintenance of the supply and demand cycle of accumulation (Carroll and Ratner 1989:32). Although in principle, Fordism represented an articulation between the processes of production and modes of consumption, it was nevertheless an institutionalised means of social control, and represented for neo-liberal pundits a direct threat to individualism and free enterprise (Davies 1985:21; cf. Patten 1999). Only 'beyond the state,' it was argued, could a life worthy of free human individuals truly begin.⁵ Still, despite early attempts at inculcating an ethic of 'moral consumption' through a blend of coercion and persuasion, the welfare state did bring a partial de-commodification to numerous areas of reproduction, thus extending universal access to quality healthcare, welfare and education (Gough and Steinberg 1981; Carroll and Ratner 1989).

Elsewhere in Canada and internationally, however, the situation was not the same. For example, in the export-oriented economies of British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland in the 1970s and 1980s, fluctuations in international demand for resource-based goods led to occasional acute economic crises and, thus, posed serious challenges to the long-term stability of the Fordist model (Carroll and Ratner 1989). By the early 1980s, unemployment in the core countries comprising the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) soared to more than 30 million, rivalling levels of the Great Depression (Wolfe 1983:7). With the increasing laxity of international trade regulations, the political agenda in Canada began to change at both the national and provincial levels, shifting further away from concerns about the management of the national economy, to an orientation toward international competitiveness (Carroll and Ratner 1989:34). Moreover, as global capital took on an increasingly mobile character, the effectiveness of Keynesian social policy in negotiating the woes of stagflation and economic decline was seriously called into question, especially in those 'extraverted' regions where Fordism had been only marginally rooted (Radice 1984; Carroll and Ratner 1989). Concurrently, the benefits of decent wages and social entitlements that had been secured through collective bargaining were now framed by influential members of the neo-conservative bloc to be major impediments to economic growth, stability and competitiveness.⁶ Nonetheless, despite the frequency in which conservatism was embedding itself into the political consciousness as a justifiable response to acute economic crisis, early NR initiatives in Canada seemed to lack the ideological *tour-de-force* necessary for establishing a new 'balance of forces'. Until recently, NR hegemony in Ontario was more or less 'passive,' characterised generally by a slow-drip in the

erosion of services and programmes⁷ but without the caustic fuel necessary for igniting more expansive hegemony (cf. Jenson 1990; Knight 1998a).

The central province's critical moment came when, after a relatively flat period of Liberal Party rule, the populace elected in 1990 the first nominally social democratic government in the province's history, the New Democratic Party (NDP). Like the NDP in BC in the early to mid-1970s, the Ontario NDP of the 1990s had the misfortune of inheriting something of a "poisoned chalice" (Hay 1996:256): a severe economic recession, monetarist economic policy at the federal level, high provincial debt and deficit, and rising levels of unemployment. The immediate response was a policy of fiscal stimulation, which ultimately failed. Its more enduring response, however, was the Social Contract, initially a means of appeasing labour while at the same time attempting to reincorporate it within a rapidly disintegrating post-war settlement. The unintended side effect was that it channelled the failures of the state in such a way that, when the crisis finally hit, the Party's long-standing support from the labour movement had, along with its hope of re-election, virtually evaporated.

During the 1995 election, the Conservative Party spent roughly 68% of its total campaign expenditures on media advertising, more than twice as much as the Liberals and almost three times more money than the incumbent NDP (MacDermid 1999). Having begun the campaign with only 25% voter support, the PCs finished by securing a convincing majority, claiming just more than 63% (82 of the 130) of the total seats in the legislature (Knight 1998a). While the combination of frequent and well-crafted political advertisements and a relatively short campaign period surely enabled the Party to secure its election win, there were more than just asymmetrical fiscal opportunities at play.⁸

Consisting of simplistic promises of reducing state spending and lowering taxes, introducing mandatory 'workfare' for able-bodied welfare recipients, fixing an education system that deserved a 'failing grade', retrenching previously legislated efforts at reducing income disparities and social stratification, the rhetoric of the Conservative campaign resonated with what was quickly becoming a disenchanted, frustrated and angry collective will (Knight 1998a). What the *Common Sense Revolution* did, and did well, was to discursively construct the notions of 'power' and 'politics' in a way that represented a relation of antagonism among political subjects and the state. It was this strategy of pitting working and middle-class taxpayers against the state and 'special interest' groups, of amplifying and accentuating a general 'fear of government,' and capitalising on the hostility and resentment of the populace, that popularised the NR agenda and ultimately channelled the Conservative's to majority status. The significance lay in destabilising the post-war consensus, thus providing a further structural opening for political and ideological struggles to redefine a new consensus.

The Interlocking of Allies and the Composition of Crisis

Thus far, ideological hegemony has been discussed in terms of the challenge to an historic bloc by a new power bloc, or dominant class faction, who presents a new vision or consensus model to the whole of society. In this context, the power bloc is a fairly stable alliance of groups whose unity depends not only on mutual self-sacrifice but also in the commitment to a common outlook (Jessop 1990:42). One of the necessary aspects of successful hegemony is for the power bloc to secure the support of social categories

(intellectuals and experts), significant social forces (organised labour), and dominated groups (average citizens, i.e. non-expert, non-labour) (ibid).

As Gramsci (1971) has argued, hegemony normally takes place beyond the state, in its narrow sense. While hegemony first occurs in civil society, it comes to be actualised by a social category of ‘organic’ intellectuals, whose role it is to elaborate ideologies, educate people, organise and unify social forces, and secure the hegemony of the dominant group (Jessop 1990:52; Mouffe 1979). It is in this sense that hegemony is said to work primarily through an organic relation or cohesion – the bond between the various levels of the body politic (rulers, intellectuals, ruled). Such organic cohesion needs to be based on a fusion ‘between understanding, knowledge, and passion,’ an emotional-normative discourse Gramsci called *feeling-passion* (1971:418). As Stuart Hall and his colleagues (1978) have argued, the role of the mass media in constructing and nurturing ‘feeling-passion’ in relation to a ‘crisis of the state’ is central to the mobilisation of dominated groups to hegemonic projects. I will discuss the role of media and its relation to the masses in the next chapter. At the moment, however, I will discuss the need of the state to enrol and mobilise intellectuals or experts.

In a generally uncommon Gramscian moment, Michel Foucault argued that intellectuals in modern liberal societies no longer place themselves “somewhat ahead and to the side” of a dominant discourse in order to express the “stifled truth” of the collective (1989:75).⁹ His point concerned the active participation, i.e. the enrolment and mobilisation of influential group(s) by virtue of their knowledge and technical expertise in relation to governmental projects. The role and participation of experts was, for Foucault, largely strategic. As ‘autonomous’ agents, their activities are designed to

modulate events, persons and places in order that a particular sphere or area may be amenable to having things done to it (cf. Miller and Rose 1990). In this sense, like Gramsci's belief that hegemony takes place beyond the narrow confines of the state proper, in liberal and neo-liberal political environments, the State has been said to be able to *act at a distance* (Callon 1986; Latour 1987; Miller and Rose 1990).¹⁰ If experts are to play integral roles in forming 'a new balance of forces,' if they are to assume along with the media *the* crucial role in foregrounding the ideological structures of reconfiguring the State, then they must be given the mandate to do so.

On 4 May 1993, under the previous NDP government, Dave Cooke, Minister of Education and Training, announced the establishment of the Royal Commission on Learning (RCL). According to the Order in Council responsible for creating the RCL, the government had identified "the need to set new directions in education to ensure that Ontario youth are well prepared for the challenges of the 21st century."¹¹ The mandate was "to present a vision and action plan to guide Ontario's reform of elementary and secondary education". The RCL was formed by the NDP and disbanded in 1994. Its final report, *For the Love of Learning*, was released just prior to the 1995 election and came subsequently to assume great symbolic significance under the Conservative programme.¹² While it would be untrue to say that the Conservatives enrolled the commission, it would not be going too far to suggest that the Tories surely utilised and thence mobilised the commission's findings, *post hoc*, to be in line with its own vision.

The times they-are-a-changing – technologically, economically, socially, demographically – at a pace so bewildering that *widespread anxiety* is the inevitable result (RCL: 1).

As moments of interregnum, crises present strategic opportunities for government and non-government authorities in that they problematise the need for obtaining the

‘consent of the governed’ (Gramsci 1971). Husserl spoke of crises as ‘moments of dramatic choice – periods aggravated to the extreme and in need of radical solutions’¹³ (1977:299, 1981:193). Gramsci (1971) described them as ‘exceptional moments’ in otherwise ‘normal states,’ which require the ideological commitments of several agents and agencies to restore order and *good sense* (Gramsci 1971; cf. Hall et al. 1978). Others have submitted that crises should be seen as *axial* events, historic moments that portend the uncovering of societal fault lines and indicate a dramatic turning point in collective life (Jaspers 1953; Foucault 1970; Eisenstadt 1982).

Successful hegemonic projects depend crucially *not* upon the ability to respond to a crisis, but to demarcate the governing project by defining and constituting the nature of the crisis in the first place (Hay 1996). This suggests that to even begin to comprehend the current Conservative consolidation in Ontario we must, by necessity, first consider the education crisis as an ideological moment in which the structures, responsibilities and boundaries of the state came to be crucially defined. Once we do so, we can begin to see the extent to which NR hegemony in Ontario was not only guaranteed ‘electorally’, but ‘ideologically’ as well.

Successful hegemony rests fundamentally on the ability to construct a legitimate ideological representation of crisis that can enrol and mobilise the necessary individual and group allies whose participation is crucial to the stability of the project. In its final report, the RCL stated that public education was “no longer responsible to the public,” causing among parents and taxpayers a significant “lack of confidence” in the education system (RCL: 1). Moreover, it suggested a generally shared feeling among the public that, while education trustees and provincial governments are elected democratically,

there exists “widespread unease that schools have become kingdoms unto themselves” (ibid). The commission reported to have consulted the public formally through scheduled open forums and hearings, and informally as well, visiting schools and communities to talk openly with parents, students, teachers and administrators, business leaders, unions, aboriginal peoples, trustees, police, social workers, doctors, rabbis, priests, ministers, and librarians. It also spoke hundreds of times to newspaper, radio, and television reports and received widespread media coverage, “engaging thousands of Ontarians in a crucial debate”¹⁴ about the current state and future of education in Ontario.

Despite biennial surveys from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education showing that Ontarians held their public education system in great confidence (Kozolanka 1998), the report cited commonly held fears about rapid technological change, international competitiveness, and rising tides of violence in schools and communities. The education system, the RCL believed, was at the present below standard and, to quote Premier Harris, the situation was “unacceptable.”¹⁵ If even unambiguously implying the presence of a crisis, the report stated that a “significant and possibly growing number of people are disturbed by the *crisis* of our schools.” To this effect, “Ontario’s schools,” it claimed, “are not properly equipped to deal with the future” (RCL: 2). With concern about the rapid changes in technology, politics and society, the RCL believed that it was “just about time to ring some alarm bells in Ontario” (RCL: 3).

The report can in many ways be seen as a mere shadow of the legislation with which it would later be associated (Bill 160). In this sense, it is easy to conceive of the degree to which the actions and decisions of the RCL came later to be regulated in relation to much broader authoritative criteria. In particular, the government used the

commission's findings to set up an array of 'relatively autonomous' arm's length bodies to oversee and implement key aspects of education reform. The Education Improvement Commission (EIC), headed up by former NDP Minister Cooke, oversaw the transition to fewer school boards. As the predecessor to Cooke's 'Ontario School Board Reduction Task Force', the function of the EIC was clearly delineated in cost-cutting terms. The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) was designed to implement the government's comprehensive testing program, i.e. to monitor and report to the public on the performance of the education system by publishing school-by-school results in local newspapers. Clearly, "as recommended by the Royal Commission on Learning," its role was to "respond to the *public's* demand for closer scrutiny and greater accountability" (Ministry of Education, 22 September 1995). The Working Group on Education Finance Reform was established in March 1995 by the former NDP government to advise Cooke on key issues in elementary and secondary school finance reform.

Yet, this should not suggest that the report be seen merely as a kind of "implementation of the ideal into the real" (Rose and Miller 1992:183). As indicated, the Tory government was not even responsible for setting up the RCL in the first place, though it certainly used the commission's report to its rhetorical benefit. Furthermore, one of the commission's co-chairs, Gerry Caplan, later became an outspoken critic of Bill 160 and the Tory agenda.¹⁶

As perceptual categories, crises come into being when a sufficient number of *influential* individuals and groups become aware of important changes in their immediate environment (Schorr 1987:125-7). Whatever their origins, crises always contain multiple levels of conflict and meaning. Conflict occurs when individuals are faced with clashing

cognitions: on the one hand, familiar beliefs in the virtues or moral goodness of the existing order and a wish to retain it. On the other hand, feelings of inability in coming to terms with the repetitive and seemingly undeniable information that suggest something to be fundamentally flawed (t'Hart 1993). The most significant aspect of the education crisis, and illustrated especially by the unitary strategic role of the RCL, EIC, and EQAO, was the element of institutional *de-legitimisation* (t'Hart 1993:39-40). In this case, "perceived changes are interpreted in such a way as to call into question the past, present and perhaps future functioning of particular aspects of society and, in many cases, government" (ibid). The rationale behind the Conservative government's education crisis is exemplary of the NR strategy of amplifying or perhaps instilling in the population a general fear and anxiety about the inefficiency and moral problematic of regulationist government. The effect of this is that crises, "directly challenge the knowledge, status and authority claims of those individuals and groups seen to be responsible" (ibid: 40). Hence, following Foucault (1988:159-77) I would suggest that crises challenge the collective need for 'security', while at the same time calling into questions the 'shepherd's ability to care for his flock'.

In the face of crisis situations, governing bodies will normally react with different strategies and tactics. Thus, it should not be altogether surprising that there are predictable patterns of government crisis response (t'Hart, et al. 1993). Especially with respect to the case at hand, the education crisis was neither natural nor unforeseen but, if we treat history and the dispersion of international political movements as something of a yardstick, somewhat predictable. The crisis, so constructed, de-legitimated the old order, thereby opening up the possibility for the construction of a new one. The constitution of

the education crisis was thus the operative ideological moment, the *eternal* moment, as Althusser would call it, in the transformation of the Ontario State. The recognition and acceptance of the new order was thus dependent on the nature and extent of the misrecognition of the old. If what is misrecognised is a *particular* mode of government, we can then easily imagine a different one, in which there occur no misrecognition at all (Laclau 1997:300).

Having attempted to articulate the idea that the education crisis was the result of an accumulation of internal and external deficiencies, the Conservative government argued the need for taking the necessary measures, viz. Bill 160, to 'reform' the education system. The term, 'reform', is itself an ideological product insofar as it is suggestive of a need for on-going improvement – something that is in need of reform is said to be inefficient and/or unproductive. In addition to a perceived sense of inefficiency, the Conservative reform legislation pointed to the need for greater 'accountability' in the education system as well, although accountability was seen to be a largely economic consideration. In many ways, one can schematise the Ontario Conservative government's education reform plans as an attempt to construct through largely neo-conservative measures the kind of structural and ideological environment that would be necessary for introducing neo-liberal solutions. As Dehli (1998) has argued, the logical next step for the Ontario education system will be the introduction of market-driven competition among schools for education 'customers' (cf. Greenberg 1999). Dehli shows that the Conservative education campaign consisted of the discursive construction of a view of the state or public sector as an inherently inefficient, costly, and bureaucratic monopoly run by administrators or self-interested union bosses with no interest in

improving the education system beyond the status quo (1998:62). Moreover, as I have argued elsewhere, the Ontario case fits the New Right model insofar as previous attempts to introduce market-driven schooling have been preceded by all or some of the following: substantial budget or administrative cost-cutting, the introduction of regular or standardised testing and the publication of school-by-school results, the reduction in the scope or ability of teachers to freely bargain and negotiate for job improvement standards collectively, and the creation of 'autonomous', para-governing agencies to preside over and implement education reform initiatives (Greenberg 1999). However, one of the most enduring ideas about government response to crisis is the expectation and assumption that government decision-making becomes highly centralised. This in fact was the locus of most critical reactions to Bill 160. The Ontario teachers mobilised around the fear of a massive centralisation of decision-making power in the Conservative Cabinet.¹⁷

Conservative Education Reform, Bill 160: The Coldest of Cold Monsters?

There are still peoples and herds somewhere, but not with us, my brothers: here there are states. The state? What is that? Well then! Now open your ears, for now I shall speak to you of the death of peoples. The state is the coldest of all cold monsters. Coldly it lies, too; and this lie creeps from its mouth: 'I, the state, am the people' (Nietzsche 1969:75).

Orders and directives of the Education Improvement Commission under this section or a predecessor of this section are final and shall not be reviewed or questioned in any court (Bill 160, sec. 58.2).

Subject to section (1) subsection (4), the Minister has exclusive jurisdiction as to all matters arising under this Division or out of the exercise by the board or any person of any powers conferred by this Division, and that jurisdiction is not open to question or review in any proceeding or by any court (Bill 160, sec. 257.40).

The Minister may dismiss from office any officer or employee of a board who fails to carry out any order, direction or decision of the Minister (Bill 160, sec. 257.45).

The board and each of its members, officers, and employees shall comply with the orders, directions and decisions of the Minister in any matter relating to the administration of the affairs of the board, and any such person who knowingly fails to comply with any such order, direction or decision, or who, as a member of the board, votes contrary to such order, direction or decision, is guilty of an offence (Bill 160, sec. 257.45).

It is not the intention of this section of the chapter to discuss the merits or problems of Bill 160, so much as to pose what I think are important organisational questions in relation to the construction and response to crisis. Moreover, the points that will be made below hold significant strategic implications as well. To successfully counter a hegemonic project, a counter-force must be able to first identify the source(s) of its antagonism and then construct the appropriate strategies for weakening that dominant force. The hope then is that this discussion will not be misconstrued as a form of polemical contestation, but as the framework for a different kind of interventionism in the debate over strategy in the face of the Conservative stranglehold in Ontario. Furthermore, it suggests a different conceptualisation of power than the rather rigid conventional notion of an omnipotent State that has dominated active strategies and modes of resistance to this point.

Blau and Scott (1963) have argued that the normal texture and procedures of bureaucratic organisations come to be challenged profoundly in critical situations, to which organisations respond in several ways. A notable example of one such adaptation strategy is the centralisation of decision-making, which relates to two different, but interrelated, phenomena. It may refer, first, to the *concentration* of power in the hands of a few key executives, i.e. high-ranking cabinet members; and second, to look for strong leadership and embrace one or another form of government that offers attractive *solutions* (t'Hart et al 1993: 14).

Education activists were concerned with several onerous features of Bill 160. In addition to what were clearly questionable challenges to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms,¹⁸ the most significant concern was “the massive *centralisation of power* over education in the provincial cabinet” (italics added, Dehli 1998:59). In light of this criticism, decision making in crisis situations is therefore said to be of a small group structure (Hermann and Hermann 1982; Burke and Greenstein 1989). In ‘regional’ crisis situations, the effect of centralised decision-making is often an intensified focus on the personality and behaviour of individual actors in relation to their immediate environment (Rosenthal and t’Hart 1989; t’Hart et al. 1993).¹⁹ In the framing of news stories about the strike, for example, most of the events came to be seen not as the outcome of a variety of converging social forces, but as the consequence of *elite* individual decision-making, i.e. the metamorphoses of social forces into personification (cf. Galtung and Rage 1973:66-67).²⁰

Regardless of whether crises are exogenous, self-imposed, or even wilful and intentional, they tend to invoke a widely felt need for *strong leadership* and a demonstration of decisional resolve (Wolfenstein 1967). Hence, a common response to the Conservative government has been that ‘at least the government has done what it said it would do.’ Moreover, in the campaign leading to the recent re-election of the Tories to its second mandate, the primary issue of contention among all three parties was not who could best administer education, healthcare or the welfare system, but who was likely the strongest and most charismatic leader.

With the protracted crisis of the Keynesian Welfare State, the strategic form of centralisation pertinent to critical government intervention has been a form of power that

Poulantzas (1978) termed “authoritarian statism” (AS).²¹ The operational side of neo-conservatism, AS represents that moment of contradiction when the state appears to be strengthening and weakening itself at one and the same time (Knight 1998a).

Authoritarian statism might also be described as the *side effect* of critical conditions, whereby in the moment of crisis, there might arise the need to invite various forms of so-called “constitutional dictatorship” (t’Hart et al. 1993: 17). Arising in particularly critical periods, AS is motivated by the urge for a return to “normal times,” which may assume dramatic proportions and increase public pressure to temporarily do away with what might be perceived to be fragmented, weak governance (Poulantzas 1978). Authoritarian statism puts the assumptions of centralisation into direct question. According to Poulantzas (1978), it runs concurrently along two ideological-structural axes. He notes that new plebiscitary and populist forms of consent have developed alongside the new technocratic and/or neo-liberal forms of legitimation, while noting the strategic restructuring of the relationship between the centralisation and decentralisation of political processes (Jessop et al 1985: 111). Moreover, the centralisation thesis is questionable not only for the strategic implications to which it gives rise, but also, *pace* Poulantzas, because it often neglects the necessary distinction between the strategic and operational levels of crisis response.

This largely functionalist perspective opens up the possibility that major strategic decisions on how crises are not only handled but constructed, can in fact come from the lower levels of the political-bureaucratic hierarchy, viz. the EIC, EQAO and Working Group on Education Finance Reform. In highly centralised systems, disruptions to one part of the system can have a cumulative effect, triggering chains of failures that “can

become very hard to stop or reverse” (t’Hart et al 1993:22). Thus, in such crisis situations, it might be better to consider the bureaucratic organisation of the State as *formally decentralised*, suggesting the pre-planned constitution of authority over crisis operations. In formalised decentralisation, the vulnerabilities of the ‘centre’ are countered by a web of interrelated and interconnected agencies, each of which is directed toward a common goal – the preferred or universal interest – and each share in the operations necessary for ensuring the security of the universal interest. In managing the education crisis, this composition of ‘autonomous’ actors implied the absence of a single, effective locus of power. Instead, the government came to be seen as a fragmented plurality of actors, which ‘in their unitary structure, would come to play a more-or-less strategic role’ (Foucault 1980:142) in the governance of the education system.

Put schematically, the exercise of power is centralised and concentrated, whereas the responsibility and accountability for its effects tend to be decentralised and localised (Knight 1998a). In terms of education reform, Ontario’s sixty-six remaining local school boards have been stripped of nearly all control over education financing and pedagogy while left at the same time with the responsibility for implementation (ibid). This might provide the rationale for understanding the relative absence of the school boards from the ‘public debate’ and the strike against Bill 160. At the same time, much of the onus on school governance has been downloaded to school administrators, principals and vice-principals whose role as manager and liaison between community and ministry places greater stress and emphasis on neo-liberal modes of management, calculation, and accountancy.

Once these contextual factors are considered, it becomes evermore problematic to attribute responsibility for the 'education crisis' so simply and unequivocally to one or another participant. Power and the construction of crisis, in this sense, is shared or composed among variably dispersed political actors in a network of relations; it is not the cause, but the *effect* of the composition of a multitude of agents and agencies. Thus, though we may *attribute* power to a specific site or locale, we should do so cautiously. Power is not *sui generis* the imposition of force from above; rather it is the ability to successfully enrol and mobilise 'persons, procedures, and artefacts in the pursuit of specific objectives or ends' (cf. Rose and Miller 1992:183). Power is moreover not an entity, but an exercise. It exists in the lasting networks of relations only to the extent that the mechanisms of enrolment can be composed in more or less persistent forms, thereby materialising and stabilising not just *programmatic* aspirations, but also the lives and ambitions of those caught up in its design (ibid: 184).

Conclusion

This chapter set out to examine some of the structural and ideological shifts that have occurred in Ontario vis-à-vis NR hegemony and the construction of a crisis in education. The approach suggests that successful hegemonic projects require the active participation of privileged groups of specialists. Intellectuals function by articulating the objectives of government to others, thereby enabling ruling groups to act at a distance, and holding out the hope for governing bodies that the tension of regulation/freedom that lies at the heart of NR ideology can be resolved.

Given the enrolment and mobilisation of the EIC, EQAO and other ‘independent agencies’, it is problematic to suggest that political power can be an object to be possessed and hoarded by the state. The NR political schema demonstrates the degree to which power is distributed horizontally among an assemblage of actors and agencies. While power can be *attributed* to one locale or another, it is not a thing but an exercise, which emerges only through the continual process of enrolment and mobilisation. Nonetheless, as the discussion of crisis suggests, governing bodies still seek to retain their ruling status by centralising their decision-making authority while decentralising the operations for attaining its objectives.

However, the enrolment of intellectual allies is not enough for hegemonic projects to be successful. If they are to work, dominant groups must also enrol and mobilise the active participation of the masses as well. The mass media is a specific technology that works toward achieving this end. It is the purpose of the next chapter to discuss NR hegemony and the construction of the education crisis with reference to the role of the press.

CHAPTER 2

Hegemony, Ideology and Discourse: The Media and Strikes

Introduction

The previous chapter concluded with some remarks about a compositional approach to the study of power: while power can be *attributed* to a central source or site, it emerges only in the coming together of several interconnected actors. In light of the current context, Conservative reforms to education, although *initiated* from above, required the ‘composition’ of variably dispersed agents and agencies throughout the interstices of the body politic. The previous chapter discussed the ways in which New Right hegemony depends crucially upon the active participation, i.e. the enrolment and mobilisation of ‘specific’ intellectuals (RCL, EIC, EQAO). However, hegemony also relies heavily upon the mobilisation and active participation of the subordinated groups, the masses. This chapter attempts to further the discussion by addressing the role of the news media and newsreaders in the composition of crisis.

Under Gramsci’s framework, subjects are conceptualised in terms of their relation within and outside of the “ideological complex,” i.e. the structure of diverse ideologies (1971:324; cf. Hall 1988:55-6). This suggests the need to emphasise the processes whereby such ideological complexes come to be structured and re-structured, articulated and re-articulated (Fairclough 1992:92-3). Moreover, the production, distribution, and interpretation of news texts is itself a critical component of hegemonic struggle that contributes to both the transformation of an existing discourse, and the reproduction of the power relations that serve as that discourse’s foundation. In view of this, I draw

primarily upon the classic contributions to Marxism of Gramsci and Althusser, although in the case of the latter with caution to avoid duplicating its theoretical and strategic limitations.²²

The Media, Ideology and Hegemony

As indicated in the previous chapter, the Conservative Party's 1995 election victory was secured by combining a hearty media budget with a slick advertising and news campaign that was comprised largely of normative-emotional resonances. Neither the tactic nor the success should come as much of a surprise since, in the wake of the post-war settlement, the mass media has emerged as a highly privileged site for political action between government and non-government actors (Hall 1978; Poulantzas 1978; Castells 1997; Knight 1998a). For Hall and his colleagues (1978), the media came to play a crucial role in the discursive construction of a moral panic around mugging, rendering legitimacy to the Thatcher government's tough stance on crime. In the same political climate, Hay (1996) has shown how the media came to play a central role in the narrative construction of a crisis over industrial conflict, at a time when the welfare state was in decline and Thatcherism on the rise. In light of the current analysis, the education crisis emerged as a moment of both governmental and state transformation, insofar as the ideological transformation of the state emerged only within the context of the narration of an institutional (education) crisis. However, it was also a moment in which the media would come to play a crucially fundamental role in provincial politics and politicking, serving in this sense a dual function. It served first, as a political actor by enrolling itself into the hegemonic project, where it served as a nexus point for integrating the

viewpoints and struggle of the main actors; and second, once enrolled, as a mobilising force in terms of its ability to potentially integrate other allies into the logic of the hegemonic project.²³ These things considered it was through the channels of mass communication, and the press in particular, that the teachers' strike came to be portrayed as the 'moment' *par excellence* for NR consolidation.

Ideology is concerned with the way in which individuals and groups can be said to experience their own reality, vis-à-vis the "preferred" representations of a mediated reality (Hall 1977, 1980). In this sense, three important claims can be made with respect to ideology (Fairclough 1992:87): first, that state apparatuses (e.g. mass media) are sites of group struggle; second, that ideology has a material existence, viz. news texts which enable us to see discursive practices as material forms; and third, that ideology is capable of addressing and mobilising subjects to hegemonic projects. In their unity, these claims are significant in that they help to overcome the generally conventional and outmoded notion of ideology as a belief system that exists merely in a vacuum. Such a perspective has been shown to be overly restrictive, in that it tends to make an unfounded distinction between ideology in form and ideology in content, i.e. ideas from their organisational and political structure and separate from their practical applications (Knight 1982:16).

In this sense, the analysis of ideology looks primarily at the intersection of meaning and power in discourse. As part of the ideological state apparatuses, the news media represents reality in a manner that tends to reproduce dominant viewpoints, with the effect of reproducing the power relations that serve as its foundation (Althusser 1971; Thompson 1984, 1988). If media reports reproduce the reality that reproduce dominant interests and values, then ideology can be seen to entail a complex arrangement of

significations that give rise to partially selective, or “preferred,” representations and interpretations (Hall 1980). These selective representations serve ultimately to determine the production, reproduction and transformation of relationships of power *and* dominance. Contrary to the conventional perspective, the critical point is that the social functions of ideologies should not be limited to their role in the reproduction and legitimation of only domination. Though a theoretically sophisticated conceptualisation of resistance would help clarify this problematic, it will suffice to say that dominated groups too need ideologies in order to consent to *and* confront or resist the ideology of the dominant group (cf. van Dijk 1998:24). Moreover, we must reject the notion of a “monovocal capitalist ideology” in favour of a “multiplicity of ideologies that ‘speak capitalism in a variety of ways for a variety of capitalist subjects’” (Fiske 1987). Furthermore, the dominant ideology thesis fails because it cannot adequately enough account for the remarkable diversity of subject identities that the ‘subordinated’ have retained (ibid). Thus, ideologies will be useful insofar as they can be seen to co-ordinate the social practices of group members for the realisation of the goals of the social group – be it the dominant or dominated – and the maintenance and protection of its interests.

The main cognitive function of an ideology is to organise the attitudes of individuals and groups.²⁴ Although ideologies may be said to be coherent in relation to group interests and goals, this does not mean, however, that their bases are consistent or total. Rather, as Laclau and Mouffe have argued (1985, 1987), they are not sutured totalities, but constructs that are crucially dependent upon their usage. Ideology is not meaningful unless someone or some group portends its meaning. It is in this sense that

ideologies are said to be 'social' representations of the mind because, as with grammar, traffic signs, and other linguistic devices, they are socially shared.

In liberal democratic states, an ideology will vary from the extreme to the transient, and will thus be shared, secured and maintained only if it *appears* to be natural, taken-for-granted, and undoubtedly determinant of the truth (*inter alia* Barthes 1972). The notion of hegemony becomes useful at this point, in that it suggests the need for the power bloc's interests and project to prevail over the interests and projects of the historic bloc and its other opponents. It is in this sense that an ideology is said to assume the role of a natural consensus (Hall 1985, 1986). Hegemony harmonises with ideology to the extent that it involves leadership across a given society's economic, political, and cultural domains. And although this moral and intellectual leadership is ultimately reliant on the ability to use force, hegemony is chiefly about the need to construct alliances, and to integrate, rather than dominate, the subordinate classes or groups.

Of critical importance is the way in which ideological bonds are established among the variably dispersed actors and agencies in the body politic. If power is an exercise that is determinant upon the composition and relations of several differently oriented and differently engaged allies, in what ways do these relations get constructed? Our conventional sense of connectedness to the world, an *activity* that finds its resolution in reading the newspaper, listening to the national news radio broadcast or watching a prime-time news television programme, gets fostered through modes of articulation and disarticulation. Articulation involves the operation of expression or communication via the fusion of objects to other objects, or ideas to other ideas in a credible or plausible way (Knight 1998b). In this sense, when we speak of a news text as articulating or

communicating a particular message, we are referring in a more-or-less ontological sense to the interaction and connection of different linguistic and extra-linguistic signifiers to produce a tangible outcome. When we compose a discursive totality of a variety of elements or semiotic signs, we alter the original meanings of these elements by changing them into definite and necessary 'moments' (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 105). Moreover, linguistic and non-linguistic discursive elements are amenable to different relations and different articulations, suggesting not only a transformational potential from event to account, but also an inherent mobility from discourse to discourse and moment to moment. In this sense, these discursive elements are, to use Vološinov's (1973) terminology, "multiaccentual". They compose a variety of meanings and connotations that are contingent largely upon their previous usage and in relation to a current discourse. The Ontario Conservative's political discourse, for example, can be interpreted as a re-articulation of an existing order of political discourse, but which has brought traditional conservative, neo-liberal and populist discourses into the mix, constituting an unprecedented discourse of political power in Ontario (cf. Fairclough 1992:93). As such, hegemony works to articulate one meaning or set of meanings as dominant over another. Security, tradition, competition, and success are all examples of dominant meanings in today's public discourse. They achieve their dominance not solely by virtue of what they tell us but, rather, in their relation to those signs to which they are juxtaposed: experimentation, exploration, transgression, etc. Thus, linguistic signs, like any objects, do not belong naturally to a specific ideological perspective but find their belonging only when rendered useful by an external agent or force and when differentiated from other signs or objects. As Knight has convincingly argued, this implies also that hegemony

functions by “disarticulating signs from their existing contexts and associations” (1998b: 97). Thus, the degree to which allies can be successfully enrolled, and to which their mobilisation can be targeted to a shared objective, depends to a large extent on the success to which signs and their contexts can be kept apart as well as brought together (cf. *ibid.*).

Ideology and hegemony are also determinants of the material realities that govern the collection and compilation of information into representation. As Gitlin (1980) has argued, the routines and practices of news production inform to a great extent the structural and ideological sequences that come to be interwoven into news texts. Organisational factors such as budget ceilings, for example, lead to shortages of bureaus, correspondents, and crews, all of which come to determine, in one way or another, what gets reported and how the story gets told (*ibid.*). In newspaper reporting, retrenched budgets often lead to part-time beat correspondents. Moreover, journalists are not generally experts in a given area, but come to understand the complexities and details of those areas ‘on the job’. Given the journalist’s critical dependence on news sources for information, it becomes easy to see the extent to which the source’s interpretation of an event will help to determine the journalist’s position. News events are *framed* – via a process of inclusion and exclusion – and *formatted* – in sentence structure, articulation and amplification – by the everyday practices that govern news collection. Given structural and ideological constraints such as deadlines and competition, ideological bias often results from the journalist’s reliance on certain sources for commentary and viewpoints, while ignoring others.²⁵

In addition, the relation between news source selectivity and ideological articulation concerns the *hierarchy of access* of news sources to the media. News media often impose a hierarchical relationship among the sources that inform their articles. This relationship, so formed, tends often to reflect and accentuate the positions of power and prestige of news sources in the real world, determining, ultimately, the given day's "agenda": not only what is said but also how it is said, and by whom (Knight 1998b).²⁶

Primary sources are normally deemed most credible and are often the preferred source of journalists in the 'news source hierarchy'. Generally official voices of expertise – e.g. doctors, lawyers, politicians, CEOs, and professors – primary sources have the ability to define the situation for mass audiences; their voice is normally the rational one which legitimately tells us not what to think, *per se*, but how to think about it. *Secondary sources* on the other hand normally provide responses to events and often express the more emotional, reactive point of view. As a result, secondary sources – e.g. unions, social movements, protesters, and children – are normally represented in the news as the voice of complaint, deviance, disruption, and victimhood. In textual representation, their point of view is normally placed immediately after the viewpoint of the primary source in sequence, while in photographic representation, their viewpoint is normally placed to the right (see discussion below). In a recent article, Carroll and Ratner (1999) have shown that although secondary sources can invert the normal preferential bias of news media to primary news sources, they do so at the risk of attracting the wrong kind of attention, possibly amplifying and accentuating their disruptive or extraordinary behaviour.

The Discursive Composition of Crisis

We are no longer either alienated or dispossessed: we are in possession of all the information. We are no longer spectators, but actors in the performance, and actors increasingly integrated into the course of that performance...we are, in fact, beyond all disalienation (Baudrillard 1996:27).

Laclau and Mouffe (1987:83) argue that meaning and use are intimately linked because *use* (use-value) aids in the determination of *meaning* (exchange value). In relation to the study of news texts, moreover, it suggests that ideological effects can be in no way guaranteed by the continuous circuit of production and distribution from which they give rise (Hall 1980:128). Thus, as Morley (1992:52) has observed, while the moment of *encoding* values into news texts still exerts “an over-determining effect,” no relation can be possibly contingent, because “no discursive formation is a sutured totality” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:106).

Having considered the political role of news media in enrolling allies to government projects, it is incumbent on the rest of the analysis to describe the mode through which influential and non-influential, or primary and secondary allies are *mobilised*. Put differently, given Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985:107) argument that “the transformation of the elements into moments is never complete,” the positioning of subjects into news discourse will bring us closer to ‘stitching the wound,’ so to speak. In what is to follow, I will discuss the role of the media in the mobilisation of newsreaders to crisis. It is my hope, in doing so, to inflect the notion of ideology with a critical edge, and to establish a conceptualisation of newsreaders as *active* participants, i.e. potentially strategic allies in the composition of crisis and power and the transformation of the State. It is an approach that recognises the inherent imagination of newsreaders in their

interactions with texts, without rendering to them the weakness and passivity of mere ideological stooges (Hall 1981; cf. Fiske 1987; Hay 1995, 1996).

Given that the analysis of government takes as central the discursive field within which the problems of the political, economic, and social are delineated and accorded significance (Rose and Miller 1992: 177), it is crucial to understand the modes of address through which governed subjects come to be enrolled and mobilised in state projects. In what ways do the media in general and specifically the press, recruit individual or group allies as *dramatis personae* (Hay 1995) to the cinema of politics and political projects? What duties, once assembled, do the cast then perform? Do we believe, as Bataille did, that the mass, negated by their existence, ceases to be itself only in order to become *affectively* the chief's thing and, in consequence, like a part of the chief himself (1985:151)? Or do we feel contempt, as Bruck concluded, that the media "excite...[the audience]...into passivity" (Bruck 1992: 117; Hay 1995: 200)? For a variety of reasons these are, among others, assumptions that I generally reject. As Fiske so adequately put it, "the lowest common denominator may be a useful concept in arithmetic, but in the study of popularity its only possible value is to expose the prejudices of those who use it" (1987).

Interpellation and Resonance

Media discourses recruit and mobilise newsreaders to political programmes through an interpellative hailing (Althusser 1971; Laclau 1977; Hay 1995, 1996). By interpellation is meant, generally, the mode by which individuals are constituted into subjects *through* their connection to a discourse, i.e. the way in which the discourse can

be made sympathetic to the individual's feelings and experiences. Despite acknowledging that hegemony works through the production of news texts, i.e. in the practices, techniques and constraints that inform news construction, news texts are not in themselves ideological. They become so only when the ideology that is present can be activated by the reader. This is what Laclau meant when he stated that "the unifying principle of an ideological discourse is the *subject* interpellated and thus constituted through the discourse" (emphasis in original, 1977: 101). Despite the generally uncritical positivism in the notion that news texts 'act' or 'function' in order to 'recruit' and 'transform' individuals into subjects (Althusser 1971: 148-57, 162-3), the problematic can, as Hay (1995) has argued, be theoretically resolved with the incorporation and elaboration of the concept of ideological *resonance* (cf. Hall 1977, 1980).

I have already suggested that discourses in themselves are not ideological; they require that somebody use them in order to become meaningful. When Laclau and Mouffe remark that a diamond at the bottom of a mine shares the same material essence as the diamond in the jeweller's cabinet, they mean that the object of desire, a diamond, is *essentially* meaningless without the appropriation of a desiring subject (1987:82). In the *encoding* of media texts, subject positions are loosely constructed for the newsreader to either fully or partially accept or reject (Hall 1980). Whether s/he accepts or rejects, or the degree to which this occurs, that position will depend largely upon the degree to which s/he can insert her/himself into the constructed narrative. Our interpellation depends, therefore, not on the degree to which we acknowledge the text's functional utility, but rather in the inherently imaginative process of *decoding*, through which we insert ourselves as participants (Hall 1980). The possibility will depend largely on the

event's normative-emotional content, and on the text's ability to amplify and accentuate those aspects that will resonate with our lived experience(s). When a news story reports a particular political issue or event, such as a strike, it becomes possible for us, as 'potentially interpellated' allies, to not only consent but also actively participate in the larger programme or event within which the story is embedded. It invites us as readers and active decoders to identify with a particular subject position – the union leader, the innocent child pawn, the politician, the single mom, the business executive, the young teacher, and so on. The moment we recognise ourselves in the text is precisely the moment of our interpellation, the instant in which we have been “constituted as subjects *through* the text, as we are simultaneously subjected *to* it” (Hay 1996: 262; cf. Foucault 1978).

The moment in which we are addressed or interpellated is contingent upon a plethora of factors. Martin Jacques (1993), for example, has recently celebrated the ‘end of politics,’ urging the political system to adopt to a politically disaffected, individually driven, “hypermarket society” (Mouffe 1995: 498). ‘Politics,’ Jacques suggests, ‘has lost its collective dimension and its polarised nature’ (ibid). Conventional parties, politicians, and political issues have declined in their significance for individuals whose drive and motivation is not enlightenment, *per se*, but wealth and ambition. Following the ups and downs of the market, we live in a “pick and choose” society, where new running shoes and yellow sunglasses generate as much, if not more, excitement than so-called ‘real life’ issues, like collective bargaining and the threat to trade union freedoms. The problem this poses is not one for interpellation *per se*, as there will always be one aspect or another in a news story that strikes a personal chord. Where the problem lies, rather, is in the

consistency, and the effect of our mobilisation. On Friday, for example, my subject position might be inscribed in the reported experience of the protester. By Monday, however, this could all change, channelling my empathy into an alternative direction, or worse, turning me off completely.²⁷ The point to be made is that interpellation remains an *active* and on-going process. Although newsreaders may on occasion slip into the shadows of the silent majority, they have done so by choice and accord, by virtue of their engagement.

Mobilising Readers to Bad News: Labour, Protest, and the Press

Given that the news media constitute a dominant source of information about events and people, and that the event of a strike “breaches our expectancies” of how workers should behave (Hall 1974; Morley 1976), it is critical to discuss *how* the press report conflicts, before we can understand the reasons for why interpellation works. In other words, how is the activity of the newsreader/subject facilitated by the substance of the news?

Many have shown that the treatment of labour in the press has been and continues to be negative (Glasgow Media Group 1976; Beharrell and Philo 1977; Puette 1992; Silva 1995; Knight and O’Connor 1995; Knight, 1998b). Yet, nowhere is the image of organised labour more damaging and negative than in the coverage and reporting of strikes. Despite the position that, by and large, nearly all collective bargaining is successful in reaching agreement without recourse to strike, press representations of labour still tend to be characterised in terms of their connotations to picket-lines, protests, and greed (Puette 1992).

Interpellation is ideologically successful to the extent that the news report 'invites' the newsreader to assume a particular subject position i.e. to fill in the gaps left open by uncritical, slanted or ambiguous statements and observations. Readers are able to connect the dots from event to interpretation in a relatively formulaic way. In the case of news discourse, this is embodied in the way that the routine practices of gathering and processing the news translate into routine news scripts with (1) a division of labour among news sources, (2) a division of labour between information bits, and (3) the way in which the story is laid out on the page. Since I addressed the division of labour among news sources earlier in this chapter, and will revisit the issue in more detail in chapter 4, I will talk a bit about the ways in which information bits and story layouts contribute to the ideological construction of news texts, with particular reference to the reporting of strikes.

One way in which news stories are organised is in the form of what since the nineteenth century journalists have called the *inverted pyramid*. This formula sees that all of the important facts are placed in the leading paragraph, while the rest of the information is ordered according to the specific slant or focus of the story. As Fulford (1999:10) has argued, it has proved convenient for editors who might have to cut an article in the composing room and need to snip off a few paragraphs of type from the bottom, but with the confidence that they will not miss anything of value. This schema caters also to the hasty reader, whose need to absorb a few facts quickly supersedes the ideal that she/he will have both the time and energy to read the full story. For example, in nearly all of the front-page newspaper coverage of the teachers' strike, the opening paragraph took as given the decision of the teachers to 'walk off the job' (alternatively,

the opening paragraph might have 'read' that the government refused to amend its contested legislation). In strike coverage, the front section of the article normally highlights the action and demands of the union, leaving the more detailed, contextual information, if addressed at all, to the end of the article. Moreover, events that happened at an earlier time which serve as the story's dominant narrative get reintroduced through what is thought to be less significant content, thus obliging the newsreader to reassemble the information in a manner that will be personally comprehensible (ibid). The method is effective in two ways: first, in foregrounding what is considered to be newsworthy, viz. on day X, Y teachers walked off the job; and second, in presenting the ideological advantage of grabbing the reader's attention, thereby distracting and imposing on him/her a desired or "preferred" interpretation.

The *layout* of the news text in relation to other newspaper signifiers (i.e. text and photos) also has significant ideological implications for rendering meaning from a news text. The first encounter a newsreader has with an article will be in his/her identification with the headline and with the article's position on the page. The case study in chapter 4 looks particularly at newspaper front-pages and, in doing so treats front pages as a complex social semiotic sign. The front page invites and requires an initial reading that informs the more detailed reading of the article (Kress and van Leeuwen 1998:187-8). When a layout opposes left and right, placing one element on the left, and the other, perhaps contrasting, element on the right, the element on the left is presented as *given* and on the right as *new* (ibid). A *given* is familiar and is the conventional departure point for the message. For something to be *new* means that it is not yet known to the reader, it is therefore foreign and potentially subversive. It requires, moreover, the reader's attention

and caution. For example, on the first day of the strike, the *Sun* presented juxtaposed photographs of Minister Johnson on the left (“saddened and grim-faced”) and teacher union president Lennon on the right (“offering no solutions”). In principle, the *new* is presented as problematic and contestable, while the *given* is common sense and self-evident (ibid). Alternatively, we might have been presented with Lennon’s “saddened” face first, and Johnson, “offering no solutions”, second. Such structures are ideological in the sense that the information is presented to the reader as though it has value or status, and that the readers have to read it within this structure before deciding whether or not to accept or reject it.

As indicated, the receptivity of the news story will depend crucially upon the way in which the events and the actors involved get articulated. Articulation involves the linking together of various signifiers into a relatively cohesive whole. In reporting conflict in general, and labour conflict in particular, one can see a generally formulaic schemata in which events and actors are constructed and readers positioned to render meaning to the text. In democratic societies, the prevailing image of the social is one of basic equality and consensus: ‘we’ all share the same interests and ‘we’ all have the same goals. In times of crisis, the concept of ‘our’ concerns and ‘our’ needs and values tend to be accentuated and articulated explicitly (Morley 1976:250). In opposition to ‘our’ needs, unions are generally presented as being motivated by a selfish concern for their own ‘special interest’, while the government is presented as being motivated to protect the ‘public interest’ (ibid; Glasgow Media Group 1977). Union positions are normally called ‘demands’ while government positions are ‘offers’. Strikes also tend to be calculated in terms of lost wages or, in this case, lost hours. In the teachers’ strike coverage, this

calculus extended not just to students, whose lost learning time would 'surely be detrimental', but also to parents, who would lose work time (money earned to feed the kids and pay the bills), and employers, who would lose employee time (potential layoffs). Thus, strikes are generally presented as against the public interest, inflationary, and unreasonable (Puette 1992; Beharrel and Philo 1977; Silva 1995).

These extra-contextual factors considered, *active newsreading* is seen to be facilitated by the familiar, script-like nature of news discourse that makes the activities of reading and 'meaning-making' seem rather effortless and natural. At the same time, there do occur instances in which the strike account will not resonate with the experiences or predisposition of the newsreader. In such instances, newsreaders may seek more information, ignore the representation, resist the representation or, simply, flip the page.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to discuss the role of the media and newsreader vis-à-vis NR hegemony and the education crisis in Ontario. As a political and socialising force, the press plays a particularly important role in addressing, enrolling, and mobilising newsreaders, as active participants, i.e. allies in state formation by virtue of their consent. This depends crucially on the newsreader's ability to enter into a symbolic exchange with the text, a process in which the newsreader may or may not be successfully recruited to the preferred subject position articulated in the text. Ideology comes to be constructed also as a result of material constraints on the process of news production. In the competition for readers/viewers/listeners, producers of news are often required to be selective in choosing what and how something gets reported. News journalists normally

construct their articles with the help of primary and secondary sources, an activity shown to be inherently ideological and hegemonic.

Whether a newsreader will assume the preferred subject position invited by the text depends crucially on the way in which the news article is itself structured, and in terms of the relationship between the event and its connotative context. As discussed, media reporting of labour issues and strikes in particular tend to be negative, which translates into conventional strike news scripts. Interpellation is ideologically successful to the extent that 'meaning-making' becomes relatively effortless and unconscious. Thus, the negative connotation of a strike is not natural but socially constructed and reified by both text and context. The meaning is, moreover, considered as 'natural' as the act of reading it. These factors combined, it should come as little surprise not only that dominant groups attempt actively to impose their meanings on others through the channels of the media but, often, they do so successfully.

CHAPTER 3

Language, Discourse and the Press: Tools for the Analysis of Ideology in the News

Introduction

In chapter 1, I discussed the genealogy of a ‘crisis’ in the Ontario education system as characteristic of New Right hegemony. In doing so, I introduced the framework for a compositional theory of power to show how such constructions are possible through a kind of mutuality between state re-organisation and the ideological enrolment and mobilisation of subjects. I argued, in chapter 2, that the news media are particularly influential in two ways: first, in functioning as a space where hegemony is exercised; and second, in its ability to address and mobilise individuals through the articulation of ideology vis-à-vis points of resonance. Moreover, news discourses were shown to be unsutured totalities (Laclau and Mouffe 1987), whose meaning could be derived only in terms of their active appropriation by newsreaders. It is the purpose of the present chapter to elaborate on this discussion, by describing and discussing the methodological principles and practices that informed this study.

Materials and Sampling Procedures

The materials used for this study consisted of all front-page news articles that appeared in the mainstream Ontario press over the period spanning 26 October – 10 November 1997, the timeframe of the strike. The decision to limit the analysis to the front-page is anchored on the assumption that most newsreaders will scan or read the front-page or lead story of an event first, before moving on to the rest of the newspaper.

The front-page is the genre that constructs what are the most important, newsworthy events of the day. In Kress's (1986) terms, it sets up a relationship with the newsreader, where he/she is constructed as someone concerned about being informed, up-to-date, as a 'public person' in touch with the 'public domain'. Editorials, commentary and letters to the editor, generally the clearest indicators of a newspaper's political or ideological stance, were excluded from the formal portion of the study since they tend not to be bound by standard journalistic claims to objectivity and balance.

The samples derive from three mainstream Ontario newspapers: the *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, and *Toronto Sun*. The decision to limit the analysis to these newspapers was based on both material and idiomatic considerations. Given more time and funding, an interesting approach might have been to look at coverage of the strike in marginal or community newspapers, and to then compare this to the coverage in the bigger, mainstream papers. However, given the material limitations, and that more people read mainstream rather than community newspapers, I opted for the latter approach. These three newspapers were also selected on the basis of their general editorial distinctions. I felt that it would be important to look not only at 'quality' newspapers with differing editorial perspectives (i.e. *Globe* and *Star*), but also a popular 'tabloid' newspaper as well.

The *Globe and Mail* was selected on the basis of its status as the preferred newspaper of the province's business and intellectual elite. It publishes roughly 300,000 copies on a given day, with circulation running Monday to Saturday. It claims a cosmopolitan, national perspective, calling itself "Canada's National Newspaper," although its editorial and circulation headquarters is based in Toronto (Silva 1995:35).

The *Toronto Star* is the largest circulation English-language only daily in all of Canada, publishing roughly 500,000 copies per day, seven days per week. Whereas the *Globe* serves the province's business and intellectual elite, the *Star* purports to be a more mainstream broadsheet aimed at the entire metropolitan community. In this sense, it is considered to be a more socially liberal, middlebrow, family newspaper, and it should not be surprising that among the three sources sampled, it far outweighed the other two in total and front-page volume. The *Toronto Sun*, like the *Star*, is a much more focused metropolitan Toronto newspaper. In fact, the *Sun* and *Star* probably compete more with each other than does either with the *Globe* for both readership and advertising. Like the *Star*, the *Sun* also publishes seven days of the week. Historically, the *Sun* is the ideological successor of the *Toronto Telegram*, having emerged in the early 1970s as the province's premier tabloid sheet (ibid:49). It's content consists mostly of big, splashy photographs, advertisements for mass cultural goods, such as electronics, a hearty sports and personal ads section, and, lest we forget, the scantily clad *Sunshine Girl* on the inside cover. It's editorial stance is clearly right-wing, including a staunch anti-socialist perspective and an appealing but sycophantic populism that abhors all but the wealthiest, most powerful elite (ibid).

The analysis is divided into three, interrelated sections. The first section is a quantitative content analysis, and provides numerical measures of the strike coverage in terms of whose points of view (POV) were represented and which sources were most frequently quoted in each paragraph of the 'hard' news reports and features.²⁸ The criteria used to determine paragraph POV was the identity of the source to which the information could be attributed, either as a quote or reported speech. There were, however, times

when the subject of the information was different from the speaking actor, for example if a teacher was quoted as reporting on the viewpoint of the government, and in these situations, the POV was attributed to the speaking subject. This type of numerical content analysis is spatially oriented and derives principally from the approach of 'news framing', which offers a functional explanation of why particular stories are newsworthy and how they are represented within a broader discourse. The objective of content analysis is to determine patterns of representation and influence, i.e. to understand whose interests are being voiced and how these might be reflective or indicative of the newspaper's ideological or political stance. The crude counting of data also provides an easy to reference guide for understanding how the news is organised and presented to the reader, and with how it accentuates and validates some viewpoints at the expense of downplaying or de-emphasising others. These numerical assessments are important in their own right and act as precursors or supplements to other methods, such as critical discourse analysis (CDA). In this sense, content analysis can be treated heuristically as a kind of macro-structure of the coverage, whereas CDA might refer more to the internal micro-structure of the coverage.

The second section is a discussion of the discursive content of the strike coverage. Whereas the quantitative content analysis was organised with consideration to space, i.e. framing, the discourse analysis is concerned with accounting for the temporal aspect of news coverage. It is, in this sense, more micro-organised because its concern is less with who said what and how often they said it, than with what did they say and in what way did they say it. The temporal aspect of representation is best captured by the notion that events and their articulations occur over time, in a developmental way (Knight

forthcoming). For this reason, this section was organised thematically. The thematic categories were coded as representations of the basic elements in the signification of the teachers' strike, i.e. by identifying the recurrent themes and patterns found in the totality of the front-page coverage.²⁹ It is important to note, however, that I have not attempted to establish a clearly defined set of mutually exclusive categories, precisely since the crucial characteristic of the coverage was the interrelationship of the themes and the way they tended to blur into and, at times, even contradict one another. And although I cannot claim to have systematically established any rules of combination or transformation among the themes, I do feel that it is adequate to have established a basic set of categories from which the strike discourse was constructed. The temporal aspect of representation is captured, moreover, by the notion of narrative structure, which I shall discuss in more detail below.

To enrich these two largely textual sections, the third section of the study consists of a brief, critical discussion of the selection of strike photographs. While my overall arguments privilege the text as the "primary semiotic element," it treats the photograph as an optional or "supplemental" one (Hall 1973:176). Thus, writing is privileged as the dominant communicative code of the news coverage, fulfilling the article's prosodic role of highlighting important points and emphasising structural connections (Kress and van Leeuwen 1998). The photograph, meanwhile, represents a truncated version of the gestural, situational, expressional, and interactional signifying cues of the preferred ideology, and which are embedded within the mediated event. Moreover, the decision to include a discussion of news photos is determined also by the increasing prevalence of photographic elements into newspaper layouts (although the *Globe* is the exception in

this study). Layouts commonly polarise the semiotic elements into top and bottom, and left and right, placing different and perhaps contrasting elements in the upper and lower sections of the page. As Kress and van Leeuwen (1998:193) argue, those placed at the top are presented as the *ideal* while those at the bottom are seen as *real*. The distinction is that the *ideal* is often presented the generalised essence of the information and thus containing a specific kind of salience for the reader, while the *real* is opposed to that, in that it presents more specific, detailed, and practical information (ibid).³⁰ If the upper or left part is occupied by the image, as it normally is in Canadian (i.e. Western) newspapers, it will tend to visually formulate the essence of the day's event and solicit condemnation or support, depending on the image, by virtue of the photograph's emotive impact. The bottom or right portion of the page, normally the text, thus serves to support the *idealised* image, even though it tends to be more detailed; its primary function is to elaborate on the *givenness* of the *ideal*.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Methodological Principles

Critical discourse analysis is, for all intents and purposes, a constructionist methodology. As such, it acknowledges the notion that meaning emerges through discourse, and discourse, as such, involves a dialectic or struggle between the object and subject. The equipment, so to speak, of the struggle are the representational systems of signs and concepts. These signs and concepts are, as I've stated elsewhere, shared, and their communicative currency emerges through hegemonic struggle. The model, following Saussure (1960) and Barthes (1972) is *semiotics*.

Whether we are referring to text or image, language functions when it can be used to express, communicate or serve a generally accepted idea. The link or signification between language and meaning is conceptualised in terms of the relation of the *form* of an object and the *idea* with which the form is associated. This progression from elements to moments, i.e. their union (sign), is understood in terms of the relationship between signifier(s) and signified, in which the signified is the product of the combination of many signifiers. For example, Andy Warhol paints for us a Campbell's soup can. Our understanding of the image depends crucially upon our recognition of its signifiers – the colours, the layout of the label, the shape, etc. We derive meaning from the image when we connect up all those signifiers into an idea or concept, which is based on our previous knowledge: Campbell's soup = warmth, comfort, homemade, mom, etc. This metaphorical dimension of signification rests crucially on the distinction between what Barthes (1972) called *denotation* and *connotation*: denotation is the basic level where consensus is wide and most people agree on an element's meaning (can of soup). *Connotation*, on the other hand, consists of the collection of signifiers into a relatively meaningful whole (warmth and comfort). In this sense, connotation is the crucial level of understanding and 'meaning-making'. In this sense it is historical, insofar as it consists of the accretion of multiple meanings from previous usage. As I discussed in the preceding chapter, this becomes important because if a strike is commonly characterised as 'disorder', 'conflict', or 'inconvenience', as the teachers' strike was, the meaning we derive from it comes not just from the mere descriptiveness of the language, but from the past usage of that language. Often silent, implicit and uninterrogated, connotation is delivered in the form of repetition and familiarisation.³¹ I have indicated elsewhere with

reference to the inverted pyramid principle that the presentation of information in installments obliges the reader to make sense of the news story in his/her own terms. Connotation is, in this sense, the work of the active reader.

Semiotic analysis has contributed significantly to contemporary studies of media and culture. Representation comes to be understood on the basis of a sequence of many words or images that function as signs within a language or cultural code. The notion becomes problematic, however, when we consider the broader political context; in a culture like modern capitalism, meaning often depends on much larger units of analysis than words or objects (Fiske 1987). Narratives, statements, groups of images, visual layout, and whole discourses operate across a range of texts, which in their unity acquire and express a widespread authority. Whereas semiotics tends to confine the process of representation to language (textual and visual), thereby treating it as something of a self-contained system, subsequent developments in discourse analysis have become more concerned with representation as a source for the production of social knowledge and truth. It is in this sense, that critical analysis focuses on the ideological-hegemonic aspects of representation in the way that certain POVs come to be privileged or preferred in the discursive construction of 'universal' meaning and truth.

Techniques

The theoretical foundations of CDA are based on the general conviction of a slippery slope between language and truth. Any style of writing – poetry, novels, newspaper writing – is seen necessarily to be a practice of selection. I discussed this in more detail above with respect to the spatial metaphor of framing. This helps to give

illustrative effect to the notion that news stories are always, to varying degrees, distortions of events, in spite of the journalistic ideal of giving newsreaders the ‘unadorned facts’ (Metz 1985:71). Critical discourse analysis aims to provide an overall account of the production, internal structure and overall organisation of news texts by treating language as one of several types of social practice.

Critical linguistic analysis is one of several ways of ‘doing’ CDA. It is an eclectic methodology that incorporates a selection of practices and techniques, whose aim is to study language behaviour in natural speech situations of social relevance (Fowler et al. 1979; Kress and Hodge 1979; Kress 1985, 1986; Wodak 1989; Fowler 1991). Of these ‘natural speech’ situations, news discourse is a particular concern and site of attention for many critical linguists.

On one level, one may study the syntactic structure of forms of discourse that help to mobilise meaning in particular ways. Syntactic analysis is concerned with the position and sequence of linguistic elements rather than their propositional meanings and functions; moreover, the analysis of syntax provides for alternative phrasings (Fowler 1991:77). Two such devices through which news texts syntactically transform linguistic structure into socially significant meaning are *nominalisation* and *passivisation*.

In various linguistic contexts, such as news reporting, it is common for predicates, such as verbs and adjectives, to be realised syntactically as nouns. *Nominalisation* occurs when whole or partial sentences, and descriptions of actions and the participants involved, are turned into nouns, such as when we say, “talks ended,” instead of saying, “the government walked away from negotiations with the union.” Moreover, the use of such processes of replacing acting agents with inactive nouns is especially noticeable in

official, bureaucratic and formal modes of discourse (ibid:79), where there is ideological points to be scored from deflecting a reader's attention from particular kinds of action and agency. When participants and their actions are deleted in the nominal form, indications of time and modality go wholly missing, creating within the semantic landscape greater ideological opportunity for a dominant ideology to be naturalised or reified.

Passivisation occurs when verbs are rendered in a passive form, which allows parts of a clause to be transformed, with the similar effect of deleting agents, and leaving responsibility for actions rather ambiguous – for example, think of a news report of a protest that might say something like, “three protesters were fatally wounded when violence broke out at the rally.” Alternatively, instead of deleting the activity which caused the violence, i.e. police shooting, the report might have read, “three people were killed when police opened fire on the unarmed protesters.” As Fowler (1991:78) has shown with great detail, passive constructions are often found in the subsidiary headlines and opening sentences of news reports. Passive forms also help to immediately establish the topic, thereby indicating the preferred interpretation of the story, i.e. how the topic should be understood. Typical passive headlines from day one of the strike in the *Toronto Star* included: **School's Out!** (A1), and **There's more than one way to end a walkout** (A7).³² In these headlines, it is possible that the agentless passive is chosen not just for brevity, but because the general position of Ontario newspapers, even the middlebrow, socially liberal *Star*, is particularly negative and uncompromising in its treatment of organised labour and job action. The use-value of both nominalisation and passivisation are as tools for the transformation of internal and external referents in the news texts

(Knight forthcoming). They delete actors and agency, and represent processes as things. As indicated, the study of these and other syntactic devices may facilitate in the study of news ideology insofar as they provide initial access to process of naturalisation within language, whereby 'Nature and History are confused at every turn' (Barthes 1972:11). Moreover, the transformative effects can displace attention away from those responsible for initiating real-world action by reversing the focus from subjects to objects, and causes to consequences. Furthermore, these processes have "crucially hegemonic implications inasmuch as they deflect discursive attention away from the politically and morally problematic character of actions and motives, particularly those of the powerful; they are ways of dis-articulating and re-articulating aspects of reality in different directions" (Knight forthcoming).

While news coverage represents viewpoints and perspectives in terms of relations of inclusion and exclusion, and accentuation and downplaying, there is also a critical need for acknowledging that the news is ongoing. In events such as strikes, new developments often arise, with the effect of changing the initial frame. During the teachers' strike, for example, several moments came to effect the chain of articulation through which the protest was reported. This temporal aspect of representation is, as stated above, captured nicely by the notion of *narrative structure*.

Where the ideas of framing and narrative come together is with reference to what van Dijk (1988) has called "assertion-type speech acts." Assertion-type speech acts are often the news source POV, normally emerging in response to reporter questioning. Especially in situations where the normative consensus is placed into question, these speech acts represent the attempts by news sources to insert their viewpoints into the

ongoing narrative, i.e. to embed their POV into the plot that constitutes the 'news story' (Knight forthcoming).

News narratives act as structuring devices in terms of their function of interpellating newsreaders as active decoders to the relations and sequences between causes and consequences. In this sense, the news narrative can be seen as a translinguistic device for transporting the newsreader across place and time in a relatively coherent and safe way. Good news narratives thus manage conflict and contradiction by generating more or less coherent pathways from the chain of signifiers to the referent text (Knight forthcoming). Apropos Laclau and Mouffe (1985), we might think of narrative structure as a para-linguistic tactic for suturing a *perceived totality*. Narratives serve the function of coordinating the various elements of the text – causes, consequences, actions, agents, and their interactions – into a coherent and relatively balanced sequence, all-the-while ensuring that each element does not over-extend its discursive utility. For example, to identify an actor as a 'union chief' is to implicitly establish that actor's function and role within the ongoing narrative: union leaders get talked about only during moments of conflict, i.e. we hear about them when they are being disruptive. If we are hearing about them now, then, viz. they must be rocking the boat in some way. Moreover, the identity of the 'union chief' is not only descriptive, but it is also highly functional, inasmuch as it serves to erect the foundation upon which the representation of that actor's activities can be referred to as obvious and taken-for-granted.

Newspaper articles are constructed as narratives that portray social relations and help to unfold and explain the sequences of causes and consequences in ways that support existing relations of power. In reporting the teachers' actions as 'disruptive', 'disputable',

and 'conflictive', while reporting the government's action as a 'tough decision', we as readers become actively engaged in recounting and reinforcing the political order of things. As with conventional strike reporting, the teachers' strike tended to focus on social and political-economic disruption by emphasising the 'hardship of families', the 'inconveniences' for business, and the 'side effects' of the protest, in terms of how the strike affected other workers (bus drivers, cafeteria workers, janitors, etc.). At the same time, the narratives of labour protests often focus on the actions and 'emotions' of those on strike, and on the rational 'decisions' of those who are struck (cf. Flam 1990a, 1990b). Frequent coverage of picket-line activity, and of parents and students either joining in or opposing the teachers, were all drawn together in terms of their articulatory relationship to the teachers' decision to 'walk off the job'.

Conclusion

This chapter was concerned with elaborating on the methodological principles and practices that inform the case study in chapter 4. It took as a given some of the theoretical principles elaborated in the preceding chapter, namely that news texts, like all linguistic forms, construct reading positions for newsreaders, that is they suggest what ideological formations the reader will be required to decode to make sense of the article or story. Readers are not passive recipients of information, which is to say that they come already 'discursively equipped' to the game of text-decoding, and reconstruct the text as a system of meanings which may be more or less congruent with the ideology that informs it (Fowler 1987:486). The study takes, finally, a constructionist approach and treats news

discourses as historically specific constructs, which come together only in the relation and tension between the object and subject.

The research has been organised in terms of the idea of news framing, and a quantitative content analysis has been used to conceptualise the way that representations function spatially and selectively, in terms of the inclusion of some sources and source viewpoints, at the exclusion of others. However, at the same time, news coverage is ongoing in a temporal sense, insofar as with long-term events like strikes, smaller events and developments give rise to an alteration of the original frame. Thus, the temporal aspect of representation is adequately captured by the notion of narrative structure, and critical linguistics was shown to be a fruitful method for uncovering and evaluating ideological bias.

CHAPTER 4

The 1997 Ontario Teachers' Strike: A Content and Critical Discourse Analysis of Newspaper Coverage

Introduction

The *Education Quality Improvement Act* (Bill 160) is perhaps the most wide-sweeping of the Conservative government's social and political reform initiatives since elected to office in 1995. First introduced in the Party's election manifesto, *The Common Sense Revolution*, the rhetoric of the bill involved the government's response to a problem, which it argued was endemic in the public school system. Its purpose was to re-establish a state of 'normalcy,' in which the problem or anxiety about efficiency and competitiveness could be either mitigated or eliminated altogether. Despite a majority electoral victory, in which much of the Party's support came from a generally 'quiet' conservative middle class, opposition to the bill was strong among teachers' unions, academics, parent groups, and opposition party members. Culminating in a province-wide, two-week strike by 126,000 teachers in the fall of 1997, this wave of opposition garnered widespread coverage in the press. This chapter's concern is not with the merits or problems with recent education reform *per se*, but with the formation of a new right discourse in mainstream press coverage of the strike. Thus, it describes the reactions in the *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, and *Toronto Sun*, the province's three major daily newspapers from that period.³³

Content Analysis: Mapping the Coverage

News coverage is broken down into three tables, with each table representing a consecutive five-day block. Tables 1 – 3 provides data on the frequency of representation of sources quoted and paragraph points of view. In all three newspapers, coverage was consistent in the weeks leading up to the strike and in the short period which followed, although it was most extensive during the strike’s two-week span. In terms of the total volume of coverage, the *Star*, not surprisingly, outnumbered the other two papers.³⁴ A public service strike, which affected more than two million children, the protest was of particular concern to families, befitting the *Star*’s profile as a middle-of-the road, conventionally social liberal, family newspaper.³⁵ In all three papers, however, the “crisis in education” was framed as the dominant issue on the province’s immediate political agenda.³⁶ Clearly, the strike was presented as ‘bad news’ and, as such, it was often narrated through the detached, impersonal voices of official authority, and also through the more personal, emotionally evocative voices of the strike’s victims.

Table 1 Sources and Paragraph POV (%)
Front Page Coverage (27-31 October/97)

	Sources (%)			Paragraph POV (%)		
	TS	GM	Sun	TS	GM	Sun
Government	52.3	53.6	61.1	39.7	50.9	55.0
Labour (+)	24.7	21.4	23.0	22.6	19.4	19.3
Labour (-)	2.0	5.5	2.0	4.4	8.1	5.6
Parents	4.9	0.0	0.0	13.6	2.0	2.0
Students	3.7	0.0	11.1	5.6	0.0	4.3
School Boards	1.4	16.4	12.8	6.0	10.2	5.2
Political Opp.	6.1	3.0	0.0	3.6	2.0	2.2
Mixed/Other	4.9	0.0	0.0	4.5	7.4	6.3
Total	100.0	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.9

TS = Toronto Star; GM = Globe and Mail; Sun = Toronto Sun
POV = point of view; Sources = quoted news sources

Table 2 Sources and Paragraph POV (%)
Front Page Coverage (1-5 November/97)

	Sources (%)			Paragraph POV (%)		
	TS	GM	Sun	TS	GM	Sun
Government	41.2	42.9	39.5	40.4	47.1	40.8
Labour (+)	22.5	33.3	34.8	26.2	35.4	27.2
Labour (-)	6.1	5.1	9.1	6.3	4.4	9.4
Parents	8.5	1.2	2.4	8.8	2.2	4.8
Students	3.4	0.0	3.2	3.1	1.0	4.6
School Boards	5.9	6.7	2.2	2.5	1.0	2.3
Political Opp.	5.9	1.5	0.0	3.4	1.4	0.0
Mixed/Other	6.5	9.2	8.8	9.3	7.5	10.9
Total	100.0	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3 Sources and Paragraph POV (%)
Front Page Coverage (6-10 November/97)

	Sources (%)			Paragraph POV (%)		
	TS	GM	Sun	TS	GM	Sun
Government	24.7	24.8	32.1	17.7	16.7	25.0
Labour (+)	35.7	34.3	25.5	26.6	30.2	19.0
Labour (-)	18.5	20.1	22.6	20.1	23.3	23.8
Parents	6.0	4.0	4.2	11.8	6.4	2.0
Students	5.4	2.9	0.0	7.3	3.6	0.0
School Boards	5.2	7.6	3.9	7.0	9.0	4.2
Political Opp.	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mixed/Other	4.5	6.2	9.6	8.5	10.8	9.3
Total	100.0	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The most obvious conclusion we can draw from these data is that in all three newspapers, the government POV was more extensively represented than the POV of any other actor. This can be explained by the tendency of news media to impose a hierarchical division of labour on their sources, which generally reflects the ability of the latter to influence what can be said and done, and by whom, in the real world (Knight and O'Connor 1995; Knight 1998b:98-9). As a 'primary news source', i.e. an influential actor with the power and privilege to exercise social regulation and control, the government enjoys the ability to define the situation and the authority to determine how an issue will

be addressed in the public sphere. As a voice of expertise and by virtue of its official status as *the* representative of 'the people', the government enjoys privileged access to the media that ordinary people cannot obtain.

In all three papers, references were also made to the POV of 'secondary news sources', whose function it is to provide the much-needed reaction to a situation. Consisting generally of ordinary people without official status (i.e. individuals, social movements, and labour groups) secondary sources act as partisans of change and generally have little influence on legitimised power structures. In terms of the ability to articulate their position on a given issue(s), secondary sources often speak directly about primary sources inasmuch as they are directly affected by or dependent on them, while primary sources are generally silent in terms of speaking about secondary sources.³⁷ The most obvious secondary news sources in this event were parents and students who, in the news coverage, were painted as the strike's main 'victims'. Teachers, conversely, were more difficult to code. On the one hand, they are a highly organised body of civil servants. On the other hand, teachers possess a distinct set of skills and abilities that are not accessible to most people; theirs is a profession privileged by several years of advanced schooling, which allows them to generate 'enclosures' (Giddens 1985; Rose and Miller 1992; Rose 1996).³⁸ This ability is generally a trait ascribed to 'primary agents', and it is no surprise therefore that some critical sociologists treat the educational institution as a 'disciplinary' State apparatus (Hunter 1996). In addition, teachers were at times described apart from their union leadership; sometimes they were lumped alongside their leaders, and at other moments they were portrayed as powerless, i.e. subject to their leaders' decisions. However, since the press relied for the most part upon a conventional

strike script, which emphasised conflict between ‘the government’ and ‘the teachers’, the latter is, for the purposes of coding, treated as a privileged ‘secondary’ agent.³⁹

The relationship between, among, and/or within, primary and secondary agents is based on a general model of competition and conflict, which reflects a hegemonic struggle for power and leadership in the real world. Ultimately, this struggle is crucial to how newsreaders will perceive the event and the actors involved and it is a determinant factor in the formation of public opinion. This relationship is often accentuated in the news as a result of a standard journalistic practice of breaking-down complex political issues into more simplified cases of personal or group conflict. In this case, the *Sun* accentuated, and at times grossly over-dramatised the tension between those who acted and those who were acted upon, while the *Star*, and to a lesser extent the *Globe*, also played up the bad news angle to create a good news story (cf. Glasgow Media Group 1977).

The government POV was consistently represented in all three papers. Its interests were well articulated and ‘government’ therefore operates as a single, distinct category of analysis. Although coverage of the government POV was consistent, it was nevertheless problematic. First, the government is comprised of a ruling assembly of elected Members of Provincial Parliament (MPP). The coverage was troubling because, although each MPP is the representative of a politically diverse constituency, the press coverage did not consider this critically enough.⁴⁰ This problem highlights the “internal struggle” of any political discourse,⁴¹ the effect of which is to minimise ‘struggle’ by creating the perception of governing solidarity, which might not, after all, actually exist (Fairclough 1998).⁴² Secondly, it was problematic because the “government” is a political Party with

clear and identifiable ideological interests. The Tories *Common Sense Revolution* was based upon the neo-liberal principles of rolling back the state and the conservative values of preserving law and order. The education system was problematised as a 'risk' to the health and prosperity of its stakeholders – i.e. parents, students, taxpayers, and especially big business. The government's grievance against the education system had the effect of allowing it to both assert its role as the 'decisive leader' in the re-organisation of the state, and to secure normative compliance and co-operation, i.e. the respect, of the public. One could argue that the news coverage was limiting and perhaps misleading at times because it tended to ignore or blur these features.

In part, the success upon which the perception of a minimised internal struggle was constructed relied heavily upon the news media's use of a narrow range of government sources, restricting itself to individuals with an authorised, official identity. By and large, and in all three newspapers, government statements were attributed exclusively to the Minister of Education and Training (Johnson) or, in cases of extreme opinion, directly to the Premier (Harris) himself. Rarely were other government sources quoted.⁴³ Arms-length, para-governing agencies, which reported on and oversaw the implementation of the Conservatives' reforms, were also represented though surprisingly obliquely.⁴⁴ And while they mostly accounted for the importance of "improving" education, and identifying the "problems" with the current system, their overarching message was of unconditional opposition to the strike. According to Dave Cooke, former New Democratic Party (NDP) Minister of Education and current co-chairman of the Tory's Education Improvement Commission, the teachers unions should have been "on side" with the Conservative's school reforms, thereby surrendering much of their

power.⁴⁵ An emotional advocate of public education, Cooke's position signalled the presence of a clear problem, and indicated the need for the kind of action that would not only be legitimate, but effective as well.

The coverage of the government's POV stood in marked contrast to organised labour, which was shown to be more transient and abstract. Press accounts of the unions' viewpoint tended less often to accentuate solidarity, instead emphasising the ideological differences and political divisions which existed between them; and it has therefore been coded as either "labour positive (+)" or "labour negative (-)". The first category refers to any quote and/or POV from a union representative – official or otherwise – supportive of the strike action. The latter category refers to any quote and/or union POV, also either official or unofficial, representative or sympathetic of a dissident labour voice. Not surprisingly, this focus on union division was most clearly articulated in the *Sun*,⁴⁶ which embraced the cause of "rebel" teachers unafraid of "the wrath of their colleagues," and the rank and file who would be "horribly burned" in a "pointless" union protest.⁴⁷ The *Globe and Mail*,⁴⁸ serving the province's top political, industry, and intellectual elite, also portrayed labour as consistently strained, though in a more general sense, by stressing the trickle-down effects that the strike would have on the economy and the potential for problems between labour unions. The *Star* was surprisingly harsh in its treatment of labour. It also focused upon the 'internal struggle' within the five unions, although less consistently and in a more concentrated way, at the end of the strike. Overall, this focus on union division and internal strain is indicative of the standard hard line that these news outlets take against organised labour in general.⁴⁹

As indicated above, the “teachers” were a complex agent to classify, and this resulted in a general ambivalence about the representation of the union voice. The implications for the textual analysis are described below. For our more immediate purposes, we can note that, on the one hand, teachers are generally seen and treated as role models, whose duty it is to prepare young people for active and productive citizenship. In the classroom, they work ‘privately,’ facilitating in the transformation of children’s subjectivities, from that of private individual to social subject. On the other hand, in their more ‘public’ role, teachers are also members of a powerful labour union with its own political agenda. As unionised workers, they organise outside of the generally private sphere of the classroom, i.e. ‘out of contact’ with their students. In the press coverage at least, support for the teachers was solid but nevertheless problematic. In so far as they were looked upon as caring and conscientious role models, i.e. in respect to their ‘private’ functions, the public and news media were generally supportive. In terms of supporting them ‘publicly’, however, things were different. While press coverage overwhelming invoked anecdotal accounts of ‘wonderful’ and ‘caring’ teachers, there was little if any coverage of support for the teachers as “unfairly treated workers” or justified “political activists”.⁵⁰

In general, the press, but especially the *Globe*, portrayed the government as more conciliatory than the unions. The *Sun* was clearly anti-union, in terms of the balance of representation and, what was not surprisingly, a more spectacular account of the event. When the government’s actions were accounted for, the language used to describe it was confident, with talk about the government “vowing to fight” the actions of “disgraceful” and “selfish” union bosses. In comparison, the *Globe* treated the government less as a

powerful force to be reckoned with, than a careful, calculating, and confident elected body. Here, the government was depicted rationally, as more restrained and less strident than the unions, equipped with choices, to “weigh its options” and make “offers” to the “illegally striking teachers”. In all three newspapers, adjectives such as “unhappy,” “disappointed,” “saddened,” “concerned,” and verbs such as “deplore,” “accuse,” “urge,” and “denounce” were used to characterise the government’s reaction to the teachers. Obversely, the teachers were “angry” and “frustrated” with the government, and “determined” to stop the bill. Missing from the characterisation of the government POV was the anguish, confrontation, and emotion of the unions.

Whereas government sources were clearly defined and articulated, the range of union voices was less restricted and more internally contentious. This could be explained by the fact that the teachers were represented separately by five unions (though under one umbrella organisation, the Ontario Teachers’ Federation [OTF]), each with its’ own specific interests and issues at stake.⁵¹ In contrast to the privileging of only two government voices, several union sources were quoted. The most prominent at the beginning of the strike was OTF President, Eileen Lennon, identified as the unions’ main player, opposite Dave Johnson. Other official union representatives included Maret Sadem-Thompson (President of the Federation of Women Teachers’ Association of Ontario), Phyllis Benedict (President of the Ontario Public School Teachers’ Federation), Diane Chénier (President of the Franco-Ontarian Teachers’ Association), Marshall Jarvis (President of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association), and Earl Manners (President of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation). Additionally, unofficial union representatives, i.e. front line teachers, were also quoted, though

marginally and, specifically, to convey the strike's emotional aspects. This approach of covering the pathos of the union viewpoint was most apparent in the *Sun*, which focused upon the "anger" of rank and file teachers. In the *Star*, the "worry" and "frustration" of teachers, as parents, was privileged over the deeper philosophical principles and commitments, which spark the desire to engage in justifiable civil disobedience. Thus, news coverage of the union point of view in these newspapers comprised the opinions of several official and unofficial actors. Moreover, it was only logical, that the likelihood of a difference of opinion would increase as more voices were represented; and each union, though united in its' opposition to the government, had separate organisational mandates.⁵²

Several more interesting conclusions can be drawn from these data. First, in comparing the first block of coverage to the last, there is a striking shift in the representation and distribution of source quoting and POV. Whereas the government was by far the most dominant voice in table one, in terms of both categories, in table three this trend is reversed, though not to the same degree of imbalance.⁵³ Two possible explanations might account for this change. In the first place, and to the surprise of many, the unions were perceived to be overwhelmingly more successful than the government in the battle for public opinion.⁵⁴ This unanticipated success was enjoyed, despite an expensive Tory TV ad that featured a tough-talking Mike Harris lashing out at the teachers for "flouting" the law, placing their *demands* ahead of their students' *needs*, and providing generally poor moral and civic leadership.⁵⁵ Secondly, as a public service union serving nearly one million families, the teachers ran the risk of striking for too long and losing that support. Especially after the press declared the teachers the clear

‘winners’ in the publicity battle, many felt it was time for the unions to cash in on public favour by calling off the strike, and resuming negotiations after returning to work. The difficulty, of course, was that the unions failed to bring about ‘real’ change, in terms of forcing the government to amend the bill’s more onerous features. The onus, at least in the press coverage, shifted from a demand on the government to legitimise its position, to a discussion about how the unions should end the strike. If the protest was ‘unsuccessful’ in terms of amending the legislation, how could the unions possibly continue to justify their actions? Furthermore, one has to ask critically: what was the significance of a ‘public’ victory against a legislation that would never meet ‘rational-critical public’ debate?⁵⁶

Perhaps the most noteworthy observation to be drawn from these data is the dramatic increase in table 3 of source and paragraph POV percentages in the “labour (-)” category, and the subsequent decline in numbers in the government POV. This allows us to make two principle conclusions. First, the government’s goal to frame union power as a “legitimate controversy”⁵⁷ was dependent upon the support of a public and news media which has, in recent years and as a result of continuing government “assaults on trade union freedoms,” grown restless with union power (Panitch and Swartz, 1987). In terms of qualifying the rise in the percentage of quoted union sources and POV, coverage of labour opinion was illustrated by the change that occurred in *which* union voice was most frequently quoted. As indicated above, Lennon was the most frequently cited union source at the beginning of the strike because she was the OTF’s key player in its negotiations with the government. However, once the narrative of union division was ‘dis-embedded’ from the main discourse, and the wedge between the more ‘moderate’

and 'militant' unions articulated, the press began quoting Earl Manners' voice more frequently, and oftentimes he was quoted in response to the expressed opinions of an/other union representative(s). Manners was thus described by the press as the "most militant" and "hard-core" of the union leaders, by his critics as "forceful" and "uncompromising", and a "driving force" behind the strike. Additionally, and consistent with the literature of strike coverage in news media (Murdock 1973; Morley 1976; Glasgow Media Group 1977; Fowler, et. al 1979; Fowler 1991; Puette 1992; Silva 1995; Knight and O'Connor 1995; Knight 1998b; Knight forthcoming), this shift was telling of a much greater challenge to organised labour in general: popular legitimacy in the public sphere. As neo-liberal politics disperse internationally (Bronner 1993; Mouffe 1995), and so long as the news media continue to frame union power as a controversial, union leaders must more carefully monitor the shifting tide of public opinion about their organisations. The second conclusion to be drawn from the rise in "labour (-)" and the subsequent drop in "government" numbers in table three, relates to the restraint of the government's voice in the strike's last days. Sensing an end to its bout of negative publicity, and watching union solidarity crumble, one might argue that the government surrendered to the unions the control over the framing of the debate. The government began talking less frequently about the unions because the latter had lost much of its power to generate a significant negative impact, which is to say that the teachers' ability to influence the government had weakened considerably from the strike's first days. In effect, the controversy changed from being a political protest that was harming students and causing hardships for parents and businesses, to a controversy about union solidarity, with which the press was all-too-willing to engage.

News coverage and strike narratives: A critical discourse analysis

[N]arrative grasps together and integrates into one whole and complete story multiple and scattered events, thereby schematising the intelligible signification attached to the narrative taken as a whole (Ricoeur 1984:x; Hay 1996:206).

In a Ministry of Education press release, Johnson stated that “time and again, our government has repeated its wish to sit down with the unions” (Ministry of Education, 28 October 1997). He also claimed that the ‘walk out’ posed an “unnecessary *threat* and *inconvenience*” to children and parents, and the education system was in dire need of *improvement*, because “*despite the remarkable investment [in education property taxes], Ontario has not seen a corresponding increase in education results*” (italics added, in *ibid*). To address these issues, the Minister pledged the government would “reduce waste and duplication in the system” to “ensure the taxpayer is getting the biggest bang for the education dollar” (*ibid*).⁵⁸ This summarises succinctly the Conservative government’s position on why Bill 160 was necessary, and why the teachers’ strike was not only illegal but also unjustifiable.

In terms of the news coverage, the government’s opposition to the unions depended, in one sense, on the successful articulation of a chain of disruptive effects, which would show that students, parents, and the business community were being unnecessarily harmed and inconvenienced by the strike. In another, less direct sense, the government used the press as a promotional vehicle to enlighten the newsreader, by providing her/him with information about the possible risks of supporting the current status of education and, of course, in supporting the ‘walkout’. Here, the government’s objective was to provide guidance and reassurance to the newsreader for the steps that would be necessary to reduce or control this risk – whether this be seeking a court order,

forcing the teachers back to work, or continuing to highlight the education system's perceived failures. In varying degrees, the Conservative government claimed that the strike presented a radical threat to the procedures and underlying assumptions of 'consensus politics', the organising principle, which, as a result of its convincing victory, the Party bestowed unto its leadership. By labelling the strike 'illegal', i.e. deviant, the government contested and thereby sought to overcome the teachers' radical opposition to the bill. To accomplish this, it needed to reassert the *common sense* values which had apparently guided the Party to its' election victory in 1995, and then anchor these assumptions to various linguistic and extra-linguistic signifiers, whose effect was, ultimately, the de-legitimation of the union mandate. Hence, it clarified the nature of consensus by pointing to concrete examples of what consensus was not, by denigrating the teachers for engaging in "unlawful" actions.⁵⁹

The summoning of the news audience to the problems associated with the strike required the media's construction – intentional or otherwise – of clear and identifiable anti-labour narratives: the strike's threat to law and order, the harm and inconvenience on families and businesses, and the division and fracturing of the unions. Theoretically, these operate as frames or sub-narratives within a single, ongoing narrative. In concert they serve as open storyboards, becoming ideological if, first, they can speak to the experiences and/or anxieties of the newsreader, i.e. if in reading the news article the reader can insert his/her own subjectivity into the representational discourse. Secondly, these frames will become ideological if they either sustain or reproduce existing relations of domination – i.e. if in this case, the government succeeds in crushing the protest and forging ahead with its reorganisation of the State. The degree to which we, as

newsreaders, will be drawn into this process of “narrative projection” (Hay 1995) depends on the intensity of the normative-emotional resonances or “accents” through which our experiences and anxieties might resemble those depicted in the news (Hay 1995, 1996; cf. Hall 1980). Table four presents data on the frequency in which the anti-labour/anti-strike narratives emerged in the press coverage.

Table 4 Strike Narratives (Frequency of Reference*)

<i>Narrative</i>	TS	GM	Sun
Threat to Law & Order	27.8	27.5	34.7
Negative Impact on Economy	9.3	16.7	4.4
Union Division	21.4	18.8	27.6
Efficiency & Quality	5.0	13.7	3.5
Causing Family Chaos	14.6	6.9	10.6
Victimising Students	12.8	8.6	10.7
Other	8.9	7.8	8.4
Total	99.9	100.0	99.9

*Frequency was measured by counting the number of times each theme or narrative was mentioned. When several themes were mentioned at the same time, each was counted separately. The category termed “other” comprises references to poor student skills, need for more parental involvement, need for greater teacher qualifications, and permanent damage caused by the strike to the education system.

These data suggest the predominance of a generally conventional strike script – accentuating conflict and emotion above history – although in this case this was clearly articulated in different ways and at different moments. On the one hand, the strike’s implied threat to the sacredness of the law was linked connotatively to the government’s repetitive statements, and the news media’s repetitious coverage, about the strike’s supposed ‘illegal’ status. The government claimed, and to a large degree the press uncritically agreed that the protest was ‘illegal’ because with few exceptions the teachers were breaking legally binding contracts with their employers, the local school boards.⁶⁰ The argument was that in deciding to ‘walk off the job’, the teachers rebuked their responsibilities on two levels: on the micro-level, to provide lessons, guidance, and moral

leadership to students and, on the macro-level, their ethical and financial responsibility to their employers.

The secondary, and more explicit level of concern was that the strike signified a physical threat to students, parents and, despite commitments from the OTF that “no union will take retaliatory actions against a colleague who crosses the picket line,” rank and file teachers, who would ignore the protest.⁶¹ The conclusion we can draw is attributable to a concise, chain of pernicious effects (protest ⇒ violence ⇒ harm = anomie), which culminates in the victimisation of students, parents, businesses and, in some instances, teachers themselves. This narrative of oppositional discord was reproduced and re-articulated on several occasions and in many ways, although the *Globe* was comparatively less dramatic in its descriptions than either the *Sun* or the *Star*.⁶² This involved the government and news media’s summoning of popularised connotations of *working-class* labour strife – picket lines, visibly angry protesters, the presence of the police to quell any potential uprising⁶³ – while intermodally, the confrontational effect was completed, by the inclusion of several grammatical and photographic war metaphors. In mostly the *Sun* and the *Star*, but also to a marginal degree in the *Globe*, “battle lines” were drawn between “militant union leaders” and the government, and the Tories vowed to “fight” the unions’ for taking the province’s 2.1 million students “hostage”. And what made this particularly remarkable was the degree to which these descriptions contradicted Justice MacPherson’s observation that the teachers, a *middle-class* group, were “[protesting] in a very careful, concerned and reluctant fashion.”⁶⁴ The general implication we can draw from the strike coverage in these three press outlets is that unruly behaviour was illustrated as an institutionalised, if not tacit element of labour

protest (cf. Murdock 1973; Morley 1976; Puette 1992; Knight 1998b). Ultimately, the effect of this was that it stigmatised the unions, and especially the labour leaders, as abusive of their power and disrespectful of the accepted standards of democracy, civility and responsibility.

Interestingly, in its appeal to have the teachers forced back to work, the government did not explicitly state a concern about mounting levels of violence on picket lines. While it did so implicitly and passively, by referring to a “general concern” for the safety of anyone (especially students) who might try to cross a picket line, the overriding issue was the considerable “inconvenience” that the strike was creating for parents and businesses. *One Star* report from 28 October described how the strike was causing the very negligent effects of ‘frustration and chaos’ for “parents [who] scrambled, teachers [who] picketed and older kids [who] spent the day hanging out at malls.”⁶⁵ Press coverage privileged the government’s argument that the teachers were “flouting the law”, and that there were certainly more “lawful ways for them to make their point without being unlawful.”⁶⁶ Most of the *Sun*’s coverage focused on the concern for physical safety, and it provided rather lively accounts of either ‘real’ violence on picket lines or the concern by the “brave” but “fearful” teachers who opposed the actions of their leaders. Obversely, the *Globe* tended more often to discuss the judicial-legal status of the strike and the possible economic hardships that might arise, at the general exclusion of concerns about physical harm.

It is clear that the different ways in which the concern for law and order were articulated hinged upon two interdependent government strategies. First, the potential for violence received far greater critical news attention than the legal status of the strike. This

indicated the degree to which questions about the strike's imputed illegality were inflated with ambivalence. The objective was for the news coverage to connect with the collective anxieties and fears of parents and teachers about 'being harmed' by the strike, the result of a cause and effect sequence that would 'blame' the teachers in the end. In addition, it was intended to address the audience to a typically concern with 'anomie', the general social pathology reported to follow any significant breakdown in the moral, social, or political fibre, such as a long-term job action dispute. The support of the parents, and those teachers who might have been only moderately supportive of the strike, was crucial if the government was to successfully legitimise its 'tough love' approach to reforming education. It was the government's implied concerns about violence, the safety of children, and the 'improper role-modelling' of irresponsible, potentially criminal, teachers that would ideally resonate with the concerns of the newsreader(s). On the other hand, the worry about the strike's threat to the precedents of employer-employee relations was intended to resonate with the concerns of businesses and taxpayers at a time of increasing anxiety about economic *failure* and the ill prospects of future levels of competitiveness and productivity. This is significant because it helps to illustrate a second strategy, which was to use the news coverage as a mechanism for building private sector support from businesses inconvenienced and concerned about the implications of contract violations.

The theme of inconvenience to the business community was most clearly articulated in the *Globe* but it was also described to a significant degree in the *Star*. At the same time, however, business 'hardship' was countered by reports about the business community's capacity to 'cope' with the inconvenience of the strike. This is significant

because it helped demonstrate the economy's capacity to deal with a crisis; an important factor since much of the rationale for reform was based upon a need to encourage and enhance the market (cf. Dehli 1998). The *Globe* accentuated a negative correlation between multiple strike variables in the first few days of coverage. The protest was blamed for bringing about the layoffs of "more than 1,300 kitchen workers", as school cafeterias sat empty, causing "5,500 buses [to be taken] off the road", and forcing school boards into sending home countless numbers of crossing guards. Yet, at the same time, the *Globe* also showed that while the strike was 'inconveniencing' some Ontarians, it was also creating profitable opportunities for others. In Toronto, for example, "enterprising churches" were able to "cash in on the strike" by renting out their basements to child-care centres locked out of local schools,⁶⁷ while private tutoring companies enjoyed the benefits of financial growth from 'responsible' parents and students concerned about the further loss of classroom time.⁶⁸ Furthermore, both the *Globe* and the *Star* humanised the economy by portraying businesses as understanding and accommodating to the needs of their staff in the face of a *childcare crisis*.⁶⁹ What these particular news narratives describe is a display of determination and resilience on the part of the market, that is the ability to show that even though the body politic was in a state of flux, the market would survive and flourish.

The court's rejection of the government's injunction appeal in the second week of the protest was a watershed in terms of the how the press' anti-strike discourse was coordinated. On 3 November, following his promise that only one side would 'win' while the other would 'lose', Justice MacPherson delivered his ruling, cautiously siding with the teachers on the basis that the government had sought a court order prematurely.

“There is no direct evidence of any actual harm to any student...there is no direct evidence of any actual harm to any parent...there is no evidence of any harm to school boards – the employers,” he said.⁷⁰ For their part, the teachers treated the ruling as a “moral victory,” which instilled a sense of dignity and integrity to their actions, which had been compromised by the government’s repeated verbal assaults. On the other hand, the government questioned how anyone – itself or the teachers – could claim victory so long as the students were still out of the classrooms. Thus, in terms of the construction of news storyboards, this signified the disarticulation of the *law and order* and *harm and inconvenience* narratives, and the articulation and dis-embedding of an explicit narrative of *union fracturing and division*. This change in the narrative structure did not, however, affect the confrontational logic by which it was governed. What it did mean was that the struggle now shifted from a discursive field comprised of competing external actors, i.e. agents opposed to one another (government vs. union), to a field of competing internal actors, i.e. an agent turned against itself (union vs. union). Thus, although the media were able to retain the confrontational strike script, this was re-articulated in terms of a new kind of battle.

In the wake of the judge’s ruling, with public opinion clearly on their side, the teachers were widely called upon to end the strike and return to the classroom. Editorials, letters to the editor, and public commentary, though not the focus of this discussion, unambiguously demanded the teachers end the strike, though for different and, at times, contradictory reasons. ‘Hard’ news articles also focused on the need for the unions to ‘call it quits.’ Overwhelmingly, they claimed that although sympathetic to the teachers’ cause, the political point had been made; parents had been awakened to the importance of

education but the government was not going to comply with the unions' demands. In a way, the judge's ruling dramatically altered the meaning of the strike, and as a result this played directly in the government's favour. Previous to MacPherson's decision, the strike was posed in the press coverage and by the government as a 'problem' that needed to be solved. When the ruling was handed down, this changed the meaning of the strike, shifting its value away from a 'problem' to a 'solution' for the government. Since the courts deemed the strike perfectly legitimate, i.e. not illegal, what more could the government do? The strike was no longer its' responsibility, but was now the responsibility of the unions.

On 7 November, it appeared that an end to the strike was imminent, as the leaders of three of the five unions – those representing the Women Teachers', the Franco-Ontarian Teachers, and the Ontario Public School Teachers – announced the end to their protest. The next day, the union representing the English Catholic teachers, ended their walkout and, finally, on 9 November Earl Manners stated that the OSSTF would also end the strike but resume its protest "in other ways".⁷¹ On the day immediately following the split, the reports in the *Star* and *Globe* were fairly subdued, which could be explained in part by these newspapers' overwhelming reliance on primary news sources. As the decision by the first three unions to end the strike was abrupt, both sides were cautious in assessing what might come in the days ahead.⁷² When asked repeatedly if the break in solidarity 'angered' him, OECTA leader Marshall Jarvis stated: "We respect our colleagues and we will continue in every possible venue to protest this government's action." Johnson was equally reserved, saying only that he hoped they would "all go back...[that] it's time to get on with things."⁷³ However, over the course of the next few

days, this more cautious tide changed dramatically, as the *Star* reported visible “union rifts”, “fuelled” by a “militant backlash” among the rank and file.⁷⁴ While this describes somewhat accurately the legitimate concerns of union members, it equally accounted for the anticipation and hope undoubtedly created by the first day’s sudden announcement.

While the labour leaders, and even the government, overwhelmingly downplayed the division among the unions, the press handled this split differently, resulting in clearly different ideological consequences. The reports in the *Sun* and the *Star* were generally inflected with the confrontational mode that characterised the earlier coverage, however the OSSTF and OECTA teachers were now singled out as the strike’s primary casualties. The effect of this was twofold: first, it depicted the *teachers* as the strike’s newest victims, i.e. as subjects of “betrayal” at the hands of the union leadership.⁷⁵ Where this discourse differed from the one that described the victimisation of parents and students was in terms of the point to which the harm done unto the teachers could be made ideologically sympathetic to the newsreader(s). One need not have an active imagination to insert herself into the subject-position of a worried, single mother, having to take time off from her low-commission sales job to care for and teach her young son at home.⁷⁶ Yet, can the same be said about the teacher who followed her union leaders, only in the end to be left awaiting *their* decisions about whether or not the strike should end?⁷⁷ As newsreaders, our encounters with these news storyboards illustrate the basis of our interpellation. We potentially recognise ourselves – as parents, students, or teachers – within the harmful sequence of the mediated event; we position our own personal anxieties, worries, and fears alongside those of the event’s actors. The second effect of this shift, as alluded to above, was that it reproduced the unfavourable portrait of the

union leadership. The news implied that even after 126,000 strong stood behind their leaders' difficult decision to 'walk out', and after a very positive 15,000 person rally at the provincial legislature on 6 November, the rank and file ended up with very little to show for their support and action. The union leaders, as a result, were described as potential perpetrators of the worst professional evil: for abandoning their 'allies'. Upon recognising the contradictions in how the teachers were portrayed in the *Sun* – on the one hand, as unfortunate "victims" of greedy union bosses and on the other hand, "screaming militants" – their subject-positions became, as a result, ideologically ambivalent. The effect, therefore, was that the news coverage undoubtedly constructed the teacher as a focal point of condensed frustration – while feeling sympathy for the obviously good-intentioned but clearly passive teacher, the newsreader is still upset by the uncompromising hold that the union apparently has on the education system.

Obscurity or Lucidity? Ideology and Strike Photographs in the News

From the "armament" of the photographic camera to the "armed eye" of the reporter... the camera lens has drawn the human eye to different beings and things simply because...*new technologies make this possible* (Virilio 1995:9).

The purpose of this final section is to describe some of the possible ideological effects of the negative press coverage on the audience by looking primarily at the selection of news photographs. It demonstrates how the combination of photo and text aims to address in a particular way the attention of news audiences to social problems, which is here not labour unrest *per se*, but middle-class labour unrest. It asserts that the two general aspects of news production – the writing of the article and the assigning of the photographic image – act as modes of articulating the *controversy* of the event and the *values* by which the event is to be mediated. In addition to the text, the news

photograph is imbued with perhaps unclear, but nonetheless identifiable ideological significance. These 'significations' are important because they have the capacity to influence how a newsreader will decode and 'make meaning' from the news article or photo. And it is along this 'double articulation' that the inner discourse of the newspaper becomes a potential point of resonance for much broader societal values: here, respect for law and order, the economic responsibility of an employee to an employer, the moral responsibility of teachers to students, etc. The insights and interpretations that will be drawn in this final section are intended as supplements to the textual analysis from the preceding sections. I have intentionally selected three particularly useful news photographs – two from the *Sun* and one from the *Star*.⁷⁸ Thus, I do not present a comprehensive examination, but a largely illustrative and descriptive one.

The method that governs this approach borrows from Stuart Hall's (1973) theoretical work on the process of selecting news photographs. Briefly, Hall accounts for two aspects to the signification of news and news photos. The first derives from his appropriation of Galtung and Ruge's (1973) structural analysis of the news, and is concerned with the selection and organisation of news images according to formal 'news values'. The second, based upon Barthes' (1972) semiotic approach to interpreting popular social myths, is the photographic sign's 'ideological value'. Formal news values become then the *assumptions*, which belong to the world of the newspaper journalist and editor, and to the institutional arrangements by which events and people are constructed and mediated as 'newsworthy'. Moreover, they are *operational practices*, and allow news editors to select, rank, classify and elaborate the photo in terms of its 'stock of knowledge' about what society deems important, i.e. newsworthy (Hall 1973). Hence, a

photograph is included alongside the written article for its assumed functional 'value,' i.e. the significance that the image bears on the event from which it was produced. The *ideological* values of a news photograph, on the other hand, belong to the public or popular sphere, inasmuch as they communicate the morals and underlying assumptions of the dominant social, moral and political discourse. The news photograph elaborates a dominant ideology to the extent that it is inserted into and alongside a set of other thematic interpretations or particulars (e.g. the news text). An article's ideological themes will be inflected in different ways and this inflection will of course be relative to the construction and organisation of each newspaper (ibid). The newspaper's political orientation, its reporting policies, linguistic genre, and persona will in turn govern this inflection. But, as Hall warns, behind the inflections of a particular 'news angle' lie not just the formal values that deem a photograph or story 'newsworthy', but the ideological themes of the society itself (ibid).

Figure 1



FACE-OFF A grim-faced Dave Johnson says he is "extremely saddened" that talks with Eileen Lennon and other teachers' union reps yesterday failed to avert today's walkout by 126,000 teachers. Lennon, right, said "no solutions" were offered in the last-minute talks.

Figure 1 shows the juxtaposition of Dave Johnson and Eileen Lennon's faces from the *Sun*'s first-day coverage of the strike, set above the caption "FACE OFF". Johnson is 'extremely saddened', hence the description of a 'grim-faced' Minister. The photo – head slightly tilted to its left, brow furrowed, eyes intently focused – certainly supports this reading. Interestingly, that Johnson's (and the government's) agency is described in terms of an emotion implies the occupation of victim status, one who is powerless and dependent on the actions of others. This is significant in that it represents an unusual reversal of roles, with the powerful source now being characterised in emotional terms – normally the sign attributed to the victim in a news story. Lennon, on the other hand, is angry, stern, and will provide "no solutions" to the end of the strike. Her photo also supports this reading – left brow raised, eyes shifting away from the camera, a microphone placed strategically before her mouth as if to show precisely how recently the bad news announcement was delivered.

The sequence is also important. Johnson's photograph comes first before Lennon's, as does the caption explaining his feelings, i.e. his stare is the subject of the story and her stare is the cause or explanation of the subject. Her comment – "no solutions" – is also highly ambiguous and is represented in the passive voice. Is she offering no solutions, or does the grammatical structure of the caption imply that 'no solutions' have been offered? The implication is that these words belong to Lennon, i.e. that her offering no solutions is the cause of Johnson's sadness.

In both instances, the visual exposition is an enlarged 'head shot only.' Lennon's face is more full and frontal than the slightly tilted, asymmetrical photograph of Johnson's face. While the *Sun*'s selection of these photos might have derived purely from

chance, when placed within the legacy of critical newspaper coverage of labour protests – and especially the demonisation of labour leaders – a parallel can be drawn between Lennon’s photograph and the police mug shot, thus accentuating and validating the implied deviancy. Furthermore, the composition clearly excludes other, arguably inessential details of body and setting – are they speaking to each other or to a press gallery at separate times? Through image enlargement, it also highlights just the face and the eyes, the body’s most visibly expressive parts. What is the purpose? Perhaps it is to simply provide the uninformed newsreader with the images of the strike’s two ‘main players,’ immediately connecting the reader/viewer to the event. The ideological effect is that the exploitation of the expressive code, their faces, serves to displace or inflect the news story, away from its philosophical and historical trajectory, towards a personalised struggle for leadership and control between these elite actors. As the substance of the issues around Bill 160 was generally too complex to be widely understood or expressed, they tended to be subsumed into more operative symbols that would lend themselves to parsimonious and flexible communication (cf. Edelman 1964). Vivid, expressive images of faces and potentially violent actions needed no definition – the definition was as clear as the image itself.

The above set of images meets the requirement of ‘formal news values’ because, after several months of speculation and verbal jostling between the government and the unions, the event was expected, it was dramatic, current, and concerned not only the lives of newsreaders, but people of important status as well (Galtung and Ruge 1973). At the denotative or consensual level of meaning, the example *describes* what is obvious: a strained relationship between the government and the unions. However, at the ideological

or connotative level, these images suggest a more powerful, resonant set of themes. In this second-order of meaning the photograph comes to be seen or understood on a broader, more associative level, and refers to the ever-changing and ephemeral social structures and relations of political power that have become common characteristics of advanced capitalist states. In this example, we have two high-profile leaders at odds. The use of a culturally entrenched sports metaphor, the ‘face-off’, implies enemy competition – both sides seeking to score points against the other and, ultimately, bring the other down in defeat – with the news reading audience constructed as spectators. This same metaphor also implies a winner/loser framing of the event, a binary outcome that puts an end to the need for further public discourse.

Figure 2



I NEED SOME HELP ...
Metro Police escort Education Minister Dave Johnson through a picket line of angry teachers yesterday.

— Juan Fari d. SUN

Figure 2 also comes from the *Sun*, and relates to a news article from 8 November.⁷⁹ This photograph has been selected as a classic example of the ways in which formal ‘news values’ structure events. Central to this process of organising the news is the question: how are news values made salient to the news reader/viewer? The key here, as I have stated already, is to make the news intelligible by ensuring that it is ultimately recognisable. Of course, the event will be recognisable simply because it has been constituted as important. Moreover, we can’t help but be aware of it, the result of continual media bombast – the newspaper boxes on every street corner, the television screens in restaurants and bars, behind convenience store counters, and of course in our own homes – and in conversation with our friends, colleagues, and co-workers. Furthermore, the ideological concepts embedded in news photos and texts do not appear to us as new forms of knowledge but, rather, as recognitions of the world as we have already learned to appropriate it, what Hall called “dreary trivialities” (1973:186). These events are themselves constituted according to a formula comprised of ‘residual’ or ‘preconstituted’ elements, which, as I have noted, can be arranged and rearranged, articulated and re-articulated in a variety of ways.

In the field of political news, one of the most prominent ‘news values’ is certainly that of *violence*, or the threat thereof. I suggested this already in the textual analysis, but the point is important enough to be repeated: events such as political protests are generally not violent in themselves, but can be augmented by the inclusion of violent imagery and the suggestion of a potential for violence.⁸⁰ This was certainly clear in the case of the Ontario teachers’ strike. The photograph in question is accompanied by the bold, block-lettered caption: “I NEED SOME HELP”. The news angle is available to us

without even reading the article. We need only refer to the by-line: “‘sic him,’ militants scream at education minister,” and the rest of the caption: “Metro police escort Education Minister Dave Johnson through a picket line of angry teachers yesterday.” With the photograph that depicts a brave, resolute government official being followed by a mob of angry teachers, the ‘preferred interpretation’ is rather obvious. Despite the threat of approaching an angry picket line, the Minister of Education remained stalwart in pursuing what were perhaps tough, but nonetheless necessary courses of action, on behalf of the students still out of school, and the still inconvenienced parents and businesses. The image suggests, finally, that since Johnson was not afraid of such an angry mob, why should we [as newsreaders – projected parents or teachers] be intimidated?

To invoke a third and final example (Figure 3), we can turn our attention to the front-page of the *Star* from 5 November. We addressed the ideological implications of this particular image earlier, though indirectly and through an analysis of the article’s textual content. The caption is entitled “Mother’s Concern” and supports the photograph of a single mother, Veronica Low, age 35, hugging her son after applying to the Ontario Labour Relations Board to end the strike.

Figure 3



MOTHER'S CONCERN: Veronica Low, 35, of Toronto, hugs her son yesterday after applying to the Ontario Labour Relations Board to end the teachers' strike.

The structure of the values that governed the selection of the image in figure 3 appears as a neutral, operational apparatus. It connects stories and events with human beings, thereby making the event seem both ‘natural’ and ‘personal’. As Hall (1973) indicates, this is what news journalists refer to as the ‘human interest’ behind the story: viz. the attachment of the qualities, status, and positions of the event’s actors to impersonal historical forces. To give this a slightly different theoretical inflection, Laclau has argued that ‘the unifying principle of an ideological discourse is constituted by the subject’ [who encounters it] (1977:101). Thus, upon encountering the newsworthy, mediated image the reader will or will not achieve a sense of ‘familiarity’ or ‘recognition’ with the photograph – if she does, the image, like the text, becomes ideological.

In this particular example, the news-photo becomes meaningful at the formal level of ‘news values’ first, before signifying, secondly, an ideological theme or connotative resonance. The image of the ‘concerned mother’ has news value because it attests to a recent aspect of the strike: after the government’s failure, the appeal of a parent to the Labour Relations Board to end the strike. It is also the assertion of that set of emotions which is dramatic and heartfelt – a mother’s love and concern for her son; it then becomes possible to link this apparently ‘completed message’ with a connotative resonance, to produce a “myth” or “idea-in-form” (Barthes 1972:112).

The hug connotes here not only love and affection. It is a gesture that loved ones do when they are either about to part or when they have been just re-united after a period of separation. It connotes the anxiety of loss in the first case and the relief or overcoming of that loss or separation in the other. In ideological terms, the hug stands in positive contrast to the negative situation of the strike that preceded it (or the circumstances that

might ensue). Moreover, it illustrates a fusion of values, a unity of subjects (mother with son), which contrasts the separations of those same subjects when they were involved in the conflict. In this sense, the image of the mother and her son represents the mutuality of love, purpose and solidarity. Furthermore, the importance of this particular photograph extends beyond simply what it says and means. It is also evaluative, in that it selectively reinforces the *Star's* previous interpretation of the strike – that the protest would create frustration and chaos for parents and children – and a specific ‘news angle’ – the newspaper’s idiomatically-oriented decision to nominate parents and children as the symbolic centre of the story. In ideological terms, the mother is championed as the reluctant ‘hero’ of the story – an interpretation connotatively amplified by the photo of her protecting and comforting her son during a moment of crisis.

In each of these cases, the newspaper has used the visual image to transform the strike from a complex, historically specific event to a personalised account of political struggle. By inflecting the story with an expressive event account – be it the image of the Minister, union leader, mother, child, and/or screaming teacher – the newspaper is able to blur the ideological distinction between private and public, thereby displacing or ‘mystifying’ the event ‘through the category of the subject’ (Hall 1973). Rich in connotative detail, the photo entices our appetite for wanting to ‘know more’ by hailing our attention, and supporting the impact of the text on our own personal belief systems.

Conclusion

The analysis of front page news coverage of the strike is considered with respect to the following theoretical arguments: first, the logic of hegemony depends crucially

upon the participation of elite and non-elite actors; second, the mass media (e.g. newspapers) play an important socialising and political role; and thirdly, ideology is ultimately a social construct. Several arguments and observations have been made, of which six are worth repeating.

1. Among all three newspapers, the point of view of the government was represented more extensively and consistently than the viewpoint of any other actor.
2. The representation of the government viewpoint was less internally contentious than the union viewpoint, which is to say that there were fewer government than union sources used, the result of which was less contention among government sources and greater variation and hence contradiction in union points of view.
3. The government was shown to be more conciliatory than labour, offering 'solutions' whereas the latter posed 'problems'.
4. At the beginning of the strike, parents and children were painted as the strike's *primary* victims; by the end of the strike, the victim discourse changed slightly – while parents and children were still victims, they were now in company with a majority of teachers who had been victimised by so-called 'selfish' and 'greedy' union bosses
5. The summoning of the news audience to the problems associated with the strike required the media's construction of clear and identifiable anti-labour narratives: the threat to law and order, the harm and inconvenience on families and businesses, and the (inevitable) division and fracturing of the unions.

6. Despite that the strike was a unique, middle-class protest, the discursive construction of the crisis in the news followed a generally conventional strike script that accentuated conflict and emotion above a thorough and detailed historical analysis.

The chapter offered a case study of news coverage from Ontario's three major newspapers during the 1997 Ontario teachers' strike. Two methods were employed to demonstrate the degree to which NR ideology was present in the coverage. A quantitative content analysis showed that over the period of the strike, the government received far more coverage than any other actors, both in terms of the representation of POV and total number of quoted sources. Moreover, the government position was less problematic than the unions' because fewer sources were quoted, accounting for less variation and less internal contention. Furthermore, the government was shown to be more conciliatory than the unions, i.e. the former was seen to offer solutions while the latter posed problems. A qualitative discourse analysis demonstrated the predominance of a conventional strike script, accentuating conflict and emotion above the historical convergence of political forces. In addition to validating the government's position, the press described the strike in terms of its threat to law and order, the considerable disruption and inconvenience it posed to families and the business community, and the divisiveness of the labour movement in general. This was shown to be not only troubling but also expected, given the historical legacy of critical attention by the news media to labour and labour struggle.

Conclusion

There is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own, except through the stock of stories which constitute its initial dramatic resources.

-- Alasdair MacIntyre

Human beings create their sense of what is important in the world, and clearly how they ought to act, by referring directly or unconsciously to the stories they have learned; and like individuals, nations and communities change by virtue of the stories around which they are constituted. Children, for example, learn what are desirable and undesirable behaviours through the stories in which they find themselves a part, i.e. the stories they have read and have had read to them. They learn to listen to the lessons and warnings of their elders (*Lion King*), to embrace the power of imagination (*Anne of Green Gables*), to defy the rules of a cruel and unjust world (*Huckleberry Finn*), and to not overindulge in the temptations of excess (*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*). In short, to become freely thinking and free-acting individual and collective subjects, we must be equipped with the necessary narrative equipment for making sense of our past, present, and future – this, by the way, was why *Peter Pan* could never grow up.⁸¹

Societies develop narratives to which they can frequently refer in times of crisis and the mass media is a particularly powerful field in which narratives get constructed. But narratives can be more than simply the foundation of our present; they can also serve as models for our future, enabling us to ask the fundamental questions, ‘who are we?’ and ‘what are we to do?’ – questions that undoubtedly weigh heavily on the minds of many Ontarians. The narrative constitution of a crisis is not only the product of an accumulation of perceived contradictions and failures, but it is an ongoing process of

representation that depends upon the active participation of elite and non-elite government and non-government actors.

The education crisis, the apex of which was the two weeks strike by the province's teachers in the late fall of 1997, should be seen as a moment of decisive intervention, i.e. a moment in the transformation of the Ontario state. Once the strike came to be seen as a crisis of an overextended, inefficient and unaccountable school system, a crisis in which the unions were 'holding our 2 million children at ransom,' to quote one news story, the logic of hegemony was effectively secured. Crises are not objective conditions that define the shape of subsequent ideological struggle; they are subjectively experienced and come to be brought into existence by way of narrative and discourse, and are ultimately dependent upon the active participation of newsreaders (Hay 1996). Whether we are talking about children's stories or the recollection and reporting of events in the news, narratives give us a way of absorbing our experiences on both emotional and intellectual levels (cf. Fulford 1999).

Since first elected to office in 1995, the Ontario Conservative government has significantly restructured many of the areas that comprise the post-WWII consensus. Social assistance payments to the poor have been reduced and made increasingly more difficult to qualify for, young offenders have ended up in military-style boot camps, and women's shelters have had their funding reduced or taken away altogether. In January 1997, a single week of major policy announcements saw the Conservative government eliminate rent control (Bill 96), eliminate citizen review of police shootings (Bill 105), reduce or eliminate local control of schools (Bill 104), and eliminate environmental control protections (Bill 107) (see *inter alia* Kozolanka 1998). Public education, then, is

clearly just one of the areas that has felt the impact of wide-scale economic and political restructuring. The teachers' strike was the subject of consistent and focused media attention, not only during the period of the protest but for several months before and since. The media barrage during the strike helped to foster a profound sense of crisis, not just in the educational system in particular, but in the state more generally. Thus, a news analysis was shown to be important not only given the impact of NR restructuring on education, but also the impact of news reporting on the formation of public opinion about education.

The trajectory of this project was conceptualised along two theoretical axes. First, I was interested in developing a theoretically informed account of governance in advanced liberal society vis-à-vis the role of the press. In many ways, it represented an attempt to work within the Gramscian problematic of hegemony, but with a desire to go beyond hegemony by incorporating some of the insights of governmentality, a mode of government whose theoretical development emerged from the work of Michel Foucault and his followers. In many ways, one can read between the lines of this thesis a kind of oscillation between these complementary and at times contradictory schools of thought.⁸² The second axes involved a desire to work on a more general theoretical account of the enrolment and mobilisation of subjects to crises. In doing so, I sought to invigorate the notion of ideology with a critical edge that would recognise the inherent activity and imagination of audiences in decoding and appropriating news texts (cf. Hall 1980; Hay 1995, 1996). The purpose was to rescue the news-reading audience from the powerlessness and passivity with which they have been afflicted by so many previous investigations and studies of ideology in the media (see *inter alia* Herman and Chomsky

1988). Such an approach is crucial if we are to come to a better understanding of the role of the press in terms of setting the discursive context within which a crisis is born, and in which meanings and significance are ascribed to the statements and actions of various agents and agencies.

It was important to go about the analysis in a balanced and carefully thought out manner. In order to do so, I utilised three different but complementary methodological techniques for evaluating the news coverage in the *Toronto Star*, *Globe and Mail*, and *Toronto Sun*. A quantitative content analysis allowed me to count the number of times certain individuals or political agents were quoted, and how often their points of view were represented in the 'hard' news front-page stories. Since the event in question lasted for nearly two weeks, the coverage was broken down into three tables. After organising the data in a manner that allowed me to see who was speaking, I set out to determine exactly what it was those agents were speaking about. A critical discourse analysis allowed me to uncover the fault lines of the narrative structure of the event. Like all stories, news coverage of the strike grasped together and integrated into one whole and complete story multiple and scattered events (Ricoeur 1984). Like all stories, the news coverage followed a general plot, with heroes, villains and victims acting and interacting with another all at once. Narrative is also implicit in still images, and an analysis of news photography showed the degree to which our sense of narrative would help make the photograph newsworthy.

The contributions of this project should be found, it is hoped, in its' theoretical and methodological implications. It is the first and, at present, the only comprehensive analysis to look critically at the news coverage of the Ontario teachers' strike – a

memorable ideological moment in the province's recent history. While there has been some marginal attention paid to the dangers and implications of Conservative education reform (Kozolanka 1998; Dehli 1998; Greenberg 1999), there has not yet been a significant critical investigation of the manner in which the public was informed about the strike, i.e. in how the story of the strike was told. Given the immanent and immediate crisis in public healthcare and higher education, the study points, moreover, to some new avenues of analysis, where hopefully the logic of New Right hegemony can be seen and contested.

ENDNOTES

¹ In the Conservative Party's 1995-election manifesto, *The Common Sense Revolution* (CSR) it was argued that, in its current state, education "still gets a failing grade." Similar to the platform of the populist Conservative Party of Alberta, the CSR was released a year before the election and focused mainly on restructuring welfare and reducing the role of government in business and investment. See "Ontario Tory win in offing," *Globe and Mail*, 9 June 1995, pp. A1, A12.

² These concerns have surely not been articulated in terms of their neo-conservative and neo-liberal character. Critics have complained bitterly about the neo-conservative nature of the legislation, but also the massive centralisation of power and control over education brought about by both the *Fewer School Boards Act* (Bill 104) and the *Education Quality and Improvement Act* (Bill 160). Furthermore, some have also warned about the neo-liberal implications insofar as the legislation will destabilise the education system, thereby making it more amenable to introducing open enrolment and market-driven schooling. See for example, K. Dehli, "What Lies Beyond Ontario's Bill 160? The Politics and Practice of Education Markets," *Our Schools/Our Selves*, 9(4), #58, October 1998, pp. 59-78.

³ For a cogent critical reading of hegemony theory see P. Anderson, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci," *New Left Review* 100, 1977:5-78; J. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1981); C. Hay, "Housing policy in transition: from the post-war settlement towards a 'Thatcherite' hegemony," *Capital and Class*, 46:27-64.

⁴ Given constraints, I can only gloss over these changes here. For more complete discussions, see F. Houle, "Economic Strategy and the Restructuring of the Fordist Wage-Labour Relationship in Canada," *Studies in Political Economy*, 11, pp. 127-47; J. Jenson, "Representations in Crisis: The Roots of Canada's Permeable Fordism," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 23(4), December 1990, pp. 653-83; D. Wolfe, "The Crisis in Advanced Capitalism: An Introduction," *Studies in Political Economy*, 11, pp. 7-26.

⁵ "Whatever it [the state] is, it has stolen...only there, where the state ceases, does the man who is not superfluous begin." See F.W. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, R.J. Hollingdale, trans. (Penguin: New York, 1969), p.75.

⁶ I am referring specifically here to key business elite in forestry and mining in B.C, and to the Fraser Institute, a neo-conservative think tank established in Vancouver in 1974. On the rise of the Fraser Institute, see for example Ben Swankey, *The Fraser Institute: A Socialist Analysis of the Corporate Drive to the Right*, (Centre for Socialist Education: Vancouver, 1984).

⁷ The Ontario NDP Ministry of Education, like the Conservative Ministry, was guilty of assault on the public education system. As Kari Dehli has persuasively argued, corporate forms of management and accountability, such as performance contracts, competitive bidding, and the contracting out of services were introduced long before the Tories won the 1995 election. Moreover, it was NDP minister Dave Cooke who initiated the massive reduction of school boards; and it should come as no surprise that he played a particularly prominent role with the Education Improvement Commission, the body legislated by the PCs to oversee school board reduction. See Kari Dehli, "What Lies Beyond Ontario's Bill 160? The Politics and Practice of Education Markets," *Our Schools/Our Selves*, 9(4), #58, October 1998, pp. 59-78.

⁸ In an important and timely analysis, Robert MacDermid compared total cash donations to all three major parties during the 1995 election by individuals, unions, corporations, and conglomerations of corporations. The study went quite far in countering the myth that businesses tend to contribute equally to the Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties, arguing concisely that the perpetuation of the myth has been used to secure the claim that corporate donations are impartial, objective, and generally disinterested. Moreover, the essay argues that campaign finance laws extend a distinct advantage to big business and the party that big business chooses to support. As the shift toward popular politics gains a stronger foothold, election campaigns tend to get more expansive as parties begin vying for public support in the media, either through expensive public relations initiatives or a political version of *direct to consumer* advertising. See Robert MacDermid, "Funding the Common Sense Revolutionaries: Contributions to the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, 1995-97," *Centre for Social Justice*, www.socialjustic.org/PCPAPER.html.

⁹ Like Gramsci, Foucault differentiated between various types of intellectuals. He developed the notion of a 'specific' intellectual in the aftermath of 1968, recognising that the masses no longer needed the 'traditional' theorising intellectual in order to gain knowledge. 'Specific' intellectuals are professionals operating in their local area of competence and can come to help or hinder others (depending on context and belief) precisely because they are vested with a certain responsibility and power on the basis of their close association with so-called 'true discourses'. In this sense, specific intellectuals are complicit in the production and reproduction of power relations.

¹⁰ "Governing at a distance," is vital to neo-liberal modes of government. Concerned with the ability to manage a particular domain outside of the political sphere without destroying its existence or autonomy, governments enrol the participation of various influential allies, whose activities and calculations serve in their unity a more-or-less strategic purpose. 'Action at a distance' is the original idea of Bruno Latour, although my use borrows primarily from the application to liberal and neo-liberal modes of government by among others, Nikolas Rose. See Bruno Latour, *Science in Action*, (Open University Press: Milton Keynes UK, 1987); N. Rose, "Governing 'advanced' liberal democracies," in Barry et al., (eds.), *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, neo-*

liberalism and rationalities of government, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1996), pp. 37-64.

¹¹ See <http://educ.queensu.ca/rylcom/chpt1.html>.

¹² The copy of the RCL report used here is the 'short version' which can be found on the Ministry of Education's world-wide-web site. All page numbers will correspond to this version. www.gov.edu.on.ca.

¹³ The context of Husserl's diagnosis was the 'crisis' of modern European culture as a situation of dramatic choice between the heroism of reason or barbarism. For Husserl, the crisis results from scepticism and irrationalism as products of scientific rationality itself. In this sense, it is useful to invoke Paul Ricoeur's distinction between 'regional' and 'global' crises. Regional crises may apply to a single sphere of life or human activity – economics, politics, education, medicine, etc. Global crises, on the other hand imply events which are supposed to effect entire civilisations; viz. the 'crisis of modernity' or the nuclear arms crisis come to mind here. See Zdislaw Krasnodebski, "The Crisis of Modernity and the Life-World," *International Sociology*, 5(3), September 1990, pp. 247-65.

¹⁴ <http://educ.queensu.ca/rylcom/chpt1.html>.

¹⁵ Several qualifications are important here: while the Conservative government used the RCL report to argue that Ontario is like the 'caboose at the end of the Canadian education train,' the Commission found absolutely no evidence to this effect. Teachers, in fact, argued that while they and their students must always continue to learn and improve, there did not seem to be any agreement in a concern about competitiveness with other provinces. Moreover, the Tories reported that Ontario students finished dead last in an international mathematics and science competition. This simply was not true. The government published a list of only 13 countries that participated in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), but failed to report that 41 countries participated, with Ontario finishing ahead of countries like Sweden, Germany, New Zealand, England, Norway, Denmark, the United States, Scotland, and Spain, among others. Furthermore, for the government to report the results in the form of competitive ranking was both inaccurate and irresponsible. The goal of the TIMSS has never been to rank and compare countries and/or provinces. Countries like Belgium and Slovenia, for example, "did not meet the sampling requirements" of the TIMSS; they carefully selected which of their students would write the tests. Ontario's students were selected in an independent random sample.

¹⁶ This highlights two important aspects of the role of intellectuals in the construction of modern governmental projects. First, once enrolled, experts enters into a kind of double alliance: on the one hand, they ally themselves with political authorities, focusing upon their problems and problematising new issues by translating political concerns into a vocabulary accessible to others. On the other hand, they seek to form alliances with individuals themselves, translating in this instance, the worries and anxieties of teachers,

parents and students into a language that enables them to claim possession of 'truth.' Secondly, 'expertise nonetheless poses problems for political authority insofar as experts have the capacity to generate *enclosures*, circumscribed areas within which administrative power can be generated, intensified and defended. Of course, enclosures are only provisional, and the claims of experts can be easily contested and refuted, and normally is done so by the judgements and evaluations of other, newly enrolled experts. See A. Giddens, *The Nation State and Violence*, (Polity: Cambridge, 1985); N. Rose and P. Miller, "Political power beyond the state: problematics of government," *British Journal of Sociology*, 43(2), June 1992:173-205.

¹⁷ Not just in the news coverage, but in union press releases and internal communications documents with local members, many education activists and practitioners felt concerned with the 'totalising' nature of the Bill. This was reiterated on several occasions in formal and informal discussions with Hamilton-area teachers and school administrators.

¹⁸ As discussed in more detail in chapter 4, one week into the strike, the government sought an injunction, claiming the strike was causing 'irreparable harm' and 'inconvenience' to the economy and families. The injunction was subsequently denied and in his ruling, Justice Macpherson stated: "The number and sweep of fundamental education issues addressed in Bill 160 place it on a plane very close to the Charter. It is difficult to conceive of a subject matter more important to society than education, and it is difficult to imagine a law proposing more changes to education structure and policy than Bill 160." See for example, "Why a judge didn't stop the walkout," *Toronto Star*, 4 November 1997, A20.

¹⁹ There are both aspects of truth and mythology to the focus on individuals during so-called moments of crisis. For a discussion, see *Globe and Mail*, "The Harris Kremlin: Inside Ontario's revolutionary politburo," 1 November 1997, D1.

²⁰ I discuss the substantive issues in greater detail in chapter 4. For now, it will suffice to say that the strike coverage was often represented in terms of an opposition of not forces but individuals, viz. the Minister of Education and Premier, on the one hand, and the leaders of the Ontario Teachers Federation union, on the other.

²¹ For Poulantzas, the new form of the capitalist state was 'authoritarian statism', the basic developmental tendency of which comprised an intensification of state control over much of social and economic life, combined with a dramatic decline of the institutions of political democracy, e.g. cutting back those institutional apparatuses associated with the Welfare State, and the curtailment of so-called "formal" liberties. Moreover, he argued that four principal elements comprise authoritarian statism and its implications: a transfer of power from the legislature to the executive and the concentration of power within the latter, an increasing tendency toward collapsing the distinctions between the various branches of the state, the functional decline of political parties as leading forces in the organisation of hegemony, and the growth of parallel networks cross-cutting the formal organisation of the state. See N. Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, (Verso: London,

1978), pp. 203-4, 217-31; B. Jessop, *State Theory: Putting Capitalist States in their Place*, (Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park, PA, 1990), p. 66.

²² In particular, Althusser's thesis of ideological interpellation is limited by the assumption that ideology, and in particular the ideological state apparatuses, e.g. the media, must function to secure the conditions for reproducing relations of domination. The position is thus plagued by an unresolved contradiction between a perspective of domination as one-sided and reproductive, and the insistence that the apparatuses which reproduce ideology be a site of struggle, suggesting the possibility that domination might not in some instances be the outcome. See L. Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, (New Left Books: London, 1971). For critiques see N. Abercrombie et al., *The Dominant Ideology Thesis*, (Allen and Unwin: London, 1980); N. Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, (Polity: Oxford, 1992), pp. 86-91.

²³ I qualify this second point with the adjective 'potentially' to show that what the press did was to actually contribute to the "logic" of hegemony and not the achievement of hegemony, *per se*.

²⁴ The socio-cognitive perspective has gained great currency in studies of racism. See for instance, T. van Dijk, *Racism and the Press*, (Routledge: New York, 1994).

²⁵ The effect of this is significant. Most news discourse stems from the contributions of sources. As sources struggle and compete to insert their viewpoints into the news story, the selection and positioning of sources becomes crucial to the ideological and hegemonic effect. Accenting this is the growth of a massive electronic and digital newswire industry, where sources (generally wealthy corporations and governments) post news releases and media advisories for the use of journalists. Moreover, many of the agencies and firms that prepare these releases employ former newsroom editors and journalists, with a pre-established knowledge of what type of style and content journalists find appealing. Under deadlines and time constraints, it becomes extremely tempting for journalists to borrow *ad hoc* from the original release, and at times without critically investigating the merit of the release, or questioning its bias.

²⁶ I discuss this in more detail in the next chapter.

²⁷ "According to their imaginary representation, the masses drift somewhere between passivity and wild spontaneity, but always as a potential energy, a reservoir of the social and of social energy; today a mute referent, tomorrow, when they speak up and cease to be the 'silent majority,' a protagonist of history..." Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadows of the Silent Majorities*, (Semiotext(e): New York, 1983), p. 2.

²⁸ So-called 'hard' news reports consist of those that have been subject to the normal journalist routines of sourcing data, interviewing key sources, testing for bias and validity, etc. 'Soft' news, on the other hand, would consist of editorials, commentary, guest columns, etc.

²⁹ The themes and patterns were also consistent with the rest of the news coverage of the strike, i.e. those articles found on inside pages. However, since my study dealt only with the front-page coverage, I can speak specifically about these themes only.

³⁰ This can also work when the image is presented in the centre of the page, serving as the primary point for representing the *ideal*.

³¹ “Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of explanation but that of statement of fact...it organises a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things *appear* to mean something by themselves” (italics added). See R. Barthes, *Mythologies*, A. Lavers, trans. (Hill and Wang: New York, 1972), p. 143.

³² Interestingly, accompanying the second headline is a photograph of the teachers’ union representatives walking down a corridor, with grimacing faces and heads bowed to the ground. This contradiction in style – a passive headline indicating an ambiguous agent with a photograph of only one possible agent – was typical and I discuss this in more detail in the case study (chapter 4).

³³ Although at that time it was the *Financial Post*, Canada’s ‘business’ newspaper, the *National Post* has, since the period in question, emerged to contend with the *Globe* for both advertising and readership, and now claims to be the *only* truly national ‘quality’ newspaper.

³⁴ Over the fourteen-day period, the *Star* averaged seven articles and four editorials per day. In comparison, the *Sun* averaged five articles and five editorials (although articles were much shorter and less comprehensive), and the *Globe* averaged just more than three articles and two editorials per day. In addition, the latter paper is circulated only Monday through Saturday, while the former two newspapers are circulated daily.

³⁵ The *Star* also enjoys the largest audience-reach figures of the newspapers in this analysis, close to 2 million readers per day, and with significant numbers outside of the general Toronto area. Total estimated audience reach during the week is 1,284,800, on Saturdays 1,666,200, and Sunday 974,300. Source: NADbank 1998, Toronto CMA Adults 18+.

³⁶ On the merits of agenda-setting research see, E. Rogers, J. Dearing and D. Bregman, “The Anatomy of Agenda-Setting Research,” *Journal of Communication*, 43(2), 1993, pp. 68-84. Despite being the dominant theme on the news media and province’s ‘immediate’ agenda, a poll conducted by Environics Research Group showed that education was the second most important issue, next to unemployment, on the province’s larger political agenda. See *Globe and Mail*, “Strike likely over, anger not,” 8 November 1997, A1, A14.

³⁷ The action of speaking 'about' someone, regardless of what is said, is a sign of the power or impact that person can exercise over oneself. See G. Knight and J. O'Connor, "Social Democracy Meets the Press: Media Coverage of Industrial Relations Legislation," *Research in Political Sociology*, 7, 1995: 183-206.

³⁸ On the meaning and implications of 'enclosures', see footnote #14.

³⁹ They are privileged in the sense that the news media did pay attention to, and provide a voice for their viewpoints, although as I will show, they did so in a largely ideologically negative way.

⁴⁰ Although marginal news articles described the 'concerns' of some Tory MPPs constituencies there was no indication of even a soft rift in government circles. Even self-described "maverick" MPPs, like Hamilton-Wentworth's Toni Skarica, were relatively silent in terms of the news coverage.

⁴¹ First, it is an internal struggle, i.e. a struggle to entrench its principles within the Conservative Party, and is secondly an external struggle, i.e. it seeks to establish these principles within the political system as a whole. See N. Fairclough, "Political Discourse in the Media," in A. Bell and P. Garrett, *Approaches to Media Discourse*, (Blackwell: Oxford, 1998), pp. 142-62.

⁴² There was one marginal article about the opinions of concerned MPPs. See *Toronto Star*, "MPPs urge both sides to make concessions," 4 November 1997, A6.

⁴³ There was however, one slight exception to this pattern. When the government tried to seek a court injunction to end the strike, claiming "irreparable harm" and "inconvenience" to parents and businesses, news coverage tended to focus upon the deleterious effects of the strike on industry and the economy. In this instance, Finance Minister Ernie Eves, one of the party's more outspoken neo-liberal ideologues, was frequently quoted.

⁴⁴ It was surprising in so much that one would have expected the government to allow a supposed 'autonomous' agency, comprised of several former teachers and school administrators, to speak on its behalf and relieve the government of some of its press and public pressure. A possible explanation for this is exemplified by an off-the-cuff comment from Ontario NDP leader, Howard Hampton, who said that if the government sensed that it might be getting "propaganda" mileage from the strike, "it'll go on a while." (*Toronto Star*, "School's Out! Teachers' picket lines go up today at schools in Ontario," 27 October 1997, A1, A22).

⁴⁵ "The leadership of the teachers' federations have got to understand that part of their role is to provide leadership for change. And for the last 10 years they virtually opposed every reform, and that's not selling with the public." See *Toronto Sun*, "NDP's Cooke backs Tories: Says unions lack vision," 3 November 1997, p.4.

⁴⁶ The *Sun*'s most recent estimated audience reach numbers are 990,600 during the week, 535,500 on Saturdays and 1,026,300 on Sundays. Source: NADbank 1998, Toronto EMA Adults 18+.

⁴⁷ *Toronto Sun*, "Rebel hires help to cross lines," 26 October, p.5, and "Was walkout ever in doubt?" 27 October, p.4. In this respect, the *Sun* provides a kind of voluntary 'service' to its readers, and draws on the relationship between emotions and moral values that is central to popular journalism in general. The preoccupation with 'bad news' is often framed in terms of the concrete effects of political or outrageous personal disruptions on a society or individual's everyday life. Cf. M. Eide and G. Knight, "Service Journalism and the Problems of Everyday Life," *European Journal of Communication*, *****

⁴⁸ *The Globe and Mail*: estimated audience reach figures = 953,478 during the week and 1,184,859 on Saturdays.

⁴⁹ One might be surprised by the *Star*'s critical treatment of the teachers, given its traditionally social democratic approach to news coverage. Although it often takes up the cause of the weak and downtrodden, i.e. homeless people, single mothers, and victims of crime, it is consistently critical of organised labour and labour struggle. See E. Silva, *More Perishable than Lettuce or Tomatoes: Labour Law Reform and Toronto's Newspapers*, (Toronto: Fernwood, 1995).

⁵⁰ This mode of articulating the secondary agent's viewpoint was best shown on the second day of the strike, in a press statement by the Ontario Catholic bishops, who stated, carefully, that they supported the teachers "as teachers," but did not endorse the action they were taking. See *Toronto Star*, "DAY 1: Frustration and chaos all over," 28 October 1997, A1, A4.

⁵¹ For example, the bill aimed to decrease class preparation time for secondary school teachers, bringing it down to the 'national average', but would leave prep time as it stood for primary school teachers.

⁵² When questioned about the decision by three unions to end their strike (before the other two), Lennon remarked that differing views on strategy "are to be expected when you have five different organizations. It doesn't mean there aren't a lot of other issues where people will come together." See *Toronto Sun*, "Three teachers unions call it quits," 7 November, p.5.

⁵³ The exception to this rule was the *Sun*, which maintained heavy support in terms of over-representing the government POV throughout the entire strike.

⁵⁴ The beginning of the public relations victory has been traced to 21 October, six days before the strike. The *Toronto Star* reported that a brown envelope was slipped to an NDP representative in Queen's Park, revealing that education deputy minister, Veronica Lacey, was contracted by the Conservative government to chop \$667 million from the education budget for 1998. See *Toronto Star*, "Lessons from the teachers' strike," 9

November 1997, A1, A16. On the problematic of public opinion, see S. Herbst, "The meaning of public opinion: citizens' constructions of political reality," *Media, Culture and Society*, 15, 1993, pp. 437-54.

⁵⁵ The spot was first aired across every major provincial TV news outlet on the night of 27 October (Day 1) and was the most spectacular salvo of a \$1 million government advertising campaign in defence of the Bill.

⁵⁶ This notion of "rational" public debate borrows from Habermas' s work on public spheres. In describing the 'ideal' liberal bourgeois public sphere, he asserts that democracy functions when private individuals are free to engage in rational-critical debate, defined as non-facile criticism among private individuals about anything related to the public interest. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, (MIT Press: Cambridge), 1989.

⁵⁷ The notion of a "legitimate controversy" derives from Daniel Hallin, *The Uncensored War*, (University of California Press: Berkeley), 1989. Based on a model that privileges the popular opinion-shaping power of elite primary agents, it suggests that news media do not produce critical reports of items in either the "sphere of consensus" or the "sphere of deviance." Instead, Hallin argues that events become 'newsworthy' only when there is debate among elite opinion-makers, for example between opposing politicians, economists, and academics.

⁵⁸ See also *Globe and Mail*, "Ontario to seek court order today", 29 October 1997, A1, A10.

⁵⁹ This concern with labelling borrows from work on press portrayals of political unrest. See in particular, Graham Murdock, "Political deviance: the press presentation of a militant mass demonstration," in S. Cohen and J. Young (Eds.) *The Manufacture of News: A Reader*, (Sage Publications: Beverly Hills), 1973.

⁶⁰ Legally, the strike could only be deemed 'illegal' if the Labour Relations Board ruled that the teachers were in violation of their contracts. For this to happen, a formal complaint must be made by the teachers direct employers, in this case the school boards, or by a parent or student.

⁶¹ This law and order narrative was facilitated, in part, by an ambiguous OTF press release. Lennon was widely quoted on the first day of the strike as stating: "we call on the Minister to advise school boards that they close schools in the interest of the safety of children." See for example, *Globe and Mail*, "Teachers to walk out," 27 October 1997, A1, A6.

⁶² For example: "Johnson pleaded with teachers not to walk off the job but said he hoped that picket lines would be peaceful. 'I hope very much that nobody, nobody will be hurt...that's why I'm calling on the teachers to not follow through with their illegal

strike,' he said." *Toronto Star*, "School's out! Teachers' picket lines go up today at schools in Ontario," 27 October 1997, A1.

" 'Our young people are being caught in the middle,' Johnson said. 'They're losing valuable time. There's obviously concern about their safety should they try to go to school.'" *Toronto Star*, "Lawyers plan bid to stop walkout: Government gathers evidence against teachers," 29 October 1997, A1.

"Tempers flared on picket lines and at school board offices yesterday while high school students tried to teach some teachers a lesson about illegal strikes at a Queen's Park rally." *Toronto Sun*, "Tempers starting to rise," 30 October 1997, page 4.

"Ontario Education Minister Dave Johnson needed an eight-man police escort to get past militant secondary school unionists who were blocking the driveway of a Bell Canada building yesterday. 'Sic him, sic him!' screamed members of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation." *Toronto Sun*, 8 November 1997, page 4.

⁶³ At the same time, the image of working class revolt was softened, thereby made ambivalent, by several examples of children joining their teachers on picket lines, of parents baking muffins to take to the protests, etc.

⁶⁴ *Toronto Star*, "Ontario to judge: end the strike," 1 November 1997, A1, A15.

⁶⁵ This was the first sentence in one of the *Star's* front-page articles of day 2. Alternatively, the news could have stated that "the government's refusal to amend the more onerous features of Bill 160 created frustration and chaos for parents, teachers, and students." The sequence that *was* privileged tells us, in words, exactly how the event ought to be understood. See *Toronto Star*, "Day 1: Frustration and chaos all over," 28 October 1997, A1, A4.

⁶⁶ These were comments made by government lawyer, Leslie MacIntosh, on 31 October 1997, before Justice MacPherson, who countered that even if the strike is determined to be illegal, "there's nothing mocking or jeering or contemptuous in what they are doing." See *Toronto Star*, "Ontario to judge: end the strike," *op cit*.

⁶⁷ See *Globe and Mail*, "Toronto churches strike it rich: Day-care centres pay premium rent," 28 October 1997, A10.

⁶⁸ While private tutoring companies enjoyed immediate success, in terms of servicing the needs of students 'locked out' of classrooms during the strike, the long-term growth attests to the possible success of the government's objective of de-legitimizing public education.

⁶⁹ For example, law firm McMillan Binch set up a day care facility in its office, while Mitel Corporation in Ottawa formed an on-site classroom and used its staff as teachers of

the older children of employees. See *Globe and Mail*, "Harris wants teachers back in week: Ontario Premier pledges to end shutdown of education system with a court injunction," 28 October 1997, A1, A7.

⁷⁰ See *Toronto Star*, "Teachers' strike: No end in sight," 4 November 1997, A1, A4.

⁷¹ For example: *Toronto Sun*, "Then there was one: Fourth teachers union decides to call off strike," 9 November 1997, p. 4; *Globe and Mail*, "Classrooms back in business," 10 November 1997, A1, A6.

⁷² The decision of the first three unions to end the strike came the day after an estimated 15,000 teachers and their supporters participated in a large-scale rally at Queen's Park, the provincial legislature. The decision of the first three unions led to a great deal of speculation. Members who opposed the decision claimed that the leadership did not consult its members and in doing so not only sold out their colleagues in the other unions, but the union rank and file themselves. Bitter about this supposed backlash from union membership, the union leaders claimed that the decision was made after a representative sample of rank and file had been polled by telephone.

⁷³ *Toronto Star*, "It's back to school," 7 November 1997, A1.

⁷⁴ *Toronto Star*, "Back to school? Not so fast, some teachers warn," 8 November 1997, A1, A9.

⁷⁵ For example: *Toronto Sun*, "Holdout teachers 'betrayed' as allies return to job," 8 November 1997, p.5.

⁷⁶ See *Toronto Star*, "Teachers ponder ending walkout," 5 November 1997, A1, A4.

⁷⁷ See for example the headline on the front-page of the *Sun* from 8 November 1997: "Crunch time for holdout unions: 59,000 teachers in limbo as leaders decide if strike continues."

⁷⁸ Selecting a news photograph from the *Globe* was difficult. This is due in large part to this newspaper's more serious, high brow approach to journalism – it tends to offer more in the way of textual analysis, at the expense of impressive visual images and bold captions. Whereas nearly all of the *Sun* and *Star*'s articles were accompanied by images of the strike, most of the *Globe*'s articles were purely textual.

⁷⁹ See *Toronto Sun*, "Teachers blockade Johnson," op. cit.

⁸⁰ News editors choose photographs, which depict violence in political demonstrations for the simple reason that violence represents conflict. It grips the reader's interest, thereby interpellating her, as someone worried or afraid of being hurt, as an individual concerned about the safety of her child, or as a teacher concerned about her own physical safety.

The problem of course is that political violence of this nature is 'unusual' because it signifies the world of politics as it *ought not to be*.

⁸¹ "Peter could not understand why, but Wendy understood; and she was just slightly disappointed when he admitted that he came to the nursery window not to see her but to listen to stories. 'You see, (said Peter) I don't know any stories. None of the lost boys know any stories.' 'How perfectly awful,' Wendy said." J.M. Barrie, *Peter Pan*, (Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1950), p. 40.

⁸² On the relationship between Gramsci and Foucault, see Barry Smart, "The Politics of Truth and the Problem of Hegemony," in David Couzens Hoy, ed. *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, (Blackwell: Oxford, 1986), pp. 157-73; W.K. Carroll and R.S. Ratner, "Master Frames and Counter-Hegemony: Political Sensibilities in Contemporary Social Movements," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 33.4 November 1986, pp. 407-35.

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