Beyond Consensus?: New Zealand Journalists and the Appeal of ‘Professionalism’ as a Model for Occupational Reform

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Mass Communication in the University of Canterbury by Nadia Elsaka

University of Canterbury 2004
ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the appeal of 'professionalism' to New Zealand journalists as an occupational ideal, as a collective strategy to advance their interests, and as a model of internal reform. As an explicit rejection of the 'traits based' analyses of journalistic professionalism drawn from the sociology of professions, this thesis applies an alternative approach which explores the changing nature of journalists' conceptions of professionalism over time, as well as the structures through which they have been conveyed. In doing so, this thesis offers insight into the historical development of the journalistic occupation, as well as its contemporary configuration.

This thesis shows that during the post-war period, the representative organisation of New Zealand journalists, the New Zealand Journalists' Association (NZJA) appealed to the nature and importance of journalistic work to sustain journalists' claims to professionalism. NZJA leaders argued that the status of journalists did not reflect the importance of journalistic work to society relative to that of the 'accepted professions'. 'Professionalism' thus provided journalists a model for the reform of their occupation's organisation, educational, and self-regulatory structures during the twentieth century.

However, the appeal of professionalism among New Zealand journalists has been tempered by the presence of conflicting occupational ideals and aspirations among members of the occupation, and the wider journalism industry. It is concluded that future reform initiatives will inevitably prove ineffectual unless the historical forces that have undermined contemporary New Zealand journalism's professional culture are acknowledged. A rethinking of the concept of 'journalistic professionalism' that focuses less on the presence or absence of certain professional traits, and more on their uses to promote journalists' professional consciousness and the quality of journalism, is a necessary starting point for future reform.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research would not have been possible without the support of various individuals and institutions. For this reason, I gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the University of Canterbury through the provision of a Doctoral Scholarship. I also wish to express my gratitude to the staff of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism for their support during the course of my post-graduate student 'career', with special thanks to Jim Tully. This research could not have been completed had there not been someone to inspire the self-confidence to do so. Jim has performed this role especially well.

I also appreciate the academic assistance, guidance, and provision of difficult-to-locate publications from various other individuals including Elizabeth Tully and Geoff Fougere (University of Canterbury); Mark Hampton (Wesleyan College, USA); Richard Flory (Biola University, California); Epp Lauk (University of Tartu, Estonia); Richard Keeble (City University, London); Richard Kaplan (University of Illinois, USA); Michael Schudson (University of California, San Diego); Jörg Requate (Bielefeld University, Germany); and Mike Saks (University of Lincoln, UK).

Nicola Frean (Special Materials Librarian at Victoria University, Wellington) also deserves special mention for facilitating my data collection for this research. Thanks to Maaike for her help with proofreading and to Jason also for his editing assistance, but mostly for his support and tolerance in enduring Me and My Thesis over the last three years.

I dedicate this thesis to the ‘old hands’ who have provided me with invaluable insights into the history of New Zealand journalism, and to other New Zealand journalists, past and present, whose occupation has provided me with such an engaging research topic.
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronyms and Abbreviations</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PART ONE**

**Theorising ‘Professionalism’**

**One**

**Introduction to the Research**

1.1 Introduction: The case for investigation 1
1.2 Research rationale 2
1.3 Theoretical approach 5
1.4 Objectives and scope of the research 14
1.5 Structure of the thesis 18
1.6 Methods 25
1.7 Limitations of the study 27
1.8 Conclusion 27

**Two**

**Theorising ‘Professionalism’ and Journalism: A Literature Review**

2.1 Introduction 29
2.2 The sociology of professions: The taxonomic and ‘trait’ approaches 31
2.3 The influence of traits perspectives on journalism research 35
2.4 Symbolic Interactionist perspectives on professionalism 40
2.5 Power perspectives on professionalism 42
2.6 From structures to discourse: Macro-level analyses of the development of journalism as an occupation 54
2.7 Theorising on objectivity as ‘professional ideology’ 57
2.8 Forecasts on the future of professions 70
2.9 Conclusion 73
# PART TWO

**Making an Occupation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three</th>
<th>The Emergence of the Journalistic Occupation in New Zealand</th>
<th>80</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>The political context of nineteenth century journalism</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Post-1860 transformations in the New Zealand press</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>The reconstruction of the political role of New Zealand newspapers: Understanding the rise of ‘independent’ journalism</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>The rise of the journalistic occupation: The missing analytical link?</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Four**

*Organising Journalists: Debating the Nature and Benefits of ‘Professionalism’*

| 4.1   | Introduction                                              | 102|
| 4.2   | Making an occupation: The New Zealand Institute of Journalists | 103|
| 4.3   | ‘To close or not to close?’: Early attitudes toward occupational closure | 109|
| 4.4   | An organisation for the working journalist: The formation of the Canterbury Journalists’ Union | 116|
| 4.5   | The development of the New Zealand Journalists’ Association | 121|
| 4.6   | Renewed debate over controlling entry: Registration for journalists? | 123|
| 4.7   | Re-organising along ‘professional lines’: A professional institute of journalists? | 127|
| 4.8   | The failure of the professional institute plan            | 145|
| 4.9   | Conclusion                                                | 148|

# PART THREE

**Creating a ‘Professional Infrastructure’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five</th>
<th>‘Making Journalists’: The Evolution of Journalism Education in NZ</th>
<th>150</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>The NZJA and the education of journalists</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Early attitudes toward the education of journalists in New Zealand: A journalist is ‘born, not made’</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>The NZJA’s interests in formal education and qualifications for journalists</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>The quest for a ‘responsible journalism school’: The NZJA’s campaign for a revised Diploma in Journalism</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.4 The decline of ‘professionalism’ as occupational ideal and strategy for advancement 304
8.5 Conclusion: Towards reforming and reviving New Zealand journalism’s professional culture 315

Nine Conclusions and Implications of the Research 318
9.1 Introduction 318
9.2 Summary of thesis 319
9.3 Addressing the ‘why bother, we’re not a profession’ mentality 334
9.4 Beyond Consensus?: Remaking journalists’ occupational consciousness 339
9.5 Suggestions for further research 342
9.6 Conclusion 344

Appendices 347
Appendix A Journalism Codes of Ethics Referred to in this Thesis 347
Appendix B Significant Newspaper Industry Developments 361

References 367
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABJ</td>
<td>Association of Broadcasting Journalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJA</td>
<td>Australian Journalists’ Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APC</td>
<td>Australian Press Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APN</td>
<td>Australian Provincial Newspapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUT</td>
<td>Auckland University of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPC</td>
<td>British Press Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSA</td>
<td>Broadcasting Standards Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CABS</td>
<td>Current Affairs Broadcasting Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CJU</td>
<td>Canterbury Journalists’ Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPU</td>
<td>Commonwealth Press Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTU</td>
<td>Council of Trade Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DJU</td>
<td>Dunedin Journalists’ Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>Employment Contracts Act (1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERA</td>
<td>Employment Relations Act (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPMU</td>
<td>Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FoL</td>
<td>Federation of Labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICAA</td>
<td>Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act (1900)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFJ</td>
<td>International Federation of Journalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INL</td>
<td>Independent Newspapers Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IoJ</td>
<td>(British) Institute of Journalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAGPRO</td>
<td>Journalists and Graphic Process Workers’ Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAA</td>
<td>(Australian) Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NJU</td>
<td>Northern Journalists’ Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPA</td>
<td>Newspaper Proprietors’ Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPC</td>
<td>Newspaper Publishers’ Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUJ</td>
<td>National Press Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCTJ</td>
<td>(British) National Council for the Training of Journalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZBC</td>
<td>New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZIJ</td>
<td>New Zealand Institute of Journalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZJA</td>
<td>New Zealand Journalists’ Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZJTB</td>
<td>New Zealand Journalists’ Training Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZJTC</td>
<td>New Zealand Journalists’ Training Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZJTO</td>
<td>New Zealand Journalists’ Training Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZJU</td>
<td>New Zealand Journalists’ Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZPA</td>
<td>New Zealand Press Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZPC</td>
<td>New Zealand Press Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZPD</td>
<td>New Zealand Parliamentary Debates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZQA</td>
<td>New Zealand Qualifications Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCC</td>
<td>(British) Press Complaints Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPMU</td>
<td>Printing, Packaging and Media Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPTA</td>
<td>Post-Primary Teachers’ Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Public Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSA</td>
<td>Public Service Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNZ</td>
<td>Radio New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTVJS</td>
<td>(New Zealand) Radio and Television Journalists’ Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SoP</td>
<td>Statement of Principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TVNZ</td>
<td>Television New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPA</td>
<td>United Press Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W&amp;H</td>
<td>Wilson and Horton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WJU</td>
<td>Wellington Journalists’ Union</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART ONE

Theorising ‘Professionalism’
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the research

... It is necessary to try to understand how professionalism as a normative value system and ideology is now being increasingly used in modern organizations, and other institutions and places of work, as a mechanism to facilitate and promote occupational change. Why and in what ways have a set of work practices and relations, that historically have characterised medicine and law in Anglo-American societies, resonated first with engineers, accountants and teachers, and now with pharmacists, social workers, care assistants, computer experts and law enforcement agencies in different social systems around the world?¹

1.1 Introduction: The case for investigation

If one were to add the occupation of journalists to this schema of occupations, the above statement would offer a compelling objective for the present research. After the context to New Zealand, and extend the scope to an historical analysis beginning from the late nineteenth century, when the appeal of professionalism as an occupational identity for New Zealand journalists can first be traced, and this excerpt neatly captures the intentions of this thesis. This thesis explores the appeal of professionalism to journalists as a normative value system, ideology, and basis for occupational reform. As such, the above excerpt might be paraphrased simply as ‘what has been the appeal of professionalism to New Zealand journalists, how has this occupational ideal been perceived and pursued, and how has it shifted over time?’ as the central questions that this thesis aims to address.

Several facets of journalists’ social role and their work have lent support to journalists’ claims to professionalism since the late nineteenth century when the occupation first coalesced in New Zealand. Journalists’ claims to ‘professionalism’ are founded on the notion that journalists serve a public interest that transcends the commercial role of the media. Journalists claim to be agents of democracy, providers of public information and watchdogs of the public interest.² As this thesis explores, throughout the history of New Zealand journalism, journalists’ understandings of their societal role have shaped both their conceptions of, and rationale for

"professionalism". This thesis is concerned with how journalists’ understandings of 'professionalism' have evolved from the late nineteenth century to the present day, and how they have influenced their efforts to improve their occupation by applying internal standards and creating a 'professional infrastructure' to fit their perceived role and responsibilities. It examines New Zealand journalists’ claims to professionalism, and the impact these have had on the organisational and regulatory structures governing New Zealand journalism.

History as a tool for understanding the present

In contemporary New Zealand journalism, there are indications that journalists’ claims to 'professionalism' are reflected in practice; namely, in the organisational and regulatory arrangements of the occupation. The active role of journalists in the formalisation of journalism training and the development of self-regulation and ethical codes certainly suggest an attempt to establish a body of theory and knowledge specific to journalism,³ and to enhance and promote professional standards through such structures. However, these developments as they have unfolded in the New Zealand context remain relatively unexplored. In particular, in-depth research has yet to be undertaken into how the current 'professional infrastructure' of New Zealand journalism evolved, and the extent to which it has been underpinned by a drive for 'professionalism' among New Zealand journalists. This thesis thus represents an attempt to fill in some such gaps in understanding of the evolution of New Zealand journalism. Aiming to understand the 'institutional indicators' of professionalism in terms of their motivations, this thesis investigates the origins and development of organisational, educational and regulatory structures for New Zealand journalists. What New Zealand journalists have conceived of as 'professionalism' over the twentieth century, and how they have pursued this ambition are the central research questions that this thesis aims to answer.

1.2 Research rationale

The lack of historical research in the field of media and journalism studies has been increasingly noted within the field.⁴ This thesis thus begins from the premise that

---

⁴ See, for example, Hampton (2001); Curran (1991); and Negrine (1994).
to understand the present, we need to understand the past. As an overarching theme, this thesis aims to uncover what the history of New Zealand journalism, and the occupation's pursuit of professionalism, reveals about the present state of the occupation. At the turn of the twenty-first century, there are two notable characteristics of New Zealand journalism's 'professional culture' which await investigation. Firstly, there is a comparative absence of an active professional culture where the professional and ethical issues of everyday journalistic practice are deliberated on a regular and ongoing basis amongst practitioners. This limitation is particularly apparent when New Zealand journalism is compared with that of the United States, as the following extract suggests.

The philosophy and principles of journalism are not popular debating points in Westminster democracies. In the United States, where the constitutional principle of freedom of speech is highly valued and practical journalism is backed up by academic tradition, they are better debated ... New Zealand journalism has been terribly slow to pick up on the debates and developments. There are a number of possible reasons for this. We tend to look towards Britain rather than the United States for our models, which means we miss out on the vitality that is generated by the value placed by that society on freedom of speech and the academic tradition that has built up around it.\(^5\)

As explored further in this thesis, these remarks indicate that the comparatively active 'professional culture' of United States' journalism can be largely attributed to the first amendment guarantee of press freedom. The constitutional protection afforded to press freedom in the United States has evidently fostered a more 'professionally conscious' media, which in turn, has been sustained by active professional associations of journalists since the nineteenth century. In other words, United States journalism has the legislative and organisational frameworks to support the active professional culture that New Zealand journalism evidently lacks. This observation is explored further in this thesis.

A related characteristic of New Zealand journalism which this thesis also aims to shed some light upon is a relative lack of discourse and rigorous debate (both external, but especially internal to the journalistic environment) about the professional culture and practises of the New Zealand media. This feature of New Zealand journalism contrasts with the American situation where, as Jaehnig notes, "[p]ublic debates about the values and ethics of the press have taken place in the United States

periodically since the closing decades of the nineteenth century." However, in New Zealand the comparative lack of an active professional culture within journalism, and lack of debate about the practices of the media remain salient features of New Zealand journalism into the twenty-first century. These two characteristics of contemporary New Zealand journalism provide a rationale for this research and the topic it pursues, and are considered further into this thesis.

**Considering the idiosyncrasies of New Zealand journalism**

The observable differences between American and New Zealand journalism certainly give credence to the claim that “[j]ournalism can develop in rather different directions, dependant upon political, legal, cultural and historical settings”. Indeed, while New Zealand journalism shares a common bloodline with that of comparable countries like the United States, Australia, and more directly Britain, in the philosophy surrounding the democratic ideals of journalism, and the ‘watchdogging’ of governing authorities, there are some principal differences between the journalism of the four countries. New Zealand journalism has evolved as a curious mix of United States and British journalism, both historically and in its contemporary form. Having developed from the emerging commercial press of Britain, New Zealand’s colonial press adopted the European practice of aligning a newspaper with a political party or cause, as chapter three illustrates further. Subsequent relations between press and government have evolved in a similar manner to Britain in demonstrating a preference for an ‘unwritten’ commitment to ideals of press freedom.

However, in its contemporary form, New Zealand journalism shares more in common with that of the United States in terms of the nature of its newspaper market. Like the United States, the British distinction between ‘quality’ newspapers for ‘upmarket’ audiences and ‘popular’ papers with mass appeal is a distinction not generally drawn in New Zealand. Although there are similarities between New Zealand and American journalism, like Australia, the primary model for most of New

---

7 Lauk (2001: 2).
9 As Henningham (1995: 78) notes, while ‘supermarket tabloids’ such as the Christian Science Monitor do exist in the United States, they comprise less than 2% of US newspaper titles.
10 These features of the British and United States press respectively are discussed further in Jaehnig (1998: 99).
Zealand's journalism history has been Britain. These various factors each have implications for the manner in which professionalism has been both perceived and pursued in a given country. While there may be trends concerning the development of journalism across comparable countries, the idiosyncrasies of the country concerned need to be taken into account. As such, this thesis explores how the changing political, economic and social conditions in which New Zealand journalists have operated during the twentieth century have influenced their conceptions of 'professionalism'. It aims to explore the conditions both internal and external to the journalistic environment that have influenced journalists' desire to attain professional recognition, as well as the structures through which they have promoted their professional ideal(s).

1.3 Theoretical Approach

Unlike much of the research on journalistic professionalism that has dominated the field in the past, this thesis is not directly concerned with the question of whether journalism is, or is not 'a profession'. According to some theorists, this debate has impeded serious investigation into how and why the journalistic occupation has sought professionalism. For reasons explored further below, this thesis wholeheartedly supports this contention. As chapter two illustrates further, journalism theorists have relied heavily on the functionalist or 'trait approach' drawn from the sociology of the professions to assess journalism's claims to professionalism. This body of work reflects a preoccupation with certain prescribed 'professional traits' like government licensing, abstract knowledge, and collective organisation. By this approach, the development of 'professionalism' is treated as a linear and arbitrary process, and simply as a matter of accumulating more and more of these 'professional traits'.

The following characterisation is typical of this approach. In answer to the question 'is journalism a profession?', Merrill concludes that

[o]bviously it is not, although it has some of a profession's characteristics. There is no direct relationship between the journalist and his[sic] client. There is, in journalism, no minimum entrance requirements; anybody can be a journalist who can get himself[sic] hired - experience or no experience, degree or no degree ... No journalist is licensed, thereby giving the

---

'profession' some kind of control over him[sic]. There are no professional standards commonly agreed upon, and followed by journalists. Journalists do not share in common a 'high degree of generalized and systematic knowledge'. Journalists do not claim for themselves the exclusive right to practice the arts (all borrowed from other disciplines) of their trade. And finally, journalists ... do not form a 'homogeneous community'.

Merrill's conclusions illustrate the taxonomic/functionalist tendency to rely on generic definitions of 'professionalism', which are assumed to apply to all occupations irrespective of place or time. This thesis submits that in doing so, insufficient attention has been paid to the idiosyncrasies of the occupation under study, and how these variations might impact upon the particular definitions of 'professionalism' the occupation aspires to, and the ways these are conveyed publicly. As chapter two argues, the fact that journalism lacks certain 'professional traits' can perhaps be better understood not as a matter of failing to constitute 'a profession', but rather that this means of defining 'professionalism' fails to capture the nature of journalistic professionalism itself. To overcome the limitations of previous work on journalistic professionalism, researchers must therefore move beyond the taxonomic approaches to evolve an alternative theoretical framework, which this thesis aims to do in its study of New Zealand journalism.

A second limitation of the mainstream approaches to journalistic professionalism derived from the sociology of professions is their tendency to focus on journalism's 'have nots'. This thesis argues that the occupation's so-called 'failures' at creating a professional infrastructure need to be seen as just as important as its 'successes'. The fact that journalists may lack compulsory governmental licensing, a body of abstract 'esoteric' knowledge and certain other arbitrary criterion emphasised in the traditional approaches is irrelevant. Regardless of their success or failure, the various efforts of the journalistic occupation to establish such professional structures over time are significant. This is because such efforts to convey professionalism offer insight into the wider dynamics surrounding the pursuit of professionalism, and the complexities of the occupation's evolution that would otherwise be left unexplored. Hence, this thesis begins with the assumption that little understanding of the evolution of journalism as an occupation can be gained from simply dismissing journalism as 'a profession' because it has failed to cultivate

13 Merrill (1988: 40).
certain ‘professional traits’. It is submitted here that a more comprehensive analysis is
constituted by exploring the efforts of journalists to convey ‘professionalism’ in the
face of certain impediments, and therefore understand why the occupation might have
failed to adopt particular ‘professional trappings’.

Indeed, the limitations of the taxonomic approaches have led many theorists to
dismiss their usefulness as a means of understanding the nature and development of
journalistic professionalism. In line with recent developments in the sociology of
professions, some journalism researchers are beginning to question the validity of the
traits-oriented approaches to professionalism. As chapter two highlights further, such
theorists urge a departure in research focus from whether journalism displays certain
criteria of professionalism, to the processes through which the occupation has sought
‘professionalism’ and the particular forces underpinning this ambition. Some
journalism theorists have preferred to see so-called ‘professional traits’ like a
commitment to public service and ethical codes not as arbitrary features of
professionalism, but rather as claims or strategies employed in the pursuit of
professional recognition. This understanding is central to what are widely known as
the ‘power approaches’ to professionalism.

The limitations of a ‘commercial conspiracy’ approach to journalistic
professionalism

Indeed, the influence of the ‘power approaches’ is reflected in more recent
journalism research. However, this orientation is not without its own problems.
Considered further in chapter two of this thesis, the dominant interpretation among
several British and United States theorists is that ‘journalistic professionalism’ has its
roots in the late nineteenth century as a commercial strategy led by newspaper owners
as a means of legitimating the developing commercial press. A common assumption
is that newspaper publishers were the key initiators of, or actors in, this process.14
This school of thought maintains that the notion of professionalism was “a major
ideological weapon of press management in the separation of newsworkers from
fellow employees and the public”.15 In the context of United States journalism in the
late nineteenth century, it has been argued that professionalism was a ‘myth’ carefully
constructed by press ownership to isolate and defeat union activities in the wake of

---

mounting pressures from organised labour.\textsuperscript{16} Such accounts see professionalism as a strategy employed by media owners for separating shared labour interests of printers and editorial workers by providing promises of social status and professional independence.\textsuperscript{17} McChesney’s views are typical of this approach:

Professional journalism emerged not to the opposition of most media owners, but to the contrary, with their active sponsorship ... It made sense for media owners to grant some autonomy to journalists because it gave their product more credibility and worked to enhance their commercial prospects.\textsuperscript{18}

By such accounts, the development of professionalism in journalism is treated as a ‘conspiracy’ lead by media owners/publishers and is correlated to the economic interests of the developing commercial press, which publishers sought to endow with professional rationalisations. According to Kaul, “the professionalization of journalism, with its ‘public service’ ethos, was an adaptation maneuver\textsuperscript{sic} to insulate newspaper owners/publishers against profit-threatening commercial crises, class conflicts, and public disenchantment with the press”.\textsuperscript{19} Similarly, Nerone and Barnhurst maintain that the rhetoric of professionalism was the response of United States’ newspaper publishers to a ‘crisis of public confidence’ in the credibility of the commercial press. Professionalism represented a ‘settlement’ between newspaper publishers and their employees which served as a measure of control over journalists whilst appeasing their demands for upward mobility and increased status.

The public anxiety over the control of news intersected with the ambitions of reporters to achieve a voice and persona as well as higher pay and more autonomy. A settlement was brokered, in which publishers, to fend off reform movements, allowed editors and reporters more independence, albeit disciplined by objectivity. This settlement interacted with the rise of schools of journalism at the beginning of the twentieth century, a development that came partly from a public interest in improving the quality of journalism and an industry in improving the image of the news business.\textsuperscript{20}

While avoiding some of the key problems of the ‘traits approaches’ to professionalism, the ‘commercial conspiracy’ approach has limitations of its own. This perspective shares with the ‘traits approach’ the tendency to focus on the ‘outcomes’ of professionalism. While the ‘traits approach’ is overly concerned with

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid: 215.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid: 215.
\textsuperscript{18} McChesney (2003: 307).
\textsuperscript{19} Kaul (1986: 48).
\textsuperscript{20} Nerone and Barnhurst (2003: 443).
what 'professional traits' journalism is lacking, the commercial conspiracy accounts reduce journalists' professional infrastructure and ideals to a simple matter of newspaper economics. To explain journalism's professional ambitions in terms of a 'commercial conspiracy' fails to acknowledge the wider processes that have influenced the occupation's practitioners' attempts to convey professionalism, and the institutional preconditions for their 'successes'. Ultimately, the question 'what interests did journalists themselves have in professionalism' is largely overlooked.

Indeed, the 'commercial conspiracy' accounts reflect what Hardt and Brennen criticise as the failure to consider "... the rank and file and their contribution to the social and political empowerment of contemporary media industries". Because such accounts treat 'professionalism' as a construction of commercially-motivated newspaper owners, they position journalists as 'dupes' in the process. 'Professionalism' is treated as an insidious creation of media owners, devised not only as a means by which to legitimate the developing commercial press, but as a method of strategically subordinating working journalists, whilst offering them a false sense of autonomy and discretion in the performance of their work.

**Focusing on journalists as social and political actors**

As Delano observes, "[f]ew academics have ever shown an interest in the significance of journalists as social and political actors". In taking up this challenge, this thesis disputes the 'commercial conspiracy' assumption by showing how New Zealand journalists have been actively involved as key actors in the pursuit of professionalism. It aims to illustrate 'professionalism' as an ambition of journalists who, during the twentieth century, both actively constructed and sought professionalism as an occupational identity, a set of ideals and practices governing their work, and as a strategy to advance their various interests. This thesis aims to show that while media owners/publishers have certainly not been absent from this picture (their own agendas have naturally had a bearing on the realisation of journalists' professional ambitions), journalists have been the dominant actors in the development of professionalism in New Zealand journalism. Although journalists'

---

22 See Birkhead (1982; 1986).
23 See, for example, Solowski (1989: 226); Elliot (1972: 149-50).
motivations have varied over time, this thesis aims to illustrate that in New Zealand at least, journalistic professionalism cannot be explained simply as an issue of newspaper economics.

Bromley also notes that “in the extensive and expanding body of literature addressing journalism which has been produced over the past forty years journalists appear only rarely as workers”. As such, the purpose of this thesis is to trace the efforts of journalists as a collective of workers to attain their professional ideals. It explores the ideals to which they have aspired, and the interactions between the various roles occupied by journalists as professionals, as workers, as employees and as citizens which have influenced both their professional ideals and their realisation. It is argued that the concept of professionalism is therefore one that requires investigation in relation to the idiosyncrasies of the occupation under investigation.

Furthermore, as chapter two explains in further detail, professionalism is a concept that is best treated as highly dependent upon such variables as culture, historical context and the occupational group in question. Although this thesis takes the concept of ‘journalistic professionalism’ to denote the standardisation of journalistic ideals, values and standards through the development of a ‘professional infrastructure’, including formal, systematic journalism education, self-regulatory systems and ethical codes, it explicitly rejects the validity of a static definition of professionalism. Rather, this definition has been tentatively posed following investigation into the case of New Zealand journalism over the twentieth century in order to give a sense of direction of this thesis to the reader.

The focus of this research is not solely on the ‘outcomes’ of an arbitrary ‘professionalisation process’, but on the wider forces and processes that have underpinned and influenced journalists’ attempts to convey ‘professionalism’, the professional ideals they have aspired to, and the ways these have been conveyed publicly. This thesis treats the development of such structures as journalism education programmes, self-regulatory structures, and codes of ethics as indicators of journalists’ on-going attempts to gain professional recognition rather than the ‘end products’ of a process of ‘professionalisation’. This thesis also maintains that journalists’ claims to professionalism require continual legitimation by journalists

themselves. Given that the organisational and regulatory developments under study have evolved out of the pursuit of ‘professionalism’ by journalists, this thesis argues that they must function as such in practice. For journalists, whose ‘professional domain’ is the public eye (and ‘ear’), ‘professionalism’ must not only be done, but also be seen publicly to be done. Above all, if journalists wish to establish and sustain their credentials as ‘professionals’, they must be able to sustain public trust.\textsuperscript{27} For their claims to serve the public to be legitimated, journalists must be (and be seen to be) accountable to the public. This is an argument taken up further into this thesis that is informed by key themes in media ethics.

**Looking beyond the sociology of professions: The contribution of media ethics to the ‘professionalism’ debate**

In framing a theoretical approach to explore the appeal of ‘professionalism’ to New Zealand journalists, additional insight is gained by looking beyond the sociology of the professions. Media ethicists have much to offer by encouraging researchers not only to look beyond the traditional traits understandings of professionalism, but to treat journalism’s claims to professionalism as something that require on-going analysis to determine whether they are actually held up in practice. Rather than focussing on the presence or absence of certain organisational and structural characteristics, Belsey and Chadwick advocate a broader view of professionalism, suggesting that the concept is a great deal less static than traditional accounts imply.

The nature of professionalism is both vague and flexible ... What is important is not a precise definition of a profession, which is bound to be too restricted to apply to the variety of groups that have some fair claim to be professional these days, but rather the quality of the conduct of members of these groups whether it be in medicine or journalism, so long as it has a potential for good or harm. What is important is that the activity that wishes to call itself professional be conducted on an ethical basis and that its practitioners be accountable for their actions.\textsuperscript{28}

Such an approach highlights the value of treating journalism’s ‘professional infrastructure’ not as the ‘end’ of the development of professionalism, but rather as a feature of the occupation’s evolution that requires ongoing legitimation. In this sense, the crux of journalistic professionalism is accountability to the public, an issue that

\textsuperscript{27} Morgan (2000: 10).
\textsuperscript{28} Belsey and Chadwick (1992: 12).
this thesis aims to incorporate. This perspective is compatible with the normative media theory of social responsibility theory's conception of 'professionalism', which also assists in framing a theoretical approach for the present research.

Since the post-war period, the 'social responsibility theory' has had a major impact on the ethical frameworks of the media in liberal democracies. As such, its contribution to the 'professionalism' debate is arguably a significant one. The social responsibility theory originated from the report of the United States 'Hutchins Commission' (as it is widely known), established in the 1940s to consider the impact of social, economic, and technological changes that were affecting United States' journalism.29 The commission's report provided the impetus for the development of the theory of 'social responsibility', a normative paradigm concerning the role and responsibilities of the media. Its core prescription was that the media must "reconcile notions of freedom and independence with obligation".30

The social responsibility's conceptualisation of journalistic 'professionalism' is insightful for the present study. In reconciling notions of freedom with responsibility, autonomy with accountability, the Hutchins Commission urged the media to adopt a 'professional spirit', and to "accept responsibility for the services rendered by the profession as a whole".31 The commission believed that central to journalistic 'professionalism' was the notion of 'institutionalised responsibility'. Irrespective of whether journalism was seen to exhibit the traditional structural and organisational elements of professionalism, its public service role was the key requisite for 'professional responsibility'. As the Hutchins Commission declared:

A profession is a group organized to perform a public service ... The group seeks to perform its service and to maintain the standards of the service even though more money could be made in ways that would endanger the quality of the work ... The difficulties in the way of the formal organization of the press into a profession are perhaps insurmountable. But, keeping in mind the inescapable individual responsibility, society should see to it that every effort is made to develop a more institutionalized or communal responsibility.32

Accordingly, the press was urged to ensure collectively that high standards of performance are maintained through the internal monitoring of ethical standards. As the commission wrote,

32 Ibid: 76-78.
... the main positive energy for the improvement of press achievement must come from the issuers. Although the standards of press performance arise as much from the public situation and need as from the conscious goals of the press, these standards must be administered by the press itself ... and for the correction of abuses the maxim holds that self-correction is better than outside correction, so long as self-correction holds out a reasonable and realistic hope, as distinct from lip-service to piously framed paper codes.33

These observations remain valid in a contemporary media landscape as do the social responsibility theory's observations about the 'dual-status' of journalism in democratic societies. Indeed, the ambiguous nature of journalism compounded the debate about journalism's professional status both before and after the social responsibility theory emerged. The tension surrounding the status of the journalistic occupation goes to the heart of what Keeble refers to as the 'ethical contradictions within the newspaper industry'.34 On the one hand, journalism is an occupation positioned at the centre of a profit-oriented industry, whose practitioners are responsible for the creation of a commodity to be sold in the market place. On the other hand, journalism's political and social functions endow the occupation with a 'public service' overlay and its practitioners with certain moral responsibilities. In line with the social responsibility theory itself, it is this latter interpretation of their role that journalists have widely employed to justify their claims to 'professionalism'. In western democracies, journalists have, through their representative organisations, pursued 'professionalism' as both an occupational identity and as the cornerstone of their occupational values, standards and self-regulatory structures. Gaining relative autonomy from political, proprietorial, and commercial interests, journalists have employed the notion of 'professionalism' to justify their 'public service' status. This suggests that the social responsibility theory's prescriptions for professionalism have had a significant impact on journalism in liberal democracies. New Zealand journalists have conformed to these trends since the late nineteenth century, as this thesis aims to illustrate.

34 Keeble (2001: 21).
1.4 Objectives and scope of the research

This thesis represents an attempt to understand the ‘manifestations’ of journalistic professionalism and their emergence in terms of their motivations. Although some comparisons are drawn to other comparable countries, namely, the United States, Britain, and Australia, the primary case under investigation is that of New Zealand journalism. Moreover, this research is primarily concerned with the professionalising efforts of the New Zealand Journalists’ Association (NZJA), which was the representative organisation of working journalists for most of the twentieth century. Because the NZJA’s membership for the majority of the period under investigation was confined to newspaper/magazine journalists, this research thus concentrates on the appeal of professionalism to print journalists.\textsuperscript{35} The overarching issues that the present research aims to address are firstly, the appeal of ‘professionalism’ to New Zealand journalists, and secondly, how evolving conceptions of ‘professionalism’ have been reflected in the organisational, educational, and self-regulatory developments within journalism from the late nineteenth century and during the twentieth.

As indicated above, not only does this approach depart from those traditionally employed in the study of journalistic professionalism in that it represents a marrying of occupational sociology and media ethics, it also aims to promote a more critical approach to the concept of professionalism within journalism scholarship. As Dooley observes:

Most studies on the history of journalism as work, occupation, and profession have characterized the work products and organizational structures of journalism as indicators of professional development, rather than considering them as part of the process whereby the group, its boundaries, and its legitimacy have been constructed.\textsuperscript{36}

Indeed, the present study adopts a critical approach towards the widely held view that the development of professionalism in journalism

\ldots reflects the march of moral progress: a gradually increasing awareness by journalists of their professional responsibilities and a parallel development of the institutional framework for assuring a high standard of journalistic conduct. This progress can be seen in the growing professionalism of the

\textsuperscript{35} New Zealand broadcasters (notably, those working for public broadcasting agencies) were represented by separate organisations to print journalists for much of the twentieth century as footnote 69, page 226 and footnote 41, page 263 explain further).

\textsuperscript{36} Dooley (1997: 2-3).
workforce (increasing autonomy) and in the development of formal standards of journalistic conduct (increasing accountability).  

Rather than treating developments such as formal journalism education, self-regulatory systems, and ethics codes as indicators of 'journalistic professionalism' per se, this thesis aims to understand their emergence in terms of the motivations and forces underpinning them. The present research begins with the premise that journalism and mass communication theorists must move away from the dominant (and somewhat superficial) 'front page analysis' (to employ a journalistic analogy) of journalism's work activity and social organisation to attempt to uncover the wider significance of such developments. In this regard, journalism researchers would be well placed to take heed of the 'who, what, where, why, how' norm of their research subjects. This would involve analysing journalism's structural and organisational developments not merely as indicators of increasing 'professionalism' per se, but rather asking questions about their motivations including the purpose(s) they served and for whom, and the broader historical conditions and processes underpinning their emergence.

This thesis aims to investigate the forces both internal and external to the journalistic environment that have influenced journalists' conceptions of 'professionalism' and the structures through which they have been conveyed. It may be speculated that given the complex and changing environment in which journalists have operated during the twentieth century, their rationale for, and means of promoting 'professionalism' has been influenced by a wide variety of forces. Conceivably, journalists have developed standards, practices and educational requirements to legitimise their work, as a means of (economic and social) advancement, and to protect interests such as press freedom and journalistic autonomy among other reasons, which this thesis investigates further. As such, the notion of 'journalistic professionalism' is best conceived as multi-faceted, informed by interests on a variety of levels, and dependent upon the context in which it is pursued, as this thesis aims to highlight.

---

38 Cronin (1991: 1).
Linking journalists’ pursuit of professionalism within industrial politics

The fact that journalists work in a field of conflicting loyalties and duties has implications for their professional identity. Various roles from the individual professional, the citizen with social responsibilities, and the worker as part of a collective, are occupied by journalists giving rise to a ‘multiple identity’, as Harcup notes:

Journalists operate in (at least) two worlds, working in a field that is (ostensibly) constituted by a professional commitment to ethics and truth telling while at the same time being expendable employees expected to produce whatever stories are demanded in the marketplace.³⁹

As this thesis illustrates, the tension between these roles has heavily influenced journalists’ collective pursuit of professionalism as an occupational ideal. Indeed, the story of New Zealand journalists’ pursuit of ‘professionalism’ has not been an easy or straightforward one. Far from it, both definitions of, and attitudes toward ‘journalistic professionalism’ as an overarching source of legitimacy and advancement have remained contested. The notion of ‘professionalism’ itself has represented a contested terrain with shifting definitions,⁴⁰ and has been illustrated in the conflict over the nature and benefits of ‘professionalism’ which has been integral to the development of New Zealand journalism. While journalists have tended to draw on the same sources of legitimacy as their employers, such as notions of ‘freedom of the press’, ‘Fourth Estate’, and ‘watchdogs of democracy’, journalists and their employers have not always seen eye to eye on the benefits of journalistic professionalism. Factors internal to the occupation have included a conflict between different sectors of the occupation or interests therein over definitions of the role and functions of journalism and thus the journalist’s status as a ‘professional’.

Because of the variety of sectors it encompasses, New Zealand journalism (like that of many other countries) may be understood in terms of (an extended version of) Freidson’s conception of a ‘complex occupation’. Such an occupation encompasses a number of work roles which has the potential for divisions among membership presenting challenges to the unity of the occupation as a whole.⁴¹ New Zealand journalism has long exhibited such tendencies toward division among the

⁴⁰ Reese (2001: 175).
various sectors it encompasses, principally (although not exclusively) between journalists/employees and publishers/employers. As a manifestation of the power struggles between these two parties, the question of which has responsibility for ‘professional issues’ has been a feature in the development of the occupation in New Zealand as it has in other comparable countries, such as Australia.\textsuperscript{42}

Indeed, the potential for disunity both between different sectors of journalism, and among journalists themselves pertaining to the notion of professionalism is an issue that existing theoretical models housed within the sociology of the professions fail to acknowledge satisfactorily. As chapter two highlights, existing theoretical models tend to position occupations/professions as unitary forces with a universally accepted professional vision and ambitions for status advancement. ‘Professionalisation’ is widely conceived of as a ‘social movement towards an occupational identity conditioned by shared consciousness of ideas, beliefs, values, and interpretations of social life surrounding a world of work’.\textsuperscript{43} However, New Zealand journalism is not an occupation that conforms to such an understanding. As such, the present study will attempt to tease out the difficulties experienced by journalists in fulfilling their particular ambitions for ‘professionalism’. In doing so, this thesis aims to illustrate that the absence of a shared ‘professional vision’ within New Zealand journalism has had, and continues to have significant implications for the state of contemporary journalism in terms of both its professional ideals and infrastructure.

**The contradictions of journalists, class and objectivity**

Further insight into the disunity amongst journalists themselves as to their ‘professional vision’ can be gained from an understanding of the contradictory relationship between journalists and social class. This has been a further factor weighing on the appeal of professionalism to journalists, as this thesis aims to highlight. On the one hand, journalists’ claims to professionalism have been based on the ideal of the journalist as an independent recorder and interpreter of events and issues, and as a servant of the public interest that transcends the interests of particular

\textsuperscript{42} See Schultz (1999).
\textsuperscript{43} Birkehead (1982: 4).
social groups or classes. This ‘objective’ description of journalists’ role contrasts with the subjective interests of journalists in their own upward mobility.\textsuperscript{44}

As this thesis explores further, journalists’ appeal to professionalism was principally founded on the belief that the social importance of their work was not reflected in their own social and economic status. Journalists should not only have the accountability structures required of the accepted professions, they argued, but in doing so, journalists should receive the recognition and remuneration of ‘professionals’.\textsuperscript{45} Consequently, journalists found themselves having to confront the (subjective) interests of their own ‘class interests’ whilst attempting to distance themselves discursively from the interests of class in order to conform to the dictates of their (‘objective’) work role. Journalists were therefore also forced to straddle the contradictions surrounding the relationship between the occupation of journalism and ‘professionalism’. As a status that some journalists associated with society’s elite, many could not reconcile the idea of journalists as neutral and independent of social classes and interests with the notion of journalists as a professional group. To position their occupation as a ‘profession’ would contradict the professed role of journalism as independent, neutral, and ‘classless’. These are issues that are explored further in this thesis.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

Part one of this thesis comprises chapter one and two, the former serving to background the study, its theoretical approach and objectives. Chapter two presents a review of selected literature on the notion of ‘professionalism’. The sociology of the professions, and how this body of theory has evolved, forms a central component of this chapter. Also considered in chapter two is how the notion of ‘professionalism’ has been applied in past journalism research. Selected research on the subject is critically reviewed in order to inform and justify the approach taken in the present study. Chapter two concludes by outlining the approach to ‘professionalism’ that the present research employs to explore the development of professionalism in New Zealand journalism.

\textsuperscript{44} Hoyer and Lauk (1998: 4).
\textsuperscript{45} In this regard, New Zealand journalists followed closely in the tradition of British journalists whose claims to professionalism were markedly similar as Hampton (1999) illuminates.
Part two of this thesis is concerned with the early development of New Zealand journalism as an occupation. Chapter three explores the forces behind the emergence of the journalistic occupation in New Zealand during the period after 1860 in order to provide an historical context for the analysis of the development of professionalism in New Zealand journalism. Consideration is given to the ideologies embodied in concepts such as ‘the fourth estate’, and ‘public service’, and the role these played in gaining wider institutional recognition of journalism as ‘a profession’, and its practitioners as ‘professionals’. Extending some of the key arguments of chapter two, it is argued that the dominating economic and technology-oriented accounts of this phenomenon in other countries do not adequately explain the New Zealand case. A key theme of this chapter is that structural independence in the press was one important precondition for journalistic independence to emerge as an occupational norm and ideal governing journalistic practice. In this sense, political independence was a critical precondition for the development of journalism as an occupation.

Chapter four examines the early organisational efforts of New Zealand journalists, beginning in the late nineteenth century with the emergence of the New Zealand Institute of Journalists (NZIJ) in 1891. As in other countries, New Zealand’s first journalists’ organisations offer indicators of an occupational consciousness emerging amongst journalists, serving to perpetuate certain conceptions of ‘professionalism’. With reference to overseas’ cases, this chapter considers the earliest journalism organisations, how they emerged, and the shape they took, in order to understand the conception of ‘professionalism’ that predominated among New Zealand journalists in the first decades of the occupation in New Zealand. This chapter illustrates the validity of a conception of ‘professionalism’ that is not static but fluid and subject to change via forces both internal and external to the journalistic occupation. This was indeed the case for New Zealand journalism when, as a result of certain pressures facing journalists at the turn of the twentieth century, an alternative conception of ‘professionalism’ among working journalists emerged. This was rooted in the (more industrial-oriented) view amongst journalists that the socially accepted importance of journalism was not reflected in practitioners’ status, and subsequently, their wages and working conditions.

Indeed, this was the basis of journalists’ claims to professionalism that underpinned the professionalising efforts of the New Zealand Journalists’ Association
(NZJA) during the twentieth century. Advocates of professionalism maintained that
the journalists’ social status and economic rewards were not commensurate with the
importance of journalistic work to democracy and their services rendered to the
community. This disparity was exacerbated by the various social, technological, and
other developments in the journalistic environment since the nineteenth century that
had made increasing demands on journalists that were not acknowledged in their
social status or economic rewards. Another claim revolved around the issue of
journalists’ social and economic status relative to ‘other professions’. Journalists
claimed that their work was just as (if not more) important to the community as that of
the recognised professions such as doctors, lawyers, and accountants and, as such,
journalists should be accorded the status and rewards of ‘professionals’. 46

Chapter four shows that, as in other countries, New Zealand journalists have
attempted to improve their status by emulating socially recognised ‘hallmarks’ of
professionalism. Exploring the ‘failed’ efforts of New Zealand journalists to organise
along ‘professional lines’ in an attempt to promote their status, this chapter illustrates
how the industrial issues facing journalists played a significant role in shaping their
ambitions for professionalism and their efforts to control entry into the occupation.
While such measures designed to control entry into the practice of journalism as
registration have proved ‘unsuitable’ for New Zealand journalism, others like formal
education systems and codes of ethics, have been adopted. These efforts to convey
‘professionalism’ are explored further in part three of this thesis.

Part three is concerned with how New Zealand journalists’ ambitions for
‘professionalism’ have been expressed during the twentieth century. Chapter five
traces the evolution of journalism training and education in New Zealand. The focus
of this chapter is upon the attitudes toward, and rationale driving formal, systematic
training programmes, and how these evolved over the twentieth century. Discourses
on ‘professional competence’ versus ‘occupational status’ as a central issue
underpinning journalism education in New Zealand are explored. Indeed, control over
what journalists need to know, and how that knowledge should be imparted were
issues central to debates on journalistic training. The overarching theme of this
chapter is that understandings of journalistic professionalism, a notion very much
bound up with social and historical context, shifted over time. As such, attitudes

towards formal journalism training were shaped and constrained by these changing perceptions of professionalism amongst journalists, and also within the wider journalism industry. This theme is extended in Chapter six of this thesis.

Chapter six documents the development of ethical codes by New Zealand journalists. Traditionally, journalistic codes of ethics have been treated as a key indicator of increasing 'professionalism'. This is the dominant perspective from which the development of journalistic codes of ethics has been analysed. However, to treat codes of ethics simply as a milestone on the path to further 'professionalism' is to overlook the various reasons for a code's development. Indeed, such factors are increasingly being acknowledged in research into the development of journalistic codes. A key theme of recent work is that the development of journalistic codes of ethics has tended to occur in response to a 'crisis of credibility'. This argument has been illustrated in a number of countries. In the United States, where the first journalistic codes of ethics emerged, the development of codes has been assessed as an attempt by journalists to strengthen their reputation and status in the face of criticism at the turn of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{47} Others have attributed American journalism's adoption of ethical codes in the 1920s to World War One propaganda, and the rise of sensationalism and subsequent decline of the public's trust in the press.\textsuperscript{48} In both Britain and New Zealand, questions about the credibility of press self-regulation have been the impetus for the development of self-regulatory codes.\textsuperscript{49} According to Cronin and McPherson, the development of ethical codes has tended to be seen by the media as the best means to regain credibility because they are a visible means of making journalism's values and standards known to the public.\textsuperscript{50}

However, little attention has been paid to the efforts of journalists, through their representative organisations, to articulate ethical standards for their occupation through the development of codes. Although the first journalism ethics codes for newspapers emerged in the United States with the Kansas Editorial Association code in 1910,\textsuperscript{51} in many European countries, the first ethical codes were developed by journalists' organisations. As Bertrand notes, "[e]verywhere in Europe the journalists'
unions have manifested an interest in ethics...”\textsuperscript{52} Organising conferences and workshops on journalism ethics, helping to create press councils, and publishing codes of practice, were a significant part of the early activities of several journalists’ unions in Europe. Indeed, trade unions of working journalists were singularly responsible for developing the first journalistic codes in France (1918), Finland (1924), and Britain (1936),\textsuperscript{53} while those in Sweden and Norway were developed by journalists’ unions in conjunction with associations of publishers and editors in 1924 and 1936 respectively.\textsuperscript{54} These efforts indicate that concerns about professional and ethical issues for journalists existed alongside those traditionally associated with trade unions of an industrial nature at a relatively early stage in the journalism trade union movement in Europe. These codes represented an attempt by journalists to define their role and to whom they believed they were responsible. In doing so, they also sought to distinguish their occupation from other competing occupations, and their practitioners from ‘outsiders’. New Zealand journalists have followed in this tradition, being the first sector of the industry to formulate codes of ethics, as chapter six of this thesis illustrates.

While journalists in countries such as Britain, Australia, and New Zealand have also been the more pro-active sector of the media industry in the codification of journalistic standards, their employers have tended to resist these efforts, deeming them to “cut across management prerogative”.\textsuperscript{55} The implication was that as employees, journalists were subject to their employers’ ethical standards and not to any collective standards that their union may adopt.\textsuperscript{56} This suggests that industrial relations have played a significant role in the codification, and indeed the enforcement of journalistic standards, as chapter six explores in the New Zealand context. Chapter six illustrates that although the concepts of journalistic ethics and ethical codes were certainly not foreign to New Zealand journalists before the 1960s, it was not until this time that ethics codes began to emerge in New Zealand. It was at this time that through their representative body, the NZJA, New Zealand journalists’ drive for professional recognition was at its most pertinent primarily as a result of the industrial issues facing journalists as employees.

\textsuperscript{52} Bertrand (1998: 115).
\textsuperscript{53} Laitila (1995: 528).
\textsuperscript{54} Bertrand (1998: 115).
\textsuperscript{55} Tully (1992: 4)
\textsuperscript{56} Chadwick (1994: 170).
Journalistic codes of ethics can be treated as 'cultural artefacts' which provide an indicator of what journalists saw as their responsibilities, and to whom they believed they were responsible. As such, chapter six also considers the content of the NZJA code of ethics as an indicator of the prevailing conception of 'professionalism' at the time of the code's adoption, and the degree to which this shifted over time as reflected in the first major amendments made to the code in 1988.

Chapter seven explores how formal systems of journalistic self-regulation were shaped in New Zealand, including the overseas influences on the development of press self-regulation. Its focus is on the development of the New Zealand Press Council (NZPC) in 1972, when issues of journalistic accountability arose on the public and parliamentary agendas. In addition to journalists' ambitions for professionalism, this chapter considers the political and social background to the formalisation of self-regulation via the establishment of the NZPC. Attention is also paid to the constraints journalists faced in their attempts to construct a formal system of professional self-control, with particular attention paid to the industrial politics within the journalism industry. While journalists' pursuit of professional recognition was a central force underpinning the emergence of ethics codes, making standards 'stick' on an industry-wide basis proved to be more difficult. This chapter illustrates that the development of self-regulatory codes has been hampered in large measure due to conflict and power struggles between the various interests of employees and employers over the role of journalists and the notion of professionalism.

Extending these issues, chapter eight considers the 'professional infrastructure' of contemporary New Zealand journalism. This chapter teases out some of the inconsistencies surrounding journalists' long-standing claims to professionalism and associated privileges including the right to scrutinise social and political institutions, and the reality that, as a major social institution itself, self-scrutiny within New Zealand journalism is disturbingly infrequent. Chapter eight argues that contemporary New Zealand journalism is characterised by an 'invisibility of professionalism' and aims to offer insight into the relative absence of a definite professional culture where the professional and ethical issues of everyday journalistic practice are deliberated on an ongoing basis amongst practitioners.

Chapter eight ponders the philosophical, legislative and organisational constraints on the professional culture of contemporary New Zealand journalism that appear to have undermined the media's commitment to professionalism. Comparing
the statutory regulatory environment of broadcasters with that of the print media offers insight into how the legislative framework for broadcast journalists has shaped and constrained journalists’ ambitions for professionalism and efforts to convey them. Namely, it illustrates how the dominating interpretation of press freedom within the print media (at its core the right to freedom from government regulation) has undermined its overall commitment to professionalism.

It is also argued that insight into the present is also offered by the declining appeal of professionalism to working journalists as both an occupational identity and a strategy to advance their interests post-1970. Although the NZJA had long promoted professionalism as a means of advancing journalists’ interests in aligning themselves with the white-collar status of the ‘accepted professions’, this preference was challenged during the 1970s, with a growing belief in the efficacy of traditional trade union activity over professionalism to advance journalists’ interests. As an occupational identity, ‘professionalism’ had failed to address the overarching contradictions surrounding journalists’ occupational role. On the contrary, a tension between the ‘white-collar ideals’ of journalistic work (the notion of journalists as autonomous professionals, whose work was of social and political importance, and was an intellectual/literary pursuit) and the ‘blue-collar reality’ of that work (as reflected in the pay, conditions and social status of journalists) remained.

This thesis concludes with chapter nine, which draws together the various issues raised in the preceding chapters. It argues that based upon the analysis presented in this thesis, it can be seen that the professional infrastructure of New Zealand journalism has developed without a consensus about ‘journalistic professionalism’, and how best to promote it. Prior to the 1960s, before issues of journalistic accountability arose on the public and political agendas, journalists’ desire to attain professional recognition drove their efforts to develop a ‘professional infrastructure’, at the centre of which was the NZJA code of ethics. Although an increasing public (and parliamentary) interest in journalistic accountability from the 1960s provided a further set of motivations for journalistic professionalism, the conflict between journalists’ interests in professionalism and the economic interests of the wider industry continued. Hence, the ad hoc and fragmented manner in which the professional and regulatory framework for New Zealand journalists has evolved since the establishment of the Press Council in 1972, over the remainder of the twentieth century. This thesis concludes that these observations about the development of
‘professionalism’ in New Zealand journalism have important implications. For their claims to ‘professionalism’ to be legitimated, journalists must be accountable to the public. However, the way in which journalism’s professional infrastructure has evolved raises questions as to the degree to which professionalism is ‘seen to be done’.

Self-scrutiny and reflexivity are prerequisites for a profession whose claims to that status are based upon its self-proclaimed right to function as a watchdog on behalf of the public. Moreover, self-scrutiny is vital to the health of journalism in a democratic society. Therefore, the limited professional culture within New Zealand journalism requires attention for the future. As such, this thesis concludes with some recommendations for future reform. Chapter nine thus proposes that the starting point may lie with journalists’ own conceptions of their occupational status. Because journalists’ occupational consciousness has implications for their performance, the ambiguity surrounding the concept of ‘professionalism’ must be overcome in order to address what this thesis refers to as an ‘invisibility of professionalism’ apparent in contemporary New Zealand journalism.

It is apparent that the dominance of ‘traits understandings’ of professionalism within journalism has perpetuated scepticism as to their professional status. This has done little to inform journalists’ occupational consciousness and to sustain a professional culture within journalism. To promote a more constructive understanding of their occupation, journalists must become versed in an alternative conception of professionalism that focuses less on the presence or absence of traits per se, and more their uses to promote journalists’ professional consciousness, public accountability, and the quality of journalism generally. While it is on the professional consciousness of journalists that such reforms are directed, it is through the combined efforts of journalism educators, the public and journalists themselves, that New Zealand journalism may have the potential to develop and foster a more active professional culture and consciousness for the future.

1.6 Methods

The principal research method employed in this research is documentary research and analysis of historical records. Documentary sources utilised include the archived records and conference minutes of New Zealand journalism’s representative
organisations that have operated during the history of New Zealand journalism. The series, for most of its life entitled *The New Zealand Journalist: Official Organ of the New Zealand Journalists’ Association* (referred to throughout this thesis simply as *The New Zealand Journalist*) functioned as a principal source of data for the research. Here it may be useful to provide some background information on this publication. From 1911 until 1913, *The New Zealand Journalist* was published by the New Zealand Institute of Journalists (NZIJ).\(^{57}\) Between 1915 and 1927, the NZJA published a bulletin jointly with its Australian counterpart the Australian Journalists’ Association (AJA) entitled *The Australasian Journalist*. Publication of *The New Zealand Journalist* was resumed by the NZJA in 1935. Usually produced on a monthly or bimonthly basis, the series was distributed to union members until 1989, after which time the series was published by the reconstituted Journalists and Graphic Process Workers’ Union (hereafter JAGPRO) under the title *The Word*. Publication of this series lapsed in the mid-1990s. The union to which journalists currently belong, the Engineering, Printing, and Manufacturing Union (EPMU) publishes a series entitled *Metal* every second month. This series, under its various titles, represents the closest New Zealand journalism has had to the ‘trade publications’ found in such countries as the United States.\(^{58}\) As a comprehensive historical record of the activities, interests, and viewpoints of New Zealand journalists throughout the period under investigation, this series thus provided a highly valuable information source for the present research.

Further primary sources used for the research were interviews of past and present journalism industry representatives which were used to supplement the archival material used in this research. Secondary sources have been employed to inform the theoretical framework of this study, and to provide some comparison with overseas’ cases previously documented. As such, this research is qualitative in nature, using both documentary sources and interviews to present a picture of New Zealand journalists’ pursuit of professionalism from the late nineteenth century through until the turn of the twenty-first century.

\(^{57}\) NZJA (1962: 69).

\(^{58}\) Presumably, countries such as New Zealand, Australia and Britain borrowed from the United States’ early trade publication *The Journalist*, which was published between 1884 and 1907 (Cronin, 1993: 228).
1.7 Limitations of the study

This research concentrates on the appeal of professionalism to working journalists for reasons (primarily of an industrial nature) that will become clearer throughout this thesis. In spite of repeated efforts to gain access to archived information relating to the Newspaper' Proprietors (later Publishers') Association, including its relations with working journalists and attitudes toward their pursuit of 'professionalism', these requests were only granted (on a minimalist basis) late into the research. The fact that the archived material held by the NPA is not ordinarily publicly accessible was also another contributing factor that prevented in-depth research into these records. Although some of the NPA's historical records were accessible through the National Library of New Zealand's Alexander Turnbull Library, little of this material was relevant to this thesis, consisting primarily of financial statements and like material. Due to these restrictions, the voice of New Zealand journalism's employers in this thesis is comparatively limited in relation to that of journalists. Although I certainly did not set out to be an apologist for the cause(s) of New Zealand journalists, the restrictions on information encountered during this research unfortunately may give such an impression, and thus the ensuing limitations of this study must be acknowledged.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an introduction and overview of this thesis which explores the appeal of professionalism to New Zealand journalists since the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century. Through an outline of the dominant approaches to journalistic professionalism in previous research, this chapter has attempted to justify the theoretical approach that the present research takes, an approach which is illuminated further in chapter two. Seeking to provide insight into the relative lack of a 'professional culture' in New Zealand journalism at the turn of the twentieth century, this thesis will draw on themes from the sociology of professions, as well as media ethics literature including the 'social responsibility theory'. This thesis aims to 'put to the test' an alternative approach to analysing journalistic professionalism which explores the conditions both internal and external to the journalistic environment that have influenced journalists' desire to attain professional recognition, as well as the structures through which they have promoted
their professional ideal(s). It aims to investigate forces both internal and external to the journalistic environment that have impacted upon conceptions of ‘professionalism’ and the structures through which they have been conveyed.

The focus of this research is not on the ‘outcomes’ of an arbitrary ‘professionalisation process’, but on the wider processes that have influenced journalists’ attempts to convey ‘professionalism’, the professional ideals they have aspired to, and the ways these have been conveyed publicly. This thesis will attempt to avoid some of the key problems of past research, particularly the tendency to treat the development of such structures as journalism education programmes, self-regulatory structures, and codes of ethics as arbitrary ‘milestones’ on the path to ‘professionalisation’, and as the ‘end products’ of such a process. Instead, this thesis treats such developments as indicators of journalists’ on-going attempts to gain professional recognition. As indicated at the outset of this chapter, the foundation for journalists’ claims to professionalism has been the notion of journalism as a social institution with important social and political ‘watchdog’ functions. If journalists’ claims to ‘professionalism’ are to be recognised as legitimate, it follows that journalists must ensure that their own conduct and standards are scrutinised. As an underlying theme, this thesis explores whether this is indeed the case.
CHAPTER TWO

Theorising ‘professionalism’ and journalism: A literature review

There can be few areas of social enquiry that have become so involved, distracted and perplexed by matters of definition than the study of the professions. The reasons for these difficulties are fairly clear. Both the meaning of the term, and the occupations that might be described as professions, have changed over time, and members of professions have energetically propagated their own definitions of what they are, what they are doing and what it is that entitles them to be called a profession.\(^1\)

2.1 Introduction

‘Professionalism’ is a concept used most widely in the context of the evolution of an occupation.\(^2\) Hence, the majority of work on the subject has taken place within the field of occupational sociology. This chapter draws on this body of work to present an overview of theoretical perspectives relating to the concept of ‘professionalism’ in order to build a theoretical framework for the present study. A critical review of selected research dealing with the topic of journalistic professionalism forms the second major component of this chapter. The work on journalistic professionalism is considered in terms of its relationship with sociological approaches to professionalism. The overarching purpose of this chapter is to establish a conceptualisation of ‘professionalism’ that this research will employ in its analysis of New Zealand journalism.

An analysis of the body of literature in the field reveals that ‘professionalism’ has been characterised in a variety of ways, as the opening quote above suggests. Indeed, sociological approaches to professionalism have evolved significantly since the 1960s when professionalism was conceived of as the accumulation of ‘professional attributes’ relating to an occupation’s work activity and its social organisation. Despite the fact that many sociologists have conceded the limited theoretical utility of this approach, journalism research has relied heavily on these early ‘traits approaches’, with the central analytical questions revolving around whether or not journalism displays certain prescribed characteristics of

---

\(^1\) Burrage, Jarausch and Siegrist (1990: 204).
\(^2\) Aucoin (1993).
professionalism. As this chapter highlights, it has been within this body of literature that the professional status of (predominantly American and British) journalism has engendered much debate. Theorists have argued that while journalism may have some of the attributes of a ‘profession’, it does not have enough to be classified as a ‘true’ or ‘full’ profession. In the words of Weaver and Wilhoit, “[n]o intellectual occupation defies sociological categories of professionalisation as robustly as journalism”.

Since the 1970s, sociologists have widely rejected the utility of such traits-based approaches, instead preferring to analyse the social structural aspects of an occupation as part of a wider political process by which the group attempts to gain social recognition and legitimacy. An occupation’s organisational forms and structures are seen to have dynamic roles rather than being treated as static dimensions of an arbitrary professionalisation process. ‘Professionalism’, from this approach, is not simply a matter of whether an occupation has codes of ethics or professional bodies, for instance, but rather how the occupation employs these structures as strategies or claims in its pursuit of professional privileges. This is the key theme of the ‘power approaches’ to professions which, along with other more recent sociological perspectives on professionalism, this chapter reviews to assess their utility for an analysis of the development of New Zealand journalism as an occupation. Indeed, there is an increasing body of work on journalistic professionalism that has drawn on elements of the power approach. How journalism has sought ‘professionalism’ and its significance is the key area of inquiry from this perspective. Political-economic, Marxist and critical theory approaches have also informed work falling into this perspective.

This chapter concludes with a summary of the approaches to journalistic professionalism overviewed in this review. A central conclusion drawn is that the traits-based approaches to professionalism have the least theoretical utility for the present research. It is contended that a comprehensive understanding of journalistic professionalism necessitates looking beyond the structural functionalist tradition and its preoccupation with ‘professional traits’. It is argued that the development of ethics codes and other ‘professionalising structures’ needs to be analysed not as indicators of increasing professionalism per se, but rather in terms of the purpose they served, and the wider social, political, technological, and economic forces underpinning their

emergence. Developed out of the perspectives canvassed in this chapter, this approach forms the basis of the understanding of ‘professionalism’ employed in the present research.

2.2 The sociology of professions: The taxonomic and ‘trait’ approaches

Providing answers to the question ‘what is a profession?’ was the central pursuit of the taxonomic approaches to professions that dominated the field prior to the 1960s and 1970s. Concerned predominantly with identifying traits or attributes of professions, such theorists (e.g. Flexner, 1915; Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933; Greenwood, 1957; Goode, 1960; and Barber, 1963) saw professions as a special category of occupation with unique attributes that distinguished them qualitatively from other (‘non-professional’) occupations. While no consensus existed about the specific set of such attributes within the body of taxonomic literature, those characteristicly identified of ‘the professions’ related to firstly, the social organisation of occupations, and secondly, the professional role or work activity. The ‘professions’ were most commonly delineated by the combination of expertise and an agreed upon body of esoteric/abstract knowledge acquired through extensive university training. Collective organisation and collegial control supported by government licensing of practitioners were also emphasised. Ethical standards enforced through codes of professional ethics by professional associations, and work in a public service, were further ‘professional’ characteristics for such theorists.

In terms of work activity, a crucial indicator was seen as autonomy and self-control in the work setting, seen as autonomy from bureaucratic hierarchy and

---

5 Dietrich and Roberts (1997: 22); McKinlay (1973: 63).
6 See, for example, Millerson (1964: 5). In fact, McKinlay (1973: 63) suggests that this lack of consensus may be indicative of the fact that, perhaps with the exception of their power position, the professions remain indistinguishable from other occupations, a point this review will address further below. Based on these variations, Forsyth and Danisiewicz (1985: 59) assert that “the terms ‘profession’ and ‘professionalization’ are virtual nonconcepts, since there is little consensus about their meaning”. On the other hand, Larson (1977: x) observed that while the specific attributes that compose the ideal type profession vary, there appeared to be general agreement about their dimensions. These were categorised as, firstly, a cognitive dimension (including a body of knowledge and techniques applied in the professional work). Secondly, she identified a normative dimension (the service orientation of professionals, their distinct ethics which justify the privilege of self-regulation), and, lastly, an evaluative dimension (encompassing variables of autonomy and prestige - an implicit comparison of professions to other occupations).
7 McKinlay (1973: 64).
interference and personal discretion in the application of skills.\(^8\) As one theorist put it, professional autonomy is manifested in the power of professionals to define the standards that govern the delivery of their services, free from the interference from outsiders. The cultural authority of a profession resides in its capacity for a ‘monopoly of interpretation’\(^9\). By this approach, medicine and law were typically identified as most closely approximating ‘full’ or ‘pure’ professions.\(^10\)

Variations within the taxonomic tradition can be found in this early literature. Based on the particular characteristics or traits an occupation was seen to exhibit, one alternative approach was to classify certain occupations on a ‘scale of professionalism’,\(^11\) or their location on a continuum with ‘professionalism’ at one end and ‘non-professionalism’ at the other.\(^12\) The ‘trait’ approach to professions has also been distinguished from another taxonomic strand,\(^13\) the structural-functionalist tradition (e.g. Parsons, 1968), which focuses on those particular attributes that were deemed to have functional relevance for either the social system as a whole, or for the profession-client relationship.\(^14\) Such attributes included strict ethics and integrity, and a universalistic and functionally specific relationship to clients.\(^15\) This perspective assumed that in exchange for the (ethical and non-exploitative) provision of highly specialised and esoteric knowledge and skills of great importance to society, professions were granted a privileged social and economic position vis-à-vis other occupations, including the right to self-regulation.\(^16\)

Within the taxonomic tradition, a ‘process’ approach has been attributed to theorists such as Wilensky (1964) and Caplow (1954).\(^17\) The central analytical focus

\(^8\) Osiel (1986: 164).
\(^12\) Representative of the ‘occupation-profession continuum’ approach was the work of Pavalko (1971), who preferred to focus on “differences of degree and not differences of kind” (1971: 16). Pavalko saw ‘profession’ as an extreme end of a continuum of work characteristics, and professions as those occupations whose work activities exhibit to a high degree the complex of work characteristics typically identified as ‘professional’ by traits theorists. For Pavalko, the important analytical question was not ‘is X occupation a profession?’, but rather to what extent is X occupation a profession?’ (1971: 16, italics added). Some theorists, notably Etzioni (1960; 1969), argued that there were certain occupations (e.g. social work) that had progressed only so far on certain of these continua but would steadily improve their position in the future to become full professions. ‘Semi-profession’ was the label given to occupations considered unlikely to achieve full professional status (Bennett and Hokenstad, 1973: 42).
\(^13\) Johnson (1972) was one such theorist who drew a distinction between these two taxonomic strands.
\(^16\) Saks (1983: 2).
\(^17\) Forsyth and Danisiewicz (1985: 60); Brint (1993: 261).
of this approach was the process of ‘professionalisation’ rather than the concept of
‘the professions’.\textsuperscript{18} This approach aimed to identify events in the ‘life history’ of
occupations that constitute ‘the process of professionalisation’.\textsuperscript{19} By this approach,
‘professionalisation’ was conceived of as a process by which occupations construct
their professional reality by acquiring more and more traits or characteristics of a
‘full’ or ‘pure’ profession.\textsuperscript{20}

**Criticisms of the Functionalist and Trait Approaches**

Reflecting the wider abandonment of the Functionalist orthodoxy within
sociology from the 1960s onwards,\textsuperscript{21} occupational sociologists increasingly disputed
the validity of the functionalist and taxonomic approaches to professionalism. Critics
of the taxonomic approaches argued that treating profession simply as a ‘given’ or as
a ‘matter of degree’ is problematic.\textsuperscript{22} The prescriptive traits-based approaches to
‘professionalism’ have been criticised as obscuring the social and historical conditions
under which occupational groups become ‘professions’; the unique
‘professionalisation projects’ of different occupations.\textsuperscript{23} They also overlooked the
power struggles often involved in the process of professionalisation.\textsuperscript{24}

Furthermore, the traits approach was widely condemned for doing little more
than taking on board the professions’ own definitions of themselves, and how they
would like to be seen.\textsuperscript{25} Critics problematised the functionalists’ failure to “scrutinize
professional ideologies, leading to a mystification of the process through which
rhetoric about community service and altruism is self-serving, functioning instead as a
legitimation of the power and authority of the professions”.\textsuperscript{26} Attacking the uncritical
assumptions made by the taxonomic orthodoxy, theorists contended that

along with the public at large, many sociologists have ‘swallowed’ th[e]
assumption of the qualitative distinctiveness of so-called ‘professionalism’.
They have uncritically accepted the claims of the subjects of their study to an

\textsuperscript{18} Brint (1993: 261).
\textsuperscript{19} Pavalko (1971: 28).
\textsuperscript{20} Fielding and Portwood (1980: 24).
\textsuperscript{21} Crompton (1990: 153).
\textsuperscript{22} Brante (1990: 78).
\textsuperscript{23} Dietrich and Roberts (1997: 23).
\textsuperscript{24} Saks (1983: 2).
\textsuperscript{25} Crompton (1990: 153).
\textsuperscript{26} Pemberton and Boreham (1976: 19). See also Pemberton, Boreham and Wilson (1976: 7). Brante
(1988: 1990) refers to the taxonomic approaches to professions as ‘the naive perspective’, due to their
underscoring of the positive functions for society. Others have referred to this as the ‘functionalist bias’
due to its euphoric view of the role of professions in society (MacDonald, 1995: 3).
extent which would be unforgiveable/sic/ in most other areas of sociological enquiry.27

Problems with a linear conception of ‘professionalisation’

Wilensky’s (1964) conception of ‘professionalisation’ has also been the target of criticism from a number of European theorists. Because the process/sequential models of professionalism assumed a series of arbitrary stages through which a professionalising occupation must pass,28 the typology of professionalisation has been labelled as both essentialistic and ethnocentric.29 Based primarily on the (United States) nineteenth century professionalisation tendencies of such occupations as medicine and law, this approach does little more than to ascribe a temporal dimension to the existing traits-based classificatory models.30 Wilensky’s process/sequential model of professionalisation implies that the deficiency lies with newer aspiring occupations which somehow ‘deviate’ from the model,31 rather than with the model itself as a tool for understanding the nature of professionalism.32 Treating professions as isolated entities is to ignore the processes which have allowed (or have inhibited)

27 One critic even went so far as to claim that sociologists of the taxonomic school had “become the dupe of the established professions (helping them to justify their dominant position and its pay off) and arbiters of occupations on the make ...” (Roth, 1974: 17).
28 Wilensky’s (1964) typology identified five stages of a ‘professionalisation process’. Firstly, an occupation is established as fulltime through laying a claim to certain areas and functions relevant to the occupation. Secondly, training schools are established by forging ties with universities, after which a professional association is formed. Then, the professionalising occupation obtains legal protection, and finally, a formal code of ethics is developed (Wilensky 1964: 143-145). Similarly, Caplow’s (1954) conceptualisation proposed that firstly, a professional association is formed, after which the group changes its name in an attempt to change the image and identity of the occupation (hence ‘newspaper reporters’ to ‘journalists’, as Pavalko, 1971: 28 observes). The third stage in the process is the development of codes of ethics which establishes a rationale for the utility of the work activity that the group is engaged in, as well as permissible behaviour of members of the occupation. Codes may also function to reduce internal competition and increase the legitimacy of the group’s monopoly over the work activities it undertakes. Caplow’s final stage of professionalisation is political agitation and attainment of legal restrictions on who may perform the services for which the occupation lays claim as their exclusive domain. The establishment of training facilities, controlled either directly or indirectly by the occupation in question, is seen to occur concurrently with the earlier stages in the professionalisation process (Caplow, 1954. Reprinted in Vollmer and Mills, 1966: 20-21).
29 See for instance, Torsten Dahl (1990); Collins (1990); and Brante (1990).
31 Wilensky (1964: 466) suggests factors that “help to explain derivations from the sequence”, where “newer or more marginal cases adopt codes long before institutional and technical bases has been formed”. This automatically assumes that occupations that fail to professionalise in the ‘correct order’ are ‘deficient’.
32 Similarly, Pavalko (1971: 30-1) uses the concept ‘professional marginality’ to denote the “situation of work groups which while toward or at the ‘profession’ end of the continuum on some and often many characteristics, are at the same time noticeably at the opposite end of the continuum on others”. Pavalko offers an example of this as ‘low autonomy’ “because members of the occupation work in bureaucratic organizations”, assuming arbitrarily that “bureaucratic norms, goals and definitions operate as parameters constraining the degree to which professional autonomy can emerge or be effective”.
certain occupational groups to take on ‘essential’ traits of a profession, if indeed such
definitive set of ‘professional traits’ appeared to exist.33

Dismissing the traditional attributes models to professionalism and their
temporal variants, European theorists have been highly critical of the Anglo-
American conceptualisation of professions and professionalisation,34 arguing that

[t]he category ‘profession’ is by no means a-historical; it is to a certain extent
often quite particular to a given society or epoch. The question of what
constitutes social esteem and in what ways functional, cultural, political and
economic characteristics are valued depends upon the respective historical
context. Likewise, the professionalization process is also relative to a specific
society and to a particular historical period. Being neither automatic nor linear,
the course of development of the professionalization process is highly
complex and dynamic.35

This more critical intellectual current, which acknowledges the importance of context
and culture, has filtered into more recent theorising about professionalism as is
illustrated further in section 2.5 below.

2.3 The influence of traits perspectives on journalism
research

As Aldridge and Evetts rightly note, “[t]he episodic debate about modes of
occupational control in journalism has persisted with an implicit model of
professionalism as a set of professional ‘traits’ that was abandoned by sociology thirty
years ago”.36 Though widely challenged by recent sociological work on
professionalism, the taxonomic approaches have heavily influenced the debate about

33 Klegon (1978: 267). These criticisms have not prevented the recent appearance of ‘mimic works’
(see, for instance, Neal and Morgan, 2000) which have directly applied Wilensky’s model to study the
historical development of various occupations.
34 Freidson (1994: 5). See also Crompton (1990).
35 Siegrist (1990: 178). Likewise, Collins (1990: 57) argues that instead of ‘compulsory stages’ in the
development of professions, theorists need to acknowledge a social, historical, and temporal dimension
in their analyses given that some societies have gone through developments which have no equivalent
in others. The efforts of some theorists to promote an understanding of profession as historically
specific were reflected in the distinction between traditional professions as ‘status professions’ (which
derived their position from their close relation to social elites), and newer professions as ‘occupational
professions’ (which derive their position and power from claims to expertise and technical competence)
(Eliott, 1972: 14, 34). Taking into account the different trajectories of professions in different countries,
Johnson (1972: 23-6) distinguishes between patronage, professionalism, and state mediation (which
stresses the initiatory as well as implementory role of the state in the process of professionalisation) as
different forms of occupational control. Likewise, McClelland (1990:107) distinguishes between
professionalization ‘from within’ (successful monopolisation of the market by an occupational group)
and professionalization ‘from above’ (the domination of forces outside the occupation, States being a
plausible example of such forces).
the professional status of journalism in democratic societies. In this body of work, the key focus has been with the question ‘is journalism a profession?’ the answer to which, almost unanimously, has been declared in the negative. Examinations of the cognitive and social structural attributes of journalism have highlighted the ‘deficiencies’ of the journalistic occupation relative to the so-called ‘true’ professions. Journalism, it has been typically argued, has no systematic body of theory or knowledge; it has neither extensive education nor licensing as prerequisites for practice; journalism is not characterised by a functionally specific relationship with clients; and there is no universal binding code of ethics for practitioners. From this perspective, the general consensus is that “the key criteria of professionalization are missing with regard to journalism in the West”. Based on such an assessment, journalism has been widely regarded as a ‘non-profession’.

37 See Singletary (1982) and Henningham (1990) for an illustration of this approach. Allison (1986) also illustrates in further detail the degree of scepticism among traits-oriented journalism theorists as to the question of whether journalism is a ‘profession’. Indeed, there is a wide literature dealing with the (lack of) professional status of journalism that is rooted in the taxonomic/traits tradition. Merrill (1986; 1988; 1996) illustrates the way that debate extended to the issue of why (US) journalism should not become a profession. The crux of Merrill’s ‘anti-professionalisation’ stance lies in his belief that professionalization would undermine principles of the First Amendment, including a loss of individual freedom and a constriction of journalistic pluralism and diversity (Merrill, 1986:57). (Wilson (1995) recites this argument, claiming that the professionalisation of journalism would “undermine the constitutional role journalists play as the watchdog of government in this democratic society”). This perspective rests on the problematic taxonomic assumption of licensing as a pre-requisite of professionalism. As Broddson (1994: 238) rightly suggests, Merrill is highly selective in his choice of ‘professionalising factors’. Merrill’s argument about the assumed ‘constraints’ of professionalisation also relies on negative conceptions of press freedom, overlooking the corresponding obligations this freedom entails. Broddson (1994: 238) concurs: “this argument seems to miss the point as there is no reason to contrast the responsibilities of journalists with the question of freedom of the press”.

38 On the issue of licensing of journalists, Olsen (1986: 166) points out that although broadcast networks are licensed and have always had its market restricted by law, this form of licensing does not add to the power of journalists as it has for many other professions. Here, it is the owner of the network (not the journalists/broadcasters therein) who benefits from market restriction. Olsen suggests that it is perhaps as a result that journalists tend to be “indifferent towards regulation rather than seeing it as tool for self-aggrandizement” (1986:166). Olsen (1986:170-2) also illustrates that the issue of legal protections for journalists is not confined to the question of licensing (autonomy from the state), showing how it is important to examine the alternative protections of their autonomy and professional prerogative that journalists have sought. These can be seen, for instance, in journalists’ privilege to maintain the confidence of sources awarded by the courts as an illustration of increasing recognition by courts and state legislatures of professional prerogative (and autonomy of decision-making in relation to employers).


40 See, for example, Goldstein (1985) and Olen (1988). In fact, some journalism theorists have rejected ‘the professionalisation model’ altogether because “it does not provide a good fit for journalism” and “overlooks questions that need to be addressed when studying journalism’s development” including the evolution of the occupation’s standards, values, and goals (Aucoin, 1993). However, the ‘professionalisation model’ referred to by this author is rooted in a taxonomic/traits understanding of professionalism. Furthermore, Aucoin erroneously assumes that a theoretical model must necessarily “fit” the case in question, thus expecting it to function as something more than an analytic tool or heuristic device.
In the minority, however, are theorists such as Hodges (1986) who attempt to show how journalism may in fact be granted professional status based on the argument that journalism does in fact possess ‘most of the important’ attributes of professionalism. Furthermore, Hodges believes that journalism “does have the potential for cultivating the most important ones”.41 Taking American journalism as a case point, Hodges argues that journalism is “devoted to meeting some basic and practical needs of people”,42 and that journalists “have tended to self-organization”.43 Focussing on the perceived benefits of professionalism for both journalists and audiences, Hodges advocates the further acquisition of ‘professional traits’. However, this continued reliance on the structural/organisational attributes of professionalism misses the very point that more recent theorists have attempted to make concerning the limited theoretical utility of the ‘traits-oriented’ understandings of professionalism.

‘Professional attitudes’ of journalists

Dissatisfied with the rejection of journalism as ‘a profession’, some theorists have sought to claim for journalism a professional status by using a modified definition of the concept. Moving beyond the structural characteristics of the occupation, such researchers have concentrated on the members of the occupation rather than the occupation itself,44 concerned with identifying attitudinal and psychological attributes of individual journalists.45 Beginning from the premise that the self-definition of journalists is an important indicator of professionalisation,46 researchers have translated the ‘essential’ characteristics of professionals into job values to be identified in the attitudes of practitioners.47 Representative of this approach is McLeod and Hawley’s 1964 study, which used a ‘professional orientation index’ to measure ‘professional’ and ‘non-professional’ orientations among the journalists they surveyed.48 Professional variables included service, autonomy, altruism, responsibility and ethics. Non-professional values included salary, job

---

41 Hodges (1986: 36).
42 Likewise, Broddason (1994) uses an alternative definition of professions as a ‘sacred occupation’ in the Durkheimian sense, emphasising journalism’s ‘service of vital needs’ and democratic functions.
43 Hodges (1986: 34).
48 McLeod and Hawley (1964: 531).
security and occupational prestige. This methodology has been influential among journalism researchers.\(^49\)

From a methodological perspective, a central limitation of this approach is its reliance on an overly simplistic and normative dichotomy of so-called ‘professional’ and ‘non-professional’ characteristics.\(^50\) The reduction of the traits devised by taxonomic theorists into a ‘professional orientation index’ to measure journalists’ attitudes fails to take into consideration how such values may get produced and reproduced both in the work setting and outside of it. By focusing solely on journalists’ ostensible attitudes, the influence of context and culture are overlooked. Furthermore, the emphasis of the positive nature of professionalism also overlooks its ideological nature highlighted in the more critical literature. As Birkhead argues,

> in a process strikingly similar to an occupation seeking professional status, the journalism researcher has sought to legitimate his[sic] subject of inquiry in relation to a sought-after social ideal. In the process he[sic] has become an apologist for a professional ideology justifying a form of occupational control.\(^51\)

**Traditional views on the ‘professionalisation’ of journalism**

Reminiscent of the temporal/sequential approaches to professionalisation overviewed above, others have treated journalistic professionalism as a relative phenomenon.\(^52\) Such work has embodied an implicit comparison of (predominantly American) journalism to ‘true’ professions in terms of the occupation’s structural development, focusing on what ‘professional’ elements it has relative to other ‘fully professionalised’ occupations. It has been in comparison to the archetypal professions of medicine and law that judgements have been made as to how far journalism has

---

\(^49\) Similarly, Windahl and Rosengren (1978) aimed to describe the ‘professional orientation’ of American journalists using surveys of working journalists to obtain their data. Their study began with the assumption that to qualify as ‘professionals’, journalists should largely hold a positive view toward higher education, and a belief that specialised knowledge should be rewarded. Other ‘professional attitudes’ surveyed included the value journalists placed upon their autonomy and upon professional organisations that administered codes of ethics with sanctions. Also considered was the degree to which journalists agreed with the concept of service to the client/public (1978: 473). Henningham (1988) also surveyed the ‘professional attitudes’ of Australian journalists employing a similar approach. While concluding that Australian journalists can be regarded as having a ‘professional outlook’ (1988: 86-87), little is said as to the significance or implications of this conclusion either for the practice or culture of Australian journalism.

\(^50\) While Spilchial and Sparks (1994) also highlight the main downfall of such methodology, it was this approach (and its problematic assumptions) that the authors employed in their survey of ‘professional’ and ‘non-professional’ aspirations among first-year journalism students in twenty-two countries.

\(^51\) Birkhead (1982: 17).

\(^52\) Le Roy (1973: 251).
undergone the process of professionalisation. The consensus arrived at in this body of work is that journalism is a ‘semi-profession’. This conclusion has been based on observations that the occupation is moving in the direction of ‘established professions’ by acquiring more and more of their characteristics such as formal systems of education, and self-regulatory structures such as codes of ethics.

As one critic of this approach observes, “... most writing on the journalistic occupation portrays it as a progressively developing entity striving for professional status through the gradual acquisition of the accoutrements of professionalism such as codes of ethics and university training”. Assuming a progression towards an ideal state of organisation, practice and attitudes, most journalism research conceptualises professionalisation as a unilinear process, framed in terms of whether journalism ‘matches up’ to the traditional professions in terms of the particular hallmarks of professionalism it has acquired. By treating professionalisation as simply a process of acquiring certain characteristics, the idiosyncrasies of journalism are framed as ‘deficiencies’ which are assumed rather than analysed. Nor are they related to the particular historical cultural, social and political context in question.

It is apparent that much of the debate about journalistic professionalism has been underpinned by taxonomic assumptions, which have limited utility as tools for understanding the nature and development of journalism. This thesis submits that the taxonomic/traits models highlight not the inadequacy of journalism as a ‘profession’,

53 For instance, Versienti (1998) explicitly employs Wilensky’s (1964) ‘professionalisation model’ to determine the degree to which journalism has ‘professionalised’ in Italy, France, and the USA respectively. The author concludes that the occupation had attained different degrees of professionalisation in the three countries. However, rather than examining the different political and cultural traditions in the three countries that may have contributed to this trend, Versienti merely documents what ‘professional traits/attributes’ (e.g. formal training, certification, ethics codes) have been attained by the occupation in each country.

54 Splichal and Sparks (1994: 40). For example, Windahl and Signitzer (1992: 128) claim that “research has shown ... that journalists may attain only semi-professional status because, among other reasons, their knowledge base does not command the same respect as does that of occupational groups [with ‘full’ professional status]”. Similarly, Lambeth (1991: 106-7) defines (US) journalism a ‘craft with professional responsibilities’. Hence, the debate has largely centred upon attempts to formulate a structural definition of journalism as either ‘craft’, ‘art’, or ‘profession’ as Kimball (1965) illustrates. Others have accepted the taxonomic assumptions and sought to account for why journalism has not adopted all the ‘trappings’ of professionalism. According to some, the early and rapid commercialisation of the press has curtailed ‘a fully realised professionalisation of journalism’ (Schultz, 1995: 5 cited in Meadows, 1998: 76-77).

55 Dooley (1997: 8).

56 As Le Roy (1973: 252) points out, contrary to ‘natural history’ ideas of professionalisation characteristic of the functionalist tradition, the adoption of certain structural traits may proceed in a number of directions simultaneously. The case of US journalism shows how various professional associations within the occupation each sought legal protections, and to adopt ethics codes, self-regulatory systems, and training programmes separately.
but rather of the models themselves as a means of understanding how particular occupations achieve profession/professionalism in a particular context utilising the particular resources at their disposal at a given time.

Such an approach to journalistic professionalism has been given cursory treatment by journalism and mass communication theorists. For instance, McQuail suggests that a “factor at work in the historical development of modern news was the rise of a journalistic profession, which has entailed a claim to autonomy, a promise of some ethics of performance and of certain standards of service”. 57 He sees a trend towards adopting ethics codes in journalism as a “phenomenon [which] reflects the general process of professionalization of journalism, but also reflects the wish of the media industry to protect itself from criticism, and especially from the threat of external intervention and reduced autonomy”. 58 Such an approach to journalistic professionalisation is more useful because, rather than treating certain structural development as hallmarks of an arbitrary ‘professionalisation process’, it at least attempts to place them in their social, political and historical context and attempts to understand their occupational meaning.

This is the basis of an alternative approach to analysing professionalism that the present research aims to develop further. While this thesis is underpinned by a view that understanding journalistic professionalism involves more than simply identifying structural characteristics, it does not reject the significance of such developments as codes of ethics. In contrast to viewing them as essential components in a professionalisation process, it will examine the motivations and forces underlying their emergence. As the following sections aim to illustrate, these ideas are reflected in more recent sociological work on professions which focus on the social, historical, and political context in which claims to professionalism are made.

2.4 Symbolic Interactionist perspectives on professionalism

In the evolution of sociological theorising on professionalism, a more critical perspective on professions emerged from the Chicago school of symbolic interactionists. Moving away from the functionalist/traits focus on the structural elements of professions and their evolution, the central analytical focus within

57 McQuail (1992: 186).
symbolic interactionism was the actions and interactions of individuals and groups in their work.\textsuperscript{59} Illustrative of this perspective was the work of Hughes (1957). For Hughes, it was not important to ask ‘is this occupation a profession?’ but rather what it means for an occupation to claim to be a profession.\textsuperscript{60} From this perspective, professions were seen as essentially the same as other occupations, with ‘profession’ as merely a title claimed by certain occupations at certain points in time. Similarly, Becker (1962) considered profession as a ‘folk concept’, or ‘occupational status symbol’,\textsuperscript{61} and was interested in the role the title plays in the aspirations and fortunes of those occupations claiming it, rather than with some quality or trait that all occupations claiming the title may share.\textsuperscript{62} Of primary significance from this perspective is how society determines who and what is ‘professional’, how people ‘make’ or ‘accomplish’ profession by their activities, and what the consequences are for the way they see themselves and perform their work.\textsuperscript{63} For instance, Dingwall maintained that sociologists needed to “… [e]xamine how occupations are established as discriminable events through the interpretive work of their members and of outsiders, and how certain occupations further seek to establish themselves as ‘professions’ through certain kinds of appeals”.\textsuperscript{64}

Symbolic interactionism has been seen to offer more than the earlier traits and functionalist accounts of profession/professionalism. However, its micro-sociological focus on individuals rather than the institutional features of professions means that the wider structures of power and ongoing historical processes are overlooked.\textsuperscript{65} The analyses of Hughes and Becker have been further critiqued for their failure to explain what a claim for professional status entailed in terms of broader privileges, and for overlooking the structural conditions under which occupations’ claims to ‘professionalism’ were liable to be successful.\textsuperscript{66} These factors have been a central interest of the macro-sociological work undertaken by sociologists of the professions.

\textsuperscript{59} MacDonald (1995: 4).
\textsuperscript{60} Hughes (1957: 44-5).
\textsuperscript{61} These terms were used in addition to ‘honorable title’ (Becker, 1962). Freidson (1994: 170) also employs the term ‘folk concept’ in this manner.
\textsuperscript{62} Dietrich and Roberts (1998: 23).
\textsuperscript{63} Freidson (1994: 20).
\textsuperscript{64} Dingwall (1976: 347).
\textsuperscript{65} Saks (1983: 5).
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid: 5.
2.5 Power perspectives on professionalism

Out of symbolic interactionism arose an alternative perspective that is often referred to as ‘the power approach’. This approach dominated in the 1960s and 1970s when debates moved from a focus on forms of professionalisation to their functions, which were taken as ideological rather than socially functional.\(^\text{67}\) Power theorists moved away from the micro-sociological perspective employed by the symbolic interactionists, and devoted more attention to the wider dynamics of professionalism and professionalisation, emphasising its political character and conflict-oriented nature.\(^\text{68}\) The following section illustrates the central themes of the power approaches through an overview of selected works that have embraced this perspective.

The ‘power approach’ was an evolutionary stage in theorising on the professions which united theorists who rejected the concept of professionalism as a value system in favour of a critical assessment of professions as elite conspiracies of powerful occupational workers.\(^\text{69}\) Theorists who have been placed under the auspices of the ‘power paradigm’ have in fact approached professionalism from varying perspectives,\(^\text{70}\) including neo-Marxian (e.g. Johnson 1972/1982), neo-Weberian (e.g. Collins, 1990), or both of these (e.g. Larson, 1977).\(^\text{71}\) Others depict professionalism as a phenomenon of labour market organisation (e.g. Freidson, 1994),\(^\text{72}\) or as the process through which occupations constitute and reproduce themselves relative to others (e.g. Abbott, 1988).\(^\text{73}\) However, power theorists tend to share the view that the distinguishing feature of the professions is purely their ability to gain societal recognition as a ‘profession’.\(^\text{74}\) Occupational power is deemed as the crucial factor in evaluating the professional status of occupational groups. For power theorists,

\(^{67}\) Abbott (1988: 5). Abbott (1988: 6), however, does caution against a complete distinction between the power perspective and the traditional approaches to professions, particularly given that both assume that medicine and law provide the ‘best’ illustrations of profession.

\(^{68}\) Siegrist (1990: 178).

\(^{69}\) Evetts (2003a: 401).

\(^{70}\) MacDonald (1995: 4). As MacDonald (1995: 5) suggests, the ‘power approach’ has essentially been a label given to approaches to professionalism that have abandoned the traditional functionalist traits orthodoxy.

\(^{71}\) Illustrative of the way that sociological theorising about the professions has digressed is the way that theorists have debated the theoretical orientation of Larson (1977) and her later works; whether they can be classified as ‘neo-Marxian’, ‘neo-Weberian’, or both (see MacDonald, 1995: 12, 22, 30).

\(^{72}\) Brint (1993: 262).

\(^{73}\) This characterisation is derived from Johnson (1995: 17).

\(^{74}\) Dietrich and Roberts (1998: 23).
‘professionalisation’ is seen as a matter of group struggle for privilege and prestige rather than merely the accumulation of traits.

Challenges to the taxonomic approaches: From professionalism as normative value system to professionalism as ideology

Much of the work that falls into the ‘power approach’ to professionalism consisted of meta-theorising about the direction that the sociology of professions should take based upon a critique of the taxonomic approaches. This body of work represented a transition in the conception of ‘professionalism as normative value system’ to ‘professionalism as ideology’.

Klegon’s (1978) work captured a central tenet of the power approaches, arguing that sociological work on professions needed to move beyond the preoccupation with abstract traits of professions to the social conditions that allow particular groups first to claim, and then to perpetuate their claim to holding special expertise. Such an alternative approach, argued Klegon, needed to “examine the use of professionalism as strategy, and the social and historical milieus leading to attempts to use that strategy”.

Further criticisms of the taxonomic tradition centred upon its conceptualisation of ‘professionalisation’. Of the process approaches advanced by such theorists as Wilensky (1964), power theorist Eliot Freidson argued that while avoiding any conscious definition of ‘profession’, it is implicitly defined as an occupation that has obtained professional status. Problematising this conception, Freidson contended that

[an emphasis on process rather than structure, on professionalization rather than the attributes of professions ... requires one to define the direction of the process, and the end-state of professionalism towards which an occupation may be moving. Without some definition of profession the concept of professionalization is virtually meaningless, as is the intention to study process rather than structure.]

---

75 Evetts (2003a: passim).
77 Klegon (1978: 270).
78 Freidson (1994: 15). Freidson (1994: 28) also raises the question: “Even if one defines the traits constituting the end-point towards which the process is assumed to be headed, how many of those traits, and in what degree, must an occupation display before it makes sense to talk of it as in the process of professionalization ...?”
Other power theorists took issue with the taxonomic understanding of professionalisation as a unilinear process, and the notion of a fixed sequence of professional development. This is what Abbott refers to as the ‘common career pattern’ assumption of the professionalisation literature. British theorist Terence Johnson (1972) also critiqued what he classified as the ‘inventory approaches’ to professionalism because they assumed that there were ‘true’ professions which exhibit to some degree all ‘essential’ elements of professionalism. This was to overlook the important differences between alleged ‘essential characteristics’ and historically specific institutionalised forms of control. Like Freidson, who criticised the failure of the taxonomic approaches to acknowledge ‘profession’ as a historical and cultural construction, Johnson preferred to use the concept of ‘professionalisation’ to denote historical processes. For Johnson, ‘professionalisation’ was more usefully seen as the emergence of professionally recognised groups under particular historical and cultural conditions. Johnson maintained that these circumstances condition both the sequence of an occupation’s development and the nature of their professional characteristics. He also urged analysis of how the latter factors in the overall identity of an occupation.

**Professions’ power sources and institutional support**

A central interest for power theorists was the power sources utilised by occupations in their struggle to achieve and maintain professional status and way that this power is institutionalised within the emerging profession. Power theorists such as Johnson (1972) regarded ‘professionalisation’ as a political process of gaining greater occupational control over work, and were interested in the role of power in establishing and maintaining that control. Johnson (1972) promoted the analysis of “professional occupations in terms of their power relations in society - their sources of power and authority and the ways in which they use them”.

---

79 Johnson (1972: 22-23).
80 Abbott (1998: 3).
81 Johnson (1972: 26).
82 Freidson (1994: 9).
83 Brante (1990: 78).
84 Johnson (1972: 26-8). This approach is similar to what Torstendahl (1990) called a ‘historical development perspective’, concerned with identifying the (historical and other) conditions for the category of ‘profession’ to exist.
85 Johnson (1972: 23).
Likewise, Freidson was concerned with the ways in which work can be organised and controlled and the institutions necessary for gaining and maintaining that organisation. Taking into account the institutional features of professions and their wider sources of power, Freidson saw the distinctive autonomy of a profession not as absolute, but rather as dependent on the power and protection of the state. For Freidson, a profession’s privileged position is secured by the influence of the state and the elite that sponsor it. As Freidson maintained:

Professions are intimately connected with formal political processes ... [T]he maintenance and improvement of a profession’s position in the market place requires continuous political activity. A profession must become an interest group to at once advance its aims and protect itself from those with competing aims.

Evidently influenced by the early works of power theorists such as Johnson and Freidson, Klegon (1978) also maintained that to understand the dynamics of professionalism it is necessary to examine the relation between the occupation and its practitioners to other aspects of the social structure. Capturing a central theme of the power paradigm, Klegon argued that occupational sources of power, or resources, are best seen not as isolated within the occupation itself, but as stemming from linkages to the wider social structure. Klegon urged an understanding of professional organisation and control as bound up with other institutional forces and arrangements of power. For this theorist, the successful use of a ‘professionalising strategy’ depends on the sources of power that allow an occupation to gain and maintain professional recognition. This is what Klegon referred to as the ‘external dynamic’ of professionalism:

From the perspective of the external dynamic, it is the relationship of an occupation to social arrangements of power, and the way in which those relationships affect the social meaning of an occupation, that affect the ability of an occupation to obtain and maintain professional occupational control.

---

87 Freidson (1994: 8).
88 MacDonald (1995: 8).
90 Klegon (1978: 272-3).
91 Ibid: 271.
Professionalism as boundary building and monopolisation

Post-functionalist studies have analysed the various strategies of social closure and exclusion commonly deployed by professions to claim exclusive ownership of particular areas of expertise, and to raise the status and prestige of their practice. Indeed, occupational closure and control, boundary building, and monopolisation are concepts central to the power perspectives on professionalism; hence the classification of theorists such as Freidson and Larson as ‘monopolists’. Drawing on both neo-Weberian and neo-Marxist perspectives, Larson’s (1977) work applied Johnson’s (1972) premise concerning the need to identify the historical conditions for professionalism. In her influential analysis of nineteenth century professions, Larson depicted professions as interest groups linked to the class system of capitalist society. She analysed professionalisation as a ‘collective mobility project’ in which occupations seek to improve their economic position and social standing or prestige. Drawing on Freidson’s work, Larson viewed professionalisation as the construction of a market in professional commodities or services, and was interested in “... how particular groups of people attempt to negotiate the boundaries of an area in the social division of labour and establish their control over it”. Thus, professionalisation was conceptualised as “... the process by which producers of special services sought to constitute and control a market for their expertise ... [and] also as a collective assertion of social status and as a collective process of upward mobility”.

Like Freidson, who saw professions as those occupations exercising the capacity to create exclusive shelters in the labour market through the monopolisation of educational training and credentials, Larson also focussed on the monopolisation efforts of professions. However, Larson critiqued Freidson’s neglect of the relationship between historical conditions and the attainment of monopoly in the division of labour:

... [W]hile Freidson’s analysis emphasizes that a profession must gain support from strategic social or political groups, the institutional approach suffers from

---

95 Brain (1991) refers to the works of Larson (1977), Freidson (1970) and Johnson (1972) as the core examples of the ‘dominant macro-historical perspective’ on professionalism.
96 Freidson (1994: 3).
97 Ibid: 3.
100 Ibid: xvi (italics in original).
a tendency to present professions as categories which emerge from the division of labor in unmediated connection with society as a whole.¹⁰²

Larson proceeded to illustrate how the type of society and the class structure were critical for the emergence of nineteenth century professions. In particular, she highlighted how two aspects of modernity; namely, scientific knowledge and the existence of free markets creating ‘opportunities for income’ deriving from their knowledge and educational qualifications, were critical in the rise of the professions.¹⁰³ The keystone of Larson’s (1977) conceptualisation was the ideal-typical construct of the ‘professional project’.¹⁰⁴ The ‘professional project’ was the means whereby social mobility and market control arose as outcomes of establishing a link between occupation and education.¹⁰⁵ For Larson, the market control aspect of the project required a body of relatively abstract knowledge, susceptible of practical application, and a market, or potential market for a profession’s services.¹⁰⁶ Rejecting profession/professionalisation as a social fact, and acknowledging the role of claims to expertise, the concept of ‘professional project’ captured the dynamics of professionalisation, implying an endless effort on the part of an occupation to defend, maintain and improve its position.¹⁰⁷

Influenced by Larson’s (1977) work,¹⁰⁸ Burridge et al’s ‘actor-based framework’ for the study of professions also displays an affinity with perspectives that emphasise the wider institutional features of professionalism, particularly the active role of the state in professions. This framework gives priority to identifying the key actors involved in the struggle of an occupation to establish itself as ‘a profession’, and the varieties of the interrelationships over time and points of dispute between them.¹⁰⁹ Of particular concern are the interests, resources, and strategies of

---

¹⁰³ MacDonald (1995: 9, 30).
¹⁰⁴ MacDonald (1995: 34) explains the Weberian concept of ‘ideal-type’ as an approximation where “elements can be more or less present and occasionally absent”. Freidson (1994: 330) suggests that the concept refers to “logically consistent extremes rather than a faithful description of any real institution”. Similarly, Oppenheimer (1973: 213) uses the term to denote “a perfect or extreme model”, where any actual case can only approximate or approach an ‘ideal type’.
four main actors - the profession, the state, the university, and the consumers of professional services and the interplay between them. \(^{110}\) Burrage et al submit that

If one could identify the interests, resources and strategies of each of these four actors in a number of countries, and how their interaction has changed over time, we would be able to advance general propositions about professionalization and be on our way to a general theory of professions. \(^{111}\)

This framework has explanatory potential in highlighting the involvement of the state, either indirectly or directly, in professions’ organisation, their education, training, licensing, and ensuring a market for their services, and the general policies to which professions are subject. \(^{112}\) However, because it neglects ‘other professions’ as a key variable, it has limited theoretical utility as a means of exploring interprofessional competition, which, for some theorists, is the key to understanding the evolution of professions. \(^{113}\)

Neo-Weberian theorists have been among those to acknowledge the importance of ‘other professions’ as a variable for analysis. ‘Social closure’ was a term employed by such theorists as Parkin (1979), Collins (1979), and Murphy (1988) to capture the boundary building and maintenance aspects of professionalism. Focusing on market conditions and viewing society as an arena where competing groups struggle with one another and the state to gain power and status, professions were seen as interest groups which employed a strategy of ‘social closure’ to defend and maintain their privileged position relative to other professions. \(^{114}\) British theorists such as MacDonald began with the premise that “[w]hat needs to be added to Larson’s formulation/conceptualisation is the recognition that a profession does not merely mark out its domain in a bargain with the state; it has to fight other occupations for it, not only at the time, but before and after as well”. \(^{115}\) The concept of ‘social closure’ was employed to denote

... one of the most important means by which the professional project is pursued and constitutes the conceptual counterpart to Larson’s model. The

\(^{110}\) Ibid: 221-222.

\(^{111}\) Ibid: 218.

\(^{112}\) Ibid: 210

\(^{113}\) Burrage et al implicitly acknowledge this limitation themselves when they state that Abbott’s (1988) ‘systems approach’ (outlined below) adds a ‘fifth actor’ - other professions - although they see the four actors they identify as ‘sufficient’ (Burrage, Jarausch, and Siegrist (1990: 207).

\(^{114}\) Dietrich and Roberts (1998: 23). Freidson (1994: 202) suggests that the term ‘social closure’ is the Weberian equivalent of the term ‘labour market shelter’ he employs to refer to much the same set of processes.

occupation and its organisation attempts to close access to the occupation, to its knowledge, to its education, training, credentials and to its markets in services and jobs; only ‘eligibles’ will be admitted ... Exclusion is aimed not only at the attainment and maintenance of monopoly, but also at the usurpation of the existing jurisdiction of others [and their privileges] and at the upward social mobility of the whole group.\textsuperscript{116}

Other theorists have also emphasised the importance of occupational groups’ abilities to form and maintain occupational boundaries, which are seen as social or cultural divisions that help signify a group’s work, societal roles, and legitimacy.\textsuperscript{117} To do so, “professions must adopt various strategies, including the dissemination of professionalising rhetoric in a variety of forms and venues, and become involved in social actions designed to influence public opinion and legislatures”.\textsuperscript{118} Boundary building and maintenance are seen as central to an occupational group’s gaining of social legitimacy.

To establish and maintain occupational boundaries, groups must define, claim and seek to control certain work tasks; they must devise strategies to ward off the members of other occupations seeking to encroach on their work terrain; they must control the process of admitting new workers to the occupational fold; and they must strive to become solely responsible for penalizing those who violate the group’s standards. In addition, occupational groups seeking to establish and maintain boundaries must create markets for their particular skills and/or products.\textsuperscript{119}

The notions of boundary building and maintenance are central to Andrew Abbott’s (1988) ‘system’ approach, which has as its focus the notion of interprofessional competition. Rather than assuming a characteristic and universalistic history of professionalization,\textsuperscript{120} professionalism is seen as a system of competitive occupational relations centring on jurisdicational claims and disputes.\textsuperscript{121} Abbott

\textsuperscript{116} MacDonald (1995: 27, 29). In addition to closure strategies, Selander (1990: 142) also discusses the concept of ‘associative strategies’ as a preliminary strategy which occupations employ to “assimilate organised interests and thus neutralise them”. Associative strategies are utilised until the occupation “is strong enough to make social and occupational demarcations, to enclose a certain area of interest”. The same author also refers to work undertaken on Swedish journalists, which describes the successful use of a closure strategy to enclose an area of work from other occupational groups, and how Swedish journalists have begun usurping traditional work of typesetters. This work suggests that the two occupations are now involved in ‘borderline fighting’ (how to make demarcations between their respective occupations) (Selander 1990: 147, 150). This European literature displays an affinity with Abbott’s (1998) approach overviewed later in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{117} Abbott (1988: 56).

\textsuperscript{118} Dooley (1997: 7).

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid: 7.

\textsuperscript{120} Abbott (1988: 214).

\textsuperscript{121} Johnson (1995: 14, 17).
employs the term 'jurisdiction' to refer to the body of exclusive claims, recognised rights, and the legitimised link between profession and task – the channels of public acceptance of a profession.\textsuperscript{122} Abbott contends that "[p]rofessions develop when jurisdictions become vacant, which may happen because they are newly created or because an earlier tenant has left them altogether or lost its firm grip on them".\textsuperscript{123}

In Abbott's formulation, a profession's control of a jurisdiction entails both cultural control and social control. Cultural control arises in work with the task, and is legitimated by formal knowledge that is rooted in major cultural values like rationality, logic and science.\textsuperscript{124} Social control arises out of active claims made in three key arenas - through public opinion, the legal system, and the workplace.\textsuperscript{125} Abbott states that "a full jurisdictional claim is normally made in the public, then later in the legal arena. It is based on the power of the profession's abstract knowledge to define and solve a certain set of problems, which may or may not already be under the full jurisdiction of some other professional group".\textsuperscript{126} The ability to "define old problems in new ways" through abstraction is seen as a crucial factor influencing the power of a profession's knowledge base.\textsuperscript{127}

The 'boundary building' aspects of professionalism have been classified by Klegon (1978) as the 'internal dynamic' of professionalism, which involves the efforts of practitioners to raise their status, define the services which they perceive only they can perform properly, and to achieve and maintain autonomy and influence. According to Klegon, the 'internal dynamic'

\[\ldots\text{ is seen in the attempt of many occupations to claim professional status by announcing that they are trustworthy, have a code of ethics, a professional association, and perform important services which only they are qualified to do, and, therefore, are deserving of autonomy and prestige. The internal dynamic is also seen in the efforts of practitioners to maintain their position and exclusive claim to the performance of services by regulating entry, controlling requirements, defining levels of competence, and protecting their special knowledge base through mystification.}\textsuperscript{128}
The ideological character of professional claims

Power theorists assert that the more control an occupation has over various processes and resources (such as defining the group’s work tasks and their guiding normative values, controlling education and admittance to the group, punishing transgressions, and resisting the controlling efforts of economic, societal, governmental or political forces), the more occupational power they amass.\(^{129}\) Throughout these processes, certain organisational forms and professionalising rhetoric, rather than being a static dimension of a professionalising process, play a dynamic role in the amassing of societal legitimacy. Klegon captures the dominating view among power theorists that the characteristics that have been used to define professions can often be best understood as *strategies* for the achievement and maintenance of a particular type of occupational control – a particular type of social relationship which grants power and prestige to the practitioners.\(^{130}\)

Freidson, Larson and Abbott are theorists who also assert the ideological character of professional claims. For Freidson, the cognitive and normative features of professions (viewed as ‘essential’ traits and empirical characteristics of professions by traits/functionalist theorists) are neither fixed nor stable attributes. Instead, they are used strategically as the basis of arguments to establish boundaries of their domains and membership,\(^{131}\) and as resources to gain professional monopoly and dominance.\(^{132}\) As Saks notes of the power perspective, the development of such features as codes of ethics and formalised education programmes are typically associated with the process of establishing this pattern of exclusionary social closure, even if professions cannot necessarily be assumed to embody the high levels of altruism and theoretical expertise that has been suggested by some earlier trait and functionalist writers.\(^{133}\)

Likewise, Freidson maintains that claims to knowledge and skill are essential elements in a political process which takes place in an arena of conflicting or competing aims from other groups.

\(^{129}\) Dooley (1997: 7-8).
\(^{130}\) Klegon (1978: 269, Italics in original).
\(^{131}\) MacDonald (1998: 8). As Freidson (1970: 83) further explained, it is only “through a process of political negotiation and persuasion that the society is led to believe that it is desirable to grant an occupation the professional status of self-regulative autonomy”.
\(^{133}\) Saks (1999: 130).
Indeed, special knowledge and skill is used to define professions and aspiring occupations have been excluded from consideration on the basis of the sociologist’s judgement that they do not possess ‘basic’ knowledge and skill ... [W]hen seen as part of a political process, however, knowledge and skill are claimed by a group to advance its interests ... [C]laims of knowledge function as ideologies ... in gaining public and legislative support for an organised occupation.134

Larson also emphasised professions’ use of knowledge as a claim or resource in their struggle for power and status. According to Larson, a profession’s service ideology helps to gain the public’s acceptance of its monopoly in the marketplace.135 Thus, while characteristics like special knowledge and skill have been seen as ‘essential’ traits of profession, they are seen from this perspective as part of a political process in which knowledge and skill are claimed by a group to advance its interests. For Freidson too, professions’ ideologies of expertise, public service, ethics and collegial control have empirical status as claims “... designed to persuade those in power that the work is in the public interest and that workers are dedicated to doing good work and using their privilege for the good of others rather than for their own interest”. From this perspective, a professional ideology is an important component of the process by which occupations seek to gain and maintain their control.136 A professional ideology is, for these theorists, of crucial importance to professionalisation, both in terms of internal cohesion and outside recognition or acceptance ... A professional ideology not only inspires practice and constrains practitioners, but also justifies privilege via public service to central societal values.137

Abbott extends this line of thought, arguing that the development of the formal attributes of professionalism is “bound up with the pursuit of jurisdiction and the besting of rival professions”.138 According to this theorist, professions’ social organisation/internal structure is significant from the perspective of interprofessional

---

136 Ibid: 124. Coinciding with the emergence of more critical perspectives on professions, Brante (1990: 76) explains the ‘cynical perspective’ which gained prominence in the sociology of knowledge during the 1970s: “Professions are still understood as groups with long and high education. But the resulting credential and alleged theoretical competence is employed strategically to seek monopoly of sectors of the labor market; a speciality (knowledge monopoly) is used to obtain occupational monopoly; that is, to eliminate competition. Professions are seen as instruments, as resources by which their members can gain higher income, power, and prestige - a kind of collective egoism”.
competition, and the success of their jurisdictional claims. Abbott argues that a full jurisdiction must normally be made by organised groups. He explains that “jurisdictional claims furnish the impetus and the pattern to organizational developments”, where a profession’s claims “usually assert the efficacy of the profession’s social organisation in applying or further developing its knowledge or in controlling its work”. Formal and informal controls through schooling, examinations, licensing, and ethics codes shape and maintain the internal structure/social organisation of the profession where the more strongly organised a profession is, the more effective its claims to jurisdiction. According to Abbott, “[w]hat matters is not having or not having an ethics code, but whether having or not having one influences competition for jurisdiction at that particular moment”.

The departure in theoretical approach away from the notion of ‘profession as given’ toward an interest in how groups seek and consolidate professional positioning is a dominant theme of the power approaches. Characteristically, the concept ‘profession’ refers to a group that controls its own work, is organized by a special set of institutions (namely, the university, professional associations, and the state) sustained in part by a particular ideology of expertise and service. ‘Professionalism’ refers to that ideology and special set of institutions. The usefulness of this perspective is that it does not automatically exclude such occupations as journalism as unworthy of study because of an assumed disparity between its structural or organisational characteristics and those of ‘true’ professions. As power theorist Eliot Freidson suggests, any occupation to which the title ‘profession’ has been attached is an appropriate case for analysis irrespective of whether or not it conforms to various definitions.

---

139 Ibid: 71.
140 Ibid: 2.
141 Ibid: 70.
142 Ibid: 82.
143 Ibid: 82. Abbott (1988) departs from the more ‘orthodox’ power approach in his views on professions’ ability to monopolise. While Freidson and Larson saw the ability to monopolise as crucial aspects of professionalism, Abbott (1988: 225) argues that whether an occupation’s inability to monopolise makes it a profession or not is “not particularly interesting”. Abbott takes American journalism as an example of an occupation that, although it has schools, professional associations, and ethics codes, has not achieved exclusion. What is significant, according to Abbott (1988: 226), is how interprofessional competition with hired publicity agents in the 1920s shaped the journalistic occupation, its drive for professional structures, and practitioners’ formal conception of their jurisdiction of news. (Similar views on the issue of monopolisation are held by Edman, 2001).
144 Freidson (1994: 10); Brint (1993: 263).
2.6 From structures to discourse: Macro-level analyses of the development of journalism as an occupation

A number of works dedicated to exploring the development of journalism as an occupation have drawn on the critical themes and macro-level approach of the power perspectives canvassed above. Influenced by their concern with the formal structures of political economy, Christian (1980) correlates the evolution of the occupational ideologies used by two British journalists' representative organisations for social and economic advancement to trends in the political economy of the British press since the late nineteenth century. Christian illustrates how divergent types of occupational ideology have been expressed in conflicts between the two principal representative journalists' organisations; the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), and the Institute of Journalists (IoJ). Specifically, Christian highlights how the NUJ's occupational unionist ideology underpinned its use of trade union strategies to advance the position of the working journalists who formed its membership. On the other hand, the NUJ's rival body, the IoJ (whose membership was not confined to working journalists) maintained a predominantly professional status-seeking ideology employing professional self-control strategies (such as the promotion of journalists' registration legislation) to advance the social status of the occupation. Christian concludes that the political economy of the press set the limits within which journalists' choices of occupational organisation and action have taken place. This explains the increasing appeal of trade union strategies for British journalists as an active response to the effects of commercialisation on their employment conditions and economic circumstances, and a corresponding decline in appeal of professionalism, as a separate rival strategy, amongst working journalists.\footnote{Christian (1980). Taylor and Willis (1999:123) define 'occupational ideology' as the self-perception(s) of media practitioners and the ways it impacts upon the operations of the media organisations they inhabit. Pavalko (1971:192-3) offers a more universal definition as "the system of beliefs, values and stereotypes that exist to some degree in all occupations [which] ... functions to interpret the work in a manner that its importance will be enhanced in the eyes of members and the public or a significant segment of the public".}

\footnote{Underscoring this argument is a view concerning the compatibility of unionism and professionalism, which tend to be positioned as diametrically opposed modes of organisation and strategies for advancing the interests of an occupational group. Krause (1977: 75-6) for example, maintains that although in both cases the goal is collective social mobility, unionization is a 'conflict-based process', while the strategy of professionalisation appeals to a 'social consensus model'. However, Selander (1990: 142) disagrees on the point that both unionism and professionalism both aim towards upward social mobility, arguing that trade unionist strategies do not aim to cross class boundaries at all. The relationship between unionism and professionalism as modes of occupational control is explored further in Parry and Parry (1977); and Kerdner and Kaufman (1995).}
Also situated within the body of journalism research that focuses on the interrelationships between the development journalism as an occupation, its professional values, and changes in structure of the press is Elliot’s (1978) work. His account of the development of British journalism since 1800 supports the central theme of Christian (1980) that the principal changes in the occupation, practice and ideology of journalism have been shaped by the changing economic requirements of the press industry. This is a theme that is echoed in Boyd-Barrett’s (1980) study of the development of formal training structures for British journalists.

Like Christian and Elliot, Boyd-Barrett emphasises the importance of understanding professionalism in terms of the broader political economic context as a crucial force shaping both the development of professional structures and the form they take. Focussing on the evolution of journalism training in Britain, the author argues that its provision has not been determined purely by the specific range of abilities seen as necessary for the profession, but the politico-cultural factors that have underpinned and shaped it. According to Boyd-Barrett, a ‘professionalization hypothesis’ insufficiently accounts for the evolution of formal training structures.148 By this, the author means that it is insufficient to frame the progression of training systems simply as a milestone on the path to professionalisation. The political-economic and politico-cultural forces that have shaped such professional forms must also be recognised. As Boyd-Barrett shows, in the British case such forces have included recommendations from outside the occupation (including government-sponsored inquiries into the press), threats of state-controlled training provision and of external competition in the higher education sector, as well as the resistance and influence of sectorial interests inside the industry.149

Research undertaken on United States journalism has also highlighted the influence of commercialisation on the development of journalism. Cronin (1992), for example, documents the development of ethics and standards by New York City newspapers between 1870 and 1920. Cronin’s central thesis is that the development of ethics and standards in journalism reflects the ambiguity surrounding journalism as both a for-profit business and a public service institution. The contradictory nature of journalism’s role, argues Cronin, has directly influenced the manner in which journalism had adopted ethics and standards:

149 Ibid: 335.
... [N]ewspapers faced a problem that other professions and quasi-professions did not: the press produced a commodity. Its purpose was geared to the production of news. This difference would plague the drive for professionalism. The media’s institutional role as a watchdog of the government and society would never become unified. The press, in reality, was not an institution but instead a series of diverse businesses with diverse products.150

Also consistent with approaches to journalistic professionalism that highlight the macro-level influences shaping occupational ideologies and professionalising strategies is Birkhead’s (1982) study of American journalism’s ‘professional project’; a term derived explicitly from the power analysis of Larson (1977). For Birkhead, the development of professionalism in American journalism is best understood not as a project of market control, but one involving the pursuit of societal license, with its dominant meaning as the assertion of social status. According to Birkhead, the professionalisation of United States journalism was ‘a comprehensive social project’ involving the renegotiation of the role of the press in the wake of industrialisation and the negotiation of social sanction for its commercial configuration.151 The impetus for journalism to professionalise was the need to resolve a public crisis of confidence in an industrial institution.152 As Birkhead submits,

[w]hat occurred in the name of professionalism primarily involved legitimating the press as a corporate institution. Journalism, unlike many other occupations submitting a claim for professional status, did not achieve a collegiate form of control that characterizes the established professions, but instead saw professionalism become a symbol, ideology and license for corporate journalism, and a mechanism for industrial and social control of the occupation itself.153

Birkhead argues that journalism’s technical basis allowed a professional claim of authority deriving from expertise, efficiency, functional specialisation and social dependence on the press.154

In the configuration of the modern press, the journalist emerged as society’s specialist in disseminating info. He[sic] acquired a technical and aesthetic virtuosity in handing it ... He[sic] was seen as serving a social need by surveying the societal landscape and compiling reports on events and issues, in the process removing complexity and avoiding abstraction in order that the

153 Ibid: 8.
information disseminated could be comprehended by a larger audience than would otherwise be competent to understand it.\textsuperscript{155}

Drawing on Larson's (1977) conceptualisation of professionalisation, Birkhead argues that for journalism, an occupation submerged in a bureaucratic organisation with little contact with its 'clients', market control and organisation were a 'weak facet' of the occupation's professional project. The author focuses on the origins of formal systems of journalism education to illustrate how a 'university connection' was employed in the pursuit of social status. Birkhead argues that a university connection was sought not to negotiate new lines of authority and control within the press. Rather, proponents of university education sought to cultivate the notion of journalism as a 'responsible profession' with the dominant meaning of 'professional education' for journalism framed in terms of moral, rather than academic or technical goals.\textsuperscript{156}

\section*{2.7 Theorising on objectivity as 'professional ideology'}

Central to western journalism's 'professional model' are the concepts of objectivity and neutrality. Objectivity is a particular form of media practice, particular to the task of information collection, processing and dissemination.\textsuperscript{157}

The main features are: adopting a position of detachment and neutrality towards the object of reporting (thus an absence of subjectivity or personal involvement); lack of partisanship; attachment to accuracy and other truth criteria and lack of ulterior motive or service to a third party.\textsuperscript{158}

How did objectivity become a 'professional norm' for journalists? There is a wide literature dealing with this question.\textsuperscript{159} Drawing on the more critical approach to

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid: 214.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid: 253. Similarly, Dimmick (1977) treats journalism codes and canons as 'occupational ideologies' using content analysis as the primary method of analysis.
\textsuperscript{157} Papathanassopoulos (2001: 507). Stoker (1995) distinguishes between objectivity as rooted in (scientific) theory, and objectivity as a set of pragmatic rules governing journalism practice, each of which originated in the United States during the 1920s and 1930s.
\textsuperscript{158} McQuail (1994: 145).
\textsuperscript{159} For example, Brown (1969:157-8) considers the social responsibility theory of the media as ideology, as well as 'older components of press ideology' such as notions of the press as 'watchdog', or 'the fourth branch of government' as professional ideologies which stress the importance of maintaining distance between journalists and their sources (1969: 163). On the evolution of 'the fourth estate' as a mass media ideology in Britain, see Boyce (1978), and on the evolution of objectivity in Australia, see Dunlevy (1998). For an overview of various critiques of objectivity, see McNair (1998: 71-77). See Kitch (1999) for a feminist analysis of objectivity, and Ryan (2001) for a defence of objectivity based on a critique of the alternatives previously posed.
professions that gained prominence within sociology during the 1960s and 1970s, theorists have analysed the rise of objectivity as an ideological resource used to justify journalism’s claim to professional status, legitimated with reference to a large public responsibility.160 A central research trend has been to relate the development of objectivity to the political-economic context from which professional ideologies are argued to have emerged and grown up in support of. Historical analyses of the institutionalisation of the objectivity norm in journalism tend to correlate the emergence of objectivity with the rise of the commercial press which, supported by an advertising base, gradually displaced the partisan political press. As news production became commercially viable through the selling of audiences to advertisers (rather than selling newspapers to partisan audiences), newspaper owners and editors increasingly aimed to print ostensibly ‘objective’ content in an attempt to appeal to readers of all political affiliations. Thus, the practices of neutrality and impartiality became institutionalised as the professional norm of objectivity.161

Three central themes are reflected in this approach. Firstly, that the advent of the commercial press saw the origins of the objectivity norm. Secondly, the commercial interests of newspaper owners/publishers resulted in their ‘invention’ of objectivity norm for journalism. A common assumption is that it was publishers/media owners, rather than journalists, who were the key initiators of the objective norm. Such accounts often treat professionalism as a ‘conspiracy’ lead by media owners/publishers,162 as a means of insulating owners against profit-threatening criticism, and of social control in the newsroom. Thirdly, it is widely believed that the advent of such technological developments as the telegraph and subsequent use of news agencies for the transmission of news were further factors underscoring the emergence of the objective news norm.

Carey’s (1969) work is illustrative of the commercially-oriented explanations of the emergence of ‘objectivity’ in journalism. In the context of British journalism, Carey argues that the practice was established as a commercial strategy of reporting rooted in the need of the mass newspaper to serve politically heterogeneous audiences. According to Carey, objectivity was rationalised into a canon of

professional competence and an ideology of professional responsibility.\footnote{Carey (1969: 32-3).} Kaul’s (1986) analysis of the United States case presents a similar argument. He contends that the notions of

... ‘independence’, ‘objectivity’ and ‘social responsibility’ emerged as ideological corollaries of commercial strategies deployed to stabilise marketplace crises within journalism ... Professional ethics was an ‘economic resource’ deployed to resolve commercial crises by legitimating marketplace practices, colonizing audiences, and co-opting journalists.\footnote{Kaul (1986: 47-8). Other works have traversed similar ground. For instance, Elliot (1978: 182) suggests that journalism’s claims to professionalism, based on the public’s right to know the truth and the criteria of objectivity and impartiality as strategic rituals for judging the reliability of news serve the interests of state. Likewise, Keeble (Personal Communication: 17 September 2001) argues that following the abolition of the ‘taxes on knowledge’ in Britain, ‘professionalism’ emerged to legitimate the press’ commercial transition. He argues that notions of professionalism and objectivity “are based on myths because they marginalise the political and economic roots of journalism and the media’s crucial ideological role for the state”. Smith’s (1978) analysis of the changing patterns of British journalism from the seventeenth century also illustrates how factors ranging from new communications technology, the acquisition of new skills, changes in normative beliefs and values, specialisation within news organisations, and the changing relationship between the press and the State helped to shape the definition and practice of British journalism. See Mindich (1998) for discussion on the parallel developments in the US context.}

Other theorists extend the commercial rationale for the rise of objectivity to the mandate of news agencies formed in the late nineteenth century. Much has been made of the “powerful economic and technological factors” underpinning the rise of objectivity.\footnote{Elliot (1978: 183).} The dominating economic and technological explanations hold that

objectivity was the by-product of a developing commercial market for journalism in the nineteenth century ... As newspapers became capitalist enterprises in the 1830s and after, they gradually lost their party affiliations and worked to establish their independence as producers of truth. The news agencies which formed in the nineteenth century had a particular need in this respect, since their information had to sell to newspapers of all political affiliations and styles.\footnote{McNair (1998: 67-8).}

Extending the notion that it was publishers, rather than journalists, that were largely responsible for defining journalism as a profession, Kaul (1986) argues that the infusing of the professional ideology on journalists was in fact inimical to journalists’ (economic) interests.

To protect itself against vulnerability to labor radicalism and profit-threatening strikes, the press barons proffered professionalism to accommodate journalists’ status ambitions while subverting their economic claims ... The new professional ‘class feeling’ disassociated working journalists from militant laboring classes, aligned them with publishers’ property interests—
proletarians strike, professionals serve—and insulated newspapers from profit-threatening disruption ... journalists assertions of professionalism obscured their economic exploitations. In its substitution of 'morality' for 'mere pecuniary gains,' professionalism legitimated marketplace practices.  

The functions of ‘objectivity’ and ‘professionalism’ in the news organisation

Research on the functions of ‘objectivity’ and ‘professionalism’ in the news organisation has also been informed by themes from the power perspectives from sociology. Representative of this body of (predominantly United States) work is that of Gaye Tuchman (1972, 1978). According to Tuchman, objectivity serves "as a bulwark between journalists and critics when attacked for a controversial presentation of 'facts'". Objectivity is conceptualised as a 'strategic ritual' — a set of ritualistic/routine procedures used defensively to deflect potential criticism, as well as a tactic used offensively to anticipate attack. Thus, the existence of standardised procedures for carrying out journalistic work tasks allows journalists to distance themselves from the material working with, and also from controversial material. The 'pressures and dangers' of journalistic work can be dealt with if certain strategies of newswork are followed, identified as 'objective' stories, which is underpinned by the assumption that if 'facts' are gathered and structured in an unbiased, detached, impersonal manner, then deadlines will be met and libel suits avoided.

Other theorists concur with the notions of professionalism and objectivity serving as methods of social control in the newsroom, suggesting that the bureaucratic norms, procedures and definitions of news organisations undermines journalistic autonomy. Birkhead (1986) typifies this side of the debate in his claim that

[e] specially in the case of reporters, almost the antithesis of professional autonomy came about. Professionalism became a standard and justification for controlling reporters in the news organisation ... The professionalization of journalism has so deviated from the standard understanding of professionalism as involving an occupation striving toward autonomy that it may well be called a perversion of the ideal.

---

167 Kaul (1986: 52-3).
168 Breed (1995) is another landmark work of this type.
169 Tuchman (1972: 660).
170 Ibid: 661.
Solowskii (1989) also suggests that ‘professional practices’ such as objectivity offer media owners a mechanism for social control which, while they do in fact offer journalists a sense of autonomy, it is ultimately a misguided one. Conceptualising objectivity as “... an eminently practical – and apparently highly successful – way of dealing with the complex needs of journalists, news organizations and audiences”, Solowskii suggests that objectivity also serves to reduce the uncertainty and unpredictability of the work environment through helping to determine legitimate news sources.

Events can be safely presented as a series of facts that require no explanation of their political significance. By presenting the news as a series of facts, news organizations are protected in at least two ways. The first and most obvious way is that since journalists need to rely on sources to provide them with the facts about events, sources and not journalists are responsible for the accuracy of the facts ... [Where] the news organization’s position in the marketplace is directly linked to its ability to maintain the integrity of its news operation ... objectivity ... helps to secure its position in the marketplace.

Like Tuchman, Solowskii argues that objectivity not only helps to maintain the economic position of the news organisation in the political-economic system but also serves to support the existing social order through the resulting news stories. The practice also serves to establish boundaries for the professional behaviour of journalists, providing a framework for action that is both broad enough for some journalistic creativity in selecting and presenting news stories, while narrow enough to trust journalists to act in the interests of the news organisation. Where such practices as objectivity serve the interests of news organisations, it is maintained that objectivity offers a false sense of authority and autonomy to journalists.

Elliot (1977) concurs with theorists who believe that standardised techniques to observe impartiality and objectivity “can be seen as strategies which are not only

---

173 Solowskii draws on Larson’s (1977) conceptualisation of the relationship between professionals and the bureaucratic businesses that employ them, and what were conceived of as ‘dependent professions’; those which operate within profit-making business organisations. As Larson (1977: 179) explained of the concept ‘dependent profession’, “for these aspiring occupations, the claim of expertise ... represents a possibility of acquiring countervailing powers vis-à-vis the business hierarchy of the organization within which they are contained”, highlighting the use of such organisations as arenas to contest competing claims to authority, and for asserting professionalism through claiming responsibility for the performance of distinctive work tasks requiring special skills (Solowskii, 1989: 214).


175 Ibid: 226.
means of achieving professional status for the individual but also as a means by which
the organisation may hold its ground in the wider society". As Elliot argues,
claims to professionalism in journalism are based on such routine
competencies as factual accuracy, speed in meeting deadlines, style in
presentation and a shared set of news values. Such claims are echoed in other
media occupations where professionalism means skill and competence in the
performance of routine tasks ... The competence involved is that which suits
the organisational structure of the medium at the particular time, so
professional excellence is valued as much by executives and administrators as
by the craft group.177

Alternative approaches to journalistic ‘objectivity’ and professionalism

While conceding that American media owners did use objectivity as a
‘weapon against unionisation in the newsroom’ (the standard argument being ‘how
could journalists be objective if they joined the Newspaper Guild?’), Schudson
cautions against treating ‘objectivity’ simply as a commercial strategy devised by
media owners/publishers. He maintains that requirements for social control in the
newsroom “gave publishers a reason to promote the objective norm even if they had
done little or nothing to invent it”.178 Rather than treating media owners as the
‘creators’ of journalistic professionalism (and journalists as ‘dupes’ of this creation),
Schudson (1978) links the rise of objectivity in United States’ journalism to
journalists’ pursuit of societal recognition as professionals. Dating the beginning of
‘objective reporting’ to the 1920s, Schudson locates the theory of ‘objective
journalism’ in the prevailing philosophical current of the beginning of the twentieth
century in American society of objective facts and uncommitted professional
discretion. He maintains that the professional ideology of journalists was a reflection
of the general trend of most white-collar occupations to raise their status and role in
society by seeking to affiliate with the prestige of science and efficiency, emphasising
first and foremost, the ideal of ‘objectivity’.

Streckfuss concurs that the 1920s represented the origins of the term
objectivity in United States journalism. Like Schudson, Streckfuss argues that “…
objectivity was a child of its time and a creature of its culture”.179 The 1920s saw the
rise of scientific naturalism, a school of thought holding that there were no \textit{a priori}

\footnotesize

176 Elliot (1977: 150).
177 Ibid: 149-150.
178 Schudson (1978: 156-7).
179 Streckfuss (1990: 975).
truths and that only knowledge gained by scientific investigation was valid. Such methodology was, according to this author, a central tenet of faith of the social sciences of the 1920s. In its original sense, ‘objectivity’ meant finding the truth through the rigorous methodology of the scientist. Calls for objectivity as a reporting method for journalism were also hailed by critics as an antidote to what they saw as excessive newspaper emotionalism and sensationalism characteristic of the era.\(^{180}\) Originating as a methodology for journalism to preserve democracy, objectivity evolved to a practical posture of day-to-day newspaper production.\(^{181}\)

Indeed, there is an increasingly sceptical perspective emerging as to the validity of accounts that emphasise objectivity as a commercial conspiracy or technologically motivated phenomenon. Critiquing the latter, Hoyer notes that the dominating technological explanations of journalistic objectivity suggest “... a simple causal connection between the use of news agencies by newspapers ... and a decreasing partisanship in political reporting ... The telegraph agencies are often depicted as more or less inadvertent inventors of journalistic ‘objectivity’.”\(^{182}\)

Schudson (2001) also critiques the economic reductionism and technological determinism inherent in the dominating accounts of the rise of the objectivity norm in journalism. Dismissing the validity of these explanations, Schudson maintains that “[t]he notion that the move from partisanship to objectivity was economically motivated is widely believed but nowhere justified”.\(^{183}\) He criticises the tendency of theorists to attribute objectivity to the rise of the commercial press and such technological developments as the telegraph and the wire services, and thus to the late nineteenth century when these developments occurred. Schudson raises a pertinent question about the ‘commercialisation hypothesis’, asking if objectivity was rooted in the commercialisation of the (United States) press in the nineteenth century, then why did partisanship continue into the twentieth?\(^{184}\) By the same token, if technological developments such as the telegraph, which saw the emergence of press associations, are located as the origins of objectivity as a professional norm governing journalism, then why did partisanship continue long after these developments took place? If the notion that the move to objectivity was economically and technologically motivated,

\(^{180}\) Ibid: 976.

\(^{181}\) Ibid: 982-983.

\(^{182}\) Hoyer (2001: 8).

\(^{183}\) Schudson (2001: 160).

\(^{184}\) Ibid: 159.
this should not have been the case.\textsuperscript{185} Evidently, such factors are not accounted for using solely economic or technological explanations, as the following chapter illustrates using the New Zealand case.

Indeed, Schudson locates another set of factors that saw objectivity institutionalised in American journalism after World War One. It was not until after this time, Schudson argues, that journalists as an occupational group had developed loyalties more to their audiences and to their occupational community than to their publishers or their favoured parties.\textsuperscript{186}

Professional allegiance to a separation of facts and values awaited, first, the rising status and independence of reporters relative to their employers, a change in journalism that developed gradually between the 1870s and the First World War, and second, the emergence of serious professional discussion about ‘objectivity’ which came only after the First World War. Only with these developments were there the social, organizational and intellectual foundations for institutionalizing a set of journalistic practices to give ‘objectivity’ force.\textsuperscript{187}

As the previous chapter noted, the dominant approaches to analysing the rise of journalistic objectivity reflect what Hardt and Brennen criticise as the failure to consider “... the rank and file and their contribution to the social and political empowerment of contemporary media industries”.\textsuperscript{188} Others in addition to Schudson have acknowledged this trend in their theorising. In his account of the origins of journalism in the United States and Britain, Chalaby (1998) argues that journalism is an invention of the second half of the nineteenth century when the discursive norms and practices of journalism emerged. While he employs the standard ‘economic-centred’ explanations of objectivity, he does not overlook journalists/employees as actors in this process. He maintains that one of the crucial factors behind the development of objectivity as a discursive norm was the growth of advertising as newspapers’ commercial base. Obtaining financial independence allowed for the autonomising of the press from partisan politics.\textsuperscript{189} In addition, he argues that competition for readers saw the decline of political partisanship: “... [T]he principle

\textsuperscript{185} Ibid: 159.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid: 161.
\textsuperscript{187} Schudson (2001: 159-160).
\textsuperscript{188} Hardt and Brennen (1995: vii).
\textsuperscript{189} Chalaby (1998: 133-4).
of objectivity was well suited to a situation where newspaper proprietors needed to cross party lines to extend the potential market of their newspapers.\textsuperscript{190}

Nonetheless, the need for journalists to create a new basis of legitimacy was, according to Chalaby, another factor which reinforced the objectivity norm.\textsuperscript{191} Journalists promoted the legitimacy of objective political reporting by claiming to be neutral political observers and impartial arbiters of political conflicts.\textsuperscript{192} As Chalaby argues,

\begin{quote}
[O]nce newspapers divorced themselves from partisan politics, their political legitimacy ceased to be provided by the political party they once represented. Thus journalists had to devise a new source of legitimacy to report and comment on a sphere of activity from which they claimed to be detached.\textsuperscript{193}
\end{quote}

These points highlight that firstly, rather than treating the rise of the commercial press as the origins of objectivity \textit{per se}, such processes are more usefully seen as having contributed to the conditions which laid a framework for objectivity to emerge. Secondly, they highlight the importance of treating objectivity as a socially and culturally specific phenomenon. Chalaby (1996) acknowledges this when he argues that journalism (and its associated discursive norms and practices of objective reporting) is an ‘Anglo-American invention’. Comparing the evolution of British and American journalism with French journalism between 1830-1920, the author argues that these practices were developed by American and British journalists in the nineteenth century and were later progressively imported by French journalists as in many other countries. Chalaby locates several factors which contributed to the more rapid development of journalism in America and Britain. These included the independence of the United States press from the literary field, the existence of parliamentary bipartism,\textsuperscript{194} the relative traditions of censorship, the ability of newspapers to derive substantial revenues from sales and advertising, and because of the Anglo-Saxon central and dominant position in the world.

Similarly, Schudson suggests that to understand the emergence of a norm historically, we need to explore not only the general social conditions that provide

\textsuperscript{190} Ibid: 136.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid: 136.
\textsuperscript{192} Chalaby (1998: 139).
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid: 137.
\textsuperscript{194} Chalaby (1998: 139) argues that the ‘parliamentary bipartism’ present in the two countries where objectivity first appeared meant that “… journalists could claim to be objective simply by proclaiming support for neither of the two main political parties”, thus accelerating the development of ‘objective journalism’.
incentives for groups to adopt ‘some’ norm, but also the specific cultural circumstances that lead them to adopt the specific norm they do.\textsuperscript{195} As Schudson points out,

\[\text{[t]here are strong reasons for journalists to seek publicly-appealing moral norms to protect them from criticism, embarrassment, or lawsuits, and to give them guidance in their work to prevent practices that would provoke criticism or even lawsuits, and to endow their occupation with an identity they can count as worthy. But this instrumentality – the practical utility of having some norm – does not explain why this norm, the objectivity norm, came to dominate.}\textsuperscript{196}

For Schudson, a more comprehensive understanding of the emergence of new norms "requires understanding the cultural environment the group can draw on, the sets of ideas, concepts, and values that they have access to, find attractive, and can convey convincingly to others".\textsuperscript{197} In this regard, Schudson’s analysis of the different rate and manner with which objectivity was adopted in American and European journalism is instructive. According to Schudson, the norm of objectivity took longer to develop in European journalism, and was accepted with less fervour than American journalism. Schudson attributes this to the relatively greater influence of public relations as an emerging occupation on United States journalism in the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{198} The desire of European journalists relative to American journalists to disaffiliate with Public Relations specialists and propagandists at this time was less pronounced, even absent. As Schudson explains of the American case,

Journalists had rejected parties only to find their new-found independence besieged by a squadron of information mercenaries available for hire by government, business, politicians, and others ... Journalists grew self-conscious about the manipulability of information in the propaganda age. They felt a need to assert their collective integrity in the face of their close encounter with the publicity agents’ unembarrassed effort to use information (or misinformation) to promote special interests.\textsuperscript{199}

By moving away from a preoccupation with economic and technological forces, such an account offers insight into the differences between ‘journalisms’ in previously assumed ‘similar’ societies. As Høyer argues, “... innovations in media

\textsuperscript{195} Schudson (2001: 165).
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid: 165.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid: 166.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid: 166.
\textsuperscript{199} Ibid: 162-3. For further discussion of how the emergence of how the public relations phenomenon influenced United States’ journalism, see Schudson (1988: 151-2).
technology diffuse much faster than innovations in journalism”, which are tied to the local conditions at the receiving end.\textsuperscript{200} Thus, while American and European journalism experienced similar economic and technological transformations at similar periods in time, an understanding of their respective social and cultural idiosyncrasies offers a fuller understanding of the nature and development of objectivity. Social and cultural differences identified by Schudson offer insight into why the practice of objectivity was embraced more rapidly by US journalists than their European counterparts. Without the threat of the growing public relations industry, he argues, European journalists remained attached to their literary tradition of journalism with its preference for commentary over ‘facts’ for longer. Schudson goes on to suggest that European journalists’ affiliation with the literary field had significant consequences for the rate at which objectivity was adopted.

The space that could be occupied by ‘objectivity’ as a professional value in American journalism was already occupied in European journalism. It was occupied by a reasonably successful journalistic self-understanding that journalists were high literary creators and cosmopolitan political thinkers. European journalists did not have the down-and dirty sense of themselves as laborers whose standing in the world required upgrading the way American journalists did. If there was to be upgrading, in any event, it was to a literary rather than professional ideal.\textsuperscript{201}

McNair also highlights the importance of acknowledging context as a crucial factor influencing the development of journalistic norms.

Journalism … reflects and embodies the historical processes within which it has developed and the contemporary social conditions within which it is made. Concepts such as objectivity and balance – so important to journalists in their everyday work – have complex socio-historical roots which reflect the values and ideas of the societies in which they emerged.\textsuperscript{202}

Dooley’s (1997) approach displays an affinity with Schudson’s theorising about the threat of PR to journalism in the US. It also represents a departure from the standard understandings of the development of journalism as an occupation that focus on the role of commercial and technological transformations in the press and on media owners as the key actors therein. The merits of her work can be found in her

\textsuperscript{200} Hayer (2001: 17).
\textsuperscript{201} Schudson (2001: 166).
\textsuperscript{202} McNair (1998: 64).
acknowledgement of the role played by journalists themselves in constructing their occupation, its role and identity.

Although Dooley focuses on American journalism’s professionalising rhetoric rather than structural developments, she suggests how the latter might best be viewed from this perspective. Drawing on Abbott’s (1988) ‘system approach’ outlined above, the author sees the development of social structures as having contributed to the process whereby journalism came to have occupational definition. These structures included sets of tasks and systems for the remuneration and training of journalists, the development of normative values and organisational structural forms that supported journalists’ claims to being trustworthy and respectable. Other such developments included the emergence of occupational associations in the United States from the 1860s, the beginnings of college and university training of journalists, and the various public communications they engaged in that contribute to public definitions of their work, occupational role, and their social legitimacy. From Dooley’s perspective, the significance of such developments is related to their claims for legitimate control over an area of work:

Rather than being viewed only as indicators that an occupational group has coalesced and might be developing as a profession, such social structures are better viewed as tools that serve occupational groups as they seek jurisdiction over certain categories of work.

Dooley’s approach is rooted in the view that “[t]o understand how journalists have acquired jurisdiction over the sphere of political communication, one must study how journalists have sought to establish these links, including their issuance of jurisdictional claims in the public, legal and workplace spheres.” Dooley explains in colonial America journalism was not viewed as an independent occupation. Rather, colonial newspapers were often produced by printers, postmasters, lawyers, and politicians. The focus of her analysis was “[t]he jurisdictional struggle between journalists and politicians … [which] involved journalists’ efforts to gain control of

---

203 Themes of Abbott’s ‘system approach’ can also be noted in Bishop (1999) which analyses the ‘boundary work’ done by mainstream British newspapers following the death of the Princess of Wales (and the allegations of paparazzi involvement) in 1997. A similar topic is also pursued by MacMillan and Edwards (1999). Likewise, Winch (1997) draws on aspects of this approach in his analysis of how journalists distinguish news from entertainment.

204 Dooley (1997: 16-7).

205 Ibid: 16.

206 Ibid: 22.
the gathering, production, and dissemination of political content in newspapers and to become widely known as the legitimate providers of such".207

Dooley focuses on the discursive strategies employed by journalists which are seen to have played at least as important a role in the construction of the journalistic occupation as have the work products and the organisational forms that have emerged in journalism.208 Her research examined the prospectuses of newspapers, and the transcripts and other published materials from fourteen libel suits which government officials filed against journalists. In addition, Dooley examined biographical profiles of early newspaper editors, proprietors, and publishers, which contained statements about journalists' evolving role and relationships. These were the key arenas in which journalists' jurisdictional claims (statements that assert an occupation's legitimate control of a particular kind of work) were made in which proclamations of independence became more common across the nineteenth century.

Analysing newspapers' defences in libel cases, Dooley (1997) observed that journalists argued that they had a right and a special occupational responsibility to expose the wrongdoing of public officials and corrupt business people. Increasingly, journalists also argued that the public depended on them for political information. The central themes of journalistic discourses Dooley studied reflected and constituted perceptions of journalistic work; what journalists should do and how; what the public should depend on journalists for; and what groups should not be depended on for the kind of work journalists claimed as theirs.209 By asserting the primacy of political news and their qualifications to provide it, journalists thereby established occupational authority and autonomy in political communication work.210

Flory (1999; 2003) is another theorist who sees the commercialisation of the United States' press as the broader context (rather than direct catalyst) for changes in the journalistic environment that increased the appeal of professionalism to

208 Ibid: 3.
210 Dooley (1995) extends this analysis by exploring the potential threats to American journalists' jurisdiction of political communication brought with technological innovation. Dooley examined journalists' statements about new communication products which bypass journalists in process of the delivery of political news to the public "to determine whether they included messages that suggest their political news roles are threatened". Her research findings "strongly support the contention that the emergence of new forms of political communication using both existing and new technologies has opened new sites of occupational struggle between journalists, on the one hand, and politicians, the public and other non-journalists, on the other hand".
Drawing on Kimball (1992), who argues that by 1910 the dominant professional ideal in the US was one that emphasised the importance of science and objective facts, Flory contends that the rise of objectivity in American journalism needs to be understood in the context of how journalists sought to legitimate their claims to professional status by appealing to major cultural values. Like Schudson and Dooley, Flory maintains that American journalists sought to establish jurisdiction over the news field by appealing to dominant cultural values like objectivity and ethics of service. In doing so, journalists engaged in 'rhetorical strategies', which included arguments contained in trade journals and in the content of education syllabi to articulate certain journalistic ideals and thus to legitimate a particular type of journalistic activity deemed 'professional'. In addition to the rhetorical strategies employed by journalists, Flory also considers the 'organisational strategies' to promote the legitimacy of journalism's professional status that emerged in the form of journalism associations and education programmes after 1900. By highlighting the cultural context of objectivity and the fact that American journalism's professionalising efforts came from different segments of the occupation, Flory's account also raises questions about the validity of the dominant technologically-economic explanations of journalistic objectivity and professionalism.

These alternative explanations of why and how journalistic professionalism emerged take into account not only the commercial and technological transformations in journalism but also the wider cultural and social forces influencing the nature of professionalism. In this regard, they offer a more comprehensive picture of why and how professionalism has been pursued by journalists. They also offer a useful basis from which to approach an analysis of the rise of journalistic professionalism in New Zealand.

### 2.8 Forecasts on the future of professions

A trend in sociological theorising about professions has been a move towards speculation about the future of these occupational forms once 'professionalised'. One forecast for the future of professions is an increase of professionalism, which envisages the continuation of professional occupational control as knowledge

---

212 Flory (2003).
becomes a more important commodity. Various theorists have prophesised an increased prevalence of professions, foreseeing an intensification of the role of the expert and an increase of professional autonomy based on expertise.

Alternatively, others predict a trend of 'deprofessionalisation' - a loss to professional occupations of their unique qualities, particularly their monopoly over knowledge, public belief in their service ethos, and their autonomy and authority in the work setting. A similar prophecy is embodied in the Marxist forecast of 'proletarianisation', which concerns the issue of whether professions are being transformed as a result of general social change, including the trend towards increasing bureaucracy which draws a growing number of professionals into non-professional organisations.

Oppenheimer, one proponent of the proletarianisation hypothesis, claims that there are strong indications that the income position, employment picture, and job condition of the increasingly bureaucratically-located professional are helping to create 'proletarian' conditions. In this view, proletarian conditions of work are seen to precipitate defensive reactions that are the beginning of a working class consciousness as the antithesis to professionalism. In addition, the 'bureaucratisation' forecast derived from Weberian theory holds that increasing bureaucratisation and rationalisation of occupational knowledge limits the ability of practitioners to manipulate the social meaning of their occupational tasks. This, in turn, can lead to attempts at alternative, non-professional occupational strategies in order to gain autonomy and 'status honour'.

Some theorists have applied the proletarianisation argument to the case of journalists, arguing that the rise of objective reporting demanded technical instead of

---

215 Ibid: 279. This view submits that knowledge-based occupations have the ability for resistance to bureaucratisation. A similar (albeit broader) perspective is captured by the term 'indeterminacy', which refers to 'those aspects of the professional organization of knowledge which function as barriers to external authority' (e.g. mystique) and as "protection against total state domination" (Fielding and Portwood, 1980: 24).
217 MacDonald (1995: 23); and Freidson (1994: 4). Abbott (1988: 329) also considers that the 'proletarianisation hypothesis' is insignificant to the debate on professionalism as it really concerns individual professions rather than professions as corporate bodies and thus is "not really relevant to the theoretical questions of how and why professions as organised bodies do what they do".
218 Oppenheimer (1973: 223). For more on the 'proletarianisation hypothesis, see Derber (1982).
intellectual skills, resulting in a 'conversion downward' for journalists.\textsuperscript{221} Kaul also described the contradictory status of journalists as 'proletarian professionals', arguing that the rise of the reporter into an emerging professional class also meant his/sic/ fall into a white-collar industrial proletariat.\textsuperscript{222} Underscoring this claim is the view that that professionalism served to accommodate journalists’ status ambitions whilst obscuring their economic exploitation.\textsuperscript{223} Likewise, Hardt maintains that in a contemporary context,

intellectual requirements among contemporary journalists are replaced by technical knowledge in compliance with corporate media goals. The latter divide the workplace and fragment the reportorial process, destabilise the professional worth of journalists, and alienate them from their own labour. All the while, decisions regarding the definition and treatment of news are centralised in a media bureaucracy that is dominated by specific management concerns.\textsuperscript{224}

While these observations about the position of contemporary journalists as employees may be valid, they are undermined by the reliance on problematic 'professional decline arguments'. These can be critiqued for the fact that they are underpinned by the 'unidirectionality assumption' of the taxonomic approaches and their essentialistic views of the arbitrary development/decline of professions.\textsuperscript{225} Klegon concurs that both the 'more' and 'less' professionalism arguments are oversimplified.\textsuperscript{226} Both approaches tend to treat the importance or unimportance of such attributes as expert knowledge and autonomy in isolation without analysing the wider social forces affecting the claim to expertise or those which may impact on the nature of professional autonomy. As Klegon suggests, autonomy can only be understood in terms of its relation to other societal forces like all characteristics of the professional form.\textsuperscript{227}

The issue of the future of professionalism, therefore, revolves around the social forces affecting the claim to expert knowledge and autonomy currently associated with that claim ... Such challenges to professionalism are not based on any inherent susceptibility of professional knowledge to bureaucratic routinization, but rather on an external attack on the power of expertise.\textsuperscript{228}

\textsuperscript{221} Carey (1969: 32).
\textsuperscript{222} Kaul (1986: 47).
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid: 52-53.
\textsuperscript{224} Hardt (2000: 214).
\textsuperscript{226} Klegon (1978: 279).
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid: 279.
\textsuperscript{228} Klegon (1978: 279-280).
Rather than asserting the increase or decrease of professionalism, Freidson sees professionalism as being ‘reborn’ in “a new form in which everyday practitioners become subject to the control of professional elites who continue to exercise the considerable technical, administrative and cultural authority that professions has in the past.” 229 Freidson predicts an expansion of professional authority resulting from a shift away from the ‘administrative principle’ to the ‘occupational principle’ of work organisation. 230 The latter is understood as the authority of expertise rather than of administrative office wherein workers retain the basic authority over their work. 231

Brint proposes a similar alternative to the professional rise/decline arguments. His central thesis is that professions are not in decline, but rather that they have taken on a new form. According to Brint, a move away from the traditional ‘social trustee professionalism’ to ‘expert professionalism’ is already occurring as a result of powerful social forces [which] have brought the older idea of professionalism linking social purposes and knowledge-based authority close to an end. They have helped to reconstitute the professions ever more exclusively on the basis of ‘applied formal knowledge’, or expertise. 232

2.9 Conclusion: Framing an alternative approach to journalistic professionalism

As theorising on ‘professionalism’ has evolved within occupational sociology, so too have the approaches to journalistic professionalism. As this chapter has illustrated, ‘professionalism’ has been conceptualised in journalism research in a variety of ways. The following table summarises the main approaches overviewed in this chapter.

---
231 Ibid: 64.
### The Treatment of ‘Professionalism’ in Journalism Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptualisation of ‘professionalism’</th>
<th>Representative works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As the acquisition of ‘professional traits’, such as codes of ethics, journalism schools, and government licensing.</td>
<td>Boyd-Barrett (1970); Merrill (1986, 1988, 1996); Henningham (1990).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As the presence of ‘professional attitudes’ amongst individual journalists (e.g. a service orientation, as opposed to economic concerns such as remuneration).</td>
<td>McLeod and Hawley (1964); Windahl and Rosengren (1975).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a corollary of technological transformations illustrated by the telegraph, and news agencies.</td>
<td>Elliot (1978); McNair (1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a ‘commercial conspiracy’ and/or method of social control over journalists (and the news product) in the newsroom.</td>
<td>Birkhead (1982, 1986); Tuchman (1972, 1978); Kaul (1986); Solowski (1989); Elliot (1977).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As manifested in the development of ‘objectivity’ as an illustration of the means utilised by journalists in laying claim to professional status, which was historically and culturally dependent. The dominating professional ideal in the US of science/factuality coincided with journalists’ pursuit of professionalism and offered the occupation a basis for their claims to professional status and a grounding for their rhetorical and organisational strategies employed post-1900 in the pursuit of ‘professionalism’.</td>
<td>Schudson (1978, 2001); Flory (2001).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a socially and culturally contingent phenomenon; the nature and development of ‘professionalism’ (as well as its significance) depends upon the particular features of the society and occupation concerned.</td>
<td>Schudson (2001); Chalaby (1996, 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As bound up with the formation and maintenance of distinct boundaries for work tasks and of social legitimacy and independence from other competing occupations. The focus from this perspective is the ‘professionalising rhetoric’ (seen in libel suits between government and newspapers for instance) which contain statements about journalism’s role and responsibilities used to advance the occupation’s jurisdictional claims.</td>
<td>Schudson (1978, 1988, 2001); Dooley (1995, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a discourse of occupational change and social control.</td>
<td>Aldridge and Evetts (2003); Hampton (1999).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As highlighted throughout this chapter, the taxonomic tradition of theorising on professionalism has the least theoretical utility of the perspectives overviewed here. Indeed, journalism researchers are increasingly acknowledging that a comprehensive understanding of journalistic professionalism necessitates looking beyond the taxonomic approaches’ preoccupation with ‘professional traits’. In this regard, the ‘power approaches’ offer more theoretical utility. As illustrated above, the monopolist/dominant macro-historical perspective sees professions as distinguished not by their intrinsic qualities or social functions, but by their ability to translate a claim to specialised expertise into a legitimised monopoly that pays off in social and economic privileges.\footnote{Brain (1991: 240).} The main strength of the ‘power approaches’ to professionalism is that they acknowledge the wider (social, political, technological, and economic) forces contributing to an occupation’s professionalising ambitions. These approaches also tend to acknowledge that the particular strategies employed and their ‘successes’ in the pursuit of professionalism are historically and culturally contingent.

The influence of the power approaches is reflected in journalism research that emphasises the commercially motivated origins of professionalism. As this chapter has argued, the ‘commercial conspiracy’ approaches to journalistic professionalism fail to acknowledge firstly, the wider social, political and other forces that helped to shape notions of journalistic professionalism, and how these came to be reflected in journalism’s organisational and regulatory structures. Secondly, the role of journalists in the development of professionalism tends to be treated as of secondary importance to the commercial ambitions of media owners, if at all.

Indeed, the ‘power approach’ has some serious limitations that undermine its explanatory potential for a variety of occupational groups in addition to journalism. The power approaches suffer from a tendency to depict the organisational/social structural aspects of professions (such as its codes of ethics, and other self-regulatory and organisational structures) simply as ‘ideological resources’ deployed in the pursuit of ‘collective mobility’; as a source of legitimization, privilege and prestige.\footnote{Ibid: passim.} One of the central criticisms of this ‘professionalism as conspiracy’ approach is that it does not extend much beyond these claims.\footnote{The phrase is borrowed from Evetts (1999a: 123; 2003b: 26). See also Saks (1983: 10-16).} With their emphasis on the insidious
nature of professions’ ideology, power theorists imply that one can somehow ‘peel back’ the ideology of professions to reveal the ‘real’ meanings and self-serving motives underpinning their rhetoric of professionalism. Above all, there is an overall lack of empirical research showing the validity of power theorists’ claims.

A significant limitation of both the earlier trait, and the more recent power approaches concerns the assumption of professional unity, shared identity, and homogeneity. 236 In both approaches, the concept of professionalism both underscores and assumes “a social movement towards an occupational identity conditioned by shared consciousness of ideas, beliefs, values, and interpretations of social life surrounding a world of work”. 237 Even in cases where researchers have acknowledged the potential for, or existence of within-profession disputes, factions, and aspirations, “... these have tended to be dismissed as profession-specific or a time-limited problem to be resolved. Unity and community are assumed to be the norm against which professions are measured”. 238 It is widely assumed that intra-professional conflict has little impact on the possibilities for strategic action by a profession. 239 On the contrary, this disunity can have a significant bearing in the processes by which an occupation seeks to lay claim to the title of ‘profession’. As Edman acknowledges, “[t]here are many identities, many values, and many interests to be found within the same profession”, 240 which affect its ability to act in the pursuit of professionalism. New Zealand journalism provides a case point. The appeal of professionalism among New Zealand journalists has been tempered by the presence of conflicting occupational ideals and aspirations among members of the occupation. The lack of unity of the journalistic occupation in New Zealand offers significant insight into the development of the journalistic occupation, as the remainder of this thesis aims to illustrate.

Another vital oversight of the power theorists is that in their attempts to invalidate the functionalist position, 241 they ignore the possibility of professions self-

---

240 Ibid: 310.
241 Saks (1983: 16) sees power theorists’ “attacks on professions ... [as] a reaction to the lengthy domination of the traits and functionalist perspectives stressing the virtuous aspects of professionalism”. Likewise, Brain (1991: 240) considers the power perspective “a critical reaction against functionalist assumptions - wary taking the role of professional knowledge too seriously”. In this regard, both the Functionalists’ and Power theorists’ analyses embodied an evaluative aspect, the former positive and the latter negative.
interests co-existing with the public interest.\textsuperscript{242} This is an emerging perspective in the sociology of professions that is reflected in more recent literature on the professions,\textsuperscript{243} and provides a theoretical starting point for the present research. This thesis argues that a more comprehensive theoretical approach must acknowledge that 'professions cannot exist on ideology alone'. This approach to the analysis of professionalism is captured by McDonald:

\begin{quote}
While there is no need to revert to the functionalist view, which takes professions entirely at their own evaluation, these occupations are providing services that they claim to provide in ... matters of crucial importance ... It is, after all, essential that they do, because they cannot keep afloat on ideology alone.\textsuperscript{244}
\end{quote}

In the 1990s, sociologists of the professions started to reassess the significance of professionalism and its positive (as well as negative) implications for clients/consumers, the public, and society generally. As Evetts notes,

\begin{quote}
[t]his current interpretation of professionalism as value system involves a re-evaluation of the importance of trust in client/practitioner relations ... It also involves a reassessment of quality of service and of professional performance in the best interests of both customers ... and practitioners.\textsuperscript{245}
\end{quote}

Indeed, the notion perpetuated by the power approaches that professions are 'conspiracies against the laity' does not hold up for a number of occupations. The occupation of journalism is no exception. Journalism's claims to providing essential (information) services to citizens, and ensuring a high quality of service through the implementation of ethics codes and other regulatory structures cannot exist merely as claims, as self-serving ideological resources. The legitimacy of these claims (and of the occupation itself) rests on their being fulfilled in practice. Just as in the context of law, justice must not only be done, but also 'be seen to be done', journalism's claims to professionalism must be seen to be fulfilled in the eyes of those whom the occupation claims to serve; the public. As Morgan aptly captures this premise,

\begin{quote}
[p]rofessional authority and autonomy rely on public trust and must be earned by subordinating their own interests to those of others and especially the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{242} Edman (2001: 302) adds to this critique of the power approach, arguing that it shares with the earlier trait-based models an assumption of a universal professionalisation process, taking for granted that 'professions in general struggle for monopolization and maximisation of power'.

\textsuperscript{243} The works of Saks (1995; 1998; 2003) are noteworthy illustrations of this emerging orientation.

\textsuperscript{244} MacDonald (1995: 35).

\textsuperscript{245} Evetts (2003a: 405).
‘common good’ … [Journalists] wishing to establish their credentials as professionals must be able to sustain that trust.246

In this sense, ‘professionalism’ is ultimately an issue of public trust, which as Fournier argues, “… is never established once and for all but needs to be continuously negotiated”.247 The professions need to establish and continuously work at maintaining their legitimacy.

This labour of legitimation requires the establishment of mechanisms through which professional practice is aligned with (or translated into) the concerns, norms and values of other actors [e.g. other professions, clients, the state]. The prime mechanism of legitimation is the articulation of ‘competence’. Competence embodies the government of truth and inscribes professional conduct within a network of accountability to clients and to the profession itself. Through the delineation of competence, the professions are made accountable to their constituency for the proper use and production of ‘truth’.248

It is conceivable that the pursuit of private interests is not necessarily in opposition to the pursuit of the public interest and that both can be developed simultaneously.249 From this perspective, ‘vestiges’ of professionalism are treated not simply as ideological resources of an occupation seeking professional privileges, but as part of the process by which a group attempts to construct its work roles and responsibilities and gain public acceptance of these. Codes of ethics, for instance, are seen neither as arbitrary ‘milestones’ on the road to professionalisation (as the functionalist view holds), nor simply as ideologies concealing the groups self-interested claims to power and status (as the power approaches maintain). Instead, this thesis will seek to understand the development of journalism’s ‘professional infrastructure’ as part of a wider process whereby the occupation has attempted to

---

246 Morgan (2000: 10).
248 Ibid: 286. Likewise, Brain (1991) argues that considerable explanatory potential is lost through the power theorists’ treatment of a profession’s knowledge base simply as a resource to be monopolised and as a source of legitimation for their power and privilege. Rejecting the this conceptualisation of professionalism as merely self-interested actions in pursuit of status, power and economic rewards, Brain (1991: 240) argues that “the production of practical knowledge … is a constitutive component of a structure of occupational control that characterizes professionalised occupations”. The core of a profession’s practical knowledge is “their capacity to identify a job to be done, to know how to go about doing it, and to recognize when it has been done appropriately (from their perspective)” (Ibid: 260). Thus, the construction of expertise is not merely a process of legitimation and control which occurs in the form of intentional uses of power, but also involves the articulation of practices that effectively represent their own status as solutions to particular kinds of problems (Ibid: 260).
articulate its ideals and role perceptions, as part of an effort to publicly assert its aims and duties and to gain acceptance of these.

From this approach, codes of ethics reflect an occupation’s efforts to establish for itself a professional identity that is related to its role perceptions, and a conception of its purpose in society through defining standards which members must strive toward. In doing so, the group attempts to legitimate its claims of trust, and of providing a service of value to society. While codifying ‘professional standards’ specific to journalism can be seen as an important aspect of the process of negotiating the boundaries of an occupation, and laying claim to certain areas of responsibility, these ‘professional standards’ must be upheld in order to sustain legitimacy.

The development of ethics codes and other such self-regulatory structures are not viewed as ‘the outcome’ of a ‘professionalisation project’, but as part of a process of negotiation over authority and legitimacy in a particular area of expertise, and to gain autonomy in its performance. The development of such structures of professionalism are a means by which an occupation attempts to bargain with society that in exchange for certain privileges it will provide services of value to society. The legitimacy of the occupation and its claims to professionalism entail that this bargain is fulfilled. From this perspective, the nature of ‘professionalism’ is multi-faceted. How journalistic professionalism has revealed itself will likely depend on wider social, political, economic and technological forces and other institutional preconditions for its emergence as both an occupational identity and set of ideals about journalism’s work role and practices. This conception underpins the theoretical approach to the following study of the appeal of professionalism to New Zealand journalists.
PART TWO

Making an Occupation
CHAPTER THREE

The emergence of the journalistic occupation in New Zealand

Changes in culture (ideas, politics, religion, technology, values) lead to changes in social institutions (in structure, purpose, function, role), and these then lead to changes in the procedures or rules governing the work carried out by those institutions. Furthermore, changes in culture are reflected in discussions of social institutions – in expressions revealing changed perceptions of their roles, purposes, and functions. Ideas of standards governing the conduct of the tasks of social institutions are related to these perceptions and will likewise change over time.¹

3.1 Introduction

Prior to the 1860s, New Zealand journalism was inextricably linked with politics, both functionally and occupationally. Colonial newspapers functioned as political organs, operated for the political advancement of their owners. Journalism invariably entailed political involvement, and politics most commonly involved journalistic involvement. The interwoven nature of politics and journalistic work was a state of affairs that characterised New Zealand journalism until the late nineteenth century. During the period between 1860 and 1900, New Zealand journalism underwent a transition from a political venture to a social institution witnessing the emergence of journalism as a distinct occupation with a distinct role and occupational identity. Mirroring United States’ and British trends, when New Zealand journalism broke its political ties, newspapers elaborated a new occupational ethic and reconstructed their political role in the public arena.² As the extract above indicates, this evolution came as a result of various forces and processes which helped to produce the occupational preconditions for the development of journalistic professionalism.

This chapter is concerned with the processes that saw New Zealand journalists emerge as an ‘independent’ occupational group in the late nineteenth century.³ It aims

² Kaplan (2002: 2).
³ This chapter (and this thesis generally) is confined to mainstream newspapers and journalism in New Zealand. Its scope does not extend, for example, to the Niupepa published during the period 1842-1933. Niupepa were newspapers that were published in Maori or were intended for a Maori readership. Further information on Niupepa can be found in a publication produced by the Alexander Turnbull Library in 1996, Guide to Niupepa 1842-1933: Maori Newspapers.
to provide an historical context from which to understand the development of ‘professionalism’ in New Zealand journalism. The notion of ‘professionalism’ as an occupational identity for New Zealand journalists was extended and reinforced by various economic, technological, social and cultural developments which began occurring in the 1860s. Central among these was the commercialisation of the press, the introduction of the electric telegraph, and the rise of press associations. A critical development that occurred amid these processes was the rise of journalism as a ‘proper’ occupation. As this chapter illustrates, these processes created the necessary preconditions for the institutionalisation of journalism as an ‘independent’ occupation concerned with the reporting of ‘facts’ in the public interest. It was from this overarching ideal about the nature and role of journalistic work that New Zealand journalism’s normative ideals and standards later evolved.

The progressive separation of politics and journalistic work was a critical element in the process by which modern journalism and its constitutive functions became institutionalised. This chapter explores the argument that the emancipation of journalism from politics in New Zealand opened up opportunities for the emerging occupation of journalism to construct for itself a basis of legitimacy, source of authority, and occupational identity that was rooted in the notion of political independence. Exploring further some of the central points made in chapter two above, the present chapter rejects the conventional notion that economic and technological developments in the nineteenth century press were the underlying forces behind the rise of ‘professionalism’ in journalism. This conception fails to understand that it was not these developments themselves, but rather the conditions in the broader journalistic environment they created, that allowed for firstly, the consolidation of the journalistic occupation, and subsequently, the development of an occupational identity among its practitioners. This chapter aims to show that the rise of New Zealand journalism as an independent occupation was a more complex process that the traditional accounts imply. It is argued that it is a process that can only be understood with reference to the changing political culture, developing conceptions of press freedom, and the rise of journalism as a full-time, independent occupation, as well as the commercial and technological transformations in the press during the late nineteenth century.
3.2 The political context of nineteenth century journalism

Prior to the 1860s, New Zealand journalism did not exist as a distinct occupation, with the editorial content of newspapers the sole responsibility of 'the journalist'. The structural and organisational arrangements of New Zealand's colonial press are instructive. For a large portion of the nineteenth century, newspaper work was primarily a political venture, and was an activity pursued by settler politicians primarily for their own ends of political advancement. The political character of New Zealand's early newspapers was largely a consequence of the fact that the first colonists did not have self-government.4 Thus, before self-government was won, newspapers served a vital political function as mouthpieces for leading colonists and as ladders of ascent to public office for those who owned and edited them.5 As Day observes, "with no recognised constitutional avenue for their political aspirations, settler politicians engaged in journalism as a means of gaining their political goals".6 There were parallels between the New Zealand situation and that of the United States where

[p]oliticians, especially early in the [nineteenth] century, served as publishers and editors or provided funds for the operation of newspapers, making it difficult for nonpolitician journalists who worked on such papers to exert authority over journalistic work and form an authoritative occupational group.7

A catalyst for change in nineteenth century journalism in New Zealand was the implementation of the Constitution Act in 1852, legislation which provided for the self-governing of New Zealand as an independent colony. This legislation was to trigger a shift in the political orientation of newspapers. After self-government was won, newspapers "shifted their attention to advocating for political parties, issues and viewpoints".8 The beginning of self-government also had an impact upon the conception of press freedom that underscored the operation of the press and its relationship with the state. Prior to the Constitution Act, a central paradox of newspapers was that while the notion of freedom of expression drawn from their British ancestors underscored the operation of New Zealand newspapers, their content was restricted to a particular political voice. Hence, notions of press freedom in the

5 Kennedy (1947: 115); Byrne (1999: 67).
6 Day (1990: 37).
nineteenth century were influenced by the broader political context in which the operation of the press took place. A comment made in 1850 by the Attorney General, William Swainson, is instructive:

It has been thought more for the advantage of Her Majesty’s subjects that in these islands that there should be occasional excesses on the part of the press rather than continual restraint, and that, so long as the people of New Zealand have no direct voice in the government of the country they should enjoy without limitation or restraint ‘that true liberty that freeborn men [sic], having to advise the public, might speak free’.

However, the provision for self-governance in New Zealand did not witness an automatic transition of newspapers from political voices to public organs. The establishment of self-government brought the New Zealand press more into line with that of comparable countries at the time whose newspaper press tended to advocate either one of two main political factions. As Day argues, “the new provisions for self-governance did not remove political allegiance, but saw newspapers transfer their support for an individual to a more general political grouping.” However, as in the United States in the early nineteenth century, the partisan nature of New Zealand newspapers “did not present itself as problematic for newspaper editors and publishers … rather, the ideology of partisanship was in perfect synchronisation with the aims of publishers and editors that sought political office and financial reward for their party loyalty.” In New Zealand, too, a newspaper relied for its sales on its political opinions, and its editors and writers were deeply imbued with the political traditions for which they fought. However, this state of affairs was increasingly challenged from the 1860s.

### 3.3 Post-1860 transformations in the New Zealand press

A number of further transformations both internal and external to journalism occurred in New Zealand after 1860, which were to have a significant impact on the role of newspapers, and on the development of modern journalism. These processes occurred during the last four decades of the nineteenth century and were “a specific version of a general pattern of change in newspapers that was occurring, or had

---

10 Chalaby (1998:139) refers to this arrangement as ‘parliamentary bipartism’, as chapter two indicated.
13 Murdoch (1949: 88).
occurred, in many countries". As such, Rutenbeck’s summary of the changes that affected the United States press arguably applies equally to the New Zealand case.

With improved technology and resources for distribution (improvements in communication, printing, production, and transportation); increased accessibility (greater number of newspapers and affordable subscription prices); broader appeal (the move away from factionalism of partisanship toward a less political and more general orientation); and a stronger base of economic support (the rise of advertising and consumerism as more pervasive forms of funding compared to political patronage), newspapers were carving out a new social, political and economic role for themselves.

The changes that affected the newspaper industry during the late nineteenth century, then, can be characterised as social, technological, economic, and political in nature. Social changes included a population growth in the 1860s, which brought a predominantly working class population to New Zealand. As a result, newspaper readership extended beyond the confines of an upper class. This was coupled with technological developments including the advent of the steam engine and cylindrical printing press, allowing for an increase in the speed of newspaper production. With the mechanics in place to serve a growing readership, these developments allowed newspapers to become profitable concerns. As advertising increased to become the mainstay of the newspaper, their cover price fell and the ‘penny press’ became increasingly common in New Zealand. According to Day, these developments enabled newspapers “... to become chroniclers of the events of a day and, coupled with the improving methods of transportation that, in particular, the telegraph allowed, the newspapers shifted their emphasis from that of political forum to that of a newspaper”. These changes laid the foundations for the development of modern journalism in New Zealand.

---

16 Ibid: 371.
17 Day (1990: 175, 234).
18 Ibid: 234.
19 See also Murdoch (1949: 90-2) on the nature of New Zealand’s brand of ‘New Journalism’. The importance of advertising to the commercialising press was visibly demonstrated with the entire front page of these new newspapers dedicated to advertising material.
3.4 The reconstruction of the political role of New Zealand newspapers: Understanding the rise of ‘independent’ journalism

As Høyer observes, “[t]he analyses of how political commitments change or disappear, and how the institutionalisation of alternative journalistic norms develops, differ among communication scholars”. However, a great deal has been made of the “powerful economic and technological factors” underpinning the rise of political independence as a journalistic norm. As noted in the previous chapter, the conventional explanations focus upon the advent of the telegraph and subsequent rise of news agencies. It is assumed that because their “information had to sell to newspapers of all political affiliations and styles”, the rise of news agencies was a major catalyst for the development of ‘objectivity’ as a journalistic norm in the United States and Britain, the two countries where the norm is thought to have first emerged. Chapter two illustrated how some theorists have critiqued the economic reductionism and technological determinism inherent in such accounts. Notably, the dominant accounts assume a “simple causal connection” between newspapers’ use of news agencies and a decrease in partisan political reporting, implying that the telegraph agencies were the ‘inventors’ of independent journalism. The following section considers the applicability of these approaches to the New Zealand experience.

The role of the telegraph: An illustration of the New Zealand case

The comparatively few accounts of early journalism in New Zealand share in common an over-emphasis on technological developments, notably the arrival of the electric telegraph in 1862, to explain the rise of journalistic independence. Scholefield’s characterisation is typical of these.

The main phases of development in New Zealand journalism may be correlated with certain outstanding events in mechanical progress. Of these the most revolutionary in its effects was the electric telegraph, which emancipated our press from its functional dependence on that of the United Kingdom and

---

26 Høyer (2001: 8).
launched upon it a new kind of competition with its own standards of efficiency, outlook and ethics.\textsuperscript{27}

Like Scholefield, who maintains that the subsequent development of the New Zealand Press Association (NZPA) in 1880 was the 'fons et origo' of political independence in New Zealand journalism,\textsuperscript{28} Byrne maintains that

\[\text{[t]he different political persuasions of editors receiving press association copy made them prickly and quick to take offence when news stories involving politics appeared to give partisan advocacy to men[sic] or policies they opposed, or which seemed just too opinionated.}\textsuperscript{29}\]

Rather than treating technological developments such as the telegraph as the 'inventors' of journalistic independence, this chapter proposes that they are best seen as organisational foundations that helped to institutionalise alternative journalistic ideals and practices. It can be seen that, rather than creating new norms, New Zealand's first national press association developed out of emerging ideas about the priority of journalistic independence over political loyalties. The introduction of the electric telegraph and the subsequent establishment of news-sharing operations in New Zealand were more significant for the way debate about their control and administration was couched in terms of the 'proper role' of journalism. A synopsis of how telegraphed news services unfolded in New Zealand is insightful as it reveals that it was a developing consensus about the importance of political independence that saw the press association take the form it eventually did.

\textbf{The emergence of telegraph news services in New Zealand: Questions about the 'proper' relationship between the press and government}

Between 1865 and 1880, a series of telegraph news services were attempted in New Zealand. These fell into two main types. The first attempt, the New Zealand General Telegraph Agency, came in 1865 and was a regional, competitive operation that soon became prohibitively expensive.\textsuperscript{30} The high cost of this system for newspapers saw the provision of telegraphed news become the responsibility of the General Government, a service to which newspapers individually subscribed.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{27} Scholefield (1958: 22).
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid: 15-22. The NZPA was actually formed as the United Press Association (see Appendix B).
\textsuperscript{29} Byrne (1999: 65).
\textsuperscript{30} Day (1990: 189-92).
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid: 193.
However, by the late 1860s and 1870s questions were increasingly being raised by newspapers regardless of their political affiliation as to the adequacy and, indeed, the propriety, of this arrangement, which led to the demise of the government-controlled service.\textsuperscript{32} Two further efforts at competitive news agencies in the 1870s culminated in the establishment of the United Press Association (UPA) in 1880, the first national news-sharing press association in New Zealand.\textsuperscript{33}

Thus, it can be seen that the UPA grew not only out of the economic/commercial interests of newspaper controllers but also out of ideas about the role of journalism and its relationship with politics and government. It was a structure that arose out of, and reflected a developing consensus about the role of journalism as the provision of reliable information to citizens. As understandings of press freedom evolved in New Zealand, the country required a news service that was operated independently of government. The national press association emerged out of a shared concern among New Zealand newspapers about the priority of these journalistic matters over their political affiliations.\textsuperscript{34} Its establishment occurred during and reflected part of a process whereby journalism and politics were undergoing a separation to become distinct work spheres, thus helping to lay the foundations for political independence to evolve as an alternative journalistic norm. In this respect, the UPA can be seen not as creating the norm of journalistic independence but as having helped to reinforce a norm already on the rise in New Zealand. Thus, it was not telegraphed news and the press association that created political independence as a norm governing journalism, but rather that the emerging norm of journalistic independence saw the UPA evolve out of successive earlier efforts in the particular form that it did.

**The impact of press commercialisation**

As Rutenbeck observes, most explanations of the nineteenth century transformations in the press have relied heavily on describing economic/technological imperatives as the driving force behind change.\textsuperscript{35} He argues that “explaining journalism history as a history of economic change tends to ignore important aspects

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid: 194-8.
\textsuperscript{33} The UPA changed its name to the NZPA in 1942 (see Appendix B).
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid: 201-2.
\textsuperscript{35} Rutenbeck (1991: 126).
of press/society relationships\textsuperscript{36}. Similar criticisms can be mounted against the dominating economic explanations for the rise of political independence as a journalistic norm, upon which New Zealand theorists have also tended to rely. For example, newspaper historian Patrick Day explains the progressive shift in the political nature of journalism with reference to the requirements that commercialisation brought upon newspapers:

The new commercial journalism led to a significant change in the political role of the press. Prior to self-government, newspapers had acted as political discussion forums with participation in those forums being largely confined to the higher-status settlers in the various settlements ... With the new commercial journalism, however, the role of political advocacy as hitherto practised had to take into account of and become compatible with the new role of the newspaper as a profit-oriented business enterprise.\textsuperscript{37}

In the tradition of Michael Schudson (1997/2001) who criticises the economic reductionism and technological determinism inherent in traditional accounts,\textsuperscript{38} this chapter proposes that neither the commercial nor the technological hypotheses adequately account for the decline of the political press in New Zealand. These developments need to be seen in terms of how they contributed to a change in the culture of journalism to allow firstly, the decline of partisanship, and secondly, its progressive replacement with a new structure and practice of the press. This emergent ideal governing both the structure and practices of newspapers was political independence.\textsuperscript{39}

**Assessing newspapers’ claims to political independence**

According to Rutenbeck:

The self-declared independent press appears to have made a concerted effort to cultivate a new kind of allegiance with its audience. No longer seeking partisan patronage, the independent press felt the need to persuade readers to accept newspapers under new terms. Because they were now more financially dependent on circulation and advertising, politically independent newspapers were forced to try to convince readers that independence was a good thing. Many editorials of the day suggested that the papers were now more than

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid: 126.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid: 134.
\textsuperscript{39} Matheson (2000) illustrates this argument in the context of the development of modern news discourse, arguing that although economic and technological factors are conditions for the emergence of a new mode of journalistic writing, they are not “sufficient conditions” (Matheson, 2000: 558).
\end{flushleft}
slightly interested in what the public wanted, rather than merely what the party wanted.\textsuperscript{40}

Though made of the United States' press, this observation appears valid in the New Zealand context. Indeed, the New Zealand newspapers that had began operation in the 1860s attempted to separate themselves from the political press that had previously dominated, as suggested by their increasingly frequent avowals of political independence. For instance, the Nelson Evening Mail, first published on the 5\textsuperscript{th} of March 1866, proclaimed in successive editions that:

The Evening Mail will not pretend to be in any respect a Political Paper ... the proprietors desire to state that it will be a thoroughly independent Journal, attached to no party, devoted to no faction, seeking only to advance the interests of this province and the prosperity of the entire colony.\textsuperscript{41}

Likewise, the Wellington Independent, which began publication on the 3\textsuperscript{rd} of January 1860, contained statements about the relationship between journalists and the public: “As public journalists, we believe ourselves to have duties to discharge to the whole of this province, and in a restricted sense, to the whole of New Zealand ...” \textsuperscript{42}

From the 1860s, New Zealand's commercial newspapers often proclaimed to represent the wider 'public interest' over narrow political concerns. The first edition of the Christchurch Star published on the 14\textsuperscript{th} of May 1868 stated that:

We intend to instruct and entertain our readers as well as we are able ... We shall comment honestly and impartially upon the leading topics of the hour. In politics, we shall ally ourselves to no party, but as free-lancers, fight the battle of the public ... The interests of many will be preferred ... We shall invite a full expression of public opinion, by keeping a portion of our columns open for the communication of the public; and we shall endeavour, by care and watchfulness, to keep our columns free from the advocacy of personal interests, or the gratification of private malice ... We shall always strive to remember the responsibilities which attach to a journal that has gained the ear of the public.\textsuperscript{43}

Other newspapers believed that in addition to representing public opinion, the New Zealand press had a distinct role in guiding it. This view was reflected in the editorial of the first edition of the Lyttelton Times:

\textsuperscript{40} Rutenbeck (1990: 17). Schudson (1988) is consistent with this view.
\textsuperscript{41} The Nelson Evening Mail (5 March 1866: 1).
\textsuperscript{42} The Wellington Independent (3 January 1860: 3)
\textsuperscript{43} The Star (14 May 1868: 2).
Unquestionably, the power and importance of the public press is one of the distinguishing features in the social condition of the most highly civilized nations in the old world. The public press has well been termed the fourth estate of the realm. By it expression is given to a public feeling which has no other means of utterance. A public journal represents the opinions not of its writers only, but of its readers ... But whilst a public press thus represents the public voice, it also acts as a guide of public opinion; and this action is powerful or feeble, according to the integrity and conscientiousness with which the task is performed. But the position which a newspaper occupies in a new colony is somewhat different. The importance of a newspaper ... will depend far less on the opinions expressed in its leading articles, than in the great convenience it will afford the inhabitants and in its general utility as a medium of public intelligence in local affairs.\textsuperscript{44}

Claims to political independence and a commitment to representing the public were characteristic of British and United States newspapers in the mid-nineteenth century and, as we have seen, were increasingly prevalent in New Zealand newspapers that began operation during the 1860s. Such public pronouncements have, however, been widely dismissed as ‘mere rhetoric or ideological babble’.\textsuperscript{45} New Zealand theorists, too, have tended to emphasise the ‘ideological nature’ of the commercial press’ claims to political independence, which are characteristic responses of the traditional commercial/technological accounts illustrated above. However, the very theorists who employ the commercial/technological case to explain the decline of the political press in New Zealand undermine their own arguments when they observe that commercialisation and technological innovation did not in fact immediately see the decline of the political press in New Zealand.

For example, Day maintains that the increasing repudiation of partisanship by newspapers – seen as a strategy designed to attract readers of various political persuasions – masked the continuation of ties between newspapers and political groups throughout and beyond the 1860s.\textsuperscript{46} Byrne supports this view, contending that while the new commercial newspapers were “… loath to let stand perceptions that

\textsuperscript{44} The Lyttelton Times (11 January 1851: 3-4). Hampton (2001: 225) argues that in Britain, an ‘educational ideal’ governed the press-society relationship before it gave way to an alternative theory of the press as ‘representing’ the people in response to changing circumstances in the wider journalistic environment in the late nineteenth century. This transition saw the development of two necessary relationships: that between the press and Parliament, and that between the press and the people. Both relationships were constituted by the notion of the fourth estate, which also underpinned the formation of press-government and press-society relationships in New Zealand in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

\textsuperscript{45} Ruttenbeck (1991: 129).

\textsuperscript{46} Day (1990: 240-1).
they were other then fully independent politically", political involvement did not disappear, but rather had to adapt to the new ‘commercial realities’ of journalism.\textsuperscript{47} As Day further explains,

[t]he repudiation of party allegiance and the denial of the importance of party distinctions were part and parcel of the change in newspapers to a mass press attempting to attract readers of all classes and political persuasions ... [this] ... was not a retreat from political involvement. On the contrary it was an attempt to forge for the mass press a political identity and political involvement as wide as its growing readership.\textsuperscript{48}

This understanding of the rise of a ‘non-partisan ideology’ in the New Zealand press is consistent with Chalaby’s explanation of parallel trends in the British and United States contexts. He maintains that:

By the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century all prominent daily newspapers claimed to be formally independent of political parties. As long as newspapers were openly tied to political parties, their legitimacy to hold a discourse on political matters rested on the party whose principles they advocated. But when newspapers became more autonomous, they had to find a new basis of legitimacy in order to comment on politics from a position external to the political field, from a viewpoint which claimed not to be directly involved in the political struggle.\textsuperscript{49}

Other theorists suggest that the ideology of the press as ‘the Fourth Estate’ – the notion of the press as the essential link between public opinion and government and check on the latter – offered one such basis of legitimacy for the developing commercial press. As Boyce explains of the British context where this doctrine had its roots, the developing commercial press needed to forge for itself a place in political society.\textsuperscript{50} Thus, the ideology of the ‘Fourth Estate’ was employed by the emerging commercial press to stake a claim for recognised respect in the political system. This ‘political myth’ enabled the British press to establish credibility based on claims to independence, reliability and authenticity, and as representative of public opinion as it sought to legitimate breaking away from state control.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{47} Byrne (1999: 61).
\textsuperscript{48} Day (1990: 178-9).
\textsuperscript{49} Chalaby (1998: 110, Italics in original).
\textsuperscript{50} See Birkhead (1982: 111) for an illustration of this argument in relation to the United States’ context.
\textsuperscript{51} Boyce (1978: 21). From the early eighteenth century until the mid-1800s, the state exercised a variety of controlling measures over the British press, which were gradually phased out by 1855 (Harris, 1943: 26-7). Created in 1712, these ‘taxes on knowledge’ as they were known, comprised of the newspaper stamp duty, pamphlet duty, advertisement duty, excise of paper duty (Chalaby, 1998: 11-2).
Although the historical relationship between Britain and New Zealand saw parallels in the evolution of newspapers in the respective countries, the New Zealand press was not subject to the same historical experience of direct state control as the British press. Although the Printers and Newspapers Registration Act of 1868, which provided for the compulsory registration of newspapers through until its repeal in 1995, was an exception to this general trend, it was not used as a vehicle to limit certain voices in the press as was the case in Britain. Indeed, controlling measures over the New Zealand press arose less out of political motivations, and were designed more to curb the ‘excesses’ of absolute freedom. The original Printers and Newspapers Registration Bill was evidently underpinned by ideals of a ‘socially responsible’ press, as indicated by the comments of the MP who had introduced it: ‘As the press is an engine of enormous power to which we have accorded absolute freedom, it is quite right that there should be a responsibility on the part of those wielding the engine’.

This suggests that the notion of the press performing in the public interest was already on the rise in the 1860s both inside and outside of journalism.

Although the history of state control over the press may have differed in Britain and New Zealand, Day maintains that New Zealand’s commercialising press drew on the ‘Fourth Estate’ ideology “to argue that they were concerned with general rather than particular welfare”. According to Day, the New Zealand press adapted the ‘fourth estate’ ideology to sustain the argument that the press had a wider concern than party politics:

The political doctrine that newspapers were guardians of the general welfare was a new ideology of non-partisan leadership that gave the press a political role distinct from that of political parties. The new ideology, however, made little difference to the actual practice of political allegiance. While the majority of newspaper managements made much of their independence, the practice of partisan political allegiance remained.

However, this emphasis on the ‘ideological nature’ of newspapers’ claims to independence obscures several important issues. Simply noting a discrepancy between the ‘rhetoric’ of the emerging commercial press’ claims to political independence, and

\[52\] Brookes Statutes of New Zealand (2000).
\[53\] Cited in Scholefield (1958: 8).
\[54\] Day (1990: 179).
\[55\] Ibid: 181.
‘reality’ of their continued political allegiance is insufficient. An alternative understanding is to see the self-declared political independence of newspapers as the germination of an emergent ideology of journalistic independence that was to rise to dominance several decades later. According to Rutenbeck’s analysis of the parallel United States’ case, to dismiss nineteenth century newspapers’ claims to independence as mere rhetoric or ‘ideological babble’ is to overlook the way they reflect newspapers’ changing self-perceptions in relation to political partisanship. For Rutenbeck, newspapers’ reflections on their political orientation represented an important phase in the formation of modern journalism’s socio-political role. As he argues further,

Unlike newspapers of today … newspapers of the 19th century did not possess the professional or institutional mechanisms that could express and internalize the industry’s rationality … instead, 19th century newspapers were very often publicly self-reflexive, discussing their visions of the changes taking place and how they saw their own public role evolving. Professional organizations, such as the American Newspaper Publishers’ Association and other trade associations were formed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, leaving pre-1890 newspapers to fend for themselves, ideologically speaking.

These remarks apply equally to the New Zealand experience where it was not until 1891 that journalists first began formally organising along occupational lines, as chapter four illustrates further. Indeed, hinting at the crucial organisational developments in the process through which independent journalism became institutionalised, Schudson corroborates Rutenbeck’s points:

… [A] professional allegiance to a separation of facts and values awaited, firstly the rising status and independence of reporters relative to their employers … and second, the emergence of serious professional discussion about ‘objectivity’, which came only after the First World War. Only with these developments were there the social, organizational, and intellectual foundations for institutionalizing a set of journalistic practices to give ‘objectivity’ force … Analytical fairness had no secure place until journalists as an occupational group developed loyalties more to their audiences and to themselves as an occupational community than to their publishers or their publishers’ favored political parties. At this point journalists also came to articulate rules of the journalistic road more often and more consistently.

---

59 Ibid: 129.
60 Schudson (2001: 160-1).
Dooley further highlights the significance of newspapers' claims to political independence as examples of journalists' occupational communication strategies. Along with factors such as political, technological, and social developments, occupational communication strategies played an important role in the process whereby the journalistic occupation and its work was established ... Such communication contributed to the social construction of definitions of the nature and roles of journalistic work and assisted the members of the journalistic group in gaining some measure of occupational legitimacy.61

Taken in sum, these points indicate that the commercial-technological case alone is an insufficient explanation for the emergence of political independence firstly as a structural characteristic of journalism and its relationship with politics, and secondly, as a norm governing journalism. While certain commercial and technological developments can be seen as having contributed to a decline of partisanship, they do not themselves fully explain the emergence of an alternative set of norms governing journalism.62 In addition, more attention needs to be paid to how commercialisation and technological innovation helped to bring about the necessary occupational preconditions and organisational developments for the emergence of alternative journalistic practices. As Schudson concurs:

None of this suggests that economic or technological factors are irrelevant to explaining this central case of social change ... But it is a mistake to assume that they were decisive, without exploring alternative possibilities and without taking seriously the political context of late-nineteenth century journalism.63

In New Zealand, the political context of late-nineteenth century journalism was one in which the political role of the newspaper was being drastically reshaped by a variety of forces. New forms of governance challenged the role of newspapers as voices for politicians, and newspapers were forced to redefine their relationships with both politicians and society. In spite of the ostensibly non-partisan nature of the commercial press, newspapers continued to grapple with their 'proper' role in an emerging democratic polity. As newspapers grappled with both their identity and freedoms in a self-governing society, press freedom came to mean a number of things for newspapers, and those who worked for them. It meant not only the freedom from state control inherited from their British ancestors; press freedom also meant the

62 See Schudson (2001) for further discussion on this point in relation to the United States experience.
freedom from the political ties that constrained newspaper content. It also meant the freedom to occupy a political stance independently of newspaper controllers. These freedoms became further entrenched as politics and journalism developed to become distinct fields of enterprise. Seen in this context, the self-declared political independence of these newspapers represented the germination of an emergent ideology that was to rise to dominance within journalism several decades later.\textsuperscript{64} As such, the formalisation of press freedom, including the political independence of newspapers, had to be supplemented by a consciousness that journalists had a political mission that varied from the politicians'.\textsuperscript{65} This process was furthered with the rise of the journalistic occupation in New Zealand.

3.5 The rise of the journalistic occupation: The missing analytical link?

Just as in law justice must not only be done but also appear to be done, journalists must not only be politically independent but must also appear to be politically independent.\textsuperscript{66}

Although questions can be raised concerning the impact of commercialisation upon the evolution of political independence in New Zealand journalism, attention must be paid to how commercialisation gave rise to development of the journalistic occupation itself. This is a crucial development that few accounts have sufficiently acknowledged. As newspaper control and management became a full-time speciality, so did the holding of political office.\textsuperscript{67} From the 1860s, politics and newspaper production became increasingly separate spheres of work. This had significant implications for both the orientation and operation of newspapers. The rise of the journalistic occupation itself was a crucial factor in the emergence of a journalistic culture independent of party politics. As Day notes, before the 1860s, “those engaged in journalism were either printers who were accustomed to producing a newspaper as part of a general printing business, or they were relatively well to do individuals who saw journalism as a combination of public service and political activity”. There were

\textsuperscript{64} Rutenbeck (1991: 131).
\textsuperscript{65} Heyer (2001: 14).
\textsuperscript{66} The New Zealand Journalist (15 November 1948: 1).
\textsuperscript{67} Day (1990: 237).
no ‘professional journalists’ – no persons who received regular salaries for writing for, or editing newspapers.68

The commercialisation of the press in the 1860s had brought with it the development of daily journalism, the demands of which meant that the efforts of a sole newspaper proprietor/editor were no longer sufficient. Consequently, the division of labour in newspaper production expanded. The number of staff engaged in newspaper production increased, and a salaried reporting and editorial staff grew to form a major constituent of newspaper production.69 This was a trend that occurred in North America and Britain early in the nineteenth century, witnessing the decline of the ‘one person editor, owner, reporter, printer, and business manager’, and the emergence of a complex division of labour in newspaper production.70 In New Zealand, these processes began in the 1860s, when the occupation of journalism and its constituent divisions from reporter to editor started to appear as facets of the country’s employment structure.71 The rise of the journalistic occupation was marked by the fulltime employment of editorial contributors to newspapers who would receive a salary for their services, and who were appointed for their journalistic competence rather than their political loyalties, prominence or beliefs.72 Henceforth, the ability to produce copy both efficiently and effectively to meet the demands of daily newspaper journalism grew as a priority over employees’ political affiliations or preferences.

When seen in the context of the developing journalistic occupation, the apparent contradiction between newspapers’ claims to political independence and their continued alignment with politics and politicians represented the first tensions over editorial independence; journalists’ desire for autonomy and independence to conduct their editorial work without the influence of newspaper owners and their political ends. Therefore, the development of the journalistic occupation was a critical development in the process whereby political independence was institutionalised in New Zealand journalism. For political independence to emerge as an occupational norm, it necessarily follows that an occupational group was needed to which this alternative norm was to apply. In seeking to distance themselves from politics and

politicians, journalists actively assisted in the institutionalisation of political independence as an alternative journalistic norm. As Morrison notes,

> [t]he journalists did not necessarily share the political views and advocacy of their owners, and developed loyalties to their sources and reading public rather than the publishers. They had no direct vested interests in shaping the news to the profitability of the newspaper, and they were at arm’s length from the advertisers. There was a natural tension between the owners, who held political views, and the journalists, who reported them. The best way for journalists to avoid conflict with the owners was to report only facts, impartially and with no reference to the first person.\(^{73}\)

With the emergence of journalism as an occupation in the late nineteenth century, came the progressive development of political independence as firstly, a structural arrangement of newspapers and a characteristic of the relationship between journalism and politics, and secondly, as a normative ideal concerning the role of journalism and of journalistic work practices. This distinction is important as it facilitates an understanding of the fact that political independence as a journalistic norm did not necessitate structural independence of the press from politics, a development which occurred later. ‘Political independence’ meant the right to defy party authority,\(^{74}\) an authority that had exercised a powerful force over the press since its inception in New Zealand. The articulation of anti-partisan sentiments by newspapers laid the groundwork for the emergence for a much different operating ideology – political independence.\(^{75}\) This was an occupational identity further articulated by the emergent occupation of journalists and it was around the notion of political independence that notions of public interest, public protection, and ‘Fourth Estate’ were framed.\(^{76}\) As Rutenbeck further illustrates this argument with reference to the United States’ case,

Even though the practice of ‘political independence’ proved difficult, if not impossible, to actually practice, this transformation served to liberate many editors from the trammels of party servitude and led to an essentially new conception of the role of the press. As many editors so ardently stressed, most of them were declaring their independence from party, not their neutrality in the political arena … [A]lthough their growing dependence on advertising and circulation and their continued preoccupation with political issues and candidates makes the ‘independent’ label seem misapplied, in historical context the label held real validity.\(^{77}\)

---

\(^{73}\) Morrison (2002: 64).


\(^{75}\) Ibid: 137.

\(^{76}\) Ibid: 137.

\(^{77}\) Rutenbeck (1990: 20).
This interpretation allows us to understand that the New Zealand press' claims to independence did not necessarily mean the end of press support for political parties, but rather that news and information would take precedence over views and opinions and that the news pages become free from obvious bias and explicit value-judgements.\(^{78}\) This was an interpretation actively supported by working journalists, who sought to distance themselves from politics and newspapers owners, and in doing so, perpetuate an occupation ideal based around notions of independence and autonomy with which to gain further legitimacy.

**'Political independence' as a basis for journalists' legitimacy**

As the occupation moved from being a literary activity to a journalistic activity, with accepted styles and formats, journalism became a technical occupation. Writers became journalists, less members of the public, and more of a profession with their own emerging standards.\(^{79}\) The reporting of ‘news’ in a factual, balanced manner characterised the work sphere of the emerging occupation of journalists, a process which continued into the twentieth century. This new mode of news presentation thus served to both differentiate and disassociate the journalistic occupation and its work domain from the political press. The right to independence and autonomy in the editorial capacity of newspaper work were to develop as central professional ideals for the journalistic occupation. This interpretation is consistent with Dooley's analysis of the United States experience:

> Before journalism would be recognized as an occupation with special duties, responsibilities, and legitimacy in the political communication work sphere, the public had to believe that journalists were a different breed of political communicator, one who, unlike politicians, would not put political ambition and partisan creed above the needs of the more general public.\(^{80}\)

In this respect, nineteenth century newspapers' claims to political independence can be interpreted as more than a 'commercial strategy' of benefit to their owners and controllers. They can be seen to have offered the new occupation of journalism a basis from which to forge its occupational role and identity. Political independence presented as an occupational identity was a crucial factor in the

---

\(^{78}\) Chalaby (2000).


\(^{80}\) Dooley (1997: 82).
institutionalisation of journalism as a distinct occupation. When political independence presented itself as a (commercially) viable option for newspapers, it also presented itself as the crux of journalists’ occupational role and identity. The discourse of political independence offered the emerging occupation of journalists a means of gaining social acceptance as an occupation distinct from politics. So long as newspapers claimed to be politically independent, the emerging occupation of journalism had a basis for legitimacy as an ‘independent’ occupational group with a particular role and set of duties. Following British and United States trends,

the [New Zealand] press elaborated a novel occupational ethic which drew on cultural ideals ... Journalists defined themselves as serving the public interest, and above the contamination of politics. This new professional ideology ... justified the press’s new political role in public communication.\(^{81}\)

New Zealand journalists also sought to legitimize the idea that was gaining currency in the British and United States contexts that journalistic work was a crucial component of democracy in that the public was highly dependent on journalists for (factual) political news and information in order to effectively participate in the democratic process. Thus, the political role of journalism became infused with a new interpretation. The emerging discourse of political independence thus “... helped journalists to maintain their legitimacy to intervene in political matters ... and enhanced the credibility of the opinions expressed in leaders by claiming to be neutral political observers and the impartial arbiters of political conflicts.”\(^{82}\) Indeed, overt political partisanship had declined significantly in New Zealand newspapers by the 1880s when “[t]he pre-eminence of local political discussion was gradually displaced as the priority task of a newspaper. It was the provision of news which newspapers increasingly perceived as their major service to the public.”\(^{83}\) Henceforth, political independence became the foundation for journalists’ professional identity and work practices concerning the provision of the fact-centred information.

The discourse of ‘political independence’ also provided the basis for the development of normative ideals and practices concerning the performance of journalistic work in the twentieth century. As Cronin explains, “ideals and standards cannot develop in any occupation or profession until employees in that field link their

\(^{81}\) Kaplan (2002: 16).
\(^{82}\) Chalaby (1998: 137).
\(^{83}\) Day (1990: 201).
work to a sense of purpose, a role". In New Zealand, journalists’ political role was consolidated during the last four decades of the nineteenth century. It was from this conception of their role, that the notion of ‘professionalism’ as an occupational identity for journalists emerged, which was pivotal for later expressions of professionalism that occurred when conditions both internal and external to the journalistic environment allowed, as illustrated further in this thesis. It is upon the early organisational efforts of New Zealand journalists, and the role these organisations played in shaping journalists’ occupational identity and perceptions of ‘professionalism’ that the following chapter will focus.

3.6 Conclusion

During the last four decades of the nineteenth century, various economic, technological, social, political and cultural forces combined to create the preconditions for the rise of the journalistic occupation in New Zealand and with it, an occupational identity rooted in the notion of political independence. Over this period, newspaper work transformed from being the domain of political figures to the occupational work sphere of journalists, a process which was consolidated in the twentieth century. This chapter has attempted to show that in relation to the New Zealand case, the dominating economic and technological accounts do not adequately explain the emergence of ‘independent’ journalism. These approaches tend to treat such developments as the telegraph or commercialisation as the catalyst for journalistic independence. In doing so, they fail to take into account the wider processes that contributed to the decline of partisan journalism, and how these combined to allow the subsequent emergence of political independence as a journalistic norm. Above all, they leave many questions unanswered about the role that the emerging journalistic occupation itself had in shaping norms such as independence, accuracy and balance, upon which the practice of modern journalism is constituted. This chapter has argued that these various economic, technological and other processes are better understood as having created the institutional preconditions for journalism to emergence as an occupation, which drawing on the cultural responses available to it at the time, embraced the notion of political independence in order to garner social legitimacy.

84 Cronin (1992: 1).
This chapter has aimed to illustrate that in New Zealand during the last four decades of the nineteenth century, the developing occupation of journalism sought to carve out for itself an identity that was seen as independent of party politics although not divorced from them. Journalism in New Zealand could not develop as a profession with its own identity before independence was gained. The doctrine of political independence that was already taking root in the British and United States contexts was drawn on by New Zealand newspapers, offering journalists a basis from which to carve out for themselves an occupational identity that was separate from politicians. The emergence of journalistic independence is more fully understood by distinguishing between political independence as a feature of the structural arrangements of the nineteenth century press, and as a journalistic norm. While newspapers’ political affiliations did not immediately cease in the 1860s, their claims of independence offered the emerging occupational group of journalists a basis from which to construct an occupational identity distinct from politics and gain social legitimacy as an occupation on these grounds. This occupational identity was extended by the organisations of journalists that began appearing in New Zealand in the late nineteenth century. It is to a discussion of the early organisations of New Zealand journalists and the role these played in further constructing journalists’ occupational identity during the twentieth century that this thesis now turns.
CHAPTER FOUR

Organising Journalists: Debating the nature and benefits of ‘professionalism’

With the growth of the number of fully employed journalists, and thoroughly altered working environments, the need to determine the work tasks, professional standards, responsibilities, methods of training, employment and recruitment conditions became inevitable: ‘Who should be considered a journalist?’ clearly became a question of establishing the occupational boundaries and the legitimacy of the occupation.¹

4.1 Introduction

By the turn of the twentieth century, press ownership and the practice of journalism had parted ways.² As the previous chapter illustrated, this was a characteristic of journalism’s evolution that New Zealand shared with the United States and a number of European countries. However, as the extract above indicates, the consolidation of the journalistic occupation involved a number of additional processes that continued well into the twentieth century. First demonstrated in the United States and Europe in the late nineteenth century, a crucial development was the formation of collectives of journalists. Early journalists’ organisations served as forums for debate about journalists’ role and occupational boundaries, and as structures for the development of normative occupational values that underpinned their claims to being independent representatives of the public interest. By their very existence, these organisations reinforced the legitimacy of the journalistic occupational group.³ This chapter considers how New Zealand journalists have organised since the late nineteenth century, the models on which they have drawn, and the ideals underpinning the evolution of journalists’ organisations over the twentieth century. In doing so, it aims to unravel the changing perceptions of journalistic professionalism that have given impetus to debates concerning why and how journalists should be organised to constitute ‘a profession’ and to best convey ‘professionalism’. As this chapter illustrates, the ambiguity surrounding the status of

¹ Lauk (2001: 5).
the journalistic occupation was reflected in the organisational tendencies of journalists.

4.2 Making an occupation: The New Zealand Institute of Journalists

The question ‘who should be considered a journalist?’ was first addressed in the New Zealand context with the establishment of the New Zealand Institute of Journalists (hereafter NZIJ) in 1891. The NZIJ was formed at a time when the transformation of newspapers from political organs to commercial operations was well underway. As the previous chapter highlighted, this process witnessed an expansion of the division of labour in newspaper production. Instead of newspapers being owned and edited by the same person, journalists had become a distinct component in the division of labour, as those responsible for the editorial component of newspaper production. This process also witnessed a transfer of loyalty from newspapers to fellow journalists. The emergent occupational consciousness of journalists was reflected in the establishment of the NZIJ. The NZIJ was an illustration of journalists’ efforts to develop an occupational identity separate from newspaper owners’ political motivations. ‘Professionalism’ was the occupational identity that journalists aspired to and was rooted in the notion of political independence.

As an indicator that the journalistic occupation had coalesced in New Zealand, the country’s first journalists’ organisation is worthy of consideration for its role in shaping journalism’s occupational role and identity. Modelled on the British Institute of Journalists, the NZIJ was set up to promote “by all reasonable means of the interests of journalists and journalism”. The body was established at the suggestion of the proprietor of the Woodville Examiner E. A. Haggen, who issued a circular to newspapers in March 1891 to inquire “whether a movement of so much importance in the advancement of the profession would receive [their] support”. With sufficient interest obtained, branches were subsequently formed in Christchurch, Wellington, Auckland, and Dunedin whose membership included working journalists, editors and

---

5 New Zealand Institute of Journalists Act (1895).
6 The New Zealand Journalist (May 1911: 8).
proprietors.\textsuperscript{7} Indeed, the nature of the NZIJ’s membership suggested that nineteenth century definitions of ‘journalistic work’ included both buyers and sellers of labour power.\textsuperscript{8} The NZIJ’s membership also suggested a shared occupational identification amongst sectors of the newspaper industry that would later become industrially demarcated.

**The objectives of the NZIJ**

The establishment of the NZIJ represented the first formal attempt in New Zealand to define journalism as an occupation. Its constitution included a range of objectives that offer insight into the developing occupational identity of New Zealand journalists. Like its British counterpart, the NZIJ was established as a ‘select body’ which expressly aimed to function not as a nineteenth century trade union, but as a body concerned with maintaining a high standard of honour among its members.\textsuperscript{9} As such, admission to the NZIJ was not automatic. Candidates were admitted to membership on the basis of their experience in the field of journalism.\textsuperscript{10} It was envisaged that candidates would also have to pass an entry test for membership in the NZIJ. One of its objectives was to devise ‘measures for testing the qualifications of candidates for admission to professional membership of the Institute by examination in theory and in practice, or by any other actual and practical test’.

**The attainment of professional standing**

The NZIJ’s overarching goal was to ‘secure the advancement of journalism in all its branches, and obtaining for journalists formal and definite professional standing’.\textsuperscript{11} Further insight into the nature of ‘professionalism’ pursued by the NZIJ is reflected in its objective to promote ‘whatever may tend to the elevation of the status and the improvement of the qualifications of all members of the journalistic profession’. Just as the NZIJ saw improving the qualifications of journalists as a means of advancing the occupation’s professional status, it also sought to secure for journalists the privileges accorded to the ‘recognised professions’ of the nineteenth

\textsuperscript{7} NZIJ Minutes (26 October 1891: 3).
\textsuperscript{8} Christian (1980: 262).
\textsuperscript{9} Verry (1985: 18).
\textsuperscript{10} Classes of membership of the NZIJ included ‘members’, ‘associates’, ‘junior associates’, and ‘honorary members’ (NZIJ, 1907: 7).
\textsuperscript{11} The NZIJ’s aims were drawn from the British Institute of Journalists (loJ), which was formed in 1889 from the British National Association of Journalists (Hampton, 1999: 186).
century. The NZIJ’s early efforts to attain recognition of journalists’ privilege to retain confidential sources were illustrative. A watershed case occurred during the 1894 Fox Correspondence Commission, which was set up to investigate the publication by the Evening Post (whose editor, Edward Thomas Gillon, was also the president of the NZIJ) of confidential correspondence between Colonel Fox of the New Zealand forces and Premier Richard Seddon. Setting a precedent for modern journalistic practice, the commission accepted the argument that a journalist who acquires information honourably but confidentially should not disclose it or reveal their source. This precedent was put to the test later that year when J. S. Guthrie (editor of the Christchurch Press) refused to disclose an anonymous correspondent in the Supreme Court. A motion put to the NZIJ council by President W. G. Attack that the NZIJ “heavily approved the action of the editor of the Press … [and] that the time has now come when the same privilege should be bestowed upon editors as upon certain other professional men[sic]” was carried.

Press freedom and promoting professional conduct

Much like modern press councils and other like self-regulatory agencies, the NZIJ was also concerned with protecting press freedom. The NZIJ pledged to ‘watch over legislation affecting the discharge by journalists of their professional duties, and endeavouring to obtain amendments of the law affecting journalists, their duties, or interests’. This objective was first illustrated in 1892 when the long passage of the libel bill began. The NZIJ had initially supported the introduction of a libel law to secure the rights of the press and had made submissions on the topic to parliament. When such a bill (based on Britain’s libel law at the time) did eventually appear in 1894, it was far from what the NZIJ had envisaged. The NZIJ decried it as

a most mischievous measure which, if passed into law, would effectually destroy the legitimate freedom of the Press in New Zealand, lessen its influence for good, and dangerously curtail the facilities for the expression of public opinion upon public questions.

The NZIJ continued petitioning for a revised libel law for the duration of its existence.

---

12 Verry (2002).
14 NZIJ Minutes (20 August 1894: 22).
15 NZIJ Minutes (1912: 349).
The NZIJ also performed a quasi-regulatory role through ‘the ascertainment of the law and practice relating to all things connected with the journalistic profession, and the exercise of supervision over its members when engaged in professional duties’. This objective was put into practice early on in the NZIJ’s existence. In the absence of a formal self-regulatory agency to monitor journalists’ conduct, the NZIJ considered cases of alleged misconduct brought before it by journalists. As early as 1892, New Zealand journalists were deliberating the ethics of privacy intrusion, as evidenced by one NZIJ resolution:

That under no circumstances can a reporter’s duty require him[sic] to become an eavesdropper, to report or make use of private conversation accidentally overheard, or do anything inconsistent with the character of a gentleman[sic] and man[sic] of honour.17

**Collegiality and information dissemination**

Promoting collegiality among members of the journalistic occupation was also an aim reflected in the NZIJ’s objective to ‘promote personal or friendly intercourse between members of the Institute holding conferences and meetings for the discussion of professional affairs, interests, and duties’. A related objective of the NZIJ was to provide a forum for ‘communication between members or others seeking professional engagements and employers desirous of employing them’. In addition, the institute was also responsible for ‘the collection, collation, and publication of information of service or interest to members of the journalistic profession’, and ‘the promotion, encouragement, or assistance of means for providing against misfortune’. The NZIJ did not begin publishing *The New Zealand Journalist* (a bulletin produced by the institute for members) until 1911.18 However, the institute periodically distributed one-off publications on topics (such as the law of libel) of interest to journalists and other industry representatives.

---

16 While this thesis makes an effort to remedy the gender exclusive language characteristic of the era in reproducing quotations from *The New Zealand Journalist* and other like sources, the fact remains that the use of masculine pronouns did represent that majority of New Zealand journalists until at least the 1970s when more women began entering journalism. An exception to this trend was during wartime, when (in the words of one former journalist of the time) “women plugged the gaps while the men were at war. The war over, they were told to go back to the kitchen” (Bruce Martin, 10 May 2003: Personal Communication). This statement nicely captures the ‘gendered nature’ of New Zealand journalism pre-1970, a point to which this thesis briefly returns in chapter nine.


18 As noted in chapter one, publication of *The New Zealand Journalist* was resumed by the NZJA in 1935.
Both the objectives and the causes pursued by the NZIJ offer much insight into the professional vision held for New Zealand journalism. Above all, the NZIJ was a body that existed to promote the social status of the journalistic occupation. This was aptly illustrated at the 1895 annual meeting of the NZIJ. Speaking about the British Institute of Journalists upon which the NZIJ was modelled, the vice president of the NZIJ and editor of the Christchurch Press, W. H. Triggs, offered a convincing rationale for the NZIJ for members who took the social status of their occupation seriously.

Before the days of the Institute ... journalism in England was regarded as a mere occupation — as a mere respectable way of getting a living — but was never looked on as a profession. Each individual journalist stood alone. If he[sic] had to fight for his[sic] rights — using the word in the widest possible sense — he[sic] had no organization to back him[sic] up, no authoritative evidence which he[sic] could produce as to the ‘use and wont’ of his[sic] calling, no status to plead or defend.\(^{19}\)

Highlighting the importance of the NZIJ as a means of delineating the occupational boundaries of journalism and thus excluding ‘outsiders’ attempting to claim the status of a journalist, Triggs continued:

Any man[sic], moreover, might call himself a journalist — a lawyer’s clerk who sent reports to a local paper, a grocer’s shopman[sic] who indited[sic] an occasional letter, even a loiterer taken up by the police and not knowing what to call himself[sic], wrote himself down ‘a journalist’. Have we not seen the same thing in this colony, even in very recent times? ... [In England] they have now not only got an organization but they have made journalism into a profession ... Journalism in England had now an organization capable of fostering a code of honour and an esprit de corps among its members, speaking in the name of the profession and securing for it the recognition and respect due to so honourable a calling.\(^{20}\)

The NZIJ Bill: Debate over ‘proper’ organisation of the journalistic occupation

After two unsuccessful attempts to have the NZIJ incorporated into New Zealand statute in 1893,\(^{21}\) and again in early 1895,\(^{22}\) this was achieved late in 1895. The New Zealand Institute of Journalists Bill’s passage is significant for the insights it sheds on the prevailing perceptions of journalistic professionalism. Two central

---

\(^{19}\) NZIJ Minutes (12 October 1895: 238).

\(^{20}\) Ibid: 238.

\(^{21}\) NZIJ Minutes (3 July 1893: 11).

\(^{22}\) NZPD (4 July 1895: 360).
themes stood out in the debates on the Bill. These themes concerned firstly, the importance of journalism to the public (and thus the need for legal recognition for the NZIJ), and secondly, the relationship of journalism to ‘other professions’. A recurring theme in these debates was that journalism was just as (if not more) important to the public as the ‘recognised professions’ like medicine and law. It followed that journalism should have the same legal recognition. As its proponents put it, the Bill was ‘intended to place journalism on precisely the same footing as the learned professions’.23

Objections to the Bill highlighted a conflict over views about the ‘proper’ organisation of journalists. The frequent reference in the debates to the ‘closed professions’ led some to question the desirability of creating a ‘close corporation’ for journalism.24 According to its opponents, the Bill would “make it just as difficult to enter the profession of journalism as to take the degree of barrister or of a medical man[sic]”,25 serving to exclude journalists from practising unless they belonged to the NZIJ. Ultimately a form of registration characteristic of the ‘recognised professions’, this was deemed undesirable for journalism as it would pose as a “danger and menace to the freedom of journalism”.26 Furthermore, critics argued that a legally recognised institute was unnecessary because journalists were “not produced in the same way as ordinary professional men[sic] – lawyers, doctors, or clergy by the machinery of the university”. Instead, journalists had “risen by their abilities and not in consequence of any diploma or examination by a board of professors which they had passed”.27 Still others downplayed the NZIJ’s ambition for professionalism, arguing that

It was not necessary that a journalist have a professional status, as their readers had nothing to fear or suffer by whatever they might place before them. It was necessary that they should have medical men[sic] who were certified in their profession, in order that their wives and children might be protected from the results of being treated by unskilful men[sic]. But there was not such necessity in the case of journalism.28

---

23 Ibid: 361.
24 Ibid: 360.
25 Ibid: 360-1.
26 Ibid: 360.
27 Ibid: 360-1.
However, the Bill’s supporters rejected the argument that the incorporation of the NZIJ would be “a dangerous menace to the integrity of journalism”, pointing out that the Bill’s intention was not to create a ‘close corporation’ which would exclude journalists from practising unless they belonged to the institute. It was clarified that incorporation would “not make it necessary for journalists to pass examinations before they could belong to the journalistic profession”. On the contrary, the Bill was simply a measure designed to secure the same benefits as other corporate bodies, including the power to make by-laws, to recover debts and acquire land.

The primary aim of the Bill was a journalists’ institute recognised by statute which would be “held responsible for the integrity of the journalistic world”, and would “conserve the honour of its members, and the honour and integrity of journalism”. Advocates believed that the Bill should be passed in order to “raise the position of journalism in the colony … [and to] create a central authority which would be an incentive for the morality, integrity, and influence of the Press of the colony”. In the event, sufficient support for these arguments was gained for the New Zealand Institute of Journalists Act to be passed in 1895, helping to realise the NZIJ’s ambitions for professionalism. However, this was not the end of debate concerning the issue of occupational closure for journalism.

4.3 ‘To close or not to close?’: Early attitudes toward occupational closure

As we have seen, the NZIJ both embodied and promoted a conception of journalistic professionalism that revolved around the occupation’s status and ‘genteel’ image. This was paralleled in the NZIJ’s early discussions of the issue of occupational closure. This debate reveals both the dominant conception of ‘professionalism’ of the NZIJ, and the rationale for ‘professionalism’ held by the body. The dominating view at the turn of the twentieth century was that the ‘journalist was born, not made’. As then NZIJ president elaborated,

---

33 Ibid: 361.  
34 Ibid: 367.  
[t]hat is another way of saying that heredity plays a greater part than environment and training in the making of the successful newspaper reporter and writer ... [A] certain natural endowment is the primary essential to the making of a journalist ... [A] youth who has not been educated past the fifth standard, provided he[sic] has the natural endowment necessary, will often make a better reporter than the one who has been through a High School course; while it is almost axiomatic that a University education absolutely unfit[sic] for the ordinary work of journalism.36

These comments reflect a view that formal journalism education was not a pre-requisite for expertise. It is in the context of the NZIJ’s central objective of promoting the social status of journalism that its views on the benefits of occupational closure can be understood.

[It] is conceivable that the interests of journalism as a profession and the public weal no less might be furthered by a method of systematic training and of rigid examination of men[sic] who aspire to become journalists ... [It] would be advantageous to apply tests of admission to the ranks of general reporter—from which to a great extent men[sic] are drawn to fill the higher grades. An entrance examination in shorthand, and in general knowledge, conducted under the auspices of the New Zealand University or other competent body, would operate beneficially—being in the interests alike of newspaper proprietors and of the members of the reporting profession. The holding of such examinations would tend to prevent the overcrowding of an already poorly paid field of labour ...37

It was believed that implementing entrance requirements for journalists, and emulating the infrastructure of the ‘recognised professions’ would advance the social status of journalism to a level on par with the ‘learned professions’.

As there are schools of science and art, why should there not be schools of journalism? A chair of journalism in the University seems as much of a necessity as chairs of medicine, law, chemistry and mathematics. This is a matter that the New Zealand Institute of Journalists might very well take in hand and agitate. In this way a great deal would be done towards raising the status of journalists and placing journalism on an equality with the so-called ‘learned professions’.38

Further remarks on the issue juxtapose journalistic expertise versus the social status of journalism. As discussed further in chapter five, while the existing method of in-office training was seen to equip journalists with sufficient expertise, the occupation’s status would benefit from entry examinations. The merits of

36 Kelly (1900: 1-2).
37 Ibid: 2.
occupational closure were not couched in terms of promoting expertise among journalists, but in terms of furthering the social status of the occupation, with emphasis placed on journalism’s public importance.

...[O]ffice training is ... sufficiently provided for under existing conditions; hence the necessity for dwelling more particularly upon the desirableness of some form of educational preparation and ‘entrance examination’ for the profession of journalism ... Let us see that something is done which shall remove ‘the making of a journalist’ from the realm of Chance, by substituting some deliberative method for the existing haphazard way of choosing a very important class of public educators ... [T]he work of making a journalist of the best stamp will not be completed [until] every care has been taken to shut out incompetence and intellectual incapacity.\(^{39}\)

Kelly’s comments reveal that the NZIJ promoted a conception of professionalism that derived from claims of journalism as a public service and representing the public interest. This view centred upon the aim of advancing the social status of the occupation vis-à-vis ‘other professions’. From these remarks, the NZIJ’s conception of and rationale for ‘professionalism’ was social status, which would be furthered by emulating the professional infrastructure of the ‘recognised professions’ like medicine and law. Accordingly, the benefits of occupational closure through entry examinations for journalists were couched not in terms of promoting expertise among journalists, but rather in terms of promoting the professional status and public perception of the occupation.

**The social context of journalism’s status in nineteenth century New Zealand**

The NZIJ’s conception of ‘professionalism’ was consistent with the wider social conditions in which it was established and operated. In the late nineteenth century, an idiosyncratic feature of the development of journalism in New Zealand was that the occupation’s status was high at the time. This was in large measure due to its long-standing association with the political and social elite of the colony. Furthermore, the New Zealand press did not have the equivalent of Britain’s ‘working class press’ to ‘tarnish’ the overall reputation of newspapers. That journalism was ‘a profession’ was a taken for granted ‘fact’ of social life in late nineteenth century New Zealand. As Day further explains,

\(^{39}\)Ibid: 3.
The status of journalism was high in New Zealand. This was by no means usual. In the/sic/ England whose newspapers New Zealand editors recognised as home journals, journalists of the working-class press were vilified by established public opinion. Even in regard to the established and acceptable newspapers there was a doubt if journalism was a profession. With little remuneration or tenure of position and no practice of monopoly privilege, it had few of the generally accepted hallmarks of a profession. In New Zealand it was different ... Journalism in New Zealand began as a voluntary service for their community ... performed largely by well educated, capable and generally well regarded male members of the colony’s elite; the small group of aristocratic and upper middle class migrants who became the New Zealand ruling class ... [W]ith a record of power, influence, and association with the gentry, journalism in New Zealand was a respected profession.\textsuperscript{40}

Indeed, these were the conditions in which New Zealand journalism as an occupation began in the late nineteenth century. With its association with power and the elite of the colony, respectability and social status were automatically conferred upon the journalistic occupation. Further, the fact that the practice of journalism had grown from a ‘literary hobby’ also contributed to its high status. With the development of daily and weekly newspapers this ‘hobby’ increased in popularity and contributions were increasingly remunerated. Hence, in its developmental stages journalism was considered a ‘remunerative hobby’.\textsuperscript{41} The high mobility within the journalistic field and the fact that it was seldom regarded as a life-long career did not serve to detract from its high status, but rather informed it. While formal occupational closure remained elusive for the journalistic occupation, and the field was easy to enter and leave since it did not require costly preparation, often providing a supplementary source of income for authors, journalism offered some of the prestige of an ‘intellectual profession’.\textsuperscript{42} This association of journalism with the literary field automatically conferred upon the occupation a ‘respectable’ image. Thus, the prevailing social conditions into which the journalistic occupation was born and initially operated in New Zealand serve to account for the dominant conception of professionalism embodied by the NZIJ. For the NZIJ, which was dominated by the most powerful members of the wider newspaper industry, professionalism was, above all, a matter of promoting the occupation’s social status.

\textsuperscript{40} Day (1990: 167-8).
\textsuperscript{41} The New Zealand Journalist (12 May 1936: 6).
\textsuperscript{42} Lauk (2001: 5).
Tensions over the ‘professional vision’ for journalism

Yet these apparently favourable conditions were not to persist, at least for the working journalist. With the growth of working journalists employed in New Zealand, and the NZIJ providing them, if nothing else, with a forum for discussion and sharing of their concerns, it soon became apparent that these were becoming increasingly similar to those facing journalists elsewhere. As in the United States and Britain at the turn of the century, New Zealand journalists increasingly questioned the apparent discrepancy between the high status of the journalistic occupation, and the relatively low status of its practitioners. A key issue for journalists was the fact that the importance of journalistic work to the public (the cornerstone of the occupation’s claims to professionalism) was not reflected in journalists’ economic rewards. Put another way, the ethos of professionalism that surrounded journalistic work was at odds with the reality of journalists’ wages and working conditions.43 Saleetti explains this inconsistency in the context of United States journalism: “An ongoing dilemma within the occupation in the early twentieth century was that reporters had increasing power to inform and influence large groups of people but lacked the economic benefits afforded professionals in other fields”.44

The economic position of New Zealand journalists created further inconsistencies for an occupation whose developing identity was based on the ideals of independence and neutrality. On the one hand, journalists’ claims to independence pledged distance from issues of class, seeing themselves as opinion makers above social classes and interests. This objective description of the role of the journalist contrasted with the subjective image which journalists held of their work.45 At odds with the high social importance accorded to their work was the reality of the low wages, long hours, and lack of job security of journalistic work. (Journalists were paid ‘by the line’, suggesting a priority on quality over quality).46

Although the establishment of the NZIJ had represented an attempt to define journalism as an occupation, definition of the occupational boundaries was complicated by the wide membership of the NZIJ. The tension over the ‘professional vision’ that existed among members of the NZIJ was attributable to the divergent sets

43 See Hampton (1999) for a consideration of the parallel British experience.
46 The New Zealand Journalist (12 May 1939: 4).
of interests among members. This resulted in a conflict between firstly, a conception of professionalism that emphasised the (social) status of the occupation itself, and secondly, one which prioritised the (social and economic) status of its practitioners relative to that accorded to the occupation of journalism. More often than not, it was the dominating proprietorial interests of the NZIJ that held this former conception of professionalism, while the working journalists who comprised the other major segment of the body held the latter. Whether intentional or not, this conflict served to undermine the interests of journalists as it was played out in both the NZIJ’s objectives and causes it pursued. While the NZIJ claimed to exist to ‘secure the advancement of journalism in all its branches, and obtaining for journalists formal and definite professional standing’, the social status of the occupation tended to be promoted at the expense of the working journalists’ industrial interests.\(^{47}\)

**The problem of an ‘anonymous press’: Anonymity as both a professional and an industrial issue for journalists**

The conflicting interests within the wider journalism industry were pertinently illustrated by the prevailing practice of anonymity, where journalists either wrote under a pseudonym or (as was more commonly the case) refrained from using bylines at all. The rationale for continuing the British practice of anonymity in New Zealand was that information could go before the public for what it was worth rather than who said it.\(^{48}\) If reporters were to put their name to an article, so the argument ran, the interests of impartiality would be undermined.\(^{49}\) However, journalists’ counter-arguments included the following:

One of the most harmful features of journalism today [is] the anonymity by which those who advised the public worked unseen. The writers should be given a personal responsibility as [is] given to other professional men/sic/ who advised the public on other questions, such as law and health. It [is] essential, too, that the journalist be properly remunerated and given independence.\(^{50}\)

\(^{47}\) It is noteworthy that journalists’ criticisms of the NZIJ in the area of their wages and working conditions did not take into consideration whether the institute could actually legally function in this area given that it was not a registered trade union empowered to deal with industrial issues.


\(^{49}\) Ibid: 169-170.

\(^{50}\) The Australasian Journalist (16 June 1924: 100).
Indeed, the practice of anonymity was a ‘professional issue’ with a significant industrial overlay. While the rhetoric of impartiality/objectivity may have promoted the status of newspapers (and their owners), it did little to improve the position of the journalists responsible for the editorial production of a newspaper. Asher refers to this as the ‘ambiguous attitude’ of newspaper publishers toward professionalism; that is, while they often observed the rhetoric of professionalism, they also had an interest in keeping editorial wages low.\textsuperscript{51} Indeed, the practice of anonymity not only hampered the status of the journalists by inhibiting ‘ownership’ of the editorial element of newspaper production and their ability to gain public recognition in this regard, it also depressed the price they were paid for their work and denied them bargaining power against an employer.\textsuperscript{52}

In New Zealand, some proprietors feared that journalists would be ‘baited’ by opponent newspapers if they were to ‘bill their best men/sic’.\textsuperscript{53} However, many journalists believed that anonymity served only proprietors’ interests as it meant that their editorial staff would not be placed in a position where they were able to command better prices for their services.\textsuperscript{54} Anonymity thus provides an illustration of the way that early ‘professional issues’ in New Zealand journalism tended to be inextricably linked with journalists’ industrial concerns. Ultimately, it was its failure to cater to both working journalists’ professional and industrial interests that saw the demise of the NZIJ.

**The declining popularity of the New Zealand Institute of Journalists**

The NZIJ’s emphasis on ‘professionalism’ as increasing the status of the occupation at the expense of that of its practitioners undermined the value of the NZIJ to the working journalist. This was reflected in the way that the ‘professional issues’ addressed by NZIJ tended to serve the dominant interests of the body which were often inimical to the concerns of its working journalist members. Issues such as

\textsuperscript{51} Asher (1994: 316).
\textsuperscript{52} Day (1992: 169). Unlike comparable countries such as the United States and Britain, by-lines were rarely used in New Zealand newspapers well into the twentieth century (*The New Zealand Journalist*, 12 September 1942: 6). During the Second World War, the publication of war correspondents’ names with their articles represented the first major challenge to the practice of anonymity in New Zealand journalism. However, it was not until the 1960s that the use of by-lines became more common. Conceivably, the advent of television news at this time, which increased the visibility of journalists, further served to challenge the tradition of anonymity in newspapers.
\textsuperscript{53} *The New Zealand Journalist* (12 May 1939: 4).
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid: 4.
privilege were evidently addressed by the NZIJ because to do so was in the interests of journalism as a profession with professional recognition and rights. Anonymity, on the other hand, was an issue that concerned journalists, depressing both their status and wages. Naturally, it was not in the (economic) interests of employers – the dominating interests of the NZIJ – to resolve this issue facing journalists. This perceived imbalance of interests saw the majority of working journalists lose faith in the NZIJ. Indeed, the nature of the NZIJ’s membership was a significant factor in its downfall. Modelled on the ‘professional association’ established by British journalists in 1889, the NZIJ’s membership was not industrially demarcated and suggested that, at least initially, journalists, editors, and proprietors alike conceived of themselves as a unified occupational grouping. However, changes in the wider social and economic environment of journalism challenged this arrangement.

Although the NZIJ attributed its dwindling membership to an ‘insufficient community of interest in the organisation’, it acknowledged its limitations for the working journalist in its efforts to regain their interest. In an attempt to address its declining membership, in 1905 the NZIJ council set up a committee “to enquire into a plan for improving the Institute and increasing its advantages to working journalists”. However, this initiative was evidently ‘too little too late’, at least for Canterbury journalists whose plans to establish a trade union for journalists were by this time well underway.

4.4 An organisation for the working journalist: The formation of the Canterbury Journalists’ Union

Before the turn of the twentieth century, journalists’ loyalty to their newspaper and its owner had remained stronger than any alliances with fellow journalists. This loyalty was challenged as the desirability of a ‘journalists-only’ body to address issues of wages and working conditions was increasingly acknowledged. According to Christchurch journalist W. G. Atack, who was a founding member of the emergent journalists’ union, many journalists were of the view that “salaries were low and there

56 The New Zealand Journalist (20 May 1911: 2).
57 NZIJ Minutes (1905: 1). In 1910, the Auckland branch disaffiliated from the NZIJ (NZIJ, 12 October 1910:322), and by 1915, the Wellington branch was the only one remaining (NZIJ, 1915: 349). In spite of these obvious difficulties, the NZIJ was reportedly still in operation on a minimalist basis into the 1920s (NZJA Minutes, 2 February 1921).
seemed no hope of getting them raised by the institute". According to critics, there was a need for a body 'to tackle the industrial problems of the profession'. Indeed, trade unionism had already begun to take root in New Zealand journalism with sectors of the industry becoming industrially demarcated. The employers' had organised as the Newspaper Proprietors' Association (hereafter NPA) in 1898, and working journalists believed that 'it was only right' that they, too, had an organisation of their own to pursue the 'professionalism' that journalists saw as most relevant to them.

A letter written on the 17th of August 1901 by the president-elect of the NZIJ, Mark Cohen, to the constituent branches of the body aimed to gauge interest in the formation of a separate body to address issues of journalists' wages and working conditions. It was stated that

Whilst I do not think it is desirable that the Institute, which embraces all classes of journalists ... should tackle the question I feel strongly that something requires to be done to stop the tendency, in the North Island especially, to reduce wages. I know that the work of the average reporter is much harder than it was ten years ago, the cost of living has increased ... and I am not conscious that newspaper proprietors have correspondingly raised wages. It therefore behoves the working bees of the profession to take immediate steps for self-protection and I think the best course towards that end is to band themselves into an organisation outside the Institute ...

The Christchurch branch of the NZIJ was the first to consider this proposal. At a meeting of working journalists of the Christchurch branch of the NZIJ held on the 23rd of August 1901, consideration was given to the formation of a journalists' union to deal with the industrial concerns facing journalists. Unanimous agreement on this issue was obtained, and it was resolved that a committee of journalists be formed to draw up a draft constitution for the proposed union. By September 1901, journalists in Wellington, Auckland and Dunedin had been informed of the moves taken by

---

58 NZJA (1933: 11).
59 Ibid: 6. The implementation of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act in 1894 had provided a platform for the revival of unionism in New Zealand, establishing a framework for resolving disputes over wages and conditions through conciliation boards and ultimately an arbitration court. This meant that employers had to negotiate with unions and ensured that there would be an outcome (Franks, 2001: 47).
60 For background on the formation of the NPA, see Appendix B.
61 CJU Minutes (17 August 1901: 3). Further, New Zealand printers had begun organising as early as the 1860s when the first typographical unions were formed in Dunedin and Wellington (Franks, 2001: 9).
62 NZJA (1933: 10).
63 CJU Minutes (17 August 1901: 1).
Christchurch journalists to form an industrial union of working journalists.\textsuperscript{64} However, efforts to secure the co-operation of journalists outside Christchurch, and the establishment of provincial branches were unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{65} Initial interest from the Wellington branch of the NZIJ dissipated when it was deemed to potentially weaken the NZIJ.\textsuperscript{66} The crucial point was that, for many journalists outside of Christchurch, the very notion of trade unionism contrasted sharply with their social aspirations for professionalism. In spite of their economic interests, many journalists were hostile toward unionism, and “saw the banding together of professional men[sic] into a union as extremely undignified”.\textsuperscript{67}

Therefore, it was in the hands of Christchurch journalists to form a journalists’ union. However, before the union could proceed, Christchurch journalists were obliged to ascertain the bearing of the law on whether working journalists employed for a salary could form a union of workers under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act (1900). The response received allowed Christchurch journalists to proceed with establishing a union. Consideration was then given to the issue of the union’s membership, which for the first time in the history of New Zealand journalism, would be confined to journalists as a distinct occupational group within the newspaper industry. It was proposed that the term “journalist” was to be defined as “any person, not an employer, habitually engaged for payment as and whose chief source of income is derived as editor, leader-writer, writer of special articles, special correspondent, assistant-editor, sub-editor, reporter or reader”.\textsuperscript{68}

However, the question of whether membership should be extended to editors received considerable debate. A letter written by \textit{Press} journalist Jack S. Kelly to editors to gauge their opinions on the issue summed up the views of Christchurch journalists. On the one hand, it was argued “... that the necessity for the Union was more urgent in the case of country editors than in the case of any other class of journalist”.\textsuperscript{69} However, it was also felt that

as editors were called upon to advise their employers regarding the engagement of members of their staffs they really stood in the position of employers and that if they became members of the Union their interests as

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{64} CJU Minutes (14 September 1901: 1).
\item \textsuperscript{65} The New Zealand Journalist (15 October 1945: 4).
\item \textsuperscript{66} CJU Minutes (17 August 1901: 3).
\item \textsuperscript{67} NZIA (1933: 13).
\item \textsuperscript{68} CJU Minutes (17 August 1901: 4).
\item \textsuperscript{69} Kelly (1901: 1).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
employees and quasi-employers would clash and that they would be placed in an invidious position regarding their fellow-members of the Union.\footnote{Ibid: 1.}

This issue was further debated at a meeting of Christchurch journalists on the 4\textsuperscript{th} of October 1901, at which the union’s rules were deliberated. It was confirmed that “regarding the question of editors being members of the union” any journalist, other than an employer would be eligible for membership. The new body was registered as the Canterbury Journalists’ Union (CJU) under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act (1900), and adopted a set of rules in January 1902. Conspicuously absent from the NZIJ’s objectives were two aims for which the CJU was founded. In addition to promoting the status and general interests of members, the Canterbury union would aim to ‘maintain a fair rate of wages and reasonable hours and conditions of labour’ and ‘settle disputes between members of the Union and employers’.

The CJU also sought to address ‘professional issues’ that had industrial implications for working journalists. One such issue, which had been actively addressed by its predecessor the NZIJ, was the issue of journalists’ privilege to retain confidential sources. In 1903, the issue of journalists’ privilege arose out of a case in which a reporter and the proprietor of the \textit{New Zealand Times} were fined after publishing certain documents which had been procured from an anonymous source. With the fine came the warning that another occurrence could result in expulsion from the Press Gallery.\footnote{NZIJ Minutes (1904: 238).} A report was presented to the Privileges Committee of the House of Representatives proposing that journalists who refused to divulge their sources of information would be disqualified from occupying seats in the Press Gallery.\footnote{CJU Minutes (October 1903: 1).} A CJU petition decried these proposals as threats to both freedom of the press and of the people, and as interference with the discharge of the proper duties and responsibilities of press gallery journalists.\footnote{Ibid: 1.} Thus, the petition carried significant indications of the perceived role and duties of journalists. However, unlike the NZIJ’s rationale for promoting journalists’ privilege, the CJU’s primary concern was the threat posed to the security of journalists’ livelihood. This was consistent with union’s founding objectives — the protection of journalists’ industrial interests.
However, the CJU was to face a major impediment to its long-term success. In an effort to discourage a union movement among journalists, the proprietor of The Press threatened that any journalists who joined the union would be dismissed.\textsuperscript{74} When a further effort to create branches in other centres was made in 1905, this threat naturally deterred many journalists from joining the Canterbury Journalists' Union.\textsuperscript{75} W. G. Atack of the Canterbury Times and vice-president of the CJU confirmed the reluctance of many journalists to become involved in unionism:

Repeated efforts were made to get the Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin journalists to form unions, but they proved fruitless. Expressions of sympathy and belief in unionism was not wanting, but no one in any of the centres mentioned appeared to possess the courage to set the ball rolling ... A warning had been issued that dismissal awaited any staff member interesting himself[\textit{sic}] in the formation of a union.\textsuperscript{76}

Indeed, this threat resulted in the resignation of all Press journalists from the CJU with the exception of Jack S. Kelly (who had initiated the formation of the union in 1901) leaving the CJU with only six remaining members.\textsuperscript{77} Presumably, maintaining one's job (in spite of its relatively low pay and poor working conditions) was preferable to no job at all. As a result, the CJU was a weak body. It did not have the support of all Canterbury journalists, much less the country's working journalists, who in spite of their industrial interests, did not want to be seen as 'unionists' and put their jobs on the line. This was the belief of W. G. Atack, who felt that the pressure brought to bear on journalists by proprietors warning against union involvement was directly attributable to the CJU's demise.\textsuperscript{78} Consequently, the Canterbury journalists' union unanimously voted to cease operation after only seven years in 1908.\textsuperscript{79} According to Atack, the CJU “failed because unionism was not regarded with any degree of favour by employers, and was anathema to the directors of newspaper companies”.\textsuperscript{80}

... There was no departure from the belief that the step they [CJU members] had taken was for the betterment of the profession, but the day came when they were called upon to ask themselves whether it was worth while playing a lone hand in the seemingly hopeless task of attempting to arouse those in the

\textsuperscript{74} The New Zealand Journalist (12 July 1935: 2).
\textsuperscript{75} NZJA (1933: 10).
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid: 11-12.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid: 10-11.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid 11-12.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid: 9-10; The New Zealand Journalist (15 October 1945: 4).
\textsuperscript{80} NZJA (1933: 12).
other centres from the inertia that appeared to weight so heavily upon them. The members, accordingly, were called together, the position was fully discussed, and it was agreed that, as all that could be done had been done, further effort was useless.\footnote{Ibid: 12.}

4.5 The development of the New Zealand Journalists’ Association

By 1908, journalists had organised firstly to promote the prestige and honour of their profession, and secondly, to promote solely the industrial interests of working journalists. The New Zealand Journalist’s Association (NZJA) represented an attempt to reconcile both of these sets of interests. There was a growing current of opinion that was both sympathetic to the economic plight of journalists, but at the same time, was in favour of the social aspirations for ‘professionalism’ that the NZIJ embodied. It was out of this dual set of social and economic interests that a new ‘professional vision’ for journalists was born in the form of the NZJA, which was to provide the structure for the development of the journalistic occupation in New Zealand for much of the twentieth century.

The nature of the NZJA: Promoting professionalism and avoiding ‘militancy’

The NZJA began operation in 1912 having overcome two of the limitations of the CJU. Firstly, the NZJA purposely avoided the label ‘union’, so as not to deter those journalists who had shunned the Canterbury union. Instead, its founders drew on the name of its recently established Australian counterpart, the Australian Journalists’ Association (AJA), which “provided the impetus for a new movement for organising the profession”.\footnote{Ibid: 13.} New Zealand journalists were in agreement with their Australian contemporaries that “[t]heir wages might be low and their tenure precarious, but they did not wish to be confused with the working class”.\footnote{Walker (1976: 238).} Hence, the label ‘union’ was also eschewed by journalists in New Zealand. The NZJA would not only take a ‘moderate’ stance toward unionism; it would also reject the ‘airy-fairy’ conception of professionalism that the NZIJ had embodied.
Although the NZJA would perform as a union in respect to the Arbitration Court and collective bargaining, it eschewed all connection with other unions and the growing Labour movement. The NZJA pledged to “stand apart politically from the general body of trade unions” and desired to “remain free from outside entanglements”. The ‘moderate’ nature of the NZJA served to attract more members than the Canterbury union. It also served to quell disquiet about the ‘perils’ of journalists’ unions from employers, who claimed that “it would be impossible for journalists, once in a union, to keep an objective view of politics”, and that journalists “would be unfitted to give the public trustworthy reports and opinions on economic matters”. Both the NZJA’s ‘moderate’ stance toward unionism and its ‘practical’ ambitions for ‘professionalism’ were reflected in its twenty-first anniversary publication:

The NZJA was founded with the concrete and practical aim of improving everyday life for the rank and file of New Zealand journalists. For this it has never substituted such cloudy generalities as ‘raising the status of the profession’ [as the NZIJ had]. It has sought first and foremost the material welfare of its members, and thereby many other things have been added to it. Journalism is not, and is never likely to be, one of the close professions, but in the past two decades the professional spirit has become much stronger within the ranks. This is largely due to the organisation of working journalists for their mutual benefit, and in New Zealand such organisation has been carried out entirely by the Association.

The emergence of a third journalists’ organisation in a little over two decades illustrated the conflict over the professional vision among journalists. Whereas most NZIJ advocates of professionalism had emphasised improving the social status of the occupation, the NZJA sought professionalism primarily on the grounds that the importance of journalistic work to the public was not reflected in journalists’

---

84 *The New Zealand Journalist* (12 December 1935: 1-2). When the NZJA was founded in 1912, the Labour Party had not emerged as a political force in New Zealand. An invitation to affiliate with the New Zealand Federation of Labour (an industrial organisation formed in 1937) was extended to the NZJA later that year. However, the majority of journalists were opposed to affiliation on the grounds that “journalistic work requires strict political impartiality, and the alliance of journalists as a body to any party would contravene the ethics of the profession” (*The New Zealand Journalist*, 12 July 1937: 2). This stance was significantly challenged in the 1970s, as chapter eight discusses further.

85 NZJA (1962: 35).
87 NZJA (1933: 5).
88 During this period, a number of ‘Press Clubs’ sprang up around New Zealand. These were not formal organisations as such, but rather served as forums for social gatherings. One early example was the Christchurch Press Club, noted in 1924 for its ‘atmosphere of Bohemianism’ (*The Australasian Journalist*, 15 May 1924: 1).
economic rewards and social status. These pressures facing journalists intensified during the Depression years. The 1930s were notoriously fraught with economic difficulties, and the conditions of the journalists’ award had fallen below the first journalists’ award obtained by Christchurch journalists in 1913.\(^89\) While salaries had advanced on paper, certain conditions, including the increase of hours, had reverted to their pre-1913 state.\(^90\) These economic concerns were coupled with an attack on the integrity of journalists by the managing director of New Zealand Newspapers Ltd, Sir Cecil Leys, who claimed that journalists were “militant unionists who placed material things above the pleasure of a job well done”.\(^91\) Action needed to be taken to improve the economic and social status of journalists.\(^92\) Improving their position would also involve, in part, shedding journalists’ ‘Bohemian image’, which was increasingly seen to have negative implications for journalists:

There is still hesitancy, on the part of some employers, to admit frankly that journalism is a profession worthy of high pay and good condition ...The idea became general that writers for the Press were a Bohemian lot, who dashed off their paragraphs in between drinks; men/sic/ whom, to pay well, was to drive deeper into debauch.\(^93\)

4.6 Renewed debate over controlling entry: Registration for journalists?

Further organisational efforts by journalists came in the 1930s. The NZJA responded to journalists’ industrial and social concerns by promoting a journalists’ registration bill. The bill was intended to secure for journalists a status comparable with that of other professionals like doctors and lawyers. To achieve such a status, there was a need to exclude “that growing horde of ‘outsiders’ who are occasionally bitten by the desire to write”.\(^94\) This ‘intrusion’ by ‘outsiders’ ran counter to the

---

\(^{89}\) NZJA Minutes (13 August 1938: 2). Significantly, this was not only the first journalists’ industrial award to be obtained in New Zealand; it is said to have been the first of its type world-wide (The New Zealand Journalist, 15 October 1945: 4).

\(^{90}\) NZJA Minutes (13 August 1938: 2).

\(^{91}\) Ibid: 5.

\(^{92}\) It was not until after the 1936 Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Amendment Act (which introduced, among many other things, a minimum wage, a forty hour week, and compulsory unionism) that the NZJA was able to forge a significant role in New Zealand journalism. In 1938 then NZJA president, A. Hardcastle stated that “the advent of a Labour government and legislation favourable to workers ha[di] placed greater responsibilities on the Association”. Previously, “more or less independent action was taken by the separate union, with a parental guide from the NZJA. Now a common understanding and purpose are essential to the attainment of improved conditions in journalistic work” (NZJA Minutes, 13 August 1938: 1).

\(^{93}\) The Australasian Journalist (31 March 1920: 47).

\(^{94}\) The New Zealand Journalist (12 February 1936: 2).
interests of journalists as it not only weakened the status of the profession, it also depressed their rates of pay. As one journalist laid out the issue:

Most professional men [sic] have an advantage not shared by journalists of being in close corporations. Lawyers, doctors, surveyors, engineers, marine officers and architects are protected from outside competition by varying forms of registration. This fact helps keep up their pay. It may be an argument in favour of journalists being officially hallmarked too.

Indeed, the NZJA's rationale for promoting occupational closure contrasted with that of the NZIJ. Not only was the NZJA concerned about restricting entry to the journalistic occupation in order to promote journalists' status; the issue also revolved around notions of journalists' expertise and indispensability. Advocates of registration for journalists objected to the 'intrusion' on industrial grounds, arguing that "the work of journalism is expert work which should be paid for at the rates prescribed in the award". They also objected on professional grounds, maintaining that there was "no place for the amateur in journalism as in any other places where skilled tests are applied". As one proponent of registration for journalists stated:

Annoyance to journalists who earn their bread and butter by writing for the Press is often caused by the spurious claims of persons of varying repute and equally doubtful ability to rank as members of the profession ... We must guard our status jealously and any trespass—and some has been most flagrant and nauseating—should be stopped.

The proposal for a journalists' registration bill in fact dated back to 1929 when, at the NZJA's annual conference, a remit was carried that the NZJA consider the matter of promoting a journalists' registration bill. The NZJA took its stance from its Australian counterpart, the AJA, which was also mooting the idea of registration for journalists. In their joint publication, The Australasian Journalist, the following remarks were made, from which considerable insight into the NZJA's ambitions for 'professionalism' can be obtained.

If a doctor in public practice became a drunken outcast, shabby and unclean; the British Medical Association would take very necessary steps to see that that doctor was not allowed to continue as a member of the Association. But when outcasts announce themselves as newspapermen [sic], and frequent

---

97 The New Zealand Journalist (12 November 1937: 1).
98 The New Zealand Journalist (12 February 1936: 2).
99 NZJA Minutes (7 September 1929).
100 The Australasian Journalist (15 February 1925: 30).
courts and sources of copy as newspapermen[sic], nothing seems to be said or done. It is about time the Association became a selective body, in which the power to wipe off impostors was more widely noticed. In days now thankfully passed, it was considered that no man[sic] was really qualified to be a newspaperman[sic] unless he[sic] was a ‘Bohemian’... But Bohemia has vanished, and in its place some alleged journalists have substituted degradation as a pastime ... What do judges, magistrates, and court officials think of the profession of journalism when they see such persons stumbling in and out of court during cases, visiting the nearest pub every ten minutes or so, and then borrowing the copy of a confederate to scramble out their uninspiring lines? ... There are too many men[sic], failures at all other professions, butting in and bludging on those to whom journalism is a life work. After a bit of cleaning up, it is possible that a state of affairs might be brought about in which a journalist would not have to confess, in a subdued whisper, that he[sic] was a member of the writing profession.101

Although the NZJA’s discussion on the topic resulted in the preparation of a report on the subject by the NZJA’s president,102 the issue lapsed until 1936. On both occasions, however, the purpose of the registration proposal was to ensure that journalists would ‘get the rewards they deserved’. As a socially recognised hallmark of the ‘recognised professions’, registration was believed to place journalists on a higher social plane. It would also serve to restrict entry into the occupation thus improving the quality of practising journalists. In other words, by keeping out individuals who would depress the status of journalists, better journalists would be attracted to the field. Their overall ‘value’ would be increased and, as a result, journalists could expect to receive more remuneration. As proponents of registration further rationalised:

No other organised profession or calling would remain so complacent while outsiders were jeopardising its members’ welfare. We DO resent intrusions into journalism; we cannot tolerate untrained opportunists, many of them are incompetent and have other means of making a comfortable living. We must raise ourselves to combat the injustice. Doctors, lawyers, and other professional men[sic] keep unskilled persons out of their callings. Journalists must do likewise ... We should do our utmost to keep the journalistic field clear of that type of person, who undermines our standards of value ... This is our job. We have been trained for it. And its rewards should be ours.103

101 The Australasian Journalist (15 March 1925: 44).
102 NZJA Minutes (26 August 1930).
103 The New Zealand Journalist (12 November 1937: 1, Capitals in original).
However, there were both practical and philosophical reasons why the journalist’ registration proposal did not eventuate. One journalist captured these objections, arguing that:

It is impossible that journalism should ever become a close profession, because no proprietor and no editor will ever refuse to take an article from a man/sic/ who has something to say, and can say that particular thing better, and with more authority, than anybody else he/sic/ knows. Nor would it be fair to the public that he/sic/ should refuse such articles.\(^{104}\)

Certainly, the notion of journalists’ registration was seen to contravene the principles of press freedom and freedom of expression (the implied question being ‘how could freedom of speech and of the press be sustained when journalists are drawn only from a select class?’). These objections saw the registration proposal fall from the NZJA’s agenda shortly afterward.

**The background to pursuit of ‘professionalism’ in the post-war period**

The period immediately following the close of World War Two was perhaps the pinnacle of journalists’ concerns about their status. Former journalist, Eric Beardsley, recalls that the context in which renewed interest in ‘professionalism’ emerged in the 1940s was the relative economic status of journalists. During the war, he stated, journalists had been swept up in a current of ‘patriotic fervour’, and had thus refrained from seeking wage increases. After World War Two, journalists were to discover that their economic position had fallen significantly behind that of ‘other professions’ that were once on equal footing with journalists as far as their salaries were concerned.\(^{105}\) It was not only ‘other professions’, but also related occupations in the newspaper industry, to which journalists began to compare their economic position. By 1945, the new award secured by the printers – an occupation that had traditionally been paid less than journalists – meant that “the wages of journalists and

---

\(^{104}\) *The Australasian Journalist* (15 November 1922: 194).

\(^{105}\) Eric Beardsley (28 March 2003: Personal Communication). Another significant change noted of post-war journalism was “the number of pre-war men who did not return to journalism”, which was said to have “changed the style of reporting and presentation of newspapers” (*The New Zealand Journalist*, March 1954: 4). Conceivably, the ‘new breed’ of journalists to enter the occupation had aspirations for their status advancement not shared by many of the ‘old hands’ who had not returned from the war, thus contributing to the increasing appeal of professionalism within the journalistic occupation in the post-war period.
printers are now out of their correct relationship". This was not 'right', journalists argued, given the relative importance of journalists to printers:

It should be borne in mind that, while all staffs are essential to the production of a newspapers, the literary staff sets the standard of the newspaper, both in news content and lay-out, and its success depends in the last analysis on the work of journalists.\(^{107}\)

These claims were consistent with the NZJA's rationale for 'professionalism' highlighted above. To sustain their claims, journalists maintained that their social status and economic rewards were not commensurate with the importance of journalistic work to the public. Another claim revolved around the issue of 'relativity'. Journalists claimed that their work was just as (if not more) important to the community as that of 'other professions'. It followed that journalists should be accorded the status of the 'accepted' or 'recognised' professions. In the post-war period, many journalists were of the opinion that their situation would not improve unless they were capable of attaining 'professional standing'.\(^{108}\) The pursuit of such standing became a matter of NZJA policy during the post-war period, and represented the origins of the NZJA's attempt to create a 'society of journalists'.

4.7 Re-organising along 'professional lines': A professional institute of journalists?

Following the demise of the NZIJ, suggestions for a new 'professional body' for New Zealand journalists had been voiced periodically. For example, in 1921 it was suggested that the NZJA merge with the NZIJ (which at the time was still operating on a limited basis). The merger of these two bodies would offer, according to its supporters, "better protection of the interests of journalists not eligible for union membership" and would further "the professional interests of journalists in such cases as those which do not conflict with the interests of newspaper owners".\(^{109}\) The NZJA council was then appointed to consider a conference with the NZIJ, with a view to forming a new constitution for joint membership of the two bodies. However, the NZJA council concluded that because the only journalists not eligible for union

---

\(^{106}\) The New Zealand Journalist (15 February 1945: 2).
\(^{107}\) Ibid: 2.
\(^{109}\) NZJA Minutes (2 February 1921).
membership were editors of metropolitan newspapers it was not prepared to discuss the merger proposal any further.

This issue re-emerged in a slightly different form in 1939 when at the annual conference an Auckland delegate moved

that the conference consider the extension of its activities to provide an affiliated, non-industrial organization in the nature of an associate membership which all working journalists (including editors, chiefs-of-staff, and others not bound by award conditions, as well as present union members) could join; that is an organization to work for the betterment of journalism as a profession and encourage a better spirit of harmony among all grades of journalists.\(^\text{110}\)

However, such suggestions were not given serious consideration until 1950 when the pressures facing journalists gave added impetus to proposals to improve the social and economic position of journalists. The annual meeting of the NZJA that year revolved around two issues: the training of cadets and the professional status of journalists.\(^\text{111}\) Discussion then turned to the formation of a professional institute of journalists. Again, ‘professionalism’ was promoted as a means of increasing the social and economic standing of journalists. Controlling entry into the practice of journalism was seen as central to this.

The rationale for promoting ‘professionalism’

A remit from the Christchurch branch of the NZJA proposed that “the time had come for the NZJA to consider the raising of the status of the profession. This could be done by fixing certain standards which would bring the profession into line with other professional organisations such as accountants”.\(^\text{112}\) Like earlier efforts to promote professionalism in journalism, reference was made to the ‘professional infrastructure’ of other occupations whose practitioners’ status journalists sought to attain. The NZJA looked to the infrastructure of other ‘marginal professions’ that had ‘pulled themselves up by the bootstraps by having a society that did other things aside from dealing with issues of pay’.\(^\text{113}\)

Complementary discussion came from the Dunedin branch of the NZJA, which reiterated two related rationale for improving journalists’ status; improving

\(^{110}\) NZJA Minutes (7 November 1939: 1).

\(^{111}\) The New Zealand Journalist (15 May 1950: 3).

\(^{112}\) Ibid: 3.

\(^{113}\) Eric Beardsley (28 March 2003: Personal Communication).
both the public perception of journalists, as well as their economic rewards. John Spedding’s 1950 presidential report for the Dunedin branch of the NZJA suggested improvements in the status of journalists lay in the hands of individual journalists themselves.

The standing of journalists in the community is, I believe, something which should be in the mind of every journalist ... I am most firmly of the opinion that journalism is a profession and should be regarded by the community, as well as by its practitioners, as such. The general acceptance by the community of such a standing would, I submit, help a great deal in the practice of our profession. But to attain such standing, individual members must at all times maintain the highest possible standards.\textsuperscript{114}

As to the benefits of professionalism for journalists, Spedding continued to state that

My purpose in advocating the constant improvement of our community standing has deeper reasons. When we are regarded as professional men\textit{sic}, we are entitled to ask, and may expect to get the remuneration and working conditions enjoyed by professional men\textit{sic}.\textsuperscript{115}

**Protecting journalists’ privileges**

Further rationale for a professional institute came from then Wellington Journalists’ Union (WJU) president, S. Dartnall, who argued that journalists who regarded their occupation as something more than a means of buttering their bread must view with concern recent trends in their relationship with the public. He pointed to the 1949 Kaka Air Crash Inquiry (which was appointed at the instigation of the NZJA) into allegations that reporters had been obstructed and even intimidated in the legitimate gathering of news. The then NZJA president, J. C. McKinnon stated on behalf of journalists that the NZJA did not seek to make political capital out of the matter: “Just as in law justice must not only be done but also appear to be done, journalists must not only be politically independent but must also appear to be politically independent”.\textsuperscript{116} However, McKinnon spoke for the NZJA stating that “We insist on the right, not the privilege, to have access to sources of information which the public is entitled to know”.\textsuperscript{117} While there was found to be ‘no undue delay or obstruction’ this lead to a request from the Christchurch Journalists’ Union that the NZJA and the NPA collaborate in the preparation of a statement for publication in all

\textsuperscript{114} The New Zealand Journalist (15 June 1950: 2).

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid: 2.

\textsuperscript{116} The New Zealand Journalist (15 November 1948: 1).

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid: 1.
newspapers a statement explaining the privileges "uncodified yet traditional and long-established held by journalists, and the normal and ethical conduct of reporting in the gathering of news, and its presentation in newspapers".\textsuperscript{118}

The stand taken by the NZJA on the Kaka issue failed to forestall the censorship imposed by the Waterfront Strike Emergency Regulations in 1951.\textsuperscript{119} The regulations made it an offence "to be a party to a declared strike; to encourage or procure a declared strike or its continuance; to incite any person to be or continue to be a party to a declared strike; and to print or publish any matter that was intended or likely to encourage, procure, incite, aid or abet a declared strike or its continuance". The Christchurch branch of the NZJA protested against this action, passing a resolution "that the Union urge the NZJA to write to the Prime Minister and the NPA strongly expressing the opinion that the general restrictions imposed on the Press under the Emergency Regulations are wrong in principle and harmful in practice".\textsuperscript{120} The Wellington union also adopted this resolution. After considering the comments from constituent unions, the NZJA council passed the following resolution "that council ... objects to those aspects of the Emergency Regulations which affect newspapers and journalists and further objects that some regulations dealing with the same aspects are being retained after the end of the strike".\textsuperscript{121} The regulations were revoked before the NZJA took any action on the matter. Although no firm case of suppression was found to have occurred in this instance,\textsuperscript{122} the NZJA's 1951 conference decided on the motion of Canterbury delegates to frame a policy so that immediate action may be taken if there is the appearance or threat of censorship in the future.\textsuperscript{123} Irrespective of the outcome, at the heart of each of these issues were the questions of what rights and privileges journalists could reasonably claim,\textsuperscript{124} and thus served to fuel the NZJA's interest in establishing a 'professional institute'.

**Opposition within the ranks to 'professionalism'**

While these two issues may have contributed to a desire among journalists to see their professional privileges consolidated, the appeal of 'professionalism' was far

\textsuperscript{118} McIntosh Palmer (1951: 13-14).
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid: 14.
\textsuperscript{120} *The New Zealand Journalist* (15 May 1951: 1).
\textsuperscript{121} *The New Zealand Journalist* (15 August 1951: 3).
\textsuperscript{122} NZJA Minutes (7 September 1951: 2).
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid: 9.
\textsuperscript{124} McIntosh Palmer (1951: 15).
from universal among all NZJA members. In a 1950 issue of *The New Zealand Journalist*, one NZJA member made the following remarks:

[T]here's a lot of top-lofty thinking that goes on in our game about professional status. Our members murmur in the measured fashion of aspiring gentility about University qualifications, standards of conduct, and other trappings plucked from the law, accountancy and medicine. It sounds splendidly striped-pants, but how it is to turn out better newspapers is not clear. 125

These views were more typical among older journalists who, having witnessed similar proposals in the past, saw a professional institute as unnecessary. Many older journalists placed little credence in a proposal, which to them, appeared as 'impractical and visionary'. 126 Writing under the pseudonym ‘Years at the Game’, one NZJA member criticised younger journalists' lofty ambitions for professionalism, arguing that “ordinary everyday journalism is not professional work like the work of a doctor or a lawyer … you can’t make a job a profession merely by calling it a profession”. 127

In spite of these reservations, the question of establishing a professional institute was discussed at the NZJA’s 1950 annual conference. A Christchurch delegate moved “that the NZJA conference be asked to consider the fixing of professional standards for journalists”, a motion which was carried. 128 An extension of this remit was carried

that the NZJA conference set up a committee to investigate and report to the Council on the recruitment, training, and status and payment of journalists and that the Council on receiving this report take the opinion of constituent Unions on whether further action, including discussions with the NPA, should be taken, and if so, in what manner. 129

Consequently, by December 1950 a special committee of the NZJA had been appointed “to report on the whole question of recruitment, training, status and payment of journalists”. 130 Meanwhile, a period of six months passed which prompted Hardie Silcock of Otago at a meeting of the Dominion Council of the NZJA to call for the committee to consult branches for their opinions of the training of cadets. This

---

125 *The New Zealand Journalist* (16 November 1950: 3).
126 *The New Zealand Journalist* (15 December 1951: 2).
127 *The New Zealand Journalist* (January 1952: 2).
128 NZJA Minutes (6-7 October 1950: 8).
129 Ibid: 8.
130 *The New Zealand Journalist* (15 December 1950: 5).
motion was not passed for want of a seconder.131 By May 1951, D. W. (Don) Bain (convenor of the sub-committee on training and status of journalists) had reported to the Dominion Council of the NZJA with an order of reference which was to be circulated to constituent unions.132 On the issue of training, investigation would be undertaken into office training, and of that given in university courses. On the status of journalists, the sub-committee would consider “whether the existing set-up is sufficient”, and “whether the formation of a Chartered Institute or an incorporated Society of Journalists is necessary”. On the recruitment of cadets, the sub-committee would consider from where they were recruited and what qualifications were necessary.133

The report of the committee on training and status

By September 1951, a report of the committee on status, recruitment and training had been presented to the NZJA. A great deal of effort, including consideration of training schemes and courses operating overseas at the time,134 was put into the preparation of the report. The report was rooted in the belief that “journalists are professional men/sic/, with professional standards and ideals. The committee’s plan is designed to establish and protect both standards and ideals”.135 The report was heralded by the NZJA’s president Doug Borman as “of inestimable value in future efforts to raise the status of journalism in New Zealand”.136 The focus of the report was the proposal to create a ‘professional body’ which would be responsible for setting standards for cadet training and promoting journalists’ status.137

An overriding theme of the report was the belief that journalists’ rewards were not commensurate with the importance of their work to democracy and the services they rendered to the community. Further, journalistic work was just as important as

---

131 The New Zealand Journalist (16 April 1951: 5).
132 In understanding this particular journalist’s position on professional education, Don Bain’s own academic background is insightful; he had completed an MA and Honours degree in history at Canterbury College in 1929. The title of his thesis was also telling; ‘The Newspaper as a Public Service: Forty Years of the Lyttelton Times Christchurch, New Zealand’.
133 The New Zealand Journalist (15 May 1951: 1).
134 The New Zealand Journalist (15 February 1951: 1).
135 The New Zealand Journalist (20 September 1951: 3).
136 NZJA Minutes (7-8 Sept 1951: 8).
137 The New Zealand Journalist (20 September 1951: 3).
that of ‘other professions’. The report’s preamble highlighted the importance of journalists’ role in society.

The importance of a free press in a democracy is not doubted. It has become more apparent with the suppression of that freedom under totalitarian regimes, and with threats from other quarters. The mainstay of the press is the journalist, who has the responsibility to his[sic] community of reporting and interpreting the news of the day, adequately, accurately, and objectively, and in its proper context. Journalists in New Zealand are alive to their responsibilities, and to the dangers and difficulties of modern conditions. There has been a steady demand for some attempt to ensure that journalists are properly trained for their important service and that the ethics of the profession are protected from internal and external pressures.138

The public perception of journalists vis-à-vis ‘other professionals’ was emphasised in the report’s preamble as a central reason why a professional institute of journalists was necessary.

In the eyes of the community the journalist occupies a peculiar position. Because neither his[sic] individual social responsibility nor the high ethical standard of his[sic] occupation is evident to the public, his[sic] standing in the community falls short of other professional men[sic] such as doctors, solicitors, engineers, accountants, etc.139

The committee’s rationale for professionalism was further expressed in its belief that the status of journalists had not kept pace with developments in journalism which had increased the demands and responsibilities of their work.

The rapid growth of democratic forms of government, the social revolution of the last 25 years, and the creation of a much wider, but perhaps less receptive, reading public, have placed new and heavier responsibilities on journalists. At the same time the conditions under which journalists work have made the discharge of that responsibility more difficult. The shortage of newsprint and the need to compress news, economic difficulties, the diminishing number of newspapers, the growing trend towards shorter and more regular hours than journalism has permitted in the past, the disruption caused by the war, and the competition among employers in all trades and professions for recruits have all made journalism more difficult than it was 25 years ago.140

What was needed was a means of gaining “proper public recognition of the work of journalists” and a means of overcoming a possible decline in standards in the face of the challenges presented by a changing journalistic environment. The

138 Ibid: 3.
139 NZJ (1951).
140 Ibid.
committee was of the view that journalists’ achievements “had not brought proper public recognition of the work of journalists, and that there is now a danger that this achievement cannot be maintained. In the opinion of the committee it is time the journalists had his[sic] true standing”.141

At the time, there were a small number of training programmes operated by individual newspapers, such as the Wanganui Herald.142 However, a very small proportion of newspapers provided such training in a systematic way. This was a central concern to the committee. By promoting the status of journalists, the institute would also ‘help to overcome the difficulty of a possible decline in standards, by ensuring as far as possible that journalists were trained for their work systematically’. The committee referred to the submission of J. (Jack) M. Elliott, of the Dunedin Union, as to the need for a systematic means of training journalists:

The result of this serious lack of training can be seen in the junior and general stages now. It will be felt more seriously later. The public is entitled to have its news presented properly by men[sic] trained to seek the truth. The day is approaching when the present standard of the press will fall as more and more of the older men[sic] leave the profession.143

To arrest a potential decline in the quality of journalism and to ensure that the practising pool of journalists was of the highest possible calibre, the report proceeded to recommend measures to “raise journalism to a clearly recognised status as a profession”. This would involve setting standards for the training of journalists to give “them both the mental equipment for their work, and also, that sense of responsibility which is the hallmark of any true profession, and the only sure guarantee of public confidence”.144 The report also proposed “an organisation capable of protecting the professional standing of journalists and the ethics of their profession”,145 which could be modelled on the organisation of engineers and local body administrative officers, who “seemed to have some things in common with journalists, particularly that most engineers and all local body officers are employees, as are most journalists”.146

A professional institute of journalists “would bring together all qualified journalists on common ground – the integrity, good repute, and able performance of

141 Ibid.
142 The New Zealand Journalist (April 1952: 1).
143 NZJA (1951).
144 NZJA (1951).
145 The New Zealand Journalist (September 1951: 3).
146 Ibid: 3.
their profession. It would set standards of training and conduct without which journalism would find hard to sustain the status of a profession”. To this end, the professional institute would have four central objectives that would be underwritten by statute. Firstly, the institute would “establish, maintain and improve professional and ethical standards. Secondly, it would “help preserve the freedom of the press, and to protect the professional interests of journalists”. Thirdly, the institute would “arrange for prescriptions to be followed and examinations to be passed by persons desiring to enter journalism”. Finally, the proposed institute would “arrange suitable courses for candidates for admission to the organisation”. The institute would not only oversee the training of cadet journalists; it would also devote its attention to mid-career training by running refresher courses for senior journalists modelled on those run by the Kemsley newspaper group in Britain. The report was debated at the NZJA’s annual conference in September 1951. The annual conference approved in principle the formation of an institute of journalists, and that steps should be taken to form a draft constitution.

Meanwhile there was debate as to whether the institute’s rules should be drafted before or after ascertaining support from within the wider industry. Hardie Silcock, an initiator of the institute idea, advocated the former course of action whereas J. A. Fox, who took a leading role in the preparation of the report on training

---

147 NZJA (1951).
148 The New Zealand Journalist (20 September 1951: 5). The ‘Kemsley Editorial Plan’ was one of the most innovative and comprehensive training courses of its time. It was established by Viscount Kemsley in 1948 for the advanced training of journalists working for British newspapers in the Kemsley newspaper group. The training was designed for cadets and junior reporters without experience or special academic qualifications on topics ranging from shorthand, grammar, typing, proof-reading, the functions of local courts, councils and other public bodies, to law for journalists, feature writing, leader-writing, page and paper make-up, news assessment, and office organisation. Journalists with academic qualifications being trained for executive appointments, foreign correspondents, or arts critics, would undergo advanced instruction in all of these various areas (The New Zealand Journalist, 15 March 1951: 2). The modes of learning varied from lectures and seminars given by experts on technical, legal, and editorial aspects of journalism, and roundtable discussions at which participants could contribute. One of the programme’s main purposes was said to give Kemsley staff the opportunity to qualify for promotion in pursuance of the group’s policy of filling vacancies from within the group (The New Zealand Journalist, 15 June 1949: 4). The Kemsley Group also operated a scholarship for ‘Empire journalists’ from New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and Australia. The Kemsley Scholarship (also referred to as the ‘Empire Journalists’ Scheme) offered journalists who worked for a daily or weekly newspaper or for the NZPA the opportunity to work on a Kemsley Group paper for a year. The overall objective was to encourage an exchange of ideas and experience between Home and Dominion journalism, to foster closer mutual acquaintance and contact, and to co-ordinate and unify methods and organisation generally (The New Zealand Journalist, 15 February 1946: 3).
149 NZJA Minutes (7 September 1951: 5).
150 The New Zealand Journalist (June 1952: 1).
151 The New Zealand Journalist (October 1951: 5).
and status, advocated the latter.\textsuperscript{152} It was due to this difference in opinion that Fox stood down from his position on the committee.\textsuperscript{153}

**Debate over the institute's membership**

However, some more serious reservations harboured by some journalists hampered the institute’s progress. Others expressed concern about the proposals for the institute’s membership laid out in the report on status and training, which favoured the inclusion of juniors. However, opponents felt that by doing so the institute’s membership would be “... so wide that there will be little virtue in being a member. It should be a ‘prestige organisation’ ... The undesirables we get in the newspaper world from time to time should be kept out from the beginning by making the standard higher than they usually reach”.\textsuperscript{154} It was felt that if membership of the institute did not carry sufficient honour then it would fail to attract the support of editors and other non-union members which would be detrimental to the project. According to one NZJA member, “[w]ithout the support of the newspaper hierarchy the project has a grave risk of failing; and it should never be allowed to become merely a substitute for the union without the unions’ working solidarity”.\textsuperscript{155}

For E. V. Sale (a long-serving editorial staff member of the *New Zealand Herald*), of utmost concern was the fact that some journalists had unwisely connected the institute with the promise of higher remuneration for journalists.

The frightful faux pas of apparently linking an institute with a right to higher pay has unfortunately been published, and I mention it again (surely the NPA will not have missed it) in the hope that this will prevent it ever being suggested again. That, if anything, could wreck the show from the top down.\textsuperscript{156}

Taken in sum, these remarks highlight a division between NZJA members as to the purpose of the institute. For its initiators, the institute could plausibly promote both the social status of journalists and thus their economic interests. These journalists supported the inclusion of juniors into the institute because as the ‘journalists of the future’, the long-term standing of journalists would lie in the hands of these individuals. Hence, one of the key duties of the institute was to be the formation of a

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid: 5.
\textsuperscript{153} NZJA Minutes (18 September 1951: 1).
\textsuperscript{154} *The New Zealand Journalist* (15 November 1951: 1).
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid: 1.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid: 1.
systematic training scheme for cadets, as the next chapter illustrates further. However, others felt that the institute should be seen solely as a ‘prestige organisation’, which would ensure that ‘undesirables’ were kept out. Allowing young (and presumably less experienced) journalists into the institute would hamper its ability to promote and improve the status of journalists. Furthermore, these comments reflected the view that journalists’ status and economic aims should be dealt with as separate issues. To correlate professionalism with more pay amounted to ‘wrecking the show’.

These differences in opinion reveal an underlying conflict between conceptions of ‘professionalism’ among journalists, which were aired during debates about the formation of a professional institute. On the one hand, professionalism was conceived of in terms of journalism’s social status which emphasised notions of honour and prestige. The institute would be confined to ‘desirables’ and leading members of the profession which would impart a respectable image of journalism to society. Correlating improved social status with issues of wages and economic position of journalists was not deemed ‘gentlemanly’ from this perspective. On the other hand, ‘professionalism’ was promoted in both social status and economic terms. A professional institute modelled on those of ‘recognised professions’ would improve the image of journalists in society and thus the economic rewards they could reasonably expect. Promoting social status was not seen as incompatible with the expectation of increased remuneration but rather complementary to it.

In a later issue of *The New Zealand Journalist*, an attempt was made to clarify some of the misunderstanding about the proposed institute’s purpose by one of its key initiators, the Dunedin union’s president, W. J. (Bill) Morrison.

Some confused thinking appears to have been done on this subject, and it has been inferred that the basic idea behind an institute would be to use it as a lever to jack up wages and conditions. Such is far from being the case. The unions, through the NZJA would still be the organ for the settling of industrial, and to a large extent professional matters of the bread-and-butter kind. The institute would have as its primary functions the improvement of the professional status of journalists – not the financial – and the establishment of a satisfactory training scheme for young journalists ... [C]ondemnation of the institute proposal at this stage would be a tacit admission by individual journalists that they are not interested in the improvement of their own standing or that of future generations of journalists who will succeed them.\(^{137}\)

\(^{137}\) *The New Zealand Journalist* (April 1952: 4-5).
At the May 1952 meeting of the NZJA Dominion Council, a report on the sub-committee was presented by committee member C. L. Saunders. The draft constitution, modelled largely upon the British Institute of Journalists, would provide for two main classes of membership; Members and Fellows. Additional classes proposed were those of Junior and Honorary membership. Explaining the delay in producing the draft, the committee explained that

[a] constitution such as that required for an institute is not the simplest document in the world, and much application is needed to work out the many points involved. The fact that it is a constitution for journalists, the very nature of whose occupation is so complex, provided added difficulties ... It would be far better to let the institute develop firmly step by step than to rush into the project with a false start.

The proposed constitution was completed by July 1952, when it was reprinted in *The New Zealand Journalist* and circulated to constituent unions for consideration. However, union responses to the draft constitution were not free of criticism, even from supporters of the institute idea. The vice-president of the Auckland Journalists’ Union, G. L. (Geoff) Martin, made his reservations clear in some highly facetious remarks about the nature of the proposed institute’s membership.

So we are all – or the great majority of us – going to be able to tack MJINZ after our names. How elevating, how chummy, and how utterly useless. I have, during the past three years, been a strong advocate for an institute of journalists, believing that it would increase the standing of journalists in this country, but I am absolutely against the proposed constitution as it has been circulated to unions. I believe most other journalists will agree with me ... [T]he qualifications for membership are so wide as to include (initially at least) everyone from editor to first-year junior and copyholder who has been a professional journalist for five years ... Under these conditions the whole purpose of having an institute (raising journalists’ status) will be destroyed and that membership will become meaningless.

In the vein of earlier criticisms about the nature of the institute’s membership, Martin continued to suggest that including ‘juniors’ would deflate the degree of status the institute would be able to confer on its more senior members.

Surely membership to the institute should be something to strive for, and to be proud of. It should be the seal of our profession, not just something which

158 *The New Zealand Journalist* (June 1952: 1).
159 Ibid: 1.
160 *The New Zealand Journalist* (July 1952: 2).
161 *The New Zealand Journalist* (August 1952: 3).
goes with a union card. For the institute to mean anything the top men/sic/ in
the profession must be members. Are editors or even senior reporters going to
take a pride in being ‘M-Gins’ when reporters of the lowest rank are also
members of equal status? ... Instead of increasing our status it merely says
obviously what any graded man/sic/ can say now. ‘I am a journalist’. For an
institute, that is not good enough ... In fact, as the proposals now stand, I (and
many others, I have been told) would seriously consider not accepting
membership.\textsuperscript{162}

Other members supported these views on proposed institute’s membership.

The institute idea is all right/sic/ but membership should be limited to those
who have proved their worth as journalists by the standard of their work and
by good ethical conduct. That would make membership of the institute a real
honour, something after which a young fellow could strive. For the rest the
unions could continue their good work of looking after the industrial interests
of all members of the craft.\textsuperscript{163}

Though in favour of a journalists’ institute, the president of the Invercargill
Journalists’ Union, F. W. G. Miller, indicated that the scheme would be impaired
without the support of the NPA, stating that

[p]lans are still underway for the raising of the status of journalists by the
establishment of an institute, and though the scheme has been tentatively
prepared, it has not found favour in the eyes of the NPA. It is felt by most of
us that the margin between the rate of pay of journalists and that of less
exacting trades is still much too narrow, and the only way to widen this gap is
by the establishment of some standards of entry.\textsuperscript{164}

Another member noted the importance of NPA support for the notion of entry
examinations:

The weakness of our position is that the literary work of a newspaper does not
require professional qualifications. This may be lowering to the pride but we
should face the fact. It means that a professional examination cannot be made
the first step in promotion to the higher ranks unless the employers agree.\textsuperscript{165}

Others raised questions about the future of the NZJA if the institute plan went
ahead, suggesting that

... once the institute is established there will be a move to abolish the
journalists’ unions and the NZJA. The avowed aim of the institute is to raise
the professional status of journalists and a trade union is not consistent with
that status ... Every journalist has no doubt had the experience of ‘respectable’

\textsuperscript{162} Ibid: 3.
\textsuperscript{163} The New Zealand Journalist (September-October 1952: 4-5).
\textsuperscript{164} The New Zealand Journalist (July 1952: 3).
\textsuperscript{165} The New Zealand Journalist (September-October 1953: 4-5).
friends expressing surprise that he\textit{sic} should belong to a trade union. In the minds of such people trade unionism is associated with wharfies, freezing workers and others of the lower orders. A journalist … will be made to feel that a trade union, while it may be defended on the grounds of necessity, is certainly not respectable. On the other hand an institute is highly respectable and in conformity with professional status.\textsuperscript{166}

In response to these claims, another NZJA member, writing under the pseudonym “Professional”, had this to say:

If journalists in this country are not prepared to set themselves a standard to attain in their profession, both as working journalists and as a bracket in the social structure, they do not need an institute. But if they want some professional recognition, then I maintain that they do. There is confused thinking that an Institute would become the voice of the trade union movement. It would not; so let the old brigade and the doubters put their fears at rest. Isn’t the truth of the matter that journalists are afraid that their standards will not be high enough to make the institute work? Or that they will be too tired to do anything about making it work?\textsuperscript{167}

The criticisms that had been levelled at the proposed institute were aired at the NZJA’s annual conference in September 1952. Reflecting on the criticisms that had been directed at the proposed constitution, delegates were reminded that at this stage, it was merely a basis for discussion. The crux of the debate was the support of NZJA members for the institute idea itself. Delegates present expressed the views of their unions; some being wholly in favour of the idea, while others stated that their members were ‘apathetic to the project’.\textsuperscript{168} Finally, some minor amendments to the proposed constitution were approved, and a motion put by E. V. Sale was carried that the sub-committee would carry on with its work and report back to the NZJA within two months. A revised report would then be circulated to the constituent unions.\textsuperscript{169} The conference also carried a remit put forward by a Dunedin delegate, Gordon Parry, to consult the editorial committee of the NPA in order to reach a working basis on which the institute may be set up and begin to function.\textsuperscript{170}

By November 1952, the sub-committee on training and status had completed its task of amending the constitution for the professional institute. Along with the report on training and status, the revised constitution for the professional institute

\textsuperscript{166} Ibid: 4.
\textsuperscript{167} \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (June-July 1954: 3).
\textsuperscript{168} NZJA Minutes (5-6 September 1952: 6).
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid: 9-10.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid: 6.
was to be circulated to unions for comment by March 1953.\textsuperscript{171} However, even the reformed constitution and amendments to the report carried at the 1952 annual conference failed to appease opponents to the institute idea. Some believed that the NZJA’s attempts to promote professionalism were occurring at the expense of its industrial objectives, as the following comments from E. B. Miles indicate.

I suggest that there are a number of anomalies in the journalists’ awards, which much more deserve attention than the futile, self-deluding scheme for a journalists’ institute which had been occupying the minds of members in the last few months. It seems to me that the idea of a journalists’ institute is simply a subterfuge on the part of someone or other to take journalists’ minds off the subject they should be worrying about – bettering the conditions they work under ... Compared with prevailing industrial conditions in New Zealand the journalists’ awards, particularly the provincial areas, are unjust.\textsuperscript{172}

For this member, rather than creating an institute, the NZJA would be better placed to employ direct industrial action to address the breaches of award and comparatively poor conditions for journalists.

On the face of it, it would seem the NPA has done its damndest to make journalism ... the most degrading, demoralising and debilitating occupation it can. I think it has succeeded far too well ... Self-respecting men and women should be able to do better than that for themselves. But they won’t if they yammer in a half-baked fashion for an ‘institute’. We should demand better conditions and fight to get them.\textsuperscript{173}

In March 1953, the Dominion Council meeting resolved that members’ objections to the constitution were to be formally submitted before the end of April, and that ‘branches were to be advised that the NZJA still intended to proceed with the formation of the institute immediately after that date’.\textsuperscript{174} Any objections to the institute were apparently insufficient to stop its progress at this stage. By May 1953, it was decided by the dominion council that branches were to be asked to nominate two representatives to sit on the council of the institute in order for it to begin operation.\textsuperscript{175}

\textsuperscript{171} NZJA Minutes (25 November 1952: 2). It came as a surprise to members of the NZJA in the 1950s that another journalists’ institute had already existed in New Zealand when it was revealed in the \textit{New Zealand Journalist} that “the institute idea [wa]s sixty years old!”. The writer of this article had “discovered this when going through the files of the Southland Times on quite another question” (\textit{The New Zealand Journalist}, September-October 1952: 5). The ‘institute’ referred to, of course, was the NZIJ. Had the NZJA’s institute advocates been aware of the NZIJ and its problems earlier into their planning, it is possible that they could have avoided some of the difficulties that impeded the more recent institute’s formation.\textsuperscript{172} \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (November 1952: 3).

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid: 3.

\textsuperscript{174} NZJA Minutes (31 March 1953: 2).

\textsuperscript{175} NZJA Minutes (26 May 1953: 2).
The institute proposal was discussed further at the NZJA’s annual conference in September 1953. Additional reservations were expressed. Some questioned the NZJA’s policy on financing the institute, arguing that ‘the NZJA would be quite wrongly using its funds if it assisted financially in the new organisation, which to some extent, must be a parallel body’. Wellington delegates, who at their annual meeting earlier that year had decided to oppose the formation of an institute on the lines proposed, believed that members of the institute might come into conflict with union members. The Wellington union dismissed the need for a professional institute on the grounds that it could damage union solidarity, and would drain the financial resources necessary for the NZJA for addressing wages and conditions. Further, it was pointed out that members of the NPA to whom the plans had been submitted, thought the scheme was ‘too optimistic’.

Other delegates to the 1953 annual conference countered that the institute would pose no threat to the NZJA and its constituent unions. On the contrary, it could be, if suitably constituted, ‘a force for the increased status of journalists in the eyes of the community’ as well as ‘a guardian of press freedom’. President of the Canterbury branch C. L. Saunders denied the claim that the institute would usurp the NZJA’s functions. Criticising the ‘lethargic and indifferent attitude of some journalists’ toward the proposal, Saunders argued that the sole objective of the institute was to try to improve journalists’ training methods and their status (which was ‘not as high as it should be’), ambitions which all journalists should share. It was additionally pointed out that while difficult to form, the institute’s merit would be realised once in operation.

One delegate criticised the attitude of the NPA to the scheme, stating that journalists’ support for the institute would be crucial to arrest an already apparent decline of journalistic standards. He claimed that “the odd thing was that employers didn’t give a damn even while the standard of journalism was slipping downhill. If the initiative did not come from working journalists their status would be lower than ever

176 NZJA Minutes (18 September 1953: 1).
177 The New Zealand Journalist (May-June 1953: 1).
178 The New Zealand Journalist (August 1953: 3).
179 NZJA Minutes (18 September 1953: 6).
180 The New Zealand Journalist (May-June 1953: 1).
182 The New Zealand Journalist (September 1953: 1).
183 Ibid 1.
184 NZJA Minutes (18 September 1953: 7).
within a year or two”. Proponents of the institute plan argued that by doing more towards the training of journalists and the improvement of their status generally, the NZJA would prove to the NPA that there was sufficient drive and interest to warrant the formation of an institute.

However, these arguments failed to convince some of the opponents to the scheme. A remit was put that the NZJA should dispense with its institute plans in favour of limiting the association’s functions to award matters and giving the constituent unions more autonomy to deal with the professional issues envisaged for the institute. A Wellington delegate M. A. Berry, went so far as to move “that the NZJA abandon the current scheme for a journalists’ institute”, which was seconded by J. H. Guthrie, also from the Wellington branch. On being put, this motion was lost by fifteen votes to ten.

Auckland delegates were among those who voted against abandoning the institute scheme. A. (Alex) Wood moved “that we approach the NPA on the question of an Institute of Journalists and, if necessary, a sub-committee of the Association conference with a sub-committee of the NPA”. This motion was carried with the proviso that any action taken by the NZJA council regarding the formation of the institute should not commit the NZJA financially. A further approach to the NPA was to be made to determine whether it would support the institute proposal in principle and if so, whether it had any objections to the proposed constitution. The third question put to the NPA was “as the membership of editors, associate editors, etc. would be of great importance to the Institute in its early years, would the NPA give an assurance that they would be free to take up membership?” Thus, the fate of the proposed institute of journalists now lay in the hands of the NPA, whose support would determine whether the institute came into existence.

Meanwhile, support from within the NZJA was wavering. Only two branches – Canterbury-Westland, and Invercargill – had shown sufficient interest in the proposal to forward nominations to the Dominion Council of the NZJA for an interim

---

185 The New Zealand Journalist (September 1953: 1).
186 NZJA Minutes (18 September 1953: 6-7).
188 NZJA Minutes (18 September 1953: 6).
191 NZJA Minutes (13 July 1954: 1).
192 The New Zealand Journalist (July-August 1954: 4).
committee which would set up the institute.\textsuperscript{193} Advocates of the institute proposal were concerned about the apparent lack of support from within the NZJA, and maintained that establishing the institute as planned would be a concrete means of raising the status of journalists.\textsuperscript{194} This was the stance taken by newly elected president of the Canterbury-Westland branch, Hardie Silcock, who urged the NZJA to ‘expedite the formation of the institute’.\textsuperscript{195} However, the NZJA resolved to await the advice of the NPA on the matter.\textsuperscript{196}

\textbf{The NPA’s response to the institute question}

The NPA had advised the NZJA in January 1954 that it would consider the NZJA’s request to form a sub-committee to consider the question of an institute at its March conference.\textsuperscript{197} In March 1954, the NPA convened a sub-committee consisting of A. W. Scott (manager of the Christchurch \textit{Star-Sun} newspaper) and R. B. White (manager of the Christchurch \textit{Press}) to discuss the formation of a journalists’ institute.\textsuperscript{198} Although initial approaches to the NPA for support had proved disappointing to the NZJA’s institute advocates, by May 1954 the NPA had agreed to consider the NZJA’s report and constitution for the institute and to meet with NZJA representatives thereafter.\textsuperscript{199} The issue would then be discussed at the NPA’s annual conference in September 1954.\textsuperscript{200} The NPA’s formal response came in September 1954. However, it was not the response that the NZJA’s institute advocates had been relying on for the project to go ahead. The NZJA’s secretary reported that “the NPA conference had briefly considered the question of a journalists’ institute” but had decided to “take no action”.\textsuperscript{201}

The NPA’s response was discussed at the NZJA’s annual conference in September 1954 at which the fate of the proposed institute of journalists was sealed. The Canterbury branch’s remit “that the NZJA be urged to expedite the formation of an institute of New Zealand journalists” was withdrawn.\textsuperscript{202} The Dunedin Union

\textsuperscript{193} \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (May 1954: 3).
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid: 3.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid: 3.
\textsuperscript{196} NZJA Minutes (30 June 1954: 1).
\textsuperscript{197} NZJA Minutes (23 February 1954: 2).
\textsuperscript{198} NZJA Minutes (12 March 1954: 1).
\textsuperscript{199} \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (May 1954: 3).
\textsuperscript{200} NZJA Minutes (30 June 1954: 1).
\textsuperscript{201} NZJA Minutes (24-25 September 1954: 7).
\textsuperscript{202} \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (October 1954: 2).
remained in favour of the plan, proposing that “a postal ballot be conducted this year on the question of forming a journalists’ institute”.\textsuperscript{203} This remit was also withdrawn. In what is the last mention of the institute plan in the NZJA records, the issue concluded when a remit from the Christchurch branch was carried “that in view of the difficulties confronting the formation of an Institute of Journalists the matter be deferred indefinitely”.\textsuperscript{204}

4.8 The failure of the professional institute plan

There are parallels between the failure of the proposed ‘professional institute of journalists’ of the 1950s and the failure of the nineteenth century-formed NZIJ. Firstly, there was a division over the ‘professional vision’ for journalism among journalists, as well as a conflict over perceptions of journalistic professionalism. Some journalists believed that controlling entry into the occupation and increasing professional standards would ultimately advance their economic interests. Others failed to see the correlation between professionalism and pay (with some journalists even condemning the correlation between the two) and wanted the NZJA to focus its attention solely on journalists’ industrial concerns using traditional trade union activity such as direct wage negotiations. While ‘professionalism’ appealed to many journalists as a means of ensuring their status reflected the social importance of journalism more broadly, not all NZJA members shared this view. As noted above, opposition was more common from ‘the old hands’. Many older journalists placed little credence in the institute proposal, which they perceived as ‘impractical and visionary’.\textsuperscript{205} Some older journalists criticised what they perceived as ‘lofty and unrealistic ambitions’ for professionalism among younger journalists generally.

At the core of the issue was a conflict as to the status of the journalistic occupation; whether it was a ‘trade’ or a ‘profession’, and whether organising along traditional trade union or professional lines was the best means of advancing the position of journalists. Journalist Ian Templeton confirms how there were two schools of thought within the NZJA on the issue of whether traditional trade union methods or ‘professionalism’ was the best means of advocating the position of journalists:

\textsuperscript{203} NZJA Minutes (24-25 September 1954: 7).
\textsuperscript{204} Ibid: 7.
\textsuperscript{205} The New Zealand Journalist (15 December 1951: 2).
Within the NZJA there were those who thought the best method to improve pay and conditions was through traditional trade union activity ... Others within the NZJA were seized with the belief that the Association should seek to lift its status by working towards professional standards. This of course ran up against the old debate within journalism of whether it is a craft or a profession.

Doug Borman (NZJA president from 1950 until 1953) recalls that the institute plan did not necessarily grow out of a sense that industrial action was ineffective as a means of advancing the interests of journalists. Rather, the NZJA’s leaders were motivated by the belief that industrial methods were more suited to blue-collar workers rather than white-collar workers. It was to the latter image that the NZJA leaders aspired, and sought to achieve it through the formation of a professional institute. As noted above, this duality was recognised by journalists at the time.

Every journalist has no doubt had the experience of ‘respectable’ friends expressing surprise that he[sic] should belong to a trade union. In the minds of such people trade unionism is associated with wharfies, freezing workers and others of the lower orders. A ... trade union, while it may be defended on the grounds of necessity, is certainly not respectable. On the other hand an institute is highly respectable and in conformity with professional status.

At the heart of the debate over the professional institute, then, was a conflict of opinion as to whether ‘professionalism’ or traditional trade union activity would best serve to advance the interests of journalists. In the end, the consensus lay with the latter as a model for organising journalists. As another former journalist recalls of the institute’s fate:

Those in favour [of establishing a professional institute] hankered for a more respectable upper middle-class white-collar image. Those against didn’t care greatly about that ... The real reason for rejecting the institute, as I recall, was the greater real power available in wage negotiation if journalists remained linked to the broad union movement. That was always the clincher in any debates that I experienced.

Another critical impediment to the formation of a professional institute of journalists was the lack of employer support. NZJA advocates of the plan were not only aware that the financial support of the NPA was necessary to set up, as well as

---

206 Ian Templeton (27 March 2003: Personal Communication).
208 The New Zealand Journalist (September-October 1952: 4).
209 George Griffiths (23 April 2003: Personal Communication).
operate the institute. The need for the support of the NPA was also industrially motivated, and crucial for achieving journalists' objectives. Doug Borman recalls that institute advocates had envisaged that membership would be open to those working within journalism excluded by the NZJA's industrial award, including chief reporters, and editors who were not members of the NZJA. By having 'senior people' in the institute, it was anticipated that journalists would have more power in the event of industrial action to stop newspaper production. However, the NPA failed to offer the NZJA the necessary support to get the institute off the ground. Presumably, the 'frightful faux pas' of associating a journalists' institute with a right to higher pay did not go unnoticed by the NPA and did little to gain either their sympathy or support. As the NZJA member originally responsible for this admonishing prophesised, this assumption did indeed serve to "wreck the show from the top down", at least so far as NPA support was concerned. Ultimately, where journalists' rationalised the need for a professional institute in terms of higher pay, it was not in the economic interests of employers to support their ambitions for professionalism. The failure of the professional institute plan clearly illustrated the relative lack of power and authority of journalists to act in the pursuit of professionalism. Indeed, the power struggles between journalists and their employers highlighted in this chapter were to prove a major impediment to the realisation of journalists' professional ideals throughout the twentieth century.

One obvious difference between the nineteenth century institute and the proposed twentieth century version, of course, was that one actually began operation; the other did not. Nonetheless, while the more recent institute failed to materialise, the 'professional vision' from which the proposals emerged continued to occupy the attention of the NZJA. One aspect of this 'professional vision' concerned the need for formal systematic journalism education and training (which was to be an integral aspect of the proposed institute's mandate). The discussions about improving the provision of journalism training that had occurred amid the institute's planning had served to raise the issue of journalism training itself to the forefront of the NZJA's agenda. Following the demise of the professional institute plan, it was to the issue of journalism training and education that journalists' attention then turned, as the following chapter illustrates.

---

210 Doug Borman (28 March 2003; Personal Communication).
211 The New Zealand Journalist (November 1951: 1).
4.9 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the organisational tendencies of New Zealand journalism during the period from 1890 through until the mid-1950s, illustrating how journalists have viewed ‘professionalism’ as both an occupational ideal and a strategy for the advancement of their occupation. The first journalists’ organisation in New Zealand, the NZIJ, was informed by an understanding of ‘professionalism’ that emphasised the prestige and honour of journalism as a whole. By the turn of the twentieth century, the impact of press commercialisation on working journalists’ wages and working conditions precipitated the emergence of a trade union movement in journalism. This culminated in the establishment of a ‘journalists-only’ body, the CJU, in 1901. However, this union was short-lived due to antipathy among journalists and newspaper proprietors for the principles of trade unionism. The NZJA, established in 1912, represented an attempt to reconcile the interests of working journalists in both industrial and professional issues. As this chapter has illustrated, the organisational efforts of the NZJA during the first half of the twentieth century represented sites of struggle over whether ‘unionism’ or ‘professionalism’ would best advance the interests of journalists as an occupational group.

Advocates of ‘professionalism’ as an occupational ideal for journalists appealed to some key claims about the nature and importance of journalistic work. The first was the belief that the status of journalists did not reflect the importance of journalistic work to democracy was a central rationale for professionalism. A related argument was that developments in the journalistic environment made increasing demands on journalists that were not acknowledged in their social status or economic rewards. Another claim revolved around the issue of journalists’ ‘relativity’ to ‘other professionals’. Journalists claimed that their work was just as (if not more) important to the community as that of other professions. It followed that journalists, as an occupational group should be accorded the status of the ‘accepted’ or ‘recognised’ professions. These themes underpinned the early organisational efforts of New Zealand journalists, culminating in the effort to establish a professional institute of journalists in the 1950s.

NZJA leaders’ ‘professional ideal’ was informed by the belief that journalism was (or should at least aspire to be) a ‘profession’. As a strategy for improving the position of journalists, ‘professionalism’ appeared preferable to traditional industrial
measures because it was more consistent with the image and status that NZJA leaders sought to attain for journalists. It was out of this ambition that the effort to form a professional institute of journalists grew. However, 'professionalism' was not a universal ambition among journalists either as an occupational ideal, or plausible alternative to union activity, as this chapter has illustrated. Indeed, the early organisational tendencies of New Zealand journalists reflects both the ambiguity surrounding the status of the journalistic occupation, and the conflict over whether 'professionalism' was a preferable strategy to traditional industrial routines to advance the interests of journalists.

Moreover, a conflict within the wider journalism industry as to what exactly the most important interests of journalists (and of journalism) were hampered efforts to create a professional infrastructure for journalists. As this chapter has illustrated, these issues have been played out at the industrial relations level within journalism and have characterised the development of professionalism in New Zealand journalism for the rest of the twentieth century. The early organisational efforts of New Zealand journalists set the pattern for later efforts to develop a 'professional infrastructure' for journalists. As with the institute effort considered above, these later efforts have occurred without a consensus about journalistic professionalism and whether 'professionalism' was in fact the best means of promoting the position of journalists. This difficulty goes some way toward explaining the fragmented manner in which the professional and regulatory framework for New Zealand journalists has evolved over the twentieth century, as the remainder of this thesis explores.
PART THREE

Creating a 'professional infrastructure'
CHAPTER FIVE

‘Making Journalists’: The evolution of journalism education in NZ

The best journalists are the best-educated journalists who apply research skills, academic rigour, and high ethical standards to their craft. They need the type of knowledge that is at the core of the liberal-arts tradition, to be found in courses that explore history, culture, politics, and science. Liberally educated journalists are essential to society at large ... A narrowly educated journalist with only technical skills or one with only theoretical knowledge cannot define ‘news’ intelligently or determine its significance, much less present it with clarity and grace. How can a reporter distinguish a fad from a trend without the historical and cultural context provided by a solid liberal-arts education? The myth that a reporter can be totally objective was destroyed long ago: News is the drastic selection of available fact. Value judgements inevitably precede every selection; the better and more broadly educated the reporter, the better the value judgements.¹

5.1 Introduction

During the twentieth century, the field of journalism education represented another site of struggle over the definition of journalistic work and the status of journalists. The above excerpt derives from the debate that has underscored the evolution of journalism education in a number of countries, including New Zealand. The ‘trade-school versus professionalism’ debate was first played out in the United States and characterised the evolution of journalism education throughout the twentieth century. This debate represented a conflict between two sets of principles underpinning journalism training. On the one side of the debate were those who believed that journalism education should be modelled on the ‘trade-school approach’, teaching primarily reporting and editing skills.² On the other side were those who advocated a liberal arts or social sciences model that stressed a broad education in a variety of disciplines, including the practical aspects of journalism.³

Two conflicting views of the nature and benefits of journalistic ‘professionalism’ were inherent in this debate. Whereas the ‘trade school model’ was informed by the view that journalism is not ‘a profession’, the ‘professional model’ (also referred to as a ‘liberal arts approach’) began with the assumption that

¹ Kirtz (1997: 6).
³ This debate is expounded more fully in Blanchard and Christ (1993).
journalism is ‘a profession’, and a watchdog of society whose practitioners place public service first. As Salcetti sums up the nature of this debate,

The service ideal of a trade school approach was to serve the publisher, whereas the professional approach emphasized another ideal ... Professional training was to emphasise intellectual and ethical training as the priority over the more mechanical skills of writing copy.\(^5\)

At the core of the issue, then, was a conflict over views about the status of journalism. Some industry representatives saw journalism as a trade or, at best, a craft. As such, the necessary practical skills like reporting and editing could only be learned ‘on the job’.\(^6\) This is a characteristic that New Zealand journalism has shared with its Australian counterpart where

[The media, in particular newspapers, have traditionally seen learning-on-the-job as the best way to learn the skills for their industry. Up until the present day, many newspaper editors continue to believe that training journalists is only about teaching the practical and often technical skills and formulas/sic/ that enable stories to be written quickly and efficiently. Editors are often more concerned with getting the product out at the end of the day, week or month, than they are with the critical, ethical or analytical quality of their work.\(^7\)

Advocates of university training believed that tertiary education was necessary for instilling a sense of purpose and standards in journalists.\(^8\) Given the importance of journalism to society, it followed that the occupation’s practitioners required special training and expertise in order to perform their work effectively. One consequence of this conflict over the nature of journalism training is captured by Salcetti, who maintains that in the United States during the twentieth century “[j]ournalism education became an enduring arena in which the predictability and control of the newsroom workforce was contested around the notion of trade school versus professional training”.\(^9\) Much the same can be said of the New Zealand case, as this chapter aims to illustrate.

\(^4\) Cronin (1992: 151).
\(^5\) Salcetti (1995: 62). In the New Zealand context, the latter emphasis was to be found in the NZJA’s draft ‘creed for journalists’ discussed further in chapter six.
\(^6\) Cronin (1992: 149).
\(^7\) Thomas (2000).
\(^8\) Cronin (1992: 147).
Journalism education in New Zealand: An industry divided

For much of the twentieth century, New Zealand journalists and other industry representatives were divided over the usefulness of university training. Some believed that the newsroom was the only place to learn to be a journalist. Others took this argument a step further, maintaining that no special education was required. It was argued that journalists did not need formal training because the ability to observe and write was a natural predisposition or ‘a gift’. This attitude toward the formal education of journalists prevailed well into the twentieth century. Writing in 1970, Cleveland illustrates how this phenomenon manifested itself in the New Zealand context.

It has long been considered that the best training for journalism consists of working in the industry and learning its various skills by a process of initiation and adaptation rather than by theoretical instruction. Consequently, journalism schools have not flourished in New Zealand... On many dailies the cadet journalist customarily served a period in the reading room as a copy holder before graduating to the reporting staff. He[sic] might be encouraged to learn shorthand and typing as useful trade skills, but any aspirations he[sic] might possess to higher learning were not necessarily supported by his[sic] employer.10

Formal educational qualifications as a form of occupational closure

As the previous chapter illustrated, from the late nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century New Zealand journalists made various attempts to implement formal structures of occupational closure. Journalists believed that by emulating the socially recognised hallmarks of the ‘true professions’, they could improve their own public perception. Occupational closure was attempted in a number of forms. While some measure of success was attained with the passing of the New Zealand Institute of Journalists Act (1895), which gave formal recognition to this body of journalists, other efforts did not come to fruition. These included the NZIA’s attempts to introduce a ‘journalists’ registration bill’ in the 1930s, and to establish a ‘professional institute’ during the 1950s, both of which were designed primarily to restrict entry to the journalistic occupation. As the previous chapter highlighted, the reasons for their failure were related to principles of press freedom (as was the case concerning journalists’ registration) and a lack of industry-wide support for the project (as was the case concerning the professional institute of journalists).

10 Cleveland (1970: 207).
Although the professional institute of journalists did not materialise, the 'professional vision' out of which this idea grew continued to occupy a central position on the NZJA's policy agenda. One aspect of this 'professional vision' concerned the need for formal systematic journalism education and cadet training, as well as qualifications specific to journalism. The discussions about improving the provision of journalism education (which was envisaged to have been an integral part of the institute's role) served to raise the issue of journalism training itself to the forefront of the NZJA's agenda. This chapter turns its attention to the evolution of journalism training and education in New Zealand during the twentieth century. It explores how the principles underpinning journalism education have evolved as understandings of journalistic professionalism have been contested and shifted. The focus of this chapter is not specifically the content or syllabi of journalism training and education programmes, but rather on the models and ideals underpinning journalism education in New Zealand, and the structures through which it has been provided over the twentieth century.

### 5.2 The NZJA and the education of journalists

The interests of journalists on the question of formal education were invariably tied to their ambitions for professionalism. In Australia,

[In the early twentieth century as journalism cast off its old character of Bohemian disrespectability the question of training was much discussed ... Those who aimed to raise journalism to the status of a profession with professional ethics and income levels saw a university course as the means to achieve their object.]

The same can be said of the New Zealand case. Indeed, the education of journalists has long occupied a place on the NZJA's industrial agenda, as the NZJA's 1962 anniversary publication indicated:

For years the NZJA has fought to improve the status of journalists as members of a profession. It has been associated over many years in attempts to get a better Diploma of Journalism course ... and it has tried for years to get a Dominion-wide scheme of cadet training into reasonably efficient operation.

---

12 NZJA (1962: 15).
A former NZJA president recalls that “although there was no campaign for ‘professionalism’ complete with a package of goals and polices, there were constant threads of striving within the NZJA for organised training, better rewards and resources, and the need for high standards”. As this chapter illustrates the NZJA’s interest in improving journalism training and education in fact predated its effort to build a professional institute discussed in the previous chapter. Nonetheless, the motivations for the two initiatives were similar. As the previous chapter argued, the NZJA’s rationale for promoting ‘professionalism’ embodied some key claims about the nature and importance of journalistic work. These themes underpinned the early organisational efforts of New Zealand journalists, culminating in the effort to establish a professional institute of journalists in the 1950s. This chapter argues that over the twentieth century journalists have appealed to the same claims to sustain their arguments as to their need for formal education and qualifications.

The NZJA’s rationale behind formal education and qualifications stemmed from the belief that the social status and economic rewards were not commensurate with the importance of journalistic work to democracy and their services rendered to the community. This had been exacerbated by the various social, technological, and other developments in the journalistic environment since the nineteenth century that had made increasing demands on journalists that were not acknowledged in their social status or economic rewards. These demands also provided further impetus for formal journalism education and training which created practitioners who were able to grasp the increasingly complex requirements of journalistic work. Another claim revolved around the notion of ‘relativity’ in terms of journalists’ status relative to ‘other professionals’. Journalists claimed that their work was just as (if not more) important to the community as that of other professions. It followed that journalists should be accorded the status of the ‘accepted’ or ‘recognised’ professions.

An offshoot of these claims in the context of journalism education was the NZJA’s belief that because of the importance of journalism, it was necessary to attract the ‘best minds’ to journalism (and keep them there). Arresting a potential decline in the quality of journalism generally meant ensuring that journalism was just as ‘worthwhile’ or as economically attractive a career option as ‘other professions’. Not only would formal education and qualifications for journalists increase their ‘worth’

relative to ‘other professions’, it would improve the quality of journalism in New Zealand generally. These factors were the motivating forces underpinning the NZJA’s pursuit of formal education for journalists in New Zealand, as the remainder of this chapter aims to illustrate.

5.3 Early attitudes toward the education of journalists in New Zealand: A journalist is ‘born, not made’

At the turn of the twentieth century, the notion that ‘a journalist is born, not made’ characterised the predominant stance towards the education of journalists in New Zealand. In this sense, the notion of formal ‘journalism education’ was itself a misnomer. Central to the view that a journalist ‘was born, not made’ was the belief “that heredity plays a greater part than environment and training in the making of a successful newspaper reporter and writer”.14 As the previous chapter indicated, this view was captured in a speech given by the NZIJ president in 1900, who claimed that the ability to discern ‘news’ was a ‘natural endowment’.15 A successful journalist had certain intrinsic qualities. These included ‘knowing instinctively what the public wanted to read in the daily or weekly paper’ and a ‘keen scent for the new, unusual, interesting, striking’.16 Consequently, a successful journalist could not be ‘made’. However, the pursuit of status by journalists was a significant factor in the decline of these views as the twentieth century progressed.

The ‘making’ of journalists: Early proposals for a university course

The earliest discussions about university education for journalists in New Zealand had just as much to do with improving the professional status of journalists as they did with the growth of the university as a social institution. As was the case in Britain, the first serious discussions about a university course for New Zealand journalists were held in 1908, the year that formal journalism education began in the United States.17 However, at this time, the benefits of university training for journalists were not widely acknowledged within the journalistic profession in New Zealand, as was highlighted above. So it was that the first proposals for university

---

14 Kelly (1900: 1).
16 Ibid: 1.
17 Herbert (2000).
courses for journalists in fact came not from within the industry, but from within the university itself.

Sir James Hight is said to “have been among the most formative influences on higher education in New Zealand during the first half of the twentieth century”.\textsuperscript{18} The field of journalism was no exception. Hight (at the time a lecturer in history and political economy at Canterbury College) instigated the first serious discussion about a university course for journalists in 1908 via a memorandum written to the University Board of Governors at Canterbury College. Hight’s proposal for a university course in journalism thus represented the first major challenge to the prevailing view that a journalist was ‘born, not made’.

An examination of the rationale behind these efforts reveals a progressive shift in attitude as to the nature and benefits of journalism training. Hight’s comments about his 1908 memorandum, later published in \textit{The New Zealand Journalist}, were instructive.

I had long been impressed by the supreme importance of the journalist as a ‘keeper of the public conscience’ and by the fact that the status of his/sic/ profession is not always commensurate with its social worth … I could not assent to the proposition that ‘journalists are born, not made’, for the saying expresses a half-truth that is as applicable to any other calling as to journalism’.\textsuperscript{19}

Taking his stance from many working journalists themselves, Hight maintained that the social importance of journalism was not reflected in the status of the occupation’s practitioners. According to Hight, critics were of the view that ‘journalists were moving on a low plane’.\textsuperscript{20} It was therefore “in the interests of culture that journalists be submitted to the various elevating forces of University life”.\textsuperscript{21} While Hight conceded that a university course in journalism “would not turn out ‘finished journalists’” – both a degree of ‘natural endowment’ as well as practical experience remained necessary – it would “make for more efficiency when it comes to practice much greater than without training”.\textsuperscript{22} According to Hight, [N]o profession however efficient and flourishing at a given time, can afford to rest content; the need of progress, of easy means of adaptation to new

\textsuperscript{18} Phillips (2002).
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (20 May 1911: 6).
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid: 6.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid: 6.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid: 6.
conditions is ever present, and we owe a fair trail to any proposal bearing on its face the promise of further improvement. 23

Hight believed that although formal education was not a prerequisite for journalistic expertise (the diploma course was to be "primarily one preparatory to journalism, and ... not proposed as a substitute for practical apprenticeship"), university training was in the interests of journalists' status. Hight associated the status of the 'learned professions' with their having forged a 'university connection'. As such, the implementation of a university course in journalism was likely to improve the status of its practitioners too.

As the public status of 'the learned professions' is largely associated with the necessity of undergoing systematic training in the essential elements of a good general higher education and in the broad principles of the craft, the institution of a professional course in journalism of university standard ought to affect the journalists' status favourably if at all. 25

This view echoed that of the NZIJ president at the time, who also believed that emulating the infrastructure of the 'recognised professions' would advance the social status of journalism to a level on par with the 'learned professions', as the previous chapter also illustrated.

As there are schools of science and art, why should there not be schools of journalism? A chair of journalism in the University seems as much of a necessity as chairs of medicine, law, chemistry and mathematics. This is a matter that the New Zealand Institute of Journalists might very well take in hand and agitate. In this way a great deal would be done towards raising the status of journalists and placing journalism on an equality with the so-called 'learned professions'. 26

However, not all journalists agreed with these sentiments concerning the need for formal university training for journalists. The preference for university training was less an issue of status, and more a practical one according to one critic:

The only question then to be considered is whether the necessary education is better picked up in a newspaper office or absorbed under more favourable conditions in a university, either as a preliminary to or simultaneously with actual press work. It is very doubtful whether the sub-editor or chief-of-staff in his/sic/ few spare moments can play the school-master to sixth standard material as efficiently as the professor with ample time at his/sic/ disposal. 27

23 Ibid.: 6.
26 Kelly (1900: 2-3).
27 The New Zealand Journalist (20 June 1911: 7).
Nonetheless, this critic did not altogether reject the benefits of university training for improving the status of journalists:

In other professions the idea that practical work is the only thing necessary is being gradually abandoned ... [T]oday they recognise that a knowledge of the theories underlying practice is also essential ... It would be curious if journalism was the sole exception to the rule that the foundations of professional success must be laid in the college lecture room ... [P]rovided the holders of this qualification are firmly handled at the start of their practical experience ... a large proportion of them than under the old haphazard system should eventually prove capable ‘pressmen’ [sic].  

Evidently, the view that a journalist ‘is born, not made’ was being challenged on a number of fronts. Indeed, Hight continued to push for a Diploma of Journalism at Canterbury College. By 1909, a special committee formed by the College’s Board of Governors had considered Hight’s proposals. The committee decided to institute a course in journalism from the beginning of 1910, and to urge the university to establish a Diploma in Journalism. In January 1911, the university senate accepted the recommendations of the Authors and Periods Committee which had considered Hight’s proposals.

The first university course for New Zealand journalists was a combination of what Ryan and Switzer refer to as ‘skills content’ (the practical operating knowledge and mechanics of journalistic work) and ‘conceptual content’ (typically organised around traditional academic themes). The Diploma of Journalism was to consist of seven subjects taken from both the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Commerce syllabi: English language and literature, modern history, constitutional history, economics, geography, statistical method, and psychology and logic. A new paper incorporating the basic elements of practical journalism would also be taught. The objective was to instruct students in “all subjects that bear directly or indirectly on the daily tasks and duties of the press as well as test the candidates’ knowledge of everyday newspaper practice”.

---

29 Hight and Candy. (1927: 93).
30 Newth (1997: 45).
31 Hight and Candy. (1927: 93).
33 *The New Zealand Journalist* (May 1911: 7).
University qualifications for journalists: A matter of ‘supply and demand’

Immediately prior to its launch, industry feedback about the diploma in journalism appeared promising. Many working journalists welcomed the introduction of a university course for journalists, as it indicated a decline in

... the old idea that the profession was something like the measles, that might or might not be caught. As a direct result of the haphazard methods of the proprietors, there is now a paucity of good journalists on the daily press, and every day high-grade men/sic/ are being attracted to other walks of life ... The demand for good journalists is greater than supply. It is surely time for the proprietors as a whole to appreciate the position, and help to make the profession worthy of the work it does for the public.35

As long as the course helped to raise the calibre of practising journalists (and did not result in an ‘oversupply’ of journalists) the diploma course was seen as a promising development for journalists themselves. Local newspaper proprietors, too, expressed a favourable response to the decision to establish a journalism diploma at Canterbury College. For example, The Press claimed to place ‘great value’ upon university training.36 Indeed, this support had been influential in the university senate’s decision to establish a journalism course.

In spite of the ostensible industry support for the diploma course, the actual number of students to express interest in enrolling is recorded as having been ‘disappointingly small’.37 Consequently, the course remained in abeyance for some years.38 Existing records indicate that after World War One, the diploma course had undergone some minor changes. Practical journalism, English and General History were the three compulsory subjects.39 Students could choose three other subjects ranging from languages, statistical method, philosophy and the history of political ideas. Acting upon James Hight’s earlier recommendation that the practical journalism component of the course be divided into two branches,40 it now consisted of ‘Journalism 1’ and ‘Journalism 2’. Journalism 1 instructed students in journalistic methods: Reporting; heads and titles; précis and summaries; interviews; special

---

38 Ibid: 117.
40 The New Zealand Journalist (May 1911: 7).
writing; leaders, and preparing ‘copy’.41 Journalism 2 was broader in scope, consisting of the following topics: Meaning of news; proofs; use of books of reference; proper application of a knowledge of history, economics, and political science to contemporary public affairs; relation of newspapers to the public; comparison of characteristics of typical journals; advertising; organisation, and the essentials of the newspaper office; and general acquaintance with mechanical processes of printing.42 Any student could take the journalism subjects during the course of their Arts degree, but to be awarded the Diploma in Journalism, a candidate had to have at least one year experience in a newspaper office.43 The fees paid for any part of the Diploma course were £2 2s, and £1 1s for the diploma.44

Like James Hight, some early students of the course were of the view that the practical side of the course, encompassing the mechanical skills of journalistic work (‘skills content’) was of less significance than the traditional academic subjects (‘conceptual content’) included in the diploma course.45 These views reflect ‘the professional training approach’, emphasising the intellectual and cultural ideals of journalistic work. One of the first graduates of the two-year Diploma in journalism from Canterbury College, A. J. Harrop who completed the course in 1921,46 had this to say:

The lectureship in practical journalism at Canterbury College should I think, be extended to a School of Journalism. The lectures in practical journalism, themselves, are not the most important. It is English, Modern History, and Economics which have perhaps, the greatest value, and these subjects, which are included in the course at Canterbury College, cannot fail to be of use even to the most experienced reporter.47

While the previously dominant belief that a journalist is ‘born, not made’ was in decline, it had evidently been replaced by a new debate about the nature of training for journalists. This new debate was reminiscent of the ‘professionalism versus trade school debate’ referred to at the outset of this chapter. At the core of this debate was a

41 The Australasian Journalist (18 August 1923: 136).
43 The New Zealand Journalist (20 May 1911: 7).
45 This distinction between ‘skills content’ and ‘conceptual content’ as pertaining to journalism education is drawn by Ryan and Switzer (2001). Further discussion on the relationship between the practical and academic aspects of journalism curricula can be found in Turner (2000), Reese and Cohen (2000), Bromley et al (2001); and Skinner et al (2001).
conflict over the issue of whether journalism education should emphasise the intellectual/‘professional’ or the practical/mechanical aspects of journalistic work. This was a debate that was to continue to plague the development of journalism education in New Zealand throughout the twentieth century.

5.4 The NZJA’s interests in formal education and qualifications for journalists

The introduction of formal university training and qualifications for journalists initially appeared promising for journalists themselves. By the 1920s, New Zealand journalism was suffering the effects of a significant loss of journalists to better-paying Australian newspapers at the turn of the twentieth century.\(^{48}\) The question facing the leaders of the occupation by the 1920s, then, was how to attract and retain talented journalists.

We are bound to consider how, in the years to come, the best brains of the country are to be kept in the service of readers. Are the schools of our profession as thorough and complete in their training as are the schools of other professions no more honourable than ours? Do we trust too much to a system which is virtually that of apprenticeship? Is journalism, as it should be, the most attractive of all occupations to the man/sic/ of brains and imagination? If it is not, is it within our power to make it so? The development of the Press in these days of mechanical inventiveness is beyond our vision. One thing, at best, is certain: that the functions of giving news accurately and in its true proportion, together with those presenting the best thought of the world to the masses of the world, are functions that do require, and will always require, the best minds of the world.\(^{49}\)

In order to make the occupation of journalism attractive to the ‘best minds’, better pay and working conditions were needed. However, to attain better pay and working conditions, journalists needed to prove their ‘worth’. The introduction of university qualifications and a formal system of training for journalists were presented as the ‘means to an end’. University qualifications for journalists would serve both to attract better-qualified and academically trained people into journalism, and also to sustain journalists’ claims to professional recognition and rewards. One journalist maintained that:

The general standard of journalism can and should be raised ... It is in his [the journalist’s] hands to see that in no respect need he/sic/ give way to those

\(^{48}\) *The New Zealand Journalist* (15 August 1945: 3).
\(^{49}\) *The Australasian Journalist* (15 February 1921: 329).
representatives of those professions no more important than his [sic] own but from whom custom has long expected a standard of education and culture, while no one will deny that it is necessary to the higher branches of journalism, no one seems to think it necessary for ALL branches of journalism.\(^{50}\)

The NZJA maintained that because of the demands of the occupation, journalism had just as (if not more) valid a claim to specialised education as the 'accepted professions', and that there was a significant 'public interest' in well-educated journalists.

Every avocation calls for special skill, but journalism stands out from the others in one notable respect. The knowledge required by a dentist, architect, engineer and the rest is largely acquired by the carrying out of his [sic] business—the architect's skill in designing and calculating of strains for instance. The technique of journalism comes largely with practice, but the wide fund of information has to be acquired quite separately from his [sic] work. The differences can be shown by example. A lawyer who has to deal with a complicated matter has time to study it up; a physician with a difficult case can consult the text-books and confer with his [sic] colleagues; the pressman [sic] has to do the best he [sic] can on the moment. According to the quality of the job he [sic] turns out, the readers of his [sic] paper are well or badly served.\(^{51}\)

Journalists also had much to gain in terms of their social and economic status throughout the introduction of formal qualifications for journalists. For some, educational qualifications for journalists could prove a useful means of shedding their 'Bohemian' image and replacing it with a more respectable one.

The Association is anxious that its members should attain a high standard in education and conduct; anxious that the work done should be honest and efficient ... Naturally it asks commensurate payment for the skilled work performed. Since profits — the employer's wages — are high in journalism, it is fair to ask those who help make the profits should share in the return.\(^{52}\)

Another commentator predicted that unless journalists' qualifications were recognised along the lines of 'other professions', and a systematic means of ensuring good recruits into journalism was introduced, the overall quality of journalism would suffer.

The salary status of the experienced journalist remains a long way below that of other professional men [sic] who are performing no greater service to the

\(^{50}\) *The Australasian Journalist* (16 January 1922: 9, Capitals in original).

\(^{51}\) *The Australasian Journalist* (14 July 1923: 103.).

\(^{52}\) *The Australasian Journalist* (31 March 1920: 47).
community. Journalism is still the most inadequately remunerated of the professions. With a few exceptions, the proprietors are lamentably lacking in appreciation of the difficulty they are bound to experience in the near future in securing sufficient recruits of the right type, unless they mend their ways ... The alternative facing the proprietors is clear: Payment of an adequate salary to the qualified man[sic] or a lowered standard of journalism.  

**University lectures for journalists in the 1920s and 1930s**

These views paved the way for further developments in the field of university training for journalists. In response to demands from local newspaper editors for further university training for journalists, the Canterbury College approved a series of practical lectures in journalism in 1919. These lectures were designed for journalists and others who did not intend to take the diploma (for which other subjects were required). Local newspaper proprietor Robert Bell's bequest of three thousand pounds in January 1920 to provide scholarships for students of the diploma allowed the Canterbury College to proceed with the appointment of a lecturer for the course. Alexander G. Henderson (editor of the *Lyttelton Times*), who was an initial proponent of the journalism course, was appointed the first lecturer in June 1920. It was also during the 1920s when the NZJA first actively involved itself in the area of journalism education. The perceived success of the journalism course at Canterbury College saw the NZJA begin campaigning for further journalism courses at other New Zealand universities. At the 1923 annual conference, a remit was accepted that the NZJA push for an extension of the lectureship to the various colleges. It was out of this appeal that Auckland University College decided to establish a lectureship in journalism. The first course was taught by Alan E. Mulgan to eighteen students, comprising both working journalists and general students of the college, and concluded in October 1924. A second series was conducted in 1935 with ten lectures in subjects including 'women in journalism', 'journalism in Europe', 'Fleet Street', 'and weekly journalism', 'literary criticism in the newspaper', and 'the commercial page'. Instruction on the topic of 'Newspapers and the law' was given

---

54 Hight and Candy (1927: 93).  
55 *The New Zealand Journalist* (20 September 1951: 5).  
56 Hight and Candy (1927: 93).  
58 Hight and Candy (1927: 93).  
60 *The Australasian Journalist* (15 November 1924: 191).  
61 *The New Zealand Journalist* (8 May 1935: 1).
by Law Professor R. M. Algie.\footnote{The New Zealand Journalist (12 October 1935: 5).} This was later published in condensed form for journalists by the NZJA in conjunction with the Auckland University College.\footnote{Ibid: 5.}

By 1931, the journalism diploma had evolved away from the 1911 syllabus with an extended journalism component.\footnote{Newth (1997: 48).} The journalism paper was now structured in terms of two subjects – Principles of Journalism and Practice of Journalism. The former emphasised the history of journalism, the service ideals of newspapers, as well as ethical, professional and legal aspects of journalistic work. The latter covered the practical aspects of journalistic work. These subjects were taught in addition to subjects from the Bachelor of Arts schedule included when the course was first instituted in 1911.

**Questions as to the ‘value’ of the Diploma in Journalism**

However, these developments were offset by criticisms from within the industry. It soon became apparent that the institution of university training and qualifications for journalists was failing to meet the objectives of journalists. Some journalists argued that the Diploma of Journalism course was a “waste of time”.\footnote{The New Zealand Journalist (8 May 1935: 1).}

Those who have hoped to use their ‘Diploma of Journalism’ as a qualification have found it, in practice, of purely negative value. The practical side of the course is too sketchy and incomplete that the student can gain nothing but a confused idea of newspaper organisation while the range of study opened up by the other necessary subjects is not deep or wide enough to induce the studious habit. The obvious result is that the student fortunate enough to secure a position on a paper begins his\textit{sic} work with a much greater ignorance than the average copy boy, and a greater immaturity than the cub reporter of two years standing. This is not to decry the value of a university training for newspaper work. Any journalist is willing to acknowledge the advantages to be derived from some form of intensive study or research. But few working journalists would deny, after taking out the mysterious ‘diploma’, that they had been badly taken in by the University and that their guineas would have been better saved.\footnote{Ibid: 1.}

It is important to note that such critics were not necessarily opposed to the notion of formal university training for journalists itself. What critics objected to was their belief that the existing diploma had not produced its professed objectives as a recognised qualification for journalists that would serve to increase both the expertise.
and the status of journalists. Proponents had argued that university training would prove more beneficial for journalists than ‘on-the-job’ training, because it would not only equip them with the necessary practical skills for their work, but also with a broader knowledge that would serve to inform their work. For some, the university course was not imparting the degree of expertise its supporters had claimed it would in order to make it preferable to the prevailing ‘on-the-job’ method of learning. Furthermore, the Diploma in Journalism was seen to lack prestige; journalism could be taken by anyone as part of an arts degree. As such, the diploma was not seen as a ‘real’ or exclusive qualification for journalists. Consequently, critics were seen to favour ‘trade school approach’ ideals as to the training of journalists, not because they opposed the notion of university education for journalists *per se*, but because they did not find it preferable to on-the-job training in practice in terms of its ability to confer either expertise or status.

The promotion of formal systematic training for journalists began as an offshoot of the view among journalists that their social and economic status had not kept pace with developments in the journalistic environment. A related argument was that the importance of journalistic work to society and services to community was not commensurate with the rewards granted journalists themselves. These arguments were aptly illustrated by the journalists’ advocate’s brief read in the 1937 Arbitration Court hearing:

Under the conditions of journalism today a much higher standard of news-writing is required than in earlier days, and more care in presentation of news is insisted upon ... There is no vocation or profession which takes such toll of mind or body as does journalism ... Much more is required today of the young journalist. A matriculation pass is the minimum for entry into the profession, and diplomas of journalism and university degrees are gradually becoming essentials for promotion. A profession which asks so much of its members should at least pay them in proportion to their attainments, their arduous labours, their technical skills, and their inestimable services to the community. The journalist is one of the real leaders of democratic society ... Illpaid[sic] and overworked, it is he[sic] who has in the past, through love of his[sic] calling, loyalty to its high traditions and devotion to duty, built up the justly great reputation of the New Zealand press.\(^\text{68}\)

---

\(^{67}\) Eric Beardsley (28 March 2003: Personal Communication). Eric Beardsley became the president of the Canterbury- Westland branch of the NZJA in the early 1950s (*The New Zealand Journalist*, May 1954: 2) but by the early 1960s, he had left journalism to take up the position of information officer at Canterbury College.

\(^{68}\) *The New Zealand Journalist* (12 March 1937: 4).
Evidently then, the introduction of university education for journalists had yet to prove ‘worthwhile’ for journalists. This was reflected in the continued ‘exodus’ of journalists seeking better wages and working conditions across the Tasman during the 1930s. Not only was New Zealand journalism failing to attract ‘the best minds’ into the occupation, it was also losing many of its more experienced practitioners to Australian newspapers. In 1935, one New Zealand journalist had lamented that:

The magnet of Australian wages, conditions and opportunities, continues to attract the best of New Zealand’s talent across the Tasman ... Obviously, as prevention is superior than cure, the solution lies in keener competition by Dominion proprietors with the[se] three features of Commonwealth employment that have drawn so heavily upon New Zealand ability.\(^{69}\)

**A preference for the status quo?**

The introduction of formal university training and qualifications for journalists had not significantly changed the nature of entry into journalism. As one journalist noted in 1935:

There are two peculiarities about the profession of journalism ... The one is that although journalism is one of the most important influences of modern life, yet a man[sic] without particular training or recognised qualifications can so easily enter; the other is that a journalist with the highest qualifications can so easily be turned out.\(^{70}\)

Nor did the introduction of a diploma in journalism represent a major challenge to the status quo method of on-the-job training. While some journalists had part or full degrees earned through part-time study in the arts or law, and others had teaching qualifications,\(^{71}\) few journalists gained entry into the occupation through their Diploma of Journalism. Indeed, former journalists of the era confirm that few of their colleagues had the diploma.\(^{72}\) As one former journalist notes, journalism continued to be

... run almost totally on the lines of apprenticeship, learn-within-the-trade lines. The diploma carried little or no mana, and the one or two people with diplomas still seemed to have to learn the trade from the ground up when they began employment. The diploma just didn’t count.\(^{73}\)

---

\(^{69}\) *The New Zealand Journalist* (8 May 1935: 1).

\(^{70}\) *The New Zealand Journalist* (12 November 1935: 6).

\(^{71}\) Warren Page (7 November 2001: Personal Communication).

\(^{72}\) Doug Borman (28 March 2003: Personal Communication); Binney Lock (2 March 2003: Personal Communication); Eric Beardsley (28 March 2003: Personal Communication); George Griffiths, 23 April 2003: Personal Communication).

\(^{73}\) George Griffiths (23 April 2003: Personal Communication).
Indeed, entry into journalism straight from high school remained common, as another former journalist recounts:

My experience at Southland Boys High School in editing and producing a school newspaper was what drew me into journalism. An English Master directed many [students] into the Southland News and the morning paper The Southland Times. I left school on a Friday and started on The News on Monday. 'Training' was by doing.74

It was not so much the university as 'the nearest hotel bar' that was most commonly the hub of (informal) learning for cadets.75 Others to have become journalists had worked in the proof reading room as students during the university term break to earn money. Many entered the occupation when, after they had completed their studies, these jobs became full-time positions.76 Even early diploma holders, such as A. J. Harrop, hinted at their 'accidental' entry into the occupation.

[although I had an inclination towards writing, my entry into journalism was due almost entirely to the fact that lectures in journalism were given at Canterbury College and that my degree course corresponded almost entirely with the course required for the Diploma of Journalism.77

In part, the failure of university training for journalists to 'take root' was reinforced by newspaper editors and older journalists who 'looked down their noses at formal education'.78 In spite of the initial support from local newspaper proprietors for the introduction of a Diploma in Journalism at Canterbury College, the diploma, once instituted, was not highly regarded by editors as a qualification for journalists.79 The scornful attitude of one Christchurch editor, Hugo Freeth, who became editor of The Press in the 1930s,80 until his death in 1957,81 was illustrated by his claim that the Diploma in Journalism was 'a good qualification for a shorthand typist'.82 Freeth's views represented the status quo at the time among most editors and older journalists, who generally favoured the 'on-the-job' learning approach, and demonstrated an overall lack of interest in the notion of formal training for journalists.83 Like most

74 Keith Eunson (21 March 2003: Personal Communication).
75 Warren Page (7 November 2001: Personal Communication).
76 Binney Lock (2 April 2003: Personal Communication).
79 Ian Templeton (27 March 2003: Personal Communication).
80 The New Zealand Journalist (12 December 1935: 4).
82 Doug Borman (28 March 2003: Personal Communication).
83 Binney Lock (2 April 2003: Personal Communication).
newspaper editors at the time, Freeth was of the school of thought that the best way to train journalists was to throw them into the pool at the deep end where they either 'sank or swam'.

The 'old hands' too, saw no reason to change the system through which they had learnt their craft. The 'method' of learning where "you started as a message boy, went through the reading room, and worked your way through the ranks learning reporting from other reporters was seen to have 'worked' – they [the 'old hands'] saw was no reason to change it."

Evidently, the introduction of tertiary-level journalism courses had not served to completely dispel the view that journalists were 'born, not made'. This was a stance that remained entrenched in the industry, and was reflected in the prevailing attitudes of many editors towards university graduates:

Some editors had misgivings about employing lots of graduates. They suspected such people would want to editorialise and would resist learning from the bottom up … Such editors said they preferred to pick school leavers who showed an aptitude for writing and had 'fire in their bellies' to hint aggressively for stories and to be watchdog for the public.

**Post-war developments in journalism education**

Developments in journalism education in New Zealand lapsed during the Second World War, and their absence was felt immediately afterwards in that the introduction of educational qualifications for journalists was still failing to keep experienced journalists in the country. This second wave of departure of New Zealand journalists to Australian newspapers post-World War Two was referred to by some as 'the second migration'. (The first had occurred at the turn of the twentieth century, as noted above). The result was staffing shortages at many New Zealand newspapers and concern about the quality of journalism generally. According to one NZJA member, these difficulties could be remedied by making journalism more attractive to both existing and potential journalists.

Staffing difficulties could be much less troublesome if the profession were more attractive both in conditions and remuneration ... [N]ot only are young men[sic] coming forward in meagre numbers as copy-holders and cadets, but many are leaving quite early in their careers, finding their services even as
half-fledged journalists, valued more highly elsewhere under more congenial conditions.  

5.5 The quest for a ‘responsible journalism school’: The NZJA’s campaign for a revised Diploma in Journalism

If the university courses for journalists at Canterbury College and Auckland University College were not directly at fault, they appeared to be doing little to address the problems facing journalists in the post-war period. The NZJA remained concerned at the lack of ‘attractiveness’ of the journalistic occupation to both its existing and prospective members. Having had little, if any, visible impact on their professional status, many journalists deemed the diploma course as having failed to meet both the practical and ‘professional’ needs of journalists.  

This was one of the central reasons behind the decline in interest in the diploma course.

Although the introduction of formal training and qualifications for journalists had not produced the expected rewards for journalists, it had witnessed a shift in the notion that a journalist was ‘born, not made’. Both ability and training were now seen as necessary ingredients for the making of a successful journalist. It was claimed that “... even a ‘born’ journalist needs education, both academic and professional and if a responsible school exists which supplies his[sic] particular needs in a special and considered form it seems to me he[sic] should jump at it”.  

For some critics, this ‘responsible journalism school’ had yet to materialise in New Zealand. The problem remained that, as constituted, the Diploma of Journalism was not achieving journalists’ objectives. Addressing this issue became the mission of the NZJA over the next three decades.

In 1947, at the instigation of the Christchurch Journalists’ Union, the NZJA began campaigning for an improved Diploma of Journalism. The objective was to “bring the course more into line with the needs of the Dominion’s newspapers, raising the status of journalism and improving the standard of journalistic work”.  

The Christchurch union argued that this could be achieved by incorporating “more suitable

---

99 *The New Zealand Journalist* (15 November 1947: 3).
90 NZJA Minutes (10 September 1947: 4).
92 NZJA Minutes (10 September 1947: 4).
subjects and a range of subject courses, and by providing for a second-year course in the subject ‘Principles of Journalism’.

The 1947 annual conference of the NZJA accepted the Christchurch branch’s remit to appoint a joint committee, comprising two representatives of the NZJA and the NPA respectively, to approach the University of New Zealand on the question of a revised Diploma. President of the Christchurch branch, D. W. (Don) Bain, was appointed the president of the NZJA committee convened to deal with the proposal for a revised Diploma of Journalism. On behalf of the NZJA, the committee was to develop suggestions for revising the diploma. By April 1948, the committee had secured the support of the NPA which had agreed that the curriculum should be revised “so as to be of greater practical value in time for the next year’s university syllabus”. The committee’s progress was discussed at the annual meeting of the NZJA in September that year. Don Bain reported to the conference that the Christchurch union had formulated a proposal for the new syllabus for the Diploma of Journalism. It was anticipated that negotiations with the NPA would be completed by 1950.

Journalism education was a key agenda item at the NZJA’s 1950 annual conference. As the previous chapter noted, it was at this conference that the NZJA decided to form the Committee on Training and Status “to report on the whole question of recruitment, training, status and payment of journalists”. In addition to a revised Diploma in Journalism, Wellington delegates wanted to see the establishment of schools of journalism at Victoria College and at Otago University. This motion was amended to ‘additional courses for the Diploma of Journalism’ and was carried. At the same conference, the Dunedin branch president J. M. (Jack) Elliotte moved that representations be made by the NZJA council to the NPA requesting that the clause in the award dealing with the training of cadets be more fully observed. This motion was also carried. This provides an illustration of the way in which some journalists advocated the use of industrial routines to further journalists’ ambitions for ‘professional’ training and education.

---

94 The New Zealand Journalist (April 1948: 3).
95 NZJA Minutes (15 September 1948: 1).
96 The New Zealand Journalist (December 1950: 5).
97 NZJA Minutes (6-7 October 1950: 7).
98 Ibid: 8.
Proposals for improved training of cadets

As the previous chapter noted, the planning of the 'journalists' institute' was a key issue on the NZJA's agenda at this time. As part of the proposed institute's mandate, journalism training was a top priority. Discussion about improving university education for journalists extended into further suggestions about controlling entry into the practice of journalism, as well as efforts to improve the existing system of cadet training. These issues dominated discussion at the NZJA's 1951 annual conference at which the committee dealing with journalists' training and status was instructed to begin exploring the possibility of entry examinations for journalists.¹⁰⁰

Cadet training was also discussed at the 1951 conference. Although some newspapers ran in-house cadet-training schemes, the proportion of New Zealand newspapers operating such schemes was seen as disappointingly small. In 1946, the Wellington Journalists' Union had acknowledged the lack of systematic cadet training in its effort to organise a series of practical lectures given by senior journalists for cadet journalists of Wellington newspapers. The support of D. F. Thompson of the Dominion enabled the series to commence in 1946.¹⁰¹ However, the wider membership of the NZJA believed that the existing ad hoc approach to cadet training needed to be replaced with a more systematic method. Leading members of the NZJA were scathing towards the existing arrangements.

Cadets learn their way round offices and round their jobs the best they can, by trial and error and curses ... It does not occur to the employer that if he[sic] trained his[sic] cadets properly he[sic] would get better dividends from them and if the employer treated them better when they did reach a stage of proficiency he[sic] would not lose them to the few more enterprising newspapers.¹⁰²

At the NZJA's 1951 annual conference, "most delegates were of the opinion that not nearly enough was being done to train cadets and that offices were generally prepared to sit back unless compelled to take action".¹⁰³ President of the Dunedin union W. J. (Bill) Morrison (who had instigated discussion on cadet training) believed that although the issue of cadet training was to be covered by the formation of the

¹⁰³ NZJA Minutes (7 September 1951: 6).
¹⁰¹ The New Zealand Journalist (15 October 1946: 1).
¹⁰² The New Zealand Journalist (15 December 1947: 1).
¹⁰³ NZJA Minutes (7 September 1951: 6).
journalists’ institute (as discussed in chapter four above), “it takes a more immediate step. If we don’t make a move, employers will continue with their policy of inactivity”.\textsuperscript{104} Morrison then moved “that a definite formula for the training for cadets be laid down by the NZJA council for presentation to the NPA as the minimum acceptable by the NZJA under the award clause dealing with training”\textsuperscript{105}

The committee on training and status supported Morrison’s views on the need for improved cadet training. The committee was of the view that “[a]ll possible emphasis should be placed on the professional character of training”.\textsuperscript{106} The committee envisaged a nation-wide system of training for cadets that would “give them both the mental equipment required for their work and ... that sense of responsibility that is the hallmark of any true profession and the only sure guarantee of public confidence”.\textsuperscript{107} The conference report stated that:

The fundamental value of experience and on-the-job training needs no emphasis to experienced journalists, but modern conditions demand rather more than can be obtained in this way ... The committee does not believe that it is practicable for much general instruction to be given in individual offices but believes that the institute should arrange this practical work, designed to give the journalist-in-training the greatest benefit for his\textsuperscript{sic} practical experience ... It is obvious that a well-trained man\textsuperscript{sic}, who recognises and follows a sufficient ethical and professional standard is more valuable than the man\textsuperscript{sic} who can produce no evidence that he\textsuperscript{sic} has either the training or the will to fulfil\textsuperscript{sic} the important social functions of journalism.\textsuperscript{108}

On the motion of Auckland delegate, G. F. (George) Gair, the 1951 conference then resolved that constituent unions would approach their local newspaper proprietors seeking the establishment of local joint committees to tackle the question of cadet training. It was anticipated that these committees would provide for cadet training until the NZJA and the NPA could agree to and draw up a workable long-term plan.\textsuperscript{109} By November 1951, a report proposing an interim cadet-training plan had been circulated to unions with the request that they discuss it with their local employers.\textsuperscript{110} The short-term goal was to ensure that cadets received some formal instruction.\textsuperscript{111} This would also allow for some experimentation in individual

\textsuperscript{104} The New Zealand Journalist (20 September 1951: 4).
\textsuperscript{105} NZJA Minutes (7 September 1951: 6).
\textsuperscript{106} The New Zealand Journalist (20 September 1951: 5).
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid: 3.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid: 5.
\textsuperscript{109} NZJA Minutes (7 September 1951: 6).
\textsuperscript{110} The New Zealand Journalist (15 November 1951: 4).
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid: 5.
newspaper offices, which might prove useful when it came time for the drafting of a
national cadet-training plan – the long-term goal – by the proposed journalists’
institute.112 The NPA had advised that it would discuss this issue at its annual
conference the following February.113

**Opposition from within the ranks toward university education**

The NZJA’s pursuit of ‘professional training’ for journalists, emphasising the
intellectual and ethical aspects of training, certainly suggests a progressive departure
from the view that a journalist ‘is born, not made’. Yet in spite of the NZJA’s desire
to promote and improve university education for journalists, not all NZJA members
shared this ambition. *The New Zealand Journalist* provided a forum for some
vociferous debate on the issue of university qualifications for journalists. As one critic
remarked:

A suspicion could be harboured that a degree with honours in English and
History is no direct help in prising murder details out of unclassical policemen
and the victim’s neighbours ... Seems good journalists can come from
anywhere ... Good journalists could come out of the University of New
Zealand. They could equally come out of any local high school. What they
learn and achieve once in the game can carry them more swiftly towards the
heights than a crammed degree.114

Writing under the pseudonym ‘Years at the Game’, another critic argued that
while university education for journalists may have the potential enhance their
professional status, it was not a prerequisite for journalistic expertise.

Before a man or woman can enter one of the recognised professions such as
medicine or law he or she must qualify by taking a prescribed course of study
and passing prescribed examinations. It may be desirable that the same should
apply to journalism but unfortunately it is not essential. The three R’s are
about the only educational equipment required by the budding journalist, and
many people with no more than this have been successful ... [O]rdinary
everyday journalism is not professional work like the work of a doctor or a
lawyer ... [Y]ou can’t make a job a profession merely by calling it a
profession.115

---

112 *The New Zealand Journalist* (15 November 1951: 5).
113 Ibid: 5.
114 *The New Zealand Journalist* (16 November 1950: 3).
This critic's remarks typified the traditional 'trade school approach' to journalism training, arguing that a university education could not 'make' journalists unless they already displayed the necessary aptitude for journalistic work.

The fact is that any person who can read or write and has the aptitude to write in an interesting way may become a competent journalist. Without that aptitude all the study courses and all the degrees in the world will not make him/sic/ a successful journalist. This is not to say that a journalist needs no training but the best training and probably the only training is the practical training on the job.116

There was little use in using university education as a 'lever to jack up wages', critics maintained, because university-trained journalists would not be indispensable in the minds of employers:

... How are the employers going to react to any attempt to raise the salaries of journalists on the basis of professional training for journalism? Aren't they going to say: We don't want your high-salaried, professionally trained men/sic/ because we can get at lower salaries just as good men/sic/ who have had none of your professional training and have no degrees tacked on to the end of their names.117

Advocates of the 'professional model' of journalism training were quick to defend the NZJA's plans for improving both university education and cadet training for journalists. According to F. J. A. (John) Fox (who was serving on the committee for training and status at the time), the comments written by 'Years at the Game' represented "one of the best arguments I know of for doing something to raise the status, sense of responsibility, and performance of journalists".118 Either this journalist had "written this criticism of journalism education without bothering to read the training and status committee's report", Fox claimed, or "had read it, but had not understood it". It was "precisely such faults that the NZJA's proposals for improved university training for journalists aimed to remedy".119

Advocates of university training for journalists also attempted to clarify their point that it would not replace practical training; it would supplement it to the benefit of journalists, editors, and of journalism generally.

Older persons who have graduated after full-time study will probably require much the same instruction in practical journalism as that given to young

117 Ibid: 2.
118 The New Zealand Journalist (March 1952: 6).
cadets, but they should be able, because of their maturity and scholastic attainments, to absorb it in much shorter time.120

Supporters of improved cadet training also responded to critics by arguing that because the existing system of on-the-job training was so haphazard in New Zealand, there was only so much that cadets could learn in newspaper offices “hence the fairly steady drift of the younger fry through country offices”.121 Indeed, NZJA executives remained firm in their belief that the matter of journalistic training was “primarily in the hands of journalists themselves because in the past employers had shown little more than disinterest”.122

Further developments: A textbook on training for New Zealand journalists?

In the background to these debates, the NZJA was also attempting to develop a textbook to assist in the training of journalists, which was a further reflection of the way in which the NZJA attempted to improve journalism training. At the 1948 annual conference, Dunedin delegate John Spedding’s motion was carried ‘that the Dominion Council be instructed to approach the NPA to consider the joint publication of a series of small textbooks of training, especially for cadets’.123 By July 1949, NZJA vice-president D. K. (Keith) Gunn reported that the NPA had been approached with a view to jointly producing a textbook for journalists. The NPA had indicated that it would be prepared to meet the cost of printing if the NZJA would undertake the preparation of the text.124 Gunn moved that the Dominion Council should appoint a subcommittee to undertake the preparation of suitable material for inclusion in a journalists’ textbook. This motion was seconded by Nelson delegate, G. L. Mead, and was carried. By February 1950, the NZJA council had convened a sub-committee comprising M. P. Whatman (Auckland), Don Bain (NZJA president) and Keith Gunn (vice-president) to examine the question of the publication of a suitable handbook for journalists.125 In May 1952, this effort was postponed pending the establishment of

120 The New Zealand Journalist (20 September 1951: 5).
121 The New Zealand Journalist (15 August 1951: 4).
122 The New Zealand Journalist (May 1952: 2).
123 NZJA Minutes (15 September 1948: 7).
124 NZJA Minutes (27 September 1949: 1).
125 NZJA Minutes (13-14 February 1950: 2).
the journalists’ institute which was to have training related issues among its responsibilities.\footnote{NZJA Minutes (27 May 1952: 2).}

Another initiative arose from the Canterbury-Westland union, proposing the publication of a textbook containing a selection of news stories that had won the Cowan Prize or the Good Journalism Prize.\footnote{The Good Journalism Prize was set up in 1927, and from the mid-1930s, it was referred to as a competition in ‘practical’ journalism for which winners were awarded £10 from the NZJA. The Cowan Prize competition was established in honour of the journalist and writer James Cowan who died in 1943, and prize money came from a Government contribution of £350, with additional funding from the NPA and the NZJA (NZJA, 1962: 71-72). The aim of the competition was “to promote a high standard of news gathering and news writing in the daily Press of the Dominion”. Entries were judged in terms of ‘internal evidence of efficient and enterprising news-getting’; ‘lucid and complete presentation of the facts’; ‘good arrangement of matter, emphasis of important, unusual or interesting facts and other points of craftsmanship’; ‘atmosphere, colour, and human interest’; ‘clear simple, appropriate and correct English, free from the bondage of traditional “Journalalese”’ (The New Zealand Journalist, 15 March 1946: 5). In 1954, the difficulty of judging both news pieces and feature writing in the same competition was recognised in the decision to separate the competition into two categories (The New Zealand Journalist, October 1954: 1).} This measure, argued its advocates, “would probably do more towards raising the standard of journalism than the actual giving of the prize”. However, the support of the NPA for this project was not forthcoming. President of the NZJA, Doug Borman, relayed the message to the constituent unions that the NPA had “flatly refused to have any part of it”.\footnote{The New Zealand Journalist (July 1952: 3).}

Although the preparation of a textbook had been postponed, the publication of prize winning articles rejected by the NPA, and the professional institute plans losing momentum, the NZJA’s efforts to improve journalists’ training continued nonetheless. In early 1952, consideration was being given to the training plan for cadets operated by the \textit{Wanganui Herald}, which incorporated units in reading, subbing, and shorthand.\footnote{The New Zealand Journalist (April 1952: 1).} Meanwhile, the Taranaki Journalists’ Association was engaged in discussion with the editors of the two New Plymouth papers concerning a series of lectures for cadets.\footnote{The New Zealand Journalist (April 1952: 8).} Although there was success on some fronts, developments in the area of improved university training were not immediately forthcoming.

By July 1952, the NZJA’s request for instituting a Diploma of Journalism at Victoria University College had been declined; the reason for which was said to be a lack of teaching resources to dedicate to the teaching of journalism.\footnote{The New Zealand Journalist (July 1952: 2).} Consequently,
exasperation was the tone of the NZJA’s 1952 annual conference. On the subject of the Diploma of Journalism Dunedin delegate, Gordon Parry, moved “that every effort be made by the NZJA council by co-opting unions, and university graduates if necessary, to improve the Diploma of Journalism course”. This was necessary, Parry argued, to ensure that the course conformed to modern newspaper practice and requirements, the first step being a report to constituent NZJA branches on the existing curriculum and suggested improvements. This motion was carried. Discussion then turned to the issue of cadet training. Parry presented another remit “that the NZJA council set up a sub-committee immediately to draw up minimum requirements for cadet training as laid down in the award; that the schedule be circulated to unions for approval as soon as possible; that the approved schedule be circulated to the NPA and individual newspapers offices as the minimum acceptable to the NZJA and its affiliated unions as the Award requirements”. These proposals were accepted by the conference and it was decided that the president of the NZJA, Doug Borman, would confer with the NPA on this subject.

Interestingly, Parry had also advocated issuing an ultimatum to the NPA in the form of a remit stating that “[s]hould the NPA decline to accept the minimum, that a dispute be created as provided in the Award to be settled by the Department of Labour or appropriate authority”. This motion was lost. The fact that the NZJA conference failed to adopt Parry’s remit that threatened industrial action if employers failed to cooperate in the project is significant in itself. Doug Borman, who was the president of the NZJA at the time, maintains that industrial routines were not rejected by the NZJA out of a sense that they were ineffective but rather out of a belief that industrial action was more suited to ‘blue-collar workers’ rather than ‘white-collar workers’. The majority of journalists wanted to be seen as the latter, as the previous chapter highlighted. The use of ‘professionalism’ as a strategy, as opposed to industrial routines, was deemed preferable because it was consistent with the social status that journalists wanted to attain. This perhaps explains why Parry’s motion did not find favour with the majority of the 1952 conference delegates.

132 NZJA Minutes (5-6 September 1952: 6).
The pursuit of ‘professional education’ continues

In December 1953, a sub-committee of the NZJA comprising W. L. Macbeth (Taranaki) and C. L. Saunders (NZJA vice-president) was set up to suggest amendments to the diploma curriculum for discussion at the next council meeting.\textsuperscript{137} By June 1954, the sub-committee dealing with revising the diploma syllabus had conferred with the NPA sub-committee dealing with the project,\textsuperscript{138} and had begun the task of drafting ‘a better and more suitable syllabus for the Diploma of Journalism’.\textsuperscript{139} These proposals were then forwarded to the Academic Board of Canterbury University College, which assured the NZJA of its support for a revised Diploma of Journalism. The NZJA had been asked to investigate possibilities, and make and recommendations for a new draft syllabus for the diploma subjects ‘Journalism 1’ and ‘Journalism 2’. This was not an enviable task, as one journalist noted:

One of the difficulties of having journalism recognised as a profession is devising a course of study and a series of examinations that would fairly test the fitness of a person to enter journalism. Some of the greatest journalists might never have been able to pass the examinations after taking the course of study, and it is certain that some of the greatest journalists have had very little formal education.\textsuperscript{140}

Recognising that any revisions would need to be accepted by the wider industry, one NZJA recommendation was that any changes to the practical aspect of the course would require the approval of newspaper editors.\textsuperscript{141} The July 1954 meeting of the NZJA council decided to defer further discussion of the proposed syllabus until NZJA representatives were able to meet with the Professorial Board of Canterbury College.\textsuperscript{142} At the NZJA’s annual conference later that year, a full report on ways to raise the standard of the diploma was presented by the NZJA council.\textsuperscript{143} Although further negotiations with the university needed to be made, the NZJA anticipated that a revised course for the Diploma of Journalism would be in operation by the beginning of 1956.\textsuperscript{144} However, this appeared to be an overly optimistic expectation.

\textsuperscript{137} NZJA Minutes (8 December 1953: 2).
\textsuperscript{138} NZJA Minutes (4 May 1954: 1).
\textsuperscript{139} NZJA Minutes (30 June 1954: 1).
\textsuperscript{140} \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (June-July 1954: 4).
\textsuperscript{141} NZJA Minutes (30 June 1954: 8).
\textsuperscript{142} \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (July-August 1954: 1).
\textsuperscript{143} \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (October 1954: 4).
\textsuperscript{144} NZJA Minutes (21 February 1955: 1); \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (April 1955: 4).
5.6 The Diploma in Journalism is abolished

A letter written on March 23rd 1955 by Professor Logie (a representative of the Academic Board sub-committee dealing with the matter) advised NZJA president L. (Les) R. Hobbs of the progress concerning the Diploma in Journalism. The letter explained to the NZJA’s president that originally the sub-committee had forwarded to the board the NZJA’s request for the introduction of a tighter syllabus for the Diploma of Journalism. The board had rejected this recommendation and referred this suggestion back to the sub-committee. Given the board’s attitude toward the diploma, the convenor of the sub-committee, Dr. Crowther, told the NZJA that he was “now inclined to recommend that the Diploma in Journalism be discontinued”.¹⁴⁵ The letter concluded that “it is considered that the Diploma as constituted fulfils no useful function and that it cannot be converted into a proper professional course”.

Other factors weighing on this decision included expressions of doubt from some sub-committee members that any reformed Diploma of Journalism course would attract a worthwhile number of students, at least in Christchurch. The professorial board’s sub-committee had pointed out that “if working journalists were eliminated from the 1955 class, there would be hardly any other students left”.¹⁴⁶ However, Professor Logie was of the belief that the Professorial Board should not be allowed to drop the Diploma of Journalism of its own volition. One reason was that the Robert Bell Travelling Scholarship required candidates to hold a Diploma of Journalism from Canterbury University College. It was questioned whether the conditions could be altered (possibly to include Diploma holders from Auckland University College, which also taught the Canterbury diploma syllabus) as there were not enough journalists with a Diploma from Canterbury to take up all the scholarships on offer.¹⁴⁷

However, these reasons did not satisfy the NZJA, which resolved to make further inquiries as to the popularity of the diploma course at Auckland University College.¹⁴⁸ The NZJA’s interests in retaining the university course for journalists were illustrated in a 1955 issue of The New Zealand Journalist:

[T]he proprietors have amongst themselves an agreement, none the less binding because it is unwritten, the effect of which is that they will not

¹⁴⁵ Letter from Professor Logie to the president of the NZJA dated 23 March 1955.
¹⁴⁶ The New Zealand Journalist (May 1955: 4).
¹⁴⁷ Letter from Professor Logie to the president of the NZJA dated 23 March 1955.
¹⁴⁸ The New Zealand Journalist (May 1955: 4).
compete among themselves for journalistic talent by offering wages above the award level ... The result is that the newspapers are failing to attract a proportionate share of boys[sic] leaving school, and are failing to keep the most promising juniors and generals, who leave the country to obtain higher rewards elsewhere. Thus the proportion of men[sic] of large experience is ever getting lower.\textsuperscript{149}

Not surprisingly then, the NZJA responded to Professor Logie's letter with its own letter of protest, maintaining

... that the Diploma as presently constituted fulfils no useful function, but [the NZJA] does not agree that the Diploma cannot be converted into a proper professional course. We consider that the revised syllabus as recommended by the sub-committee of your professorial board would constitute a proper professional course.\textsuperscript{150}

The NZJA's 1955 annual conference discussed a further letter received from Canterbury College. The letter advised the NZJA that the College was in the process of consulting all of the university Academic Boards, as well as the NPA, on the question of whether to abolish the Diploma in Journalism or whether to amend it to make it a more useful professional qualification.\textsuperscript{151} The NPA had pointed out that the present Diploma was not of much use to a working journalist who, if prepared to devote the necessary time to study, would probably take a full Arts degree instead.\textsuperscript{152} The NPA argued that the diploma was not meeting the needs of the profession, and that an arts degree was considered by many employers and editors to be a more useful qualification.\textsuperscript{153} Subsequently, in 1956 the Academic Board recommended to the Senate that the Diploma in Journalism be abolished.

The NZJA remained dissatisfied with this outcome and in October 1957 formed a sub-committee to confer with other university authorities and to prepare submissions to the NPA on the question of university courses for journalists.\textsuperscript{154} Progress was stymied during 1958 by the predominance of industrial issues, notably the lack of a pay increase to meet the rise in taxes and cost of living. Consequently, the sub-committee on university courses recommended to the NZJA that it not revive the question of undergraduate courses, but that the committee would consider the

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid: 4.
\textsuperscript{150} NZJA Minutes (21 February 1955: 1).
\textsuperscript{151} NZJA Minutes (22-23 September 1955: 6).
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid: 6.
\textsuperscript{153} Newth (1997: 48).
\textsuperscript{154} NZJA Minutes (1 October 1957: 2).
possibility of post-graduate courses. Comments from the NZJA branches on the matter were still being awaited.\textsuperscript{155}

Meanwhile, the Senate of Canterbury College asked the Academic Board to investigate the possibility of incorporating the diploma subjects, the Principles of Journalism and the Practice of Journalism into the Bachelor of Arts degree as Stage One subjects, open only to \textit{bona fide} journalists as an alternative to the Diploma of Journalism.\textsuperscript{156} A committee was appointed to explore this possibility. Although several committee members favoured the proposal, it was rejected by the Faculty of Arts in May 1961.\textsuperscript{157}

\textbf{The NZJA's response}

With the Diploma of Journalism abolished, the problem of improving the position of journalists became more pertinent than ever before. Without formal education and qualifications for journalists, and the loss of trained journalists to other more lucrative professions, the NZJA remained convinced that the quality of journalism would suffer. The journalists' advocate in the 1961 award hearing presented the views of the NZJA:

... We cannot have reliable and trusted newspapers unless the newspapers have fully competent journalists, and an adequate salary scale is essential to retain in the profession a larger proportion of men[\textit{sic}] with first-class journalistic ability ... [T]here is sufficient competition from Australia, from the public relations field and from advertising agencies to attract from the industry too great a proportion of its trained men[\textit{sic}], and so to deprive the community of men[\textit{sic}] who are needed to preserve the efficiency of the Press and consequently of democracy itself ... The Newspaper Proprietors appear to be content to capitalise on the fact that there is a supply of newcomers available to fill the gaps as they occur. They must be aware that in this, as in any other profession, enthusiasm is not an adequate substitute for skill, maturity and judgement, but they are apparently prepared to make do with reduced efficiency.\textsuperscript{158}

\textsuperscript{155} NZJA Minutes (12-13 September 1958: 3).
\textsuperscript{156} Letter from Professor Logie to the president of the NZJA dated 23 March 1955.
\textsuperscript{157} Newth (1997: 49).
\textsuperscript{158} \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (31 May 1961: 2-3).
Efforts to introduce tertiary courses for journalists in the 1960s

In its 1962 anniversary publication, the NZJA raised questions about the ‘journalist of the future’:

In the past journalists have suffered, perhaps, because there always seemed to be a pool of people, mostly untrained, who wanted to come into the profession. The managers worried because they were short of linotype operators, linotype mechanics, but there would always be reporters and sub-editors. In recent years they have not been so sure. It is said that the journalist of the future will be a highly-trained university graduate really analysing and interpreting the news. Whether present salaries and conditions and the status of journalism are likely to tempt these into newspaper offices is a question that can only be answered in time ... Quality will have to be paid for ... 159

This was the context in which the issue of university courses for journalists returned to the NZJA’s agenda in 1962. The NZJA envisaged a course of two years duration with provision for part-time study. Letters were sent to the four New Zealand universities in order to seek their views on university courses for journalists. 160 Canterbury University rejected the idea, maintaining its earlier position that an arts degree provided the best foundation for journalism. 161 However, during 1963, meetings took place between the NZJA council and faculty representatives of Victoria University College. 162 Although faculty members were ‘favourably impressed’ with the NZJA’s submission, 163 no definite conclusions were reached. Matters of financing the course, the likely support for the course, and whether or not it would be full-time awaited consideration. The NZJA was to contact the NPA to ascertain the extent to which it would support the course. 164

The need for professionalism is reaffirmed

NZJA leaders remained convinced that ‘professional education’ and formal journalistic qualifications were a means of increasing the social and economic status of the journalistic occupation vis-à-vis ‘other professions’. The increasingly demanding nature of journalistic work provided further impetus for formal journalism education and training which created journalists that were able to grasp the complex

---

159 NZJA (1962: 61).
160 NZJA Minutes (1 October 1962: 1).
161 NZJA Minutes (25 March 1963: 3).
162 NZJA Minutes (4 March 1963: 1).
163 NZJA Minutes (27 May 1963: 1).
164 NZJA Minutes (24 June 1963: 1).
requirements of their work. The fact that journalism was still failing to attract and retain 'the best minds' only exacerbated these pressures. The NZJA's rationale for professionalism was reaffirmed again in 1963:

There are enormous responsibilities on those who present to the people the news and views of the changing world ... This makes demands, not only on their ability to assess what is important and what is not important, what is irrelevant or meretricious—and that judgement and that ability has to be applied to the widest possible range of subjects ... [T]he profession of journalism must be able to attract and retain men[sic] of the requisite ability by assuring them a career which has at least some relativity with other careers which are available to men[sic] of comparable ability with comparable effort.  

The quest for university education for journalists continues

At its 1963 annual conference, the NPA expressed support for the introduction of university journalism courses, and appointed three editors, O. S. Hintz, G. Freeman, and G. Burns, to meet with university authorities in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland. George Burns (then editor of the Christchurch Star) had been the lecturer for the Diploma in Journalism at Canterbury College since 1948, and is said to have strongly supported the re-introduction of a journalism course. In October 1963, G. Freeman (editor of the Evening Post) had recommended another meeting with the Arts faculty committee at Victoria University of Wellington. Freeman's discussions with the University suggested that "there was still some distance to go before the state was reached at which a diploma course could be established". Questions of whether the university would be entirely free to control any proposed course, the funding of the course, and the nature of the course itself would require further consideration. In discussions with representatives of the University of Auckland, O. S. Hintz expressed the desire "to see more young journalists with arts degrees and some decent groundings in English literature and history", and enquired "whether it would be possible to include within the arts course a study in a group of subjects which are complementary to practical newspaper work".

165 The New Zealand Journalist (12 November 1963: 1).
166 NZJA Minutes (24 September 1963: 1); NPA Minutes (18 September 1963).
167 NZJA Minutes (21 October 1963: 1); NPA Minutes (18 September 1963).
169 NPA Minutes (4 March 1963).
170 NPA Minutes (4 March 1964).
The NZJA appointed a standing committee to deal with the issue of university training for journalists comprising B. M. O'Connor and Ian Templeton in late 1963. A joint committee on university courses was then formed comprising representatives from the four metropolitan unions. The committee members nominated for the Journalism Training Committee were B. R. Gridley and T. P. Walsh (Wellington), E. B. (Binney) Lock and D. D. M. Steward (Canterbury/Westland), R. McClelland and G. F. Vine (Dunedin), and D. (Don) Milne and K. J. Stead (Auckland). These committees would continue to push for the introduction of journalism courses, both at the universities and polytechnics.

**Developments in the area of polytechnic courses for journalists**

The failure of the Diploma in Journalism also led to efforts to establish courses for journalists outside of the university. This was the background to the emergence of polytechnic training courses for journalists in New Zealand. In December 1963, the Wellington Polytechnic approached the Wellington branch of the NZJA on the subject of introducing a diploma course in journalism. The NZJA Journalism Training Committee met with representatives of the Wellington Polytechnic to consider a proposed course outline. A one-year course was planned but individual subjects would be independent so that all or any of the subjects could be taken in a particular year. Both parties agreed that the course should commence by the 2\textsuperscript{nd} of June 1964, subject to adequate industry support. Subsequently, the Wellington union established a committee to obtain assurances of employer cooperation.

However, concerns were expressed from the Auckland branch that the NZJA would accept the Wellington Polytechnic course as a replacement for the university courses it had been pushing for. In response to these fears, the NZJA council agreed that a polytechnic course was not a substitute for university training and that it saw the two forms of training as being complementary to, rather than competing with, one

---

171 NZJA Minutes (21 October 1963: 1).
172 NZJA Minutes (3 February 1964: 1).
173 Peter Scherer (1 May 2003: Personal Communication).
174 NZJA Minutes (4 December 1963: 2).
175 NZJA Minutes (8 April 1964: 1).
177 Ibid: 2.
another. The NZJA would continue in its efforts to have journalism training at the university level re-introduced when the opportunity arose. Meanwhile, having gained the support of the NPA for the Wellington Polytechnic course for journalists, the course commenced on June 2nd 1964 as planned. Later in 1965, an advisory committee was formed comprising representatives of the NPA (K. M. Poulton and W. P. Reeves), and representatives of the NZJA (B. R. Gridley, J. A. (Jack) Kelleher and B. M. Crossen) to monitor the progress of the Wellington Polytechnic course and to ensure that the respective interests of the industry were met.

Similar developments on the polytechnic training front had been occurring in Dunedin. In December 1963, the Dunedin Journalists’ Union was approached by King Edward Technical College Polytechnic concerning the introduction of a three-year diploma course in journalism in Dunedin. However, the Dunedin union was concerned at the employers’ insistence upon a ‘bond’ by journalists who would attend the course, which would tie cadets to newspapers for a specified period of time. The Dunedin union was opposed to a formal bonding agreement which cadets were obliged to sign. The council advised the Dunedin union that if its attempt to avoid bonding was unsuccessful, that the agreement be withheld until the effects of such a system could be considered on a national basis.

When the course commenced in July 1964 (a month after the Wellington Polytechnic course had commenced), no definite steps had been taken to bind cadets to their employers based on participation in the Dunedin polytechnic training course. Nonetheless, the course was short-lived, lasting only a year. The reasons for its failure were reported to the NZJA’s 1965 annual conference. Firstly, there was a conflict between students’ work obligations and their attendance at classes, which led to attendance problems (a problem the Wellington Polytechnic course was also to face). Secondly, students of the course complained of its ‘back to school atmosphere’

---

178 NZJA Minutes (8 April 1964: 2).
179 NZJA Minutes (4 May 1964: 1).
180 NZJA Minutes (8 June 1964: 1); The New Zealand Journalist (18 April 1964: 1); The New Zealand Journalist (18 June 1964: 5). The Wellington Polytechnic course has since been taken over by Massey University.
181 NZJA Minutes (25 March 1965: 1).
182 NZJA Minutes (4 December 1963: 2); NZJA Minutes (8 April 1964: 1).
183 NZJA Minutes (8 June 1964: 1).
184 NZJA Minutes (20 July 1964: 1).
185 NZJA Minutes (8 June 1964: 1).
186 NZJA Minutes (20 July 1964: 1).
and their belief that the tutors were not always up to standard. Thirdly, it was felt that juniors could obtain the same degree of training on-the-job. In this regard, the course was effectively redundant. Finally, it was felt that the 3-year course was too long and that a more suitable length would be two years.\textsuperscript{187}

Meanwhile, an approach to Massey University for an extramural journalism course to meet the needs of provincial journalists was also planned by the NZJA.\textsuperscript{188} For such a programme to be established, Massey representatives indicated that a substantial financial contribution would be needed from the NPA or the Commonwealth Press Union (CPU).\textsuperscript{189} Discussions with these two organisations were planned for the following September.\textsuperscript{190} By June 1965, a proposed 39-week course for provincial areas based on the Wellington Polytechnic course was planned and anticipated to commence in 1966.\textsuperscript{191}

**Questions as to the ‘value’ of the polytechnic courses for journalists**

Difficulties arose in 1967 concerning the recognition of journalists’ qualifications in their award. The NZJA believed that it was unsatisfactory that the collective nature of wage bargaining did not provide any room for the recognition of merit or talent. Promotion to a higher grade could often only be won by moving to another newspaper.\textsuperscript{192} Wellington Polytechnic proposed to the NPA that its members should appoint graduates from full-time journalism courses at least as second-year cadets.\textsuperscript{193} However, the NZJA council believed that this was not a sufficiently high target in view of the fact that the Award already required second-year cadet status for

\textsuperscript{187} NZJA Minutes (10-11 September 1965: 2).
\textsuperscript{188} NZJA Minutes (25 March 1965: 1). Originally, the NZJA had wanted all journalists to receive the same level of training, however many employers argued that provincial journalists did not require the same training as metropolitan journalists. At the core of the issue was the fact that the pay rates in the award for metropolitan journalists were higher and than for provincial newspapers. The NZJA also believed that the creation of one award for provincial and metropolitan journalists would alleviate the shortage of entrants into journalism and the loss of more experienced practitioners to more lucrative occupations (*The New Zealand Journalist*, March-April 1957: 2). The possibility of an extramural journalism course at Massey University was still being investigated in the 1970s (CPU Minutes, 31 July 1976: 9).
\textsuperscript{189} The CPU is an owner-sponsored organisation, the New Zealand Section of which convened committees to deal with press freedom, journalism training and education, and a press council committee (Peter Scherer, 1 May 2003: Personal Communication). The CPU (New Zealand section)’s training committee had initiated cadet training courses from 1952 (*The New Zealand Journalist*: 6 March 1959). At the instigation of the course’s first director, George Burns, they continued and eventually became an annual occurrence (*The New Zealand Journalist*, October 1966: 2).
\textsuperscript{190} NZJA Minutes (3 May 1965: 1-2).
\textsuperscript{191} NZJA Minutes (14 June 1965: 1).
\textsuperscript{192} Ian Templeton (27 March 2003: Personal Communication).
\textsuperscript{193} NZJA Minutes (4 December 1967: 2).
those with Higher School Certificate or its equivalent. The NZJA council suggested that this might lead some to question the value of the polytechnic course when students could get the same rates of pay if they were to stay on at school for an additional year instead of attending the polytechnic course. A letter expressing these concerns was written to the polytechnic.\textsuperscript{194}

Reporting on the meeting of the journalism training advisory committee (set up in March 1965 to monitor the performance of the Wellington Polytechnic course), the president told the conference that he had pressed the NZJA’s claim that graduates should commence at the higher pay rate of C3 (third-year cadet) instead of C2 (second-year cadet). Some advisory committee members perceived difficulties securing C3 as a commencing grade because it would create a disparity between journalists who had started work direct from school, particularly on provincial papers. It was resolved that this issue would be settled between the NZJA and the NPA in a future award negotiation.\textsuperscript{195} In September 1968, a compromise was offered by the NPA which resolved that members engage graduates of the Wellington Polytechnic journalism course as second-year cadets “with the position to be revised within three months of being reinstated”.\textsuperscript{196}

Meanwhile, in July 1969 a decision was made to run weekend training seminars hosted by the Wellington Polytechnic at a cost of ten dollars.\textsuperscript{197} A minimum of ten journalists would need to enrol for the course to take place.\textsuperscript{198} With eleven enrolments, the course took place in October. Deemed a success, a sub-editors’ seminar was then scheduled for early November.\textsuperscript{199}

5.7 The ‘Barrett report’ on journalism education in New Zealand

Amid the developments on the polytechnic training front, a breakthrough in the history of university education for journalism in New Zealand occurred. In 1964, Edward W. Barrett, the Dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University, was commissioned by Canterbury College to visit New Zealand to report

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid: 2-3.
\textsuperscript{195} NZJA Minutes (17 November 1969: 1).
\textsuperscript{196} NPA Minutes (18 September 1968).
\textsuperscript{197} NZJA Minutes (21 July 1969: 1).
\textsuperscript{198} NZJA Minutes (18 August 1969: 1).
\textsuperscript{199} NZJA Minutes (20 October 1969: 1).
on journalism education and the possibilities for higher education in New Zealand journalism. Not only did Barrett’s report support the NZJA’s own observations as to the need for formal university education and qualifications for journalists, it also served as a catalyst for some major developments in the field of journalism education.

Barrett also believed that New Zealand journalism was failing to attract academically trained people into the occupation. This had implications for the quality of journalism on offer. Barrett observed that New Zealand journalism “lacked thoroughness, penetration and the initiative to look beneath surface announcements”. 200 This, he argued, could be attributed to “the paucity of thoroughly educated and disciplined minds within journalism”. Too many journalists lacked both the understanding of complex issues and the self-confidence to ask the penetrating question or to report the sub-surface development. 201 While a few journalists had achieved remarkable self-education, the current system in general appeared to militate against educated journalists. 202 Barrett argued that since the more intellectual school leavers went on to university, the newspaper industry would be wise to offer a university course in journalism. 203

Barrett’s views supported the NZJA’s observations that journalism was not seen by many as a ‘real career option’. This was in part due to the fact that the media industry did not favour university graduates. It was also because the industry did not offer competitive rates of pay. 204 Consequently, the ‘best minds’ were attracted to more lucrative professions. Barrett argued that the university had a role to play in overcoming these difficulties.

...the University system is going to have to find a way to do its part towards meeting this need ... Universities, as centres of intellectual development, have no right, it seems to me, to wash their hands of so basic a problem. I do not feel by any means that every university should have a journalism division, department, or school. I do feel that a higher education system that provides education programmes for doctors or lawyers or engineers can scarcely shun education for journalism as somehow ‘academically impure’. The intellectual content and discipline of the communication profession should be at least as great as that of any of the professions mentioned. 205

200 Chronicle (September 1966: 7).
201 Ibid: 8.
203 The New Zealand Journalist (18 April 1964: 2).
204 Binney Lock (2 April 2003: Personal Communication).
205 Chronicle (September 1966: 8-9).
Like James Hight six decades earlier, Barrett maintained that journalism had just as valid a claim to university training as ‘other professions’ like medicine and law.\textsuperscript{206} Barrett thus recommended a threefold strategy both to raise the standard of, and to stimulate a more professional approach to, journalism training in New Zealand. Firstly, the university needed to ‘open its doors’ to journalism education programmes. Hence, Barrett recommended that a post-graduate (rather than an undergraduate) journalism programme be introduced at the University of Canterbury, suggesting that an undergraduate unit for journalists could be offered as part of the Bachelor of Arts degree.\textsuperscript{207} Barrett believed that “a university should not emphasise such technique-training as shorthand, headline writing or proof-reading but can appropriately help develop more fundamental disciplines”.\textsuperscript{208} As such, he proceeded to recommend that the course should be divided into four parts: History, principles and law of journalism and public communication; major current issues; a research report; and laboratory work.\textsuperscript{209} Secondly, journalists’ achievement needed to be rewarded through the establishment of fellowships for overseas study, and annual prizes for journalists and newspapers for superior performance in areas such as investigate reporting. Thirdly, Barrett recommended further encouragement of academic criticism of journalistic performance in New Zealand.\textsuperscript{210}

The response to the ‘Barrett report’

In the mid-1960s, there were also indications of public support for the central ideas underlying Barrett’s report on journalism education. One member of the public suggested the notion of a ‘school of journalism with rigid passing examination’. It was his view that “journalists should have professional status, be subject to professional discipline by their own society and be rewarded commensurately with ability”.\textsuperscript{211} Likewise, the NZJA’s response to the Barrett report was ‘very favourable’.\textsuperscript{212} This was not surprising given that it echoed the NZJA’s own views as to the need for formal training for journalists. Ian Templeton, who served on an NZJA committee to deal with training matters, had expressed the view that

\textsuperscript{206} The New Zealand Journalist (18 December 1964: 1).
\textsuperscript{207} Chronicle (February 1967: 7).
\textsuperscript{208} Chronicle (September 1966: 8).
\textsuperscript{209} Ibid: 8.
\textsuperscript{210} Cleveland (1970: 207-8).
\textsuperscript{211} Consumer (26 March 1966: 24).
\textsuperscript{212} Binney Lock (2 April 2003: Personal Communication).
Until a university degree is accepted as an essential part of a journalists’ career equipment, journalists could not hope to aspire to the status of lawyers, accountants, dentists, doctors, and engineers ... I suggest that if a university arts or sciences degree is becoming a prerequisite for Government services ... then it can be required by the newspaper industry – and I say it must be required as such if journalists are to acquire professional status.\textsuperscript{213}

In the eyes of NZJA leaders, Dean Barrett had “correctly anticipated the value of a post-graduate course for journalists”.\textsuperscript{214} Restricting the diploma course to degree holders would assist in attracting more ‘academically trained’ individuals into journalism.\textsuperscript{215} Another ‘plus for it’, according to a former president of the Christchurch branch of the NZJA, was the fact that the course was to have a limited number of places,\textsuperscript{216} being open only to fourteen students per year.\textsuperscript{217} These restrictions upon entry into the new diploma course rendered it much more valuable as a qualification for journalists.\textsuperscript{218} At the same time, a key requirement was industry acceptance for the diploma course. There needed to be a suitable balance between academic subjects and skills content to be seen as valuable to industry editors and employers. Journalists themselves recognised that “unless the diploma holders could ‘fit’ into the industry then it would not be welcomed”.\textsuperscript{219} This, of course, was a crucial issue that had already been played out in the context of the previous diploma course.

The industry takes action

By March 1965, the NZJA was considering a joint study of Barrett’s recommendations with the journalist’ training committee of the New Zealand Section of the Commonwealth Press Union (CPU).\textsuperscript{220} It was decided that the NZJA president, Les Hobbs, and vice-president, Ian Templeton, would meet CPU representatives to determine how a university course at Canterbury could be established. In May 1965,
arrangements were made for a meeting the following month to discuss a proposed one-year postgraduate course at Canterbury between representatives of the NZJA council, the Canterbury/Westland branch, the NZBC, and the NPA respectively. By July 1965, broad agreement on a university course for journalists had been reached at a round-table discussion among the above parties. The board reported that it was in general agreement with Dean Barrett’s assessment of the condition of New Zealand journalism. It also recognised “the important role of journalism in modern New Zealand society”, and acknowledged “that it may be a legitimate function of the university to encourage more informative, more searching and more critical journalism, and to help enhance the professional status of journalists”. In September 1965, the NPA also advised the University that it “agreed to offer its full support to the proposal to establish a [journalism] course”. The finer details were to be discussed at a meeting between E. J. Burgess (of the Canterbury/Westland union), the Canterbury University College Council, and representatives of the NPA and CPU respectively on October 12th 1965.

A Post-graduate diploma in Journalism is established

In February 1966, a committee comprising Ian Templeton (convenor), E. J. Burgess, and D. L. Baumfield was established to consider all aspects of the issues of university training and to report to the next council meeting. The NZJA had also received a letter from Canterbury University College enquiring whether the Canterbury branch of the NZJA would be able to support the establishment of the course financially. Canterbury/Westland responded with the suggestion of one hundred pounds subject to the views of the individual unions being ascertained. The committee on university training reported that the Canterbury union would face no legal barrier to contributing one hundred pounds for the course’s establishment, a token which would be a necessary indicator of the NZJA’s genuine interest in the

---

221 NZJA Minutes (3 May 1965: 2).
222 The New Zealand Journalist (July 1965: 1). Interestingly, two of the university representatives involved in these discussions were former journalists who advocated university education – Don Bain (who sat on the university council) and Eric Beardsley (who was the university's information officer).
223 The New Zealand Journalist (July 1965: 1).
224 NPA Minutes (14 September 1965; 10 December 1965).
225 NZJA Minutes (11 October 1965: 2).
226 NZJA Minutes (6 February 1966: 2).
227 NZJA Minutes (13 December 1965: 3).
228 NZJA Minutes (6 February 1966: 2).
229 NZJA Minutes (7 March 1966: 2).
programme. The NZJA would also consider what of its funds it could contribute to
the course.\textsuperscript{230} Although most NZJA members supported the proposed course,
Canterbury-Westland member R. S. (Rod) Lindsay felt that employers were primarily
responsible for establishing the course along with the university.\textsuperscript{231}

The financial support of other industry bodies allowed the launch of the
diploma course.\textsuperscript{232} The New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation (NZBC) pledged
three thousand pounds, the NPA one thousand,\textsuperscript{233} and the \textit{Christchurch Star} and \textit{The
Press} nine hundred pounds each.\textsuperscript{234} Further, in March 1967 the Tasman Pulp and
Paper Company contributed one thousand pounds to enable the Canterbury College
library to expand its resources in the field of journalism and public communication.\textsuperscript{235}

With both the necessary finance and resources secured, the course in journalism at
Canterbury was scheduled to commence in 1968.\textsuperscript{236} However, there were some delays
in the launching of the diploma course. A letter from Canterbury University College
was received by the NZJA in March 1967 stating that it may be necessary to defer the
commencement of the graduate course in journalism until 1969. This was because, in
spite of extensive advertising, the university had not yet made an appointment to the
position of senior lecturer of journalism or public communication.\textsuperscript{237}

Finally, in September 1967 J. V. (Val) Williams had been appointed as Senior
Lecturer in Journalism.\textsuperscript{238} It was expected that the course would thus commence at the
beginning of the 1969 academic year.\textsuperscript{239} The background of Williams himself was
seen by many journalists as having given the diploma 'a certain panache'.\textsuperscript{240} Williams
had trained in Britain on a two-year scheme operated by Reuters and Cumberland
Newspapers Ltd. learning basic reporting skills. After passing the examination for the
proficiency certificate awarded by the National Council for the Training of Journalists
(NCTJ) in 1960, Williams worked in London for Reuters. He then became the editor
responsible for the agency's output of British news. Williams also held editorial posts

\textsuperscript{230} Ibid: 2.
\textsuperscript{231} NZJA Minutes (9-10 September 1966: 3).
\textsuperscript{232} \textit{Chronicle} (September 1966: 7).
\textsuperscript{233} NPA Minutes (10 December 1965).
\textsuperscript{234} NZJA Minutes (9-10 September 1966: 2).
\textsuperscript{235} NZJA Minutes (6 March 1967: 2).
\textsuperscript{236} NZJA Minutes (5 September 1966: 1).
\textsuperscript{237} NPA Minutes (1 March 1967); NZJA Minutes (6 March 1967: 2).
\textsuperscript{238} NZJA Minutes (6 September 1967: 2).
\textsuperscript{239} NPA Minutes (13 September 1967).
\textsuperscript{240} Eric Beardsley (28 March 2003: Personal Communication).
in Paris, and as a feature writer with the Sheffield Morning Telegraph.\textsuperscript{241} Williams was instrumental in setting up the new diploma course, sitting in on newspapers, the NZPA, and the NZBC news service.\textsuperscript{242} Significantly, Williams would have found a great deal of favour with the NZJA’s leaders at the time given his own views on the subject of journalists’ status. Williams was of the belief that “journalists did not have the status that their responsibilities and role deserved.”\textsuperscript{243}

Perhaps the main problem of the press here is the New Zealand journalist’s low status. He[sic] is not treated as an equal but as some sort of parasite by local-body members and the like. If he[sic] was regarded as a more positive contributor to society he[sic] would get more confidence ... Also he’s[sic] badly paid.\textsuperscript{244}

Upon Barrett’s earlier recommendation, the university had decided that the course would be open to holders of a Bachelor’s or other approved degree.\textsuperscript{245} Many journalists were of the view that a post-graduate diploma would be more beneficial to journalists and editors as journalists would enter the occupation with more knowledge and ability than if they were to work their way up the ranks.\textsuperscript{246} A balance between the academic and practical components of the diploma course also meant that the post-graduate diploma was regarded in a ‘much more favourable light’ then the first Canterbury diploma course within the industry.\textsuperscript{247} While many journalists favoured an ‘academically-oriented’ course, they also realised that unless graduates entered journalism equipped with the basic mechanics of journalistic work, then the diploma would not gain the support of the wider industry.\textsuperscript{248}

**Developments in cadet training in the 1950s and 1960s**

In the background to the developments in the area of university education for journalists, the problems with the existing ‘system’ (or the perceived lack thereof) of cadet training continued to occupy the attention of the NZJA, which remained

\textsuperscript{241} *Chronicle* (August 1967: 6).
\textsuperscript{242} *New Zealand Listener* (25 May 1970).
\textsuperscript{243} *The New Zealand Journalist* (August 1968: 2).
\textsuperscript{244} *New Zealand Listener* (25 May 1970). In addition to lecturing in the journalism course Williams referred to as ‘his baby’, he was also involved in a television programme on New Zealand news media Column Comment before he resigned in 1970 to return to a career in practical journalism in Britain.
\textsuperscript{245} *Chronicle* (February 1967: 7).
\textsuperscript{246} Eric Beardsley (28 March 2003: Personal Communication).
\textsuperscript{247} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{248} Ibid.
"seriously concerned at the effects of the lack of training of cadets". The NZJA executive was unanimously of the opinion that the need for an improved system of training existed but the methods to be used to achieve this remained elusive. At the 1957 annual conference, a Canterbury-Westland remit was put ‘that steps be taken promptly in conjunction with the NPA to inquire into courses for cadet training.'

Although some newspapers ran in-house cadet training schemes, the proportion of newspapers operating such schemes was seen by the NZJA as disappointingly small. The NZJA looked to some of these programmes for ideas on how to organise a nation-wide cadet-training scheme. The cadet-training scheme run by Wangamui Herald was one such scheme that the NZJA considered. Other proposals were forwarded for running a series of lectures for cadets. In June 1959, the editor of the Palmerston North Times accepted a request from the NZJA to run a series of morning lectures for cadets, which was attended by nearly all members of the paper’s reporting and illustrations department. In Auckland, the New Zealand Herald had also began twice-weekly shorthand classes for reporters, at a cost of £6 6s to students.

Led by the Wellington branch of the NZJA, further efforts to secure cooperation from the employers were made in 1962, when a letter was sent to the editors of the Dominion and the Evening Post proposing the joint production of pamphlets to be used for the training of cadets. As a result of NZJA concerns about inadequate cadet training, a letter was also circulated to NPA members to draw attention to their obligations under the award. However, these measures failed to deliver the systematic nation-wide cadet training system envisaged by the NZJA.

---

249 NZJA Minutes (30 June 1954: 6).
251 NZJA Minutes (20 September 1957: 2).
252 The Evening Post, Dominion, and Star-Sun newspapers had introduced cadets training schemes for their respective cadet journalists in early 1957. The training programme at the Christchurch Star-Sun was led by editor George Burns and consisted of a lecture series on various topics given by senior journalists lasting three to five months (The New Zealand Journalist, May-June 1957: 2). The Otago Daily Times followed suit shortly afterwards, introducing a cadet training scheme later in 1957. The ‘Cadet Master’ appointed to lead the scheme was the paper’s chief reporter, Keith Eunson (The New Zealand Journalist, July-August 1957: 2).
253 The New Zealand Journalist (April 1952: 1).
254 The New Zealand Journalist (June 1959: 7).
255 WJU Minutes (25 June 1962: 1).
256 NZJA Minutes (25 March 1963: 3).
257 The New Zealand Journalist (19 October 1964: 1).
5.8 Standardising training: The emergence of the Journalists’ Training Committee

The NZJA’s continued interest in standardised, formalised training for journalists was captured by NZJA president, Warren Page writing in a 1969 edition of The New Zealand Journalist:

Training of journalists in New Zealand must be thoroughly examined, planned and reorganised in the near future. We will never be professionals under the present piecemeal system. Journalists must take a leading part in deciding the future pattern of our training because it will help us to do a better job. The increased skills will eventually mean more money and more status. We must become better at our work to meet the challenge of radio and television news and feature presentation.\(^{258}\)

These ambitions were set in motion at the NZJA’s conference in August 1969 when a Wellington motion was resolved “that the NZJA council consider the setting up of a journalism training council with representatives of employers, journalists and editors to develop and co-ordinate training within industry and technical institutions”.\(^{259}\) According to Wellington Polytechnic course tutor, Tony Curtin, who was a major supporter of this move, journalism was almost the only ‘trade’ in New Zealand without any formal training scheme and on-the-job training had not proved to be a completely viable form of introducing trainees to the responsibilities of newspapers and journalism.\(^{260}\) Curtin echoed the NZJA’s view as to the need for formalised training for New Zealand journalists and for an organisation to co-ordinate training.\(^{261}\) Curtain’s recommendations were forwarded to the General Committee of the NPA. However, the NPA expressed reservations about the notion of a journalism training council to oversee a nationwide journalists’ training plan because it “could well impose an irritating degree of regimentation without any assurance of real advantage”.\(^{262}\) Many NPA members felt the CPU training committee could serve much the same role without the administrative problems.\(^{263}\)

Nonetheless, the NZJA’s interest in a training committee persisted. The proposal for a journalism training council in fact dated back to 1964, when the NZJA

\(^{258}\) The New Zealand Journalist (December 1969: 3).
\(^{259}\) NZJA Minutes (18 August 1969: 9).
\(^{260}\) The New Zealand Journalist (November 1969: 2).
\(^{261}\) Ibid: 2.
\(^{262}\) NPA Minutes (17 September 1969).
\(^{263}\) Ibid.
council meeting had raised the possibility of setting up a standing committee on which the NPA (and possibly the NZBC) would be represented to consider journalism training matters.\(^{264}\) It was not until September 1971 that this idea finally came to fruition with the formation of the New Zealand Journalists’ Training Committee (NZJTC),\(^{265}\) which formalised the industry role in journalists’ training.\(^{266}\)

Although the formation of a nation-wide system for journalistic training began as part of an NZJA-led strategy to control entry into journalism and thus to sharpen journalists’ industrial bargaining power, the relative power of media owners/employers meant that was not the outcome. While such a committee had originally been the brainchild of the NZJA, its eventual formation came only at the initiative of newspaper editors through the New Zealand Section of the Commonwealth Press Union (CPU).\(^{267}\) Nonetheless, the NZJA supported the establishment of the NZJTC in the hope that it would help rectify the way in which many employers had paid only ‘lip service’ to the training requirements specified in the industrial awards.\(^{268}\) According to the NZJA, the existing system was ‘wasteful of time, talent and money’. Journalistic work was seen as ‘too important, too intricate, and too difficult for the ‘sink or swim’ attitude of the past’\(^{269}\). The NZJA lauded the NZJTC’s development as follows:

For years the depressed rates of pay forced skilled and experienced journalists to leave the industry or move overseas. An untold number of journalists must have given up the thought of a newspaper career when they realised the low rewards and status. Journalists can take some pride in their activities over the past year. For they have shown determination and organisation in the drive for better pay and conditions while at the same time striving for higher standards and maintenance of ethics for the good of journalism generally.\(^{270}\)

With the support of the NZJA, the CPU editorial committee formed the NZJTC in 1971 comprising three representatives of the CPU, three from the NZJA, one from the Wellington Polytechnic course, and a secretary to introduce a training course for journalists.\(^{271}\) Its central objective was to establish a national system for

\(^{264}\) NZJA Minutes (13 October 1964: 1).
\(^{265}\) CPU (NZ Section) Minutes (31 July 1972: 7); NZJA Minutes (10-11 September 1971: 1).
\(^{266}\) Thomas (2000).
\(^{268}\) Don Milne (13 May 2003: Personal Communication).
\(^{269}\) "The New Zealand Journalist" (September 1971: 2).
\(^{270}\) "The New Zealand Journalist" (October 1972: 4).
training of cadets and journalists in the junior grades.\textsuperscript{272} The National Training Scheme was finalised by March 1972 and was in kitset form,\textsuperscript{273} and was designed to provide cadets with a 2-3 year in-office training programme, which was drawn mostly from the \textit{New Zealand Herald} training programme.\textsuperscript{274} It was anticipated that there would be training supervisors in each newspaper office to distribute material, and that two hours a week would be dedicated to the training of cadets and working on the material included in the kitset.\textsuperscript{273} In the preface to the kitset itself was a reminder as to the mandatory nature of cadet training for both employers and cadets under journalists’ award. A breach of the training requirements, therefore, would be grounds for industrial action.\textsuperscript{276}

However, NZJA president Warren Page stated that the national training scheme was “only the beginning of the plan to raise our standards and our status (in that order)”.\textsuperscript{277} Emphasising the importance of the training programme, Page encouraged journalists to recognise the various developments with which journalists needed to keep pace. Not only was the general standard of education in the community rising, but the increasing competition from television, radio, and magazines in timeliness, presentation and coverage placed added importance on the training of journalists. Advances in technology affecting the collection, preparation, and distribution of news, as well as changing reading habits of the public were additional factors underscoring the importance of education and training for journalists.\textsuperscript{278}

However, the NZJTC had evidently failed to rectify the concerns of the NZJA at the failure of journalism to attract and retain the ‘best minds’. Indeed, by 1972, the concerns of the 1940s had yet to be alleviated in the eyes of the NZJA:

Many skilled and experienced journalists give up and leave for higher rewards elsewhere. Many intelligent and academically qualified youngsters do not

\textsuperscript{272} \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (September 1971: 1).
\textsuperscript{273} NZJA Minutes (27 March 1972: 1).
\textsuperscript{274} \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (September 1971: 2). The \textit{New Zealand Herald} Training programme was devised by John Hardingham, who had graduated from the Auckland University College Diploma in Journalism in the 1940s (Don Milne, 13 May 2003: Personal Communication). The programme provided the basis for the 1967 publication \textit{The New Zealand Herald Manual of Journalism}. Edited by then deputy editor of the \textit{Herald} John Hardingham, it was a landmark publication on the rudiments of journalism in New Zealand with contributions from experienced journalists and other members of the Wilson and Horton group (then publisher of the \textit{New Zealand Herald}).
\textsuperscript{275} Milne (1988: 28); \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (September 1971: 2).
\textsuperscript{276} NZJTC (1972).
\textsuperscript{277} \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (September 1971: 2).
\textsuperscript{278} Ibid: 2.
consider journalism as a career when they learn of the low rates of pay and other conditions. Journalists are concerned about what this will do for the future standard of journalism.\textsuperscript{279}

**The NZJTC gets a revamp: The creation of the Journalists’ Training Board**

Problems with the National Training Scheme itself were debated at the NZJA’s 1972 annual conference.\textsuperscript{280} In August the following year, the NZJTC was renamed the Journalists’ Training Board (NZJTB) and would oversee the three training courses in operation at the time (Auckland Technical Institute, Canterbury University, and Wellington Polytechnic).\textsuperscript{281} The NZJTB comprised of four representatives of the CPU, four representatives of the NZJA, and one each from the Department of Education and Vocational Training Council respectively.\textsuperscript{282} It was to be funded by the NPA and the Vocational Training Council, with contributions from the NZJA and the Community Newspapers Association.\textsuperscript{283} Former supervisor of the Wellington Polytechnic journalism course, Keith Gunn, was also appointed as the NZJTB’s first fulltime training officer in 1973.\textsuperscript{284} However, these largely cosmetic changes did little to resolve the problems faced by the original NZJTC.

By 1975, there were university and polytechnic courses for journalists operating in Auckland, Christchurch, and Wellington overseen by the NZJTB. Approval in principle had also been given to the establishment of an extramural diploma course at Massey University.\textsuperscript{285} However, the NZJU’s (as it had since been renamed) goal of controlling entry into journalism in order to increase the ‘value of

\textsuperscript{279} *The New Zealand Journalist* (October 1972: 2). Further indicative of journalists’ dissatisfaction with the existing system for journalism education and training at the time can be found in Campbell and Cleveland (1972). In this survey of New Zealand journalists, a question was asked ‘what are the most urgent needs of the craft?’ The majority of journalists answered issues of training and education, most of which believed necessary to in order to further the status of journalists.

\textsuperscript{280} *The New Zealand Journalist* (October 1972: 5).


\textsuperscript{282} Fenwick (1988: 25). The public broadcasters Radio New Zealand (RNZ) and Television New Zealand (TVNZ) were not members, although private radio broadcasters were as members of the union (Tully, 1990: 3).

\textsuperscript{283} Milne (1988: 28).

\textsuperscript{284} CPU Minutes (31 July 1974: 8); NZJA Minutes (14-15 September 1973: 2). On the basis the industry would fund 10\% of the cost of employing the executive training officer, the NZJTB qualified for a Government Grant of up to $12000 to employ a full-time training officer, as well as staff to undertake administrative duties, roles which had previously been performed on an honorary basis (CPU Minutes, 31 July 1772: 7).

\textsuperscript{285} NZJU Minutes (14 September 1974: 3); NZJU Minutes (10 October 1974: 2).
journalists' had yet to be reached. In 1974, the NZIU had initiated a survey of graduates of the Canterbury diploma, and polytechnic journalism courses to determine the rate of employment, the results of which were disappointing. The NZIU was highly concerned about the surplus of graduates of journalism courses, and pushed for the reduction of annual intakes. Further, while journalists had some measure of control over the nature and content of their education and training through their membership on the NZITB, their interests as employees had to be tempered with those of the NPA, and the other voices on the board.

Widespread concern among NZJA members remained at the lack of 'proper' cadet training on newspapers. The NZJA's 1975 annual conference lamented the increasing apathy by some managements to the in-office training scheme and resolved to report these concerns to the NZITB. The NZITB was also 'most disturbed' that some newspaper offices were not meeting their training obligations. Consequently, the NZITB advised that journalists' union chapels made written submissions to the managers of the newspapers on which they felt training to be inadequate. In spite of the problems the training scheme was facing, NZIU president Bob Fox reaffirmed the union's commitment to training as follows:

We remain vitally interested in training, seeing it as one of the methods by which journalists can achieve greater professionalism and with it, increased standing and higher rewards.

Working journalists were not the only sector of the industry with continued reservations about the existing system of journalism training and education. Some editors expressed concerns that there was still insufficient pre-selection of candidates, and that the overall quality of training was poor. As such, there remained a preference to "take on a bright youngster from school rather than a not so bright one who has

---

286 The significance of the NZJA's name change from 'association' to 'union' is explored further in chapter eight of this thesis.
287 NZIU Minutes (14 September 1974: 3).
288 NZIU Minutes (15 December 1976: 2).
289 NZIU Minutes (20 August 1975: 6).
290 NZIU Minutes (19 September 1975: 4). This problem was also noted by the CPU's 1975 annual conference (CPU Minutes, 31 July 1976: 9).
291 NZIU Minutes (19 September 1975: 8).
292 Ibid: 8. The Otago Daily Times, Dunedin Evening Star, Dominion, Evening Post, Manawatu Evening Standard, Southland Times, and the Marlborough Express were newspapers whose commitment to training was considered unacceptable (Ibid).
293 NZIU Minutes (19 September 1975: 4).
taken the course’. 294 Although there were more graduates in journalism than there had been ten years before, there remained widespread resistance among editors to employing university graduates who were often viewed as ‘arrogant and hard to teach’. 295 Others wanted to see the university-based courses revised to include more practical work, and less academic content. 296 Such opinion was symptomatic of the way in which the media industry remained suspicious of journalists with a degree, and the ‘elite and academic’ nature of the degrees themselves. 297

While the re-introduction of tertiary journalism courses in New Zealand removed some of the burden from newspapers to provide training to cadets, the misgivings of some newspapers about university courses placed increased pressure on in-house training. However, tension between employers and journalists remained as to the nature and quality of training provided. Although the kitset training method had been set in place, its efficacy was highly variable among newspapers. 298 Some employers were not providing training in spite of their obligations under the industrial award. Further, the NZJTB lacked the power to enforce the provision of in-office training on newspapers where it had lapsed. 299 As such, the ‘cost’ of implementing the kitset training was not merely an economic one. While employers had supported the initiative financially, a commitment of time and staffing resources to make the kitset training system effective was evidently not one that some newspapers were prepared to make. Therefore, while there was more in-house training than there had been a decade before, the value of this training varied from newspaper to newspaper. 300 These difficulties certainly represented a departure from the ‘systematic’ journalism training envisaged by advocates in the 1940s.

**Journalists’ concerns about journalism education remain**

Overall, the concerns expressed by the NZJA as early as the 1940s remained. The attempt at implementing systematic journalistic training and formal educational qualifications for journalists had not lived up to the expectations of many. As noted

---

294 Neville (1975: 14).
297 Thomas (2000).
298 As Reese (1999) notes in a broader context, the economic self-interest of media organisations encourages universities to subsidise the cost of training and to screen and credential talented prospects.
299 Tully (1990: 3).
300 Neville (1975: 14).
above, advocates of tertiary training and formal qualifications for journalists were motivated by their belief that journalism was failing to attract the ‘best minds’ and to keep them in the profession in New Zealand. Formal university qualifications for journalists would encourage the ‘best people’ into the occupation, and improve the pool of practising journalists. Better-qualified and academically trained journalists would not only increase their ‘worth’ relative to other professionals, it would ultimately improve the quality of New Zealand journalism as a whole. However, these objectives had evidently not been realised. Competition for ‘talent’ from other more lucrative professions continued. Statistics indicated that while increasing numbers of women were entering journalism, men were being lured by occupations whose university qualifications conferred a definitive and higher status upon its practitioners.  

**Journalism training at the end of the twentieth century**

Why had the implementation of a formal nation-wide system of journalistic training failed to attain journalists’ objectives? This question was considered (albeit indirectly) in 1988 when a watershed meeting of industry representatives was staged to discuss the problems with the provision of journalism education in New Zealand. The conference was attended by NZJTB members, and by Radio New Zealand (RNZ) and Television New Zealand (TVNZ) representatives, who had previously not been a part of the board. The NZJTB’s 1988 conference identified confusion over its role, a lack of resources in the face of a proliferation of journalism courses, and the lack of NPA support beyond financing the board as key problems impeding its success. The possibility of formal examination for entry into journalism was also proposed.  

---

301 Neville (1975: 14).
302 Tully (1990: 4).
303 Spicer (1988: 35). From its inception the NZJTB had received a grant for up to 90% of its operating costs, however, this was phased out from 1982 and in 1990, the industry began meeting the full cost of training (Peter Muller, 25 April 2003: Personal Communication).
304 Milne (1988: 28). The NZJTB had considered introducing a qualifying examination for journalists in 1975. Concerned that journalism was not making the same progress as other industries that were applying entry examinations, the NZJTB was advised by the Technicians Certifications Authority that there would be no physical problem to apply a qualifying examination for journalists throughout New Zealand. However, the NZJTB concluded that it would be too difficult to devise a uniform examination to cover the wide variations in staff in journalism (The New Zealand Journalist, May 1975: 3).
although nothing came of it.\textsuperscript{305} At its first meeting after the 1988 conference, the NZJTB decided it should be constituted with six members – two print employers, two broadcasting employers (one public, one private), and two union representatives (one print, one broadcasting). The Education Department and the Vocational Training Council would no longer be represented.\textsuperscript{306}

The formation of the Journalists’ Training Organisation

This recognition of the weaknesses of the NZJTB took place in the immediate background to a change to legislation governing education providers in New Zealand. The implementation of the Industrial Training Act 1992 allowed for the creation of industry training organisations to assume authority and set standards for training in a given industry. This gave the journalism industry the authority to become directly involved in, and monitor the provision of journalism training in New Zealand. Hence, in 1993 the NZJTB was reconstituted as the New Zealand Training Organisation (hereafter NZJTO). The NZJTO was established as a “voluntary body run by newspaper, magazine, radio and television companies to raise standards and to guide and foster training”.\textsuperscript{307} The NZJTO council comprises industry executives, working journalists and editors, and its principal activities are to set standards, monitor them and to accredit institutions wishing to offer journalism programmes.\textsuperscript{308} To gain accreditation, courses must be taught to New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) sanctioned standards by lecturers with at least five years practical experience in journalism.\textsuperscript{309}

The NZJTO-accredited National Diploma in Journalism remains the basic entry-level qualification for journalists, consisting of 120 unit standards each of which covers a particular area of journalism. Compulsory units include shorthand to

\textsuperscript{305} A similar proposal was made in 1998. The National Press Club proposed a commission of inquiry into the training and selection of journalists and appointed Victoria University academic Margaret Clark to head it. The commission’s brief included the idea of a registration board for journalists. The commission was roundly condemned for its lack of industry consultation by INL’s then-managing director Mike Robson, who scathingly denounced the notion of journalist’s registration, stating that “we don’t respond to committees of inquiry from luncheon clubs” (Milnes, 1998). However, the ‘Clark Commission’ did not eventuate after Professor Clark stepped down due to illness, and the other ‘commissioners’ refused to proceed without her leadership (Margaret Clark, 3 July 2003: Personal Communication).

\textsuperscript{306} Spicer (1988: 37).

\textsuperscript{307} Oakham and Tidey (2000: 157). The NZJTO also publishes specialist textbooks and conducts training courses and seminars for working journalists.

\textsuperscript{308} Ibid: 157.

\textsuperscript{309} Ibid: 158.
researching print and electronic sources, conducting interviews, applying media law in journalism and demonstrating knowledge of media ethics to electives of feature writing, news photography, and newspaper layout and design. Unit standards form the benchmark for competence, which are credited to students in the National Qualifications Framework, a database linking all non-university awards.

'Minimum standards' and accreditation of journalism courses

The implementation of minimum standards and accreditation requirements for journalism courses were positive developments for those who supported the NZJA’s aspirations of the 1940s for controlling entry into journalism to promote the occupation’s status. The NZJTB had originally released a ‘Minimum Standards Document’ in December 1990, which listed the minimum standards and performances required of a new journalism graduate. The NZJTB saw the document as a tool for selection and recruitment, and was later to serve as the basis for the approval of courses by the NZQA, which is responsible for accrediting all tertiary courses. This is perhaps the next best thing to the standardised nation-wide system of journalistic training envisaged by NZJA leaders in the 1950s. Furthermore, with the unit standards at the core of both degree and non-degree journalism courses, the media industry has been able to retain control over standards and skills taught, thus helping to erode the previously dominant industry suspicion towards tertiary courses for journalists.

Moreover, the fact that new journalism courses must now be approved by the NZJTO provides a further measure for promoting the ‘value’ of journalists within the wider media industry, and as a means of ensuring that the production of journalism graduates is kept in check. Indeed, this was a problem that the NZJTB faced in the early 1990s. Whereas in 1920, the demand for journalists was greater than supply, by the 1990s, this situation had reversed as a result of the proliferation of polytechnic journalism courses in New Zealand during the 1980s. From two in the late 1960s, the number of tertiary courses had reached nine by 1990, with nearly 300 graduates.

\[311\] Ibid: 158.
\[312\] Tully (1990: 5).
\[313\] Thomas (2000).
entering the job market each year.\textsuperscript{314} This resulted in concerns about an ‘oversupply’ of journalism graduates in relation to the number of available positions in the industry’s workforce.\textsuperscript{315} With accreditation procedures now in place, the NZJTO has more power to retain a balance between the supply of, and demand for graduates. The currently high employment rate for graduates attests to the apparent success of these accreditation procedures.\textsuperscript{316}

Indeed, the issue of training standards (both pre-entry and in-office) was one that the former NZJTB had grappled with,\textsuperscript{317} and has tended to divide the industry and the teaching institutions. While the industry has mooted the idea of a national proficiency test for journalism graduates, most teaching institutions have argued the right to determine what should be taught to journalism students and how.\textsuperscript{318} Currently, the NZJTO sets out what must be covered in this basic diploma but not how it should be done.\textsuperscript{319} This has led some industry critics to express concern over the fact that the National Diploma “demands competence, not excellence”,\textsuperscript{320} and suggests that a consensus between industry and academic opinion on this issue has yet to be achieved.

In New Zealand, the balancing act between skills and academic content in journalism programmes continues to the present day.\textsuperscript{321} The ‘academic capture’ of journalism schools is a concern expressed by some New Zealand journalism industry representatives,\textsuperscript{322} who see that in terms of the content of journalism educations

\textsuperscript{314} Tucker (1992: 5). Vocational courses in journalism were established at the Auckland Technical Institute (now the Auckland University of Technology) in 1972; at Wairariki Community College, Rotorua in 1985; at Manukau Polytechnic, Auckland in 1986; at Christchurch Polytechnic in 1987; at the Northern Polytechnic, Whangarei in 1988; at Aoraki Polytechnic, Timaru in 1989; and at Auckland Business College in 1990 (Tully, 1990: 1-2). With the Canterbury Graduate Diploma in Journalism still in operation, along with the Massey University course (originally operated by the Wellington Polytechnic), this made a total of nine tertiary vocational journalism courses in New Zealand.

\textsuperscript{315} Tully (1990: 2).

\textsuperscript{316} See NPA (1999: 8). NZJTO statistics also show that although there are now more journalism schools than ever before, eight out of ten of their graduates find employment within six months of finishing their course (Mediawatch, 9 November 2003).

\textsuperscript{317} Tully (1990: 4).

\textsuperscript{318} Ibid: 4.

\textsuperscript{319} Oakham and Tidy (2000: 158). Because New Zealand universities (and other teaching institutions) value their autonomy in deciding what should be taught and how, the ‘unit standards’ concept has engendered controversy (Tully, 1990: 4). However, an arrangement to be moderated by unit standard criteria has been reached by Canterbury University which runs the Graduate Diploma in Journalism (Oakham and Tidy, 2000: 158).

\textsuperscript{320} Ibid: 159.

\textsuperscript{321} For further elaboration on this point in the United States; and British contexts, see Dickson (2000); Bronley et al (2001); and Skinner et al (2001).

\textsuperscript{322} Bill Southworth (current executive director of the NZJTO), cited on Mediawatch (30 November 2003).
programmes, the "pendulum currently swings more towards the academic side". As this tension has been elaborated on elsewhere,

Inevitable conflicts occur in establishing appropriate standards for journalism education ... The professional community has specific goals in mind, which usually call for pragmatic, hands-on preparation. The academic community, on the other hand, strives not only to accommodate professional demands but also to provide students with experiences that will get them a job and, ideally, provide them life-long benefits.

Similar sentiments were recently expressed in the New Zealand context by the head of journalism at Massey University, which suggests that these issues remain unresolved into the twenty-first century:

[There is] ... a kind of normal tension really between the interest of the [NZ]JTO and the interest of the university in so far as the [NZ]JTO is focussed quite properly on questions of training, whereas the University doesn't forget about training but it's also got a wider mandate. The university has to be interested in research as well as training. So there's a slight mismatch in a sense between the [NZ]JTO's interests and the university's interests.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the field of journalism education in New Zealand has represented a site of struggle over the definition of journalistic work (is it 'professional work'?) and the status of journalists (does theirs constitute 'a profession'?). The introduction of the first Diploma in Journalism in New Zealand represented the first major challenge to the previously dominant understanding that a journalist was 'born, not made'. However, replacing this was a new debate – whether journalism education should emphasise the mechanical aspects of journalistic work, or whether priority should be given to the teaching of primarily academic subjects with a bearing on journalistic work. Support for a model of journalism education that advocated a broad education in a variety of disciplines, including the practical aspects of journalism, was found particularly among younger journalists. This was because this emerging ideological agenda underpinning views of journalism education and qualifications – a 'professional model' of training – appeared consistent with journalists' ambitions for 'professionalism'.

---

322 Don Milne (13 May 2003: Personal Communication).
324 Stark (2000: 1).
325 Medialwatch (30 November 2003).
Following the close of World War Two, the NZJA appealed to the notion of professionalism as both an occupational ideal and as a strategy to advance their social and economic position, which they observed to have fallen below that of comparable occupations. The NZJA’s pursuit of ‘professional education’ and formal journalistic qualifications was driven ultimately by a desire to increase their social and economic status, which many journalists believed was not commensurate with the importance of journalistic work to democracy and their services rendered to society. As chapter four also highlighted, the NZJA’s claims to professionalism revolved around the issue of ‘relativity’ in terms of the importance of their work, and in terms of their status relative to other professionals. A related argument was that various social, technological, and other developments in the journalistic environment made increasing demands on journalists that were not acknowledged in their social status or economic rewards. These demands provided further impetus for formal journalism education and training which created journalists that were able to grasp the increasingly complex requirements of their work.

Advocates believed that controlling entry into journalism would increase the calibre and ‘value’ of practising journalists, and the quality of journalism generally. NZJA leaders were motivated by their belief that New Zealand journalism was failing to attract the ‘best minds’ and to keep them both in the country, and in the profession. Arresting a potential decline in the quality of journalism meant ensuring that journalism was just as ‘worthwhile’ or as economically attractive a career option as ‘other professions’. Formal qualifications for journalists, obtained through the university, would encourage the ‘best people’ into journalism, and improve the pool of practising journalists. Not only would better-qualified and academically trained journalists increase their ‘worth’ of journalists relative to other professionals, it would ultimately improve the quality of New Zealand journalism as a whole.

In spite of the fact that the NZJA sought to improve university education and cadet training as a matter of policy, a consensus about the nature and benefits of formal educational qualifications for journalists remained elusive within the wider industry. For many journalists, their interests lay with the ‘value’ of educational qualifications for their social and economic status. For many employers, their interests in journalism education lay with whether such qualifications reduced the cost of (and need for) time-consuming in-office training, and resulted in improved efficiency in the production of newspapers. Evidently, the respective interests of employees and
employers were not always compatible. For obvious reasons, where journalists’ pursuit of ‘professional education’ and controlling entry into journalism is seen by employers as economically motivated, and a means of increasing their industrial bargaining power, their support is not likely to be forthcoming. Indeed, this chapter has highlighted how developments in the field of journalism education were heavily influenced by the hierarchical power structure of the journalism industry.

Though written about the Australian experience, the current tensions surrounding journalism education captured by the following statement are just as relevant to the New Zealand case.

Journalism education ... finds itself between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand universities find themselves under pressure to provide courses that meet industry demands and enhance job success rates; on the other hand journalists seek to be recognised as professionals for a wide range of reasons. Among these reasons is the desire to raise the credibility of journalism in the public perception and the need to argue for higher rates of pay and improved conditions. Can the tension between the twin urges to professionalise and to react to market forces be accommodated in journalism education ...?326

This question has long been pondered in New Zealand, as this chapter has illustrated. Questions as to whether skills-oriented content or academic and theoretically-oriented material should take priority have been central to the evolution of journalism education to the present day. To gain a legitimate place within the university and thus in society, the NZJA (along with those journalists who aspired to the status as a ‘recognised profession’) supported the notion of journalism as a serious academic discipline, and not simply vocational training. However, journalists were also aware of the necessity of learning the practical skills required of journalistic work in order to be marketable in the eyes of employers. Standing somewhere in between these two views have been the journalism teaching institutions themselves. The increasing locus of journalism education in tertiary institutions (rather than newsrooms) brought an additional set of interests to be factored into developments in the field of journalism education. Control over what journalists need to know, and how that knowledge should be imparted was an issue that plagued the NZJTB, and later the NZJTC. Certainly, it remains an issue which the current monitoring body, the NZJTO, is forced to grapple with into the twenty-first century.

326 Green (2002: 1).
CHAPTER SIX

‘Making Standards’: New Zealand journalists and the development of codes of ethics

Journalism’s march toward professionalism ... was slowed by a lack of consensus among journalists about the nature of their work. While many considered journalism a profession, to some it was a form of literature and to others merely a trade ... Journalists’ uncertainties about the press’ professional status in part explain the media’s slow adoption of ethics codes.

6.1 Introduction

This thesis has sought to illustrate that the NZJA employed ‘professionalism’ as both an occupational ideal and an alternative strategy to traditional industrial measures in advancing the interests of journalists. The pursuit of ‘professionalism’ underpinned many of the organisational and educational reforms within journalism during the first half of the twentieth century. However, not all journalists concurred with the notion of ‘professionalism’ as either an occupational ideal for journalists, or as a plausible alternative to industrial routines to advance their social and economic position. As was the case in the United States, this tension was largely due to ambiguity about the status of the journalistic occupation. As chapters four and five highlighted, the tension over the ‘professional vision’ for, and among New Zealand journalists had implications for the development of both organisational and educational structures for journalists. This chapter aims to show that this ambiguity as to the nature and benefits of ‘professionalism’ for journalists also had implications for the development of ethical codes by New Zealand journalists.

The significance of journalists’ codes

As noted at the outset of this thesis, the first journalism codes to appear in many countries were developed by journalists themselves through their representative organisations. However, little attempt to uncover the significance of these efforts has

---

1 This chapter draws upon the author’s Master of Arts thesis (see Reference List), however further research and refinement has been undertaken in order to draw it within the scope of the present research.

2 Cronin and McPherson (1992: 2-5).
been made. This understates the importance of these developments and they ways they represent attempts by journalists, through their representative organisations, to define their role and responsibilities, and to distinguish their occupation from other competing occupations, and their practitioners from ‘outsiders’. New Zealand journalists have followed in the tradition of European journalists, being the first sector of the journalism industry to formulate codes of ethics, as this chapter illustrates.

Of interest to the present chapter is the rationale behind New Zealand journalists’ efforts to formulate ethical codes. Its focus is on the role of the NZJA, as the representative body of New Zealand journalists for most of the twentieth century, in the development of journalistic standards and codes of ethics. Although the NZJA was formed as a trade union, it considered itself more a hybrid of industrial and professional association, as previous chapters have highlighted. Given its dual objectives, it is perhaps not surprising that the NZJA’s promotion of ‘professionalism’ was linked to its industrial objectives.

Drawing on the themes of previous chapters, this chapter explores the way in which industrial issues facing journalists have influenced their desire for promoting ‘professionalism’. It aims to illustrate how journalists’ desire for professional recognition underpinned the emergence of the NZJA code of ethics. As with the developments considered in previous chapters, some key claims to professionalism motivated the journalists’ code of ethics. The desire for professional recognition was an ambition amongst journalists that grew, firstly, out of the view that their status had not kept pace with developments in the wider journalistic environment. These developments made demands on journalists that were not reflected in their social and economic status. Neither their social status nor their economic rewards were seen to be commensurate with the importance of journalistic work to democracy, and the services they rendered to society. Comparisons of the importance of journalistic work to that of ‘other professions’ provided a related foundation for journalists’ ambitions for professional recognition. Many journalists were of the view that because their work was of just as much importance to society as that of the ‘accepted professions’ like medicine and law, journalists should receive that same recognition as doctors and lawyers. As the previous chapter illustrated, arguments for journalistic professionalism were at their most intense in the face of threats to the autonomy, authority, and status of the journalistic occupation.
Exploring the relationship between ethics and industrial politics

A comprehensive understanding of journalistic ethics and the evolution of ethical codes must take into account the issues that lie at the heart of journalists’ multiple identity. As noted at the outset of this thesis, journalists occupy different locations which range from the individual professional, the citizen with social responsibilities, and the worker as part of a collective. The tension between the professional role of the journalists and their position as employees has weighed heavily on the development and maintenance of ethical and professional standards. While issues relating to the codification of ethical standards have traditionally been approached as an issue of professionalism, the impact of industrial politics and power struggles within journalism cannot be ignored, as this chapter aims to illustrate.

As an overarching theme, this chapter explores the idea that the NZJA’s efforts to exert control over journalistic ethics were in large measure an industrial question. As such, the eventual emergence of the NZJA code of ethics can be understood then as both a professional and industrial strategy. By assuming the role as the primary adjudicator of journalists’ ethical standards, the NZJA was laying claim on the behalves of journalists to the right to internally monitor ethical standards. At the same time, the NZJA was asserting its right to oversee journalists’ performance without the interference of editors or newspaper owners. Industrial relations issues later influenced the application of the journalists’ code. While journalists in countries such as Britain, Australia, and New Zealand have been the more pro-active sector of the media industry in the codification of journalistic standards, their employers have tended to resist these efforts, deeming them to “cut across management prerogative”. The implication was that as employees, journalists were subject to their employers’ ethical standards and not to any collective standards that their union may adopt. This suggests that industrial relations and the power struggles between journalists and their employers have played a significant role in both the codification of journalistic standards and their application, as this chapter explores of the New Zealand case.

---

4 Kirkman (1996: 17) suggests that this was also the case in the Australian context.
6 Chadwick (1994: 170). This was illustrated in Australia when proprietors continually declined to discuss with the AJA a permanent means for enforcing the code of ethics developed by the AJA (see The New Zealand Journalist, 12 September 1943: 6).
6.2 Weighing up the benefits of a written code for journalists

While it was not until relatively late into the twentieth century that the first journalistic codes appeared in New Zealand, the unwritten variety were referred to by journalists as early as 1935, the year before the British National Union of Journalists (NUJ) first developed its code of conduct. That year, the NZJA described itself as

... a body of professional men/sic/ with special public responsibilities. Nothing has marked the progress of modern journalism more than the growth of the professional spirit among journalists. In New Zealand, at any rate, their conduct is governed by a well-defined though unwritten code of ethics, in which impartiality has a chief place ... every journalist takes pride in presenting news fully, accurately and fairly.  

Indeed, it was this strong unwritten code of journalists was considered a central factor “contributing to the air of respectability of the New Zealand press”; and it was not long afterward that the NZJA began discussing the adoption of a written code of ethics in earnest.

As the previous chapters have illustrated, the pursuit of ‘professionalism’ underpinned a large proportion of the NZJA’s policy over the twentieth century. The NZJA’s concern with professional and ethical issues was reflected in discussion at the NZJA’s annual meetings and conferences. The NZJA’s monthly bulletin, The New Zealand Journalist, also kept its members up-to-date with developments both in New Zealand and overseas concerning the ethical and professional issues facing overseas journalists, as well as progress concerning the adoption of ethics codes by other journalism unions. On occasion, such discussion led members of the NZJA to suggest that New Zealand journalists adopt a written ethics code of their own, as the NZJA’s fiftieth year anniversary publication indicated.

There have been sporadic, and worthwhile, attempts for years to introduce a written code of ethics for New Zealand journalists. And one will undoubtedly yet be adopted. But the most important point is that most of the abuses in other countries which call for such a code, are, and have always been, absent here. In fact, every editor, every sub-editor, and just about every reporter would admit to the existence of a very strong, but unwritten, code of ethics in

---

7 On the development of the NUJ code of conduct, see Bundock (1957).
8 The New Zealand Journalist (12 December 1935: 2).
9 Parry (1968: 29).
10 For instance, the development of the British NUJ code of conduct in 1936 was well documented, as was both the development of the code of the South African Journalists’ Society in 1940, and the progress of the Australian Journalists’ Association’s (AJA) code adopted nation-wide in 1944. For more on these developments, see The New Zealand Journalist (14 April 1936: 1); The New Zealand Journalist (12 April 1940: 6); and The New Zealand Journalist (12 January 1943: 2).
operation now ... There is no daily newspaper in New Zealand which engages in the regular, or even occasional, intrusion into private life and private grief which marks so many papers overseas; though the lack of paper-to-paper competition in the present age could have something to do with that.\footnote{NZJA (1962: 63).}

### 6.3 Early proposals for a written code for journalists

The NZJA’s attempts to develop a written code date back to the time of the Second World War. In 1941, when the Australian Journalists’ Association (AJA) was considering a code for its members, the NZJA embarked upon its first major effort to implement a code for New Zealand journalists. As the AJA had rationalised the benefits of adopting a code,

\[\ldots\] the Australian Journalists’ Association should adopt a Code of Ethics to direct the professional conduct of its members, to strengthen those who feel they should object when they are called upon to do things that are not credible to journalism \ldots and to restrain those who may not regard their conduct as incompatible with the honour and interests of the profession and the Association.\footnote{The New Zealand Journalist (12 January 1941: 5).} \footnote{Ibid: 5.}

However, not all New Zealand journalists supported these sentiments. Some considered that “[t]here should be nothing but support for the adoption of a similar code by the N.Z.J.A., but whether it would have any practical value is another matter”.\footnote{Ibid: 5.} The ‘practical value’ of a code of ethics was a primary concern for some members of the NZJA. As there were no guarantees that a written code would promote their economic and industrial objectives, some journalists questioned the overall ‘usefulness’ of a code. However, other NZJA members saw the value of a written code, suggesting that the NZJA could adopt the code framed by their British counterpart, the National Union of Journalists,\footnote{Ibid: 5.} which was clearly formulated with the industrial interests of its members in mind.\footnote{The original code adopted by the NUJ in 1936 is included in Appendix A.}

#### The threat of broadcasting journalism to the authority of newspaper journalists

In the early 1940s, various concerns facing journalists aside from their economic status gave further impetus to proposals for a code of ethics. In the
immediate background was the advent of radio news programming which, given the
immediacy of radio that newspapers lacked, brought threats to the newspaper
journalists’ authority as the sole providers of news to the public. Because at this time
a ‘journalist’ generally denoted a ‘newspaper journalist’, the emergence of radio
broadcasting as an alternative source of news and information was seen as a challenge
to the newspaper journalist’s traditional role. Therefore, many journalists believed
that they would need to find a means to combat this emerging threat in order to
maintain their authority and status as providers of news. As one journalist wrote,

[...]there are one or two interesting reasons why the status of journalism will
improve if the writing men [sic] take their chance. The radio broadcasting of
news and the pictorial news service at the cinema are to some extent taking the
former place of the journalist as the first recorder of a happening. The
journalist will have to develop a sharper eye and ear for the things his [sic]
more mechanical rivals have missed. He [sic] will have to get the news behind
the news. He [sic] will fill in vital details for which there will be an eager
public. I have no fear that the observant journalist will not hold his [sic] own.
The public will need him [sic] more than ever.16

The impact of the Second World War on New Zealand journalism

At first glance, the fact that the NZJA considered adopting a code during
wartime may appear surprising given that many of its members were occupied with
the war effort. Indeed, many overseas journalists’ unions had gone into voluntary
recess during the war. Although the NZJA was one of the exceptions to this trend and
continued operation on a minimal basis, one would not expect major policy issues
such as a code to arise during wartime. However, the timing of the NZJA’s first major
attempt to introduce a code of ethics for its members during World War Two was no
coincidence. The excerpt below offers insight:

Activities other than those aimed at raising award rates and conditions
continued [during the war], perhaps with more zeal than in peacetime because
those who remained active in the [provincial] unions and the Association
regarded themselves as trustees, and because in wartime the ideals that
journalists are supposed to follow tend to be challenged on the home front.17

The challenges the war presented for New Zealand journalism were various.
Not only were there challenges on the newspaper production front with the
restrictions on newsprint limiting the size of newspapers, there were also challenges

17 NZJA (1962: 26).
to journalistic ideals. One such challenge came in the form of wartime censorship, which raised concerns about journalistic autonomy and press freedom. In early 1941, the NZJA expressed concern about the abuse of powers allotted to the Director of Publicity, the ‘press censor’ of media coverage dealing with the war.\textsuperscript{18}

Because the very claim of journalism for public respect depends upon free presentation of all the facts, journalists are instinctively impatient under directorship or censorship, but they are not so foolish as to deny the necessity for censorship during the war, so that written, spoken or photographic news may not do harm. It irks, but it is necessary and unavoidable. Directorship, verging into censorship, of daily news, is another matter.\textsuperscript{19}

Moreover, some journalists took issue with the fact that the advice of journalists themselves was not sought in the appointment of the Director of Publicity “even though there is no body of men[sic] so closely in touch with public thought, or so quick to interpret it”.\textsuperscript{20} The AJA had faced a similar issue during the First World War. As one journalist had summed up the issue:

Who are better to say what should and should not reach the public then journalists themselves, trained publicists that they are? Journalists are no less patriotic than any other class of the community. Why should they be? They are of the nation; the nation’s interests are their interests. Our treatment at the hand of military authorities during the war, and especially in Australia, was nothing short of an insult to one of the most important professions in the community. We were treated as either children or disloyalists. The public, too, has every reason to insist on a change. A board of censorship, on which the military and diplomatic services and the journalistic profession enjoyed equal representation, will work far better for the ultimate good of the community which, after all, is the only body really interested. So far as we, as journalists, are concerned, the public would be far better served if it recognised to the full the status and importance of journalists in the economic and political life of the nation.\textsuperscript{21}

As these comments illustrate, the perception of government intervention in the press posed as a threat to the cultural authority of journalism, or, in the words of Winch, as “a threat to the autonomy of journalists to defend their authority to

\textsuperscript{18} The 1939 Censorship and Publicity Emergency Regulations, which empowered the Director of Publicity, to restrict public statements tending to imperil public safety and to avoid the release of military information to the enemy may have been an issue here (\textit{The New Zealand Journalist}, 12 March 1941: 4-5).

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (12 March 1941: 4).

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (12 May 1942: 6).

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (12 March 1941: 4).

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{The Australasian Journalist} (16 January 1922: 17).
delineate the boundaries of the cultural space of journalism". The NZJA's concerns about censorship during World War Two resulted in the passing of a resolution of support for a ‘vigilant policy’ on the issue, which included the following text:

... [A] maximum war effort by the people of New Zealand includes maximum understanding by the people, with the fullest possible freedom of discussion and criticism. This freedom, it is agreed, should not involve freedom to reveal military secrets or in any way systematically and calculatedly to hinder the war unity in New Zealand or between the Allied peoples ... Another issue of considerable importance is its [wartime censorship’s] effect upon the traditional freedom of the Press. There can be no doubt that the working journalist is a particularly sensitive predictor of the insidious and dangerous trends which seem to be unavoidably wrapped up in a censorship system ... and that the alarms which he[sic] is able to sound through his[sic] organisation render a real and important public service.  

There were also concerns raised by NZJA members about the nature of war reporting itself. While acknowledging the role of the press in maintaining public support for the war effort, some journalists believed that war reports created ‘a bias towards optimism’. Considering the perils of war propaganda as ‘subconscious deception’ and contrary to the public interest, one journalist emphasised the need to “hold to our conscious professional and personal ethics. Let us newspapermen[sic] attempt to be more practically honest. The people deserve it".

The blame for the perceived poor quality of war reporting in New Zealand newspapers was also attributed to the fact that there were no New Zealand ‘accredited war correspondents’. New Zealand ‘public relations officers’ were employed in the dual capacity as journalists as well as serving in the armed forces. Their status as ‘lieutenant’ meant that they could “be told to go to the devil by every other person enjoying the rank of captain or upwards”. Some questioned that given these circumstances, “what chance has such an officer to practice the technique of a journalist after a story?”. Writing in *The New Zealand Journalist*, one Australian journalist expressed surprise “that New Zealand newspapers had not bothered to send their own reporters into the theatres of war until recently ... It showed that the

---

24 *The New Zealand Journalist* (12 June 1942: 2).
27 *The New Zealand Journalist* (12 July 1943: 1).
newspapers of New Zealand did not realise their responsibilities to the public". With such questions being raised about newspapers' regard for their responsibilities to the public, it is conceivable that journalists wished to demonstrate that they acknowledged theirs. In the face of these pressures, adopting a code of ethics was a means of demonstrating journalists' commitment to the public. It also presented a means of protecting journalists' autonomy, and press freedom more generally.

The impact of the war on New Zealand journalism was not the only concern for the NZJA. In addition to the 'context specific' concerns that arose during World War Two, New Zealand journalists were also taking notice of lessons learnt overseas, notably from Australia, concerning the need for codes of ethics. In 1943, their counterparts in New South Wales had recently adopted a code of ethics. The code had become the subject of a disagreement between journalists and proprietors, who had resisted recognition of the journalists' code. Amid proposals for a 'Statutory Ethics Committee', which had been adopted as Labour Party policy that year, New South Wales journalists had adopted their code in 1943 "to impress upon the people of New South Wales the determination of the AJA to maintain the highest newspaper standards". New Zealand journalists perhaps believed that adopting a code of their own would pre-empt such threats to press freedom and journalistic autonomy in the New Zealand context.

**Newspapers and the ethics of election reportage**

Indeed, issues of New Zealand journalists' public perception also motivated early proposals for a code of ethics. In the period immediately preceding the first code proposals, newspaper coverage of the lead-up to the 1943 General Election had been heavily criticised for deliberate unfairness and 'blatant dishonesty'. These accusations had been levelled at the failure of some newspapers in their coverage of political

---

29 The New Zealand Journalist (15 June 1945: 2).
30 The New Zealand Journalist (12 September 1943: 6). Similar to the form and functions of contemporary press councils, it was envisaged that the proposed Australian Statutory Ethics Committee would consist of five members; a court judge as chair, representatives of the proprietors and journalists unions; along with representatives from the universities. The committee would "hear charges brought by any citizen or organisation against a newspaper, involving distortion, unfair reports, or other breaches of journalistic ethics, and also charges made by a newspaper against any citizen who makes public accusation of a breach which that newspaper denies" (Ibid: 6). Though never enacted, this final object in particular reflected the climate of public dissatisfaction with newspaper conduct at the time in both Australia and, to a lesser extent, New Zealand.
meetings to print the replies of certain political candidates, and charges of political bias had ensued. As one journalist noted:

The period before a general election is a testing time for newspapers, as circumstances arising from the political battle reveal the strictness or laxity of newspaper ethics. During the campaign in September there were instances of newspaper conduct, which did not reflect much credit on the papers concerned, and which proved more nails for the public to drive into the coffin of the daily Press set-up in New Zealand.\footnote{The New Zealand Journalist (12 October 1943: 12).}

Another journalist responded to public criticisms stating that:

With the election still vivid in editorial memory, a poor scribbler may be pardoned for thinking that if the craft is to be restored in public respect it is the boys on the track who are likely to do it not the fellows behind the door marked ‘private’ … [I]s it not time to be conscious of a desire to improve both the standards of conduct and the value of community service due from journalists everywhere? … [I]f the journalist is going to observe and report or comment and interpret events according to the highest standards of his\textit{sic}\ skill and impartiality, the NZJA must take the lead … [I]t is time we took some steps to formulate definite expressions of the New Zealand journalists’ impartial, yet fair, handling of the duties associated with the gathering and presenting the daily news … Let us as fellow craftsmen and craftswomen (if I may coin a word) express in type our idealism and our loyalty to the ethics of our profession.\footnote{The New Zealand Journalist (12 November 1943: 4).}

Evidently, it was through the formulation of a code if ethics which articulated the duties and responsibilities of journalists, that some journalists believed they could restore and promote their public status. Similar sentiments were expressed the following year by members of the Wellington Journalists’ Union (WJU). At their 1944 annual meeting, it was noted that “there were many people in New Zealand who had the stupid idea that journalists were ‘shady characters’”.\footnote{The New Zealand Journalist (15 June 1944: 5).} To promote the public perception of journalists, newly appointed president P. G. B. Harding emphasised the need for journalists “to give consideration to the introduction and enforcement of a code of ethics for the profession in New Zealand”. This proposal was deliberated at the NZJA’s annual conference the following year.

At the NZJA’s 1944 annual conference, a Wellington delegate, R.R. Mason moved “That with the object, not for the present of taking disciplinary action, but to provide a guide to members of the profession, the Council of the NZJA draw up a
code of ethics for journalists for submission at the next conference”. The immediate past president of the Wellington branch, F. W. Boshie seconded the remit, arguing that New Zealand journalists should follow the example set by the AJA which had recently adopted the New South Wales branch’s code of ethics on a nation-wide basis. The protection of the interests of journalists was a central rationale for adopting a code. According to Wellington branch president P. G. B. Harding:

One of Australia’s reasons for introducing a code of ethics had been to protect journalists against accusations of unfairness. Such attacks have been known in this country ... The value of having a written code would be in guiding newcomers to the craft, in giving the public a better appreciation of the outlook of journalists toward news, and in fortifying any journalist who may be asked by an employer or a member of the public to do something that is improper.

The idea of a code with enforcement machinery was particularly contentious. While many NZJA members saw little need for a disciplinary system, Harding maintained that “setting up a committee with power to take punitive action in the event of any proved breaches of the code was essential for its success”. While no consensus on this issue was attained, the conference gained ‘approval in principle’ for establishing a code of ethics. The next step was to determine the format of the code that the NZJA would adopt. After consideration of the codes of ethics adopted by journalists’ associations in other countries, the NZJA produced a ‘creed for journalists’ for consideration at the 1945 annual conference. The text of the creed was published on the front page of July 1945’s issue of The New Zealand Journalist. It took the form of a pledge beginning with the phrase “We believe”, followed by various statements covering such issues as the journalist’s duty to the public, the need for independence, and the status of journalists. The text of the code is worthy of consideration for the insight it offers into the perceived role and responsibilities of New Zealand journalists in the 1940s.

Based upon the content of the ‘creed for journalists’, journalistic ideals appear to have evolved dramatically since the era of New Zealand’s political press of the nineteenth century. Indeed, by the 1940s journalists’ loyalties had broadened towards

---

34 *The New Zealand Journalist* (15 September 1944: 3).
36 Ibid: 3.
37 Ibid: 3.
38 *The New Zealand Journalist* (15 July 1945: 1). The full text of the creed is included in Appendix A.
serving the public's interests, rather than solely those of publishers. This shift was illustrated in the following text of the creed:

WE BELIEVE:

The proper test of the value of a daily newspaper is its service to the community ... The journalist owes the fullest possible loyalty to his[ sic] employer, his[ sic] newspaper and his fellow-workers, and has the right to expect that this should not conflict with his[ sic] ultimate loyalty to the interests of the people. 39

Not merely chroniclers of events and opinions, the creed proclaimed for journalists a nobler role of protecting 'the public interest':

The journalist at the same time, as a citizen and a servant of the public, has the duty to reveal and oppose, within the bounds of fair reporting, instances of danger to the people's fundamental right of self-government and security. The journalist opposes cruelty, greed and oppression. 40

Of significance was the fact that the creed hinted at the various (often-conflicting) 'accountabilities' of journalists – to the public, to their employer, to their newspaper, and to their colleagues. This was an issue that had arisen during earlier discussions about a code of ethics when a NZJA member noted that "[e]very member has two claims on his[ sic] loyalty— one by his[ sic] association and one by his[ sic] employer. These need not clash so long as the employer complies with the award and does not demand a journalist do anything that he would be ashamed of doing". 41

Although journalists were accountable to their employers, the newspapers on which they worked, and their fellow journalists, the creed emphasised journalists' 'ultimate loyalty' to the public's interests. This was consistent with the creed's advocates' understanding of their occupation as a profession with public service at its core. The code thus served as an attempt by the NZJA to define journalism as an autonomous profession that served the public's interests over and above those of their employers. In doing so, the creed reflected an attempt to address the conflict between these various accountabilities.

As Schudson notes, the development of loyalties more to their audiences (and to themselves as an occupational community) than to their publishers, saw journalists

40 Ibid: 1.
41 The New Zealand Journalist (12 January 1941: 5).
begin to articulate ideals and standards for their occupation.\textsuperscript{42} The New Zealand case appears to reaffirm this argument. Evidence of the ‘professional norms’ of accuracy, impartiality and independence in news gathering and its presentation were illustrated by the 1945 creed, representing a significant departure from accepted practices of partisan reporting of nineteenth century journalism in New Zealand. As the creed read:

Any controversial interpreting of events lies in the editorial sphere, and should be clearly separate from the work of full, impartial and fearless news presentation. In gathering and editing news the journalist must not be swayed by personal, political, economic, racial or religious prejudice, must respect the genuine opinions and activities of the individual and the minority, and must strive to observe at all times scrupulous fairness and honesty. Any failure in this deserves the condemnation of the profession.\textsuperscript{43}

Journalistic independence was not only a necessary requirement for journalists’ news gathering and reporting functions, it was crucial to the attainment of professionalism, an ambition which the creed instructed all journalists to observe in its final paragraph:

In his\textsuperscript{[sic]} work and conduct, in keeping with the best traditions of the profession, the journalist should assist to bring his\textsuperscript{[sic]} profession to its rightful noble place in the life of the community.\textsuperscript{44}

Following its appearance in \textit{The New Zealand Journalist}, the text of the creed was circulated to the provincial unions for comment. At the 1945 annual conference, the NZJA’s vice-president R. R. Mason moved that the NZJA adopt the creed prepared by the NZJA council. After discussion, it was agreed that this motion be withdrawn, and that further consideration be given to existing codes overseas, including that of the British NUJ, before any further action was taken.\textsuperscript{45} This was the final mention of the creed for journalists in the records of the NZJA, indicating that the ‘creed for journalists’ was never formally adopted.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{42} Schudson (2001:160-1).
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (15 July 1945: 1).
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid: 1.
\textsuperscript{45} NZJA Minutes (7 September 1945: 5).
\textsuperscript{46} Although the prospect of adopting the creed now seemed dim, some NZJA members periodically voiced their support for some form of code, for instance in 1948 (NZJA Minutes, 10 August 1948: 1). However, such proposals were not acted upon until the 1960s, as is illustrated below.
No code for journalists

As chapter five illustrated, the period immediately following the close of the Second World War was one in which many leaders of the profession were leaving New Zealand journalism for ‘greener pastures’. Even during the war, experienced New Zealand journalists had found themselves in demand by Australian newspaper editors to reduce the existing and prospective staff shortages.47 Many journalists were enticed by the higher wages paid by Australian proprietors in the belief that they were “not risking much by leaving the pittance they received in their own country and seeking more appreciative employers in Australia”.48 NZJA executives increasingly feared that “our newspapers will quickly lose their good men[sic], if they [proprietors] don’t do something about it. That ‘something’ is obviously bringing New Zealand newspaper pay and conditions closer to the Australian level”.49 This issue had significant implications for the NZJA’s pursuit of ‘professionalism’ as the previous chapters highlighted.

The NZJA was concerned to both attract and retain experienced journalists in order to promote both the status of the occupation as well as the quality of New Zealand journalism itself. With regard to the 1945 creed, this issue proved to be highly ironic. Not only did the exodus of New Zealand journalists to Australia largely underpin the NZJA’s effort to adopt a ‘creed for journalists’; it also saw its disappearance from the NZJA’s agenda. This was largely because the driving force behind the creed, P. G. B. Harding of the Wellington branch of the NZJA, was himself a part of the ‘second migration’ of journalists to Australia in 1945.50 It appears that without Harding’s initiative and leadership, the creed seemed to have fallen from the NZJA’s agenda altogether.

Furthermore, it is likely that a lack of consensus about the status of the journalistic occupation within the NZJA – whether it was a ‘profession’ or trade – contributed to the disappearance of the 1945 creed from the NZJA’s agenda. Although adopting a code had lost momentum, the debate about the status of journalists within the NZJA persisted. While some journalists embraced professionalism as both an occupational ideal and a plausible alternative to traditional

47 The New Zealand Journalist (15 June 1945: 2).
48 Ibid: 2.
49 Ibid: 2.
50 The New Zealand Journalist (15 October 1945: 5).
industrial measures to advance their interests, others were critical of their colleagues’
aspirations for professionalism, and urged the NZJA to concentrate on the ‘practical’
interests of journalists using traditional industrial measures. This faction of journalists
did not dispute the argument that the position of journalists needed to be advanced;
what they opposed was the NZJA’s emphasis on ‘professionalism’ as a means of
doing so. This view was reflected in a statement published under the title ‘Are we
men or mice?’ shortly after the 1945 creed dropped from the NZJA’s agenda.

Is journalism a profession or a trade? Can journalists be placed in the same
category as doctors or accountants who study for years and spend so much
money in order to qualify, or with skilled tradesmen[sic] who become
proficient in their jobs in the hard school of experience? The only conclusion
that can be reached, after rational consideration of these alternatives, is that we
scribes come under the latter heading ... Having decided without any shadow
of doubt that journalism as we find it in this Dominion is a trade, how are we
to bring our wages and working conditions into line with other skilled
occupations in this country? ... Are we too firmly in the grips of our
employers, or are we too proud to make our unionism virile and effective
instead of a mere mockery which we fear and talk of under bated breath?51

6.4 Interest in adopting a code is re-ignited

Largely due to the conflicting views as to the nature and benefits of
professionalism among NZJA members, it was fifteen years later before any further
serious consideration was given to the adoption of a code. However, the ambiguous
status of journalists provided the impetus for the NZJA’s next serious effort to adopt a
code of ethics. In 1959, a former president of the Dunedin union, G. R. Massingham
(who, incidentally, was another journalist who had left New Zealand to work for the
Melbourne Herald following the war) claimed that the tension over the professional
status of journalists was impeding their economic advancement.52 He claimed, in no
uncertain terms, that “the time had come for New Zealand journalists to decide
whether they were professionals or tradesmen[sic]”.53 Massingham claimed that so

51 The New Zealand Journalist (15 December 1946: 1).
52 Although comprehensive comparative data on the wages of journalists and other occupations was not
located in the archival material consulted for this research, an indication was offered by a light-hearted
anecdote which featured in The New Zealand Journalist (6 March 1959: 4). A story was recounted of
how a senior journalist was eating at a restaurant and overheard a waitress asking about the wages she
would collect at the end of the week; the reply to her query was £12/6d. The story continued: “The
reporter justifiably bit hard on his steak (and broke an aging tooth) thinking back on his 13 years of
journalism which now nets him exactly £3 more than the young waitress”. The tale concluded by
stating that the journalist concerned was soon to leave for a Sydney newspaper where he would be
earning the top award wage of £41 per week.
53 The New Zealand Journalist (6 June 1959: 6).
long as journalists remained content with the label ‘tradesmen’, they would endure relatively low rates of pay. According to Massingham, the employers perpetuated a paradoxical conception of journalists’ status: “As I see it, you are professionals in the eyes of the employers when it comes to working conditions and tradesmen when regarding wages. The result is poor pay and poor conditions”. However, according to Massingham, journalists were much more than ‘tradesmen’. As ‘guardians of the public’s freedoms’, journalists needed to obtain definite professional status. “But professional status depends largely upon the standards which journalists demanded of themselves. Until efforts are made to maintain higher standards ... not much can be attained”. This advice, printed in The New Zealand Journalist in June 1959, set the context for the NZJA’s second major attempt to adopt a code of ethics.

Ian Templeton, a member of the NZJA executive in the early 1960s, also recalls the background to this development.

The 1960s was perhaps the heyday of print journalism in New Zealand, with the radio and television news services still in embryonic form at the beginning of the decade. Journalists remained dissatisfied with their pay and conditions, which did not seem to be keeping in step either with the profits of the newspaper companies or with inflation. Within the NZJA there were those who thought the best method to improve pay and conditions was through traditional trade union activity, and it was not surprising that this element pushed very hard for trade union advocacy and in one pay negotiation the services of the then president of the Federation of Labour F. P. Walsh were used, though without any particular advantage being secured. Partly because the NZJA was not numerically strong, its voice at the negotiating table was audible but not very persuasive on the hard-headed (and, we thought, excessively hardhearted) gentlemen/sic/ on the opposite side.

As illustrated above, advocates of ‘professionalism’ for journalists conceived of the term as acquiring a status ‘on par with the accepted professions’. In circumstances where traditional industrial measures did not reap the benefits the NZJA sought for its members, ‘professionalism’ provided journalists with an alternative strategy with which to promote their interests. This was the background the NZJA’s second major attempt to introduce a code of ethics in the 1960s.

54 In commenting upon the employers’ view of journalists as ‘professionals’ regarding working conditions, Massingham was presumably referring to the lack of overtime paid to journalists; a feature of most ‘accepted professions’ whose practitioners usually receive a salary (rather than wages) for their services.
55 The New Zealand Journalist (6 June 1959: 6).
56 The New Zealand Journalist (6 June 1959: 6).
57 Ian Templeton (27 March 2003: Personal Communication).
58 George Griffiths (23 March 2003: Personal Communication).
At the NZJA’s 1960 annual conference, a Southland delegate, J. M. McClanaghan, moved that “the NZJA give consideration to the matter of a code of ethics”.

This motion was carried, and by November that year, a code committee led by T. P. Walsh (president of the Southland branch) had been formed to consider the possibility of adopting a code. Consistent with Massingham’s comments above, improving the social status of journalists underpinned the revived interest in the NZJA’s adoption of a code of ethics. As another NZJA member wrote in The New Zealand Journalist,

> [t]he greater the status of our profession ... the greater must be the rewards for its members. Therefore, it is with great concern that I hear not much progress seems to have been made with the proposal to adopt a code of ethics for New Zealand journalists. Perhaps the need is not great, but there is no reason why we should not be vigilant ... The principle is much the same as that for doctors (B.M.A.), accountants and lawyers. They see their members' conduct is kept on a high plane. Why should we leave ourselves open to the too-often-heard charges of misreporting? And that irritating 'What can you expect? He's[sic] only a reporter'.

As chapter four illustrated, some journalists believed that by adopting the socially recognised ‘hallmarks’ of professionalism of such occupations as medicine, law, and accountancy, their improved social status would have economic ‘pay-offs’. This was also the case with the NZJA’s second effort to adopt a code of ethics. In support of a code, it was maintained that the NZJA would “get a much better hearing from the Court of Arbitration if it had a written code of ethics that was given teeth with a Court of Honour to administer it”.

In contrast to the condemnation this view had received when the NZJA was planning a professional institute of journalists, the NZJA executive believed that enhancing the professional status of journalism was in fact “part of its job as an industrial union”. In other words, by promoting the professional status of journalists, their economic and industrial interests would be furthered. As Warren Page, (who, at the time, was a member of the Wellington branch and was later to become the NZJA’s president) recalls:

> ... [The NZJA’s initiative to adopt a code] was partly recognition of the need for us to increase our worth for industrial bargaining purposes, and partly the

---

60 The New Zealand Journalist (30 April 1961: 3).
61 ibid: 3.
wish to move ourselves from craft to professional standards and recognition. A code of conduct was part of being professional.\textsuperscript{63}

Furthermore, as with the code proposal of the 1940s, perceived threats to both press freedom and the authority of the journalistic occupation drove the 1960s initiative. A code of ethics was also promoted as a means to “strengthen journalists’ ground in fighting the growing trend towards news suppression in the divorce and coroners courts”.\textsuperscript{64} Charges of ‘misreporting’ suggest that accuracy in reportage had again been called into question. As such, codifying the accepted standards of journalism was perhaps seen as a means of quashing such allegations, as well as promoting the integrity of the journalistic occupation itself.\textsuperscript{65}

\textbf{Threats from the spheres of broadcasting and public relations}

Further challenges to journalists’ authority as the sole providers of news and information to the public came in the 1960s. These threats were illuminated the journalists’ advocate, Jack Turnbull, in the 1961 award hearing:

Public relations is a new, and growing competitor for journalistic ability, and has attracted a number of trained reporters in recent years ... It is quite wrong that journalists should have to leave the newspaper field to progress in this profession. Without wishing to denigrate public relations it is surely fair to say that the provision of a news service is more important to the community. The reporter is trained to gauge what is of public interest, to obtain the facts, and to present them in a readable and intelligent form to the public. The proper discharge of this function is one of the indispensable bases of democracy. The journalist who leaves the newspaper world for a public relations position is no doubt still serving the community; but his[sic] work is surely not the vital function which is or should be performed by the newspaper journalist.\textsuperscript{66}

Furthermore, the 1960s saw the arrival of television news, and the regular broadcasting of radio news. On the one hand, then NZJA president, Jack Kelleher, believed that: “Television has so many obvious opportunities to offer journalists ... One of the most significant is the opportunity offered journalists to improve their own

\textsuperscript{63} Warren Page (23 March 2000: Personal communication).
\textsuperscript{64} *The New Zealand Journalist* (30 April 1961: 3).
\textsuperscript{65} The records of the NZJA state that by 1962, both the NZJA and the NPA had considered adopting codes of ethics “to safeguard their respective standards” (NZJA, 1962: 34; NZJA Minutes, 26 April 1962: 3), although the NPA code never eventuated. In fact, the NZJA had initially hoped to form a joint code with the NPA, however the latter organisation was not receptive to the idea (Don Milne, 12 May 2003: Personal Communication).
\textsuperscript{66} *The New Zealand Journalist* (31 May 1961: 2).
public relations—their own standing with the public”.67 Indeed, there were other NZJA members who saw benefits in this new competition for newspaper journalists:

The advent of full radio news and television must benefit [journalists]. If the competition it brings for advertising reduces newspaper prosperity, it must in the long run make journalists more valuable—and if the newspapers will not pay enough, there will be jobs in radio and television.68

However, others were less optimistic about the new competition to the work domain of newspaper journalists.69 With television emerging as a new ‘rival’ for the newspaper industry, and with radio broadcasting becoming better organised, there were unprecedented threats of competition for audiences (and advertisers) facing the newspaper industry. Combining the immediacy of radio and the visual technology of moving pictures, television represented a major challenge to the traditional news medium of newspapers. As such, these new forms of media represented a threat to journalists’ control over their work sphere. As Warren Page recalls, in the face of the threat of television to newspapers “the challenge was to win the trust of readers through professional standards”.70 Indeed, as a response to such pressures, a code of ethics would serve to declare the integrity of the journalistic occupation, and to assert its role and responsibilities.

A draft code is formed

Early in 1961, a draft code of ethics was produced by a sub-committee of the NZJA council. The June 1961 issue of The New Zealand Journalist, in which the text of the code was included, noted that “the need for a Code of Ethics has long been recognised by the J.A. council”.71 The proposed code was borrowed almost verbatim

---

68 NZJA (1962: 60).
69 One means of confronting the threats posed by the growth of broadcasting was to extend the NZJA’s membership to the newer branch of journalism. This was the strategy employed by the NZJA when the Broadcasting Act was implemented in April 1962. In 1962, the NZJA discussed the possibility of covering broadcast journalists with the Broadcasting Corporation. The NZJA’s 1962 publication records that “notice of battle for coverage of the radio journalists was given the PSA [Public Service Association] which informed the NZJA that it hoped to continue to represent all persons in broadcasting” (NZJA, 1962: 50). In the end, the PSA’s jurisdiction covered public broadcasters (journalists working for the then state-broadcasters RNZ or TVNZ), with the NZJA extending its membership to private (radio) broadcasters during the 1960s. In the mid-1970s, the NZJU was also considering extending its membership to advertising staff (NZJU Minutes, 21 June 1974: 3). Today, the boundaries are less clear-cut, with some 200 TVNZ journalists belonging to the re-constituted journalists union, now operating under the aegis of the EPMU.
70 Warren Page (23 March 2000: Personal communication).
from the AJA code of ethics. According to Ian Templeton, it was modelled on the
Australian code as "we argued that if Australian journalists found it acceptable, why
should New Zealand journalists object?". Indeed, the impact of the AJA code on the
public perception of Australian journalists provided further motivation for its
duplication in New Zealand:

There is nothing particularly new about the AJA code ... It is, in fact, the sort
of thing that is taught to every cadet. But it is a pledge of faith that contributes
a lot to the respect in which the average Australian journalist is held in his[sic]/
own country.73

The administration of the proposed code was subject to careful consideration.
It was proposed that each constituent branch of the NZJA would form an 'ethics
committee' which would be responsible for overseeing the code's adherence by
members.74 Each 'ethics committee' would consist of five members of the NZJA, all
of whom must have belonged to the NZJA for at least five years. The ethics
committees would rule on written complaints from journalists about alleged breaches
of the code. Complaints from members of the public would be considered by the
NZJA executive in the first instance, and referred to the relevant district ethics
committee. Where a majority vote of the committee ruled that a member had violated
the code's provisions, the committee would have the power to warn, rebuke, or
censure the member concerned. The committees would have the option of making
known to employer or editor of the journalist concerned the nature of the censure as a
sanction of critical 'peer review'. These proposals, along with the proposed code,
were subsequently circulated to the constituent branches for their comments "with a
view to its ultimate adoption".75

It was immediately after this that the code's progress seems to have lost its
earlier momentum. Recalling the efforts of the NZJA to adopt a code in the 1960s,
Jack Kelleher (who was the NZJA's president at the time) suggests two possible
reasons why this may have been the case. There was the possibility that the NZJA's
branches failed to provide satisfactory reports to the executive council on their
enthusiasm for a written code of ethics. Alternatively, if sufficient response was

72 Ian Templeton (27 March 2003: Personal Communication). The draft NZJA code is included in
Appendix A.
73 The New Zealand Journalist (September 1954: 1).
75 NZJA Minutes (29-30 September 1961: 8).
attained, there may have been dispute over aspects of the code’s proposed enforcement. Indeed, there were known to be some journalists who felt that it was not the role of the NZJA to ‘enforce ethics’, but rather to look after the industrial interests of its members. This division among NZJA members as to the use of ‘professionalism’ as a strategy to advance the interests of journalists as opposed to traditional industrial methods was rife in the 1960s and was perhaps another reason why, according to Kelleher, the idea for the NZJA to adopt a code of ethics temporarily ‘faded away’. The existing records of the NZJA confirm Kelleher’s recollections as to why, once drafted, interest in formally adopting the code petered out. There was in fact an overall lack of feedback from the constituent associations about the draft code circulated almost a year earlier. With only the Southland branch submitting a (favourable) response, the NZJA executive decided to re-circulate the draft code to the constituent branches in order to elicit further feedback.

Debating the content and administration of an NZJA code

The second distribution of the draft code received a greater response from NZJA members. The opinions expressed about adopting a code by delegates to the NZJA’s 1962 annual conference varied between complete acceptance and complete opposition. An Auckland delegate, K. (Ken) J. Steed, believed that there was a need for a code of ethics, but if such a code was to be pursued then it needed to be accepted by both the NZJA and the NPA. In making this point, it was perhaps a lesson from the Australian experience that New Zealand journalists were attempting to heed. As noted above, the issue of employer support for journalists’ codes of ethics had been pertinently illustrated in the Australian context when the AJA was preparing to adopt its code in the early 1940s. The majority of Australia’s newspaper publishers were reportedly opposed to the AJA code from the outset. They saw it as an intrusion into their areas of discretion. They implied that journalists, as employees, were subject to their employers’ ethical standards and not to any collective standards which their union/professional body may adopt.

76 Jack Kelleher (15 March 2000: Personal communication).
77 NZJA Minutes (29 May 1962: 4).
78 NZJA Minutes (4 September 1962: 4).
At the core of the issue was control over journalistic ethics. While on the surface a professional issue, it was also partly an industrial question as to whether journalists, as employees, had the right to determine and enforce workplace standards, which in other professions, are normally the domain of employers. It was therefore with caution that some members believed that the NZJA should approach the adoption of a code.

The difficulty of reaching an agreement on the form and content of a code for New Zealand journalists was an issue raised by Dunedin delegates.\(^8^1\) A Nelson delegate, C. R. Lavery, also anticipated that the “reinforcement machinery for a code of ethics would be very difficult [to construct]”.\(^8^2\) Other delegates thought “there was a need for ethics, which existed at present, but that it was too difficult to express these in the form of a written code”.\(^8^3\) The Canterbury-Westland branch had gone so far as to unanimously reject the idea of a code altogether. The basis for this decision was that while a code was “alright in theory”, it was in practice “impracticable and too open to abuse and impossible to administer satisfactorily”.\(^8^4\) This was the view of the Canterbury branch’s president, Hardie Silcock, whose name will be familiar from chapter four as a fervent promoter of a professional institute. Silcock admitted that he “used to be a frequent advocate of a code some years before” but that by the 1960s his views had “subsequently changed”.\(^8^5\) Seemingly, Silcock had been worn down by opponents of professionalism. Hence, due to these divergent views the NZJA council considered that the matter of a code could not progress further without a fresh mandate from the next annual conference.\(^8^6\)

Meanwhile, the form of the proposed code was also being re-evaluated. The draft code was referred back to the executive council, which was then instructed to study the statement of principles of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) “with a view to a set of principles being circulated to the NZJA branches for comment”.\(^8^7\) Accordingly, at the next council meeting in October 1962, a committee

---

\(^8^1\) NZJA Minutes (21-22 September 1962: 7).
\(^8^2\) Ibid: 7.
\(^8^3\) Ibid: 7.
\(^8^4\) The New Zealand Journalist (15 August 1962: 4).
\(^8^5\) Ibid: 4.
\(^8^6\) NZJA Minutes (4 September 1962: 4).
\(^8^7\) NZJA Minutes (21-22 September 1962: 7). First established in 1926, the IFJ was relaunched in 1946 and again in 1952, and remains the world’s largest organisation of journalists with around 500 000 members from more than 100 countries. The IFJ has long had an interest in journalism ethics and adopted a code in 1954 (see Appendix A).
was re-appointed to further “investigate the general subject of a code of ethics and/or a set of principles”. However, by September 1963, the NZJA’s code committee had made little progress, after which time the issue of whether a code would be adopted was temporarily sidelined. In fact, it was not until the annual conference of September 1966 that the proposed code received any further attention.

Threats to journalistic autonomy and ‘professional prerogative’ in the 1960s

While the proposed code of ethics may have been sidelined, the pressures facing journalists remained. In the intervening years, the industry-internal pressures mirrored those which drove both the professional institute effort, and the desire for formal journalistic training and qualifications discussed in the previous chapters. These pressures were captured by the comments of one journalist in 1963:

Too many employers fail to recognise that when we achieve the higher standard which is our target, they will benefit too … As experienced staff are allowed to turn to other fields for the sake of a few pounds a week, we have reason to wonder what store employers put on a quality job.

Threats from the legislative sphere to the ‘professional prerogative’ of journalists created further pressures on the NZJA. Although these threats meant that the NZJA’s attention was diverted from the issue of a code itself, they actually reinforced the need for one. Following the imprisonment of two British journalists for failing to disclose their sources in 1963, the NZJA took steps toward formalising its own stance on ‘non-disclosure’. Journalists’ privilege to retain confidential sources was a ‘professional issue’ that the NZJA saw as “closely related to that of an ethics code”, and was one that the former NZIJ and CJU had both sought to address at the turn of the twentieth century, as chapter four highlighted.

Later in 1963, the NZJA became concerned with issues of press freedom that arose with the introduction of the Indecent Publications Bill. Perceiving the Bill as unnecessarily draconian and a threat to press freedom, the NZJA took immediate

---

88 NZJA Minutes (1 October 1962: 4).
89 This pause in activity came after the committee’s investigation of the newly developed code of the British Institute of Journalists (IOJ) in addition to those of the AJA and the IFJ (NZJA Minutes, 24 September 1963: 3).
90 The New Zealand Journalist (12 May 1963: 2).
91 NZJA Minutes (25 March 1963: 4).
steps to promote its amendment. Furthermore, between 1964 and the end of 1965, a central concern of the NZJA was the News Media Ownership Bill introduced by the National Government in 1964. Not only did the bill represent perhaps the greatest challenge to conventional understandings of press freedom in the history of New Zealand journalism; it also highlighted the divergent sets of interests between employees and employers respectively on the issue of media ownership.

**The News Media Ownership Bill: An industry divided**

The News Media Ownership Bill arose out of controversy surrounding the attempts of an international London-based publishing group headed by Lord Thomson to buy into the then Wellington Publishing Company (WPC) in January 1964. Had the Thomson bid been successful, the capital’s morning newspaper would have been passed into the hands of a foreign business concern. The perceived effects of foreign ownership of newspapers were at the heart of the controversy over the Bill itself. In spite of newspaper owners’ traditional concern with protecting press freedom, the threat posed by the News Media Ownership bill did not appear to trouble the NPA. On the contrary, the NPA had in fact been responsible for the initial appeal to the Government to implement restrictions on overseas intrusion following the Thomson takeover bid.

The interests of the NPA in the proposed legislation centred upon the argument that the entry of foreign players would lead to a break down of the structure of the NZPA, the corporate news-sharing agency at the centre of the New Zealand press. It was contended that a competitor from outside the NZPA, operating independently of its non-competitive arrangements for news sharing, could concentrate on sensational areas comparatively absent in the New Zealand press. As newspapers were forced to compete for advertising and were forced to retaliate with similar tactics, the inevitable circulation wars would have negative repercussions for the ethical standards of newspapers. In the effort to gain circulation, increased sensationalism in newspaper content would result in a lowering of newspaper

---

94 McAllister (1965: 110).
95 Cleveland (1964: 40).
96 Ibid: 40.
97 Cleveland (1965: 9).
standards, reducing both the quality and the variety of news available to the public.\textsuperscript{98} Such a reduction in variety would be exacerbated if foreign competition absorbed its New Zealand competitors.\textsuperscript{99}

The Bill’s opponents were not convinced, voicing objections of both a practical and a philosophical nature. It was considered that foreign entry into New Zealand’s ‘sluggishly competitive’ media landscape would bring benefits to New Zealand journalism as a whole.\textsuperscript{100} As to the effect on professional and ethical standards, the view was expressed that Britain has shown fairly conclusively that intense competition lowers newspaper standards and we are thankful to have escaped the worst features of British journalism here. But the threat of competition is a different matter. It may be a very good thing for us.\textsuperscript{101}

Opponents of the Bill questioned the notion of a blanket restriction on foreign ownership and pointed to the limitations of New Zealand’s closed, non-competitive, domestic metropolitan newspaper field on the quality of news available to the public.\textsuperscript{102} Increased competition would bring more diversity in the newspapers on offer.\textsuperscript{103} The NZJA was an active voice in the opposition towards the Bill, arguing that the possibility of foreign ownership was a chance for ‘professional salvation’ of newspaper journalism, forcing better management into a ‘stagnant’ press.\textsuperscript{104} Foreign ownership could increase the level of critical journalism, presenting more opportunities for better jobs, advancement, and specialisation for journalists.\textsuperscript{105} As the highlighted above, these were critical concerns for the NZJA.

Not only would such legislation hinder the improvement in the quality of news journalism; being ‘formulated on principles that are the anti-thesis of democratic

\textsuperscript{98} Cleveland (1969: 45-7).
\textsuperscript{99} An anomaly of the bill was noted by Worth (1965: 3): “If the object is to maintain diversity of control of the news media, then it [the bill] should be directed to Domestic as well as foreign owners”. Furthermore, the NPA’s arguments relied on the likelihood that editorial independence would not be preserved with foreign ownership, and reflect a paramount desire to preserve the structure of the NZPA.
\textsuperscript{100} Cleveland (1969: 45). See Appendix B for details of newspaper ownership patterns at the time.
\textsuperscript{101} Cleveland (1969: 45). See Appendix B for details of newspaper ownership patterns at the time.
\textsuperscript{102} Bradley (1973:6); New Zealand Parliamentary Debates (23 September 1965: 2958-9).
\textsuperscript{103} This was seen to have the potential to extend to the content of newspaper output, which was limited by the existence of the NZPA. The NZPA required that carbon copies of all articles written must be submitted for distribution. This meant that any apparent bias or wrong interpretation was not balanced by another version of the same story. Newspapers operating outside of the remit of the NZPA system may have had the potential to alter this (New Zealand Monthly Review, 1965: 21).
\textsuperscript{104} Cleveland (1964: 40).
\textsuperscript{105} Cleveland (1969: 45).
freedom', it also ‘struck at the very roots of the freedom of the press’. In a submission to the Statutes Revision Committee on the News Media Ownership Bill, the then president of the NZJA, B. R. Gridley, conveyed the association’s central objections to the bill:

It represents a form of Government control over newspapers in New Zealand. It introduces permanent and absolute protection for New Zealand-domiciled newspaper proprietors. It thus limits competition in the dissemination of public information. It ignores and increases the dangers of monopolistic tendencies by newspapers operating within New Zealand ... By its restrictive measures on overseas ownership and its consequent legal requirements on New Zealand newspapers the Bill establishes an element of legislative control in this country which is unprecedented, unnecessary, and dangerous in its implications.

The issue of concentration of media ownership was at the heart of the debate on the News Media Ownership Bill. Limiting foreign players in the New Zealand media industry would effectively serve to limit competition and thereby perpetuate the existing pattern of concentrated ownership. For journalists, the implications for the reduction of diversity in media content and limited range of employers were negative. It meant there was little competition for journalistic talent amongst employers who were rarely known to pay journalists wages above the award level. This exacerbated the problem of experienced journalists leaving journalism, and the fact that journalism was failing to attract ‘the best minds’ who were lured into other professions with higher remuneration. The NZJA anticipated that the entry of foreign owners like Thomson (who was known to pay employees at a competitive rate) would address these key concerns. Overall, the debate on the bill was a pertinent reflection of the division amongst the wider journalism industry that was to figure so prominently in later developments. As Chadwick points out: “The issue of concentration of ownership, that is, a question of journalism’s structure, deeply divides the groups who together must co-operate if journalism’s content is to be effectively self-regulated”. Moreover, given the News Media Ownership Bill’s inherent challenge to journalists’ ‘professional autonomy’, its passing in November

---

106 Worth (1965: 3).
107 New Zealand Parliamentary Debates (19 October 1965: 3613).
108 NZJA Minutes (10-11 September 1965: 8).
109 New Zealand Parliamentary Debates (19 October 1965: 3604); The New Zealand Journalist (October 1965: 1). For more on the views of individual newspapers on the Bill, see MacDonald (1973).
110 The New Zealand Journalist (October 1956: 1).
1965 most likely contributed to the return of the code of ethics onto the NZJA’s agenda.\textsuperscript{112}

Public and parliamentary calls for a code for journalists

While much of the NZJA’s attention was focussed on industrial matters during the 1960s, professional issues were taking on increasing importance in their own right. Some journalists were even “responding more positively to calls upon professional pride and aspirations than they did to traditional union concerns.”\textsuperscript{113} There were also concerns within the NZJA that professional and ethical standards required codification with “something of more general application than the in-house standards fluctuating from newspaper to newspaper according to the energy and ability of the editor of the time”.\textsuperscript{114} In addition to the increasing pressure on the NZJA from within the journalistic environment, there was also a degree of external pressure for a written code for journalists.

In 1964, one media commentator raised the question that “[i]f journalists want higher status and a more responsible voice, must they not evolve more exacting professional standards and a code of ethics which they can enforce ...?”\textsuperscript{115} Not long afterward, when the first major calls for a press council in New Zealand were expressed, there were further indications of public pressure for a code for New Zealand journalists. In 1966, a published survey response on public attitudes towards the New Zealand press proposed a code of ethics and a self-regulatory system to accompany it: “Why not a code of ethics for journalists with a disciplinary committee open to the public?”\textsuperscript{116}

Calls for a code of ethics for New Zealand journalists also emanated from the parliamentary sphere. In early 1965, the Attorney-General, J. R. Hanan, called upon

\textsuperscript{112} The 1965 Act’s provisions limited foreign ownership of New Zealand news media to fifteen percent of shares in any one publishing company. In 1973, it was repealed in full by the Labour Government by section 133(2) of the Commerce Act 1975 (O’Keefe, 1976: 121). The provisions of the 1975 Commerce Act took into account public considerations and had a wide discretion in deciding whether to approve newspaper mergers and acquisitions. The Act was amended in 1986 and 1991 through which the wider public interest discretion has been progressively abandoned (McGregor, 1992: 36-37). The present legislation aims to protect only commercial interests in cross and foreign media ownership in contrast to the Australian equivalent, which takes into account social objectives including diversity of news sources (Martin, 1996: 150). (See also Appendix B).

\textsuperscript{113} Warren Page (23 March 2000: Personal communication).

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{115} Cleveland (1964: 41).

\textsuperscript{116} Consumer (March 1966: 20).
newspapers to adopt a code of ethics. In the background to this suggestion, parliament was consideration the enactment of legal restraints on newspapers’ court reporting. As an alternative to legislation, the Attorney-General proposed that he was "prepared to explore the possibility of leaving the responsibility of law court reporting to the press in New Zealand if the newspapers could produce a code of ethics that would safeguard the interests of the public". The initial response of the NZJA to this proposal was that a newspapers’ code would have to be the initiative of the employers. However, this did not stop the NZJA from proceeding with its own code of ethics.

The observable public (and indeed, political) interest in an ethics code for journalists undoubtedly prompted the return of the issue on the NZJA’s agenda later that year. Hence, the NZJA’s 1966 annual conference resulted in the appointment of a new committee charged with re-considering the adoption of a code of ethics, an initiative promoted by the NZJA’s newly elected president Ian Templeton. Ian Templeton recalls how interest in a code of ethics also re-emerged out of the:

...belief that the association should seek to lift its status by working towards professional standards ... Some like myself thought it should at least aspire to be on a plane with other professions which had standards of entry, conduct, and ethics. So during my term on the NZJA, which included not only two years as president, but also two years as vice-president, and two years as immediate past president, as well as several years as a council member, I advocated as a first step the adoption of a code of ethics.

This time around, the preparatory stages of the code’s progress were effected much more quickly. By June 1967, a new draft code had been prepared. The code committee then circulated the draft to NZJA members and the provincial unions for consideration. Feedback from the unions resulted in some minor amendments, which were referred back to the branches for approval. The content of the code as well as

---

117 The New Zealand Journalist (March 1965: 4). In 1965, the Dunedin Journalists’ Union produced a ‘Guide to journalism’ in the form of a pocket card for distribution to all members of the Dunedin union. The guide read very much like a code of conduct, the text of which is included in Appendix A.
118 The New Zealand Journalist (March 1965: 4).
119 NZJA Minutes (31 October 1966: 2).
120 NZJA Minutes (5 December 1966: 2).
121 Ian Templeton (27 March 2003: Personal Communication).
122 The New Zealand Journalist (June 1967: 1). The text of this draft, which was to undergo amendment before its adoption, can be found in Appendix A.
the ‘wider question of the desirability of such a code’ was to be discussed further at the NZJA’s annual conference in September that year.\textsuperscript{124}

6.5 The NZJA adopts a code of ethics

At the annual conference in September 1967, NZJA president Ian Templeton initiated discussion about the proposed ethics code.\textsuperscript{125} Templeton had recently returned to New Zealand after four years working in England in newspaper offices in Glasgow, Bristol and London and “was aware of the existence of both the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the [British] Institute of Journalists (IoJ).”\textsuperscript{126} Both bodies had adopted codes, “the former was more militant and the latter sought to be more professional. There was no scope in New Zealand for such a duplication and the NZJA had to try to straddle both horses, a sometimes uncomfortable posture”.\textsuperscript{127} This difficulty was reflected in the ensuing debate about a code of ethics for New Zealand journalists.

Although gaining professional recognition and maintaining journalistic autonomy were the NZJA’s two central motivations for adopting a code, the proposed code was vociferously debated on three central issues. Firstly, delegates to the conference debated the issue of whether or not a code should be adopted at all. Representing the majority view within the NZJA, Nelson delegate, A. B. Barclay, believed that the adoption of a code would “improve the status and image of journalists in the community”.\textsuperscript{128} Another delegate submitted the more pragmatic calculation that “if journalists did not produce their own effective code of behaviour then there was a strong risk of a set of rules – possibly with strong disciplinary powers – being imposed from the outside”.\textsuperscript{129}

However, Ian Templeton recalls that in proposing a code of ethics he encountered some ‘vigorous opposition’ from NZJA members, particularly from the Canterbury branch, which evidently had not changed its attitude towards adopting a written code over the previous five years. Records confirm that Canterbury-Westland delegate to the NZJA’s 1967 annual conference, R. S. (Rod) Lindsay, opposed the

\textsuperscript{124} NZJA Minutes (7 August 1967: 1).
\textsuperscript{125} NZJA Minutes (15-16 September 1967: 2).
\textsuperscript{126} Ian Templeton (27 March 2003: Personal Communication).
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{128} NZJA Minutes (15-16 September 1967: 2).
\textsuperscript{129} The New Zealand Journalist (September 1967: 1).
adoption of a code on the grounds that it would in fact "be more likely to lead to a [statutory] press council than forestall it".\footnote{NZJA Minutes (15-16 September 1967: 2). Richards (2002: 3) elucidates this view in the context of Australian journalism, stating that "[h]istorically, any movement within journalism towards focusing on ethical issues has been undermined by a consistent thread of anxiety about the possibility of external regulation, in particular a concern among many journalists that their participation on robust public discussion of ethical issues might prove to be 'the thin edge of the wedge' with regard to such regulation". It appears that, in the New Zealand case also, some journalists thought that adopting a code would be 'the thin edge of the wedge' regarding statutory regulation of the print media.} Characterised as a 'redoubtable agnostic', Rod Lindsay had made something of a name for himself within the NZJA ranks as a formidable opponent during several similar proposals as the code of ethics. It was based upon Lindsay's views on the prospect of statutory intervention, that Canterbury delegates moved that the code not be adopted, a motion which was lost.\footnote{NZJA Minutes (15-16 September 1967: 2).}  

The second issue debated at the 1967 conference was if a code were to be adopted, whether it would be accompanied by enforcement machinery. As had been the case five years earlier, a range of views was expressed on this matter. One concern was that "if the Ethics Committee had powers over journalists this could lead to the code being used for political or other undesirable purposes".\footnote{Ibid: 2.} Auckland delegate, R. (Ron) Taylor, expressed that while his branch "opposed the idea of a code with disciplinary powers", it acknowledged that "a code would be preferable than having a press council imposed upon it by legislation".\footnote{Ibid: 2.} Ian Templeton recollects that additional "[c]ounter-arguments included: it did not have any teeth, what would happen if someone breached it, and it was just a 'useless' collection of pious words".\footnote{Ian Templeton (27 March 2003: Personal Communication).} Auckland representatives then moved that the code should be adopted provided that the ethics committee had "only investigating and advisory powers".\footnote{NZJA Minutes (15-16 September 1967: 3).} This motion was accepted.  

Having gained the necessary support for adopting a code, discussion then turned to the content of the code, which was modelled on the code of the AJA. However, a motion was carried to include an additional clause stipulating the right of journalists to refuse to carry out an assignment if it involved intruding on private grief (which was not a feature of the then-AJA code).\footnote{The New Zealand Journalist (September 1967: 1).} Other concerns were less easily resolved. Warren Page recalls that one particular clause was the topic of some
controversy among NZJA members. The clause concerned, which was derived from the AJA code, stated that a member “shall not on any occasion take an unfair or improper advantage of a fellow member of the Association”. This was contentious due to a “perceived conflict between the code’s requirement to assist fellow members versus the practicalities of hard competition for advantage over rivals”.137 Page recounts that “some of us were not prepared to give up any exclusive story or angle our luck or initiative had taken us”.138 While a consensus was reached that this clause would not have to be taken so literally,139 its controversial status may explain why the code was adopted as “a voluntary one with no machinery in place for its enforcement” 140

After the conference had debated and amended the draft code, it was adopted in its revised form. Although the ethics committee charged with overseeing adherence to the code was established without disciplinary or censuring powers, it could make recommendations on the action to be taken for any breach of the code to the NZJA council.141 In a televised interview screened at the time, NZJA president Ian Templeton stated that the code formed a “basic set of common sense rules generally already adhered to by journalists” which would be “of particular value to youngsters beginning their career”.142 By the end of 1967, an ethics committee had been appointed comprising the NZJA’s president Ian Templeton, vice-president Desmond Fitzgerald, and NZJA council member B. W. Mills,143 and the code was distributed in a wallet-sized card format to members.144

Assessing the development of the NZJA code of ethics as a ‘professional strategy’

By 1967, the NZJA had adopted a written code of ethics which can be seen in the context of journalists’ ambitions for ‘professionalism’. As illustrated above, advocates of ‘professionalism’ for journalists conceived of the term as acquiring a

---

137 Warren Page (23 March 2000: Personal communication).
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
140 Tony Wilton (28 March 2000: Personal communication).
141 The New Zealand Journalist (September 1967: 1).
142 Ibid: 1.
143 NZJA Minutes (2 October 1967: 3; 6 November 1967: 2).
144 Parry (1968: 29). The text of the NZJA code is included in Appendix A.
status 'on par with the accepted professions'.\textsuperscript{145} NZJA leaders believed that by emulating the infrastructure of the 'recognised professions', journalists could acquire the social esteem and economic rewards these occupations enjoyed. Hence, the NZJA adopted the ideal of 'professionalism' as a strategy to advance the social and economic interests of working journalists in addition to the traditional industrial measures used by the NZJA. NZJA leaders were motivated by their belief that adopting the 'trappings' of professionalism would serve to increase their industrial bargaining power, as a means of substantiating journalists' claims both in and outside of the Arbitration Court to professional status and to higher economic rewards for its practitioners. The emergence of the NZJA code in 1967 can be understood as an offshoot of this ambition.

Industrial issues also influenced the NZJA's efforts to adopt a code for journalists on other levels. By adopting a code, the NZJA also sought to gain control over the maintenance of ethical standards within the wider journalism industry. In doing so, journalists' professional prerogative could be exercised, and ethical standards could be monitored by journalists themselves without the interference of employers. However, the NPA was not the only source of opposition to the idea of a code for New Zealand journalists.

The eventual adoption of a code of ethics only came after a period of struggle within the NZJA over the benefits of a code for journalists. This diversity of opinion within the NZJA as to the benefits of 'professionalism' had featured prominently in the NZJA's effort to create a professional institute of journalists, and in the evolution of journalism education and training.\textsuperscript{146} While advocates of professionalism were typically found amongst the younger generation of journalists, who believed that the importance of their occupation warranted both the accountability structures and the status of the 'accepted professions', this view was not shared by all NZJA members.

\textsuperscript{145} George Griffiths (23 March 2003: Personal Communication).

\textsuperscript{146} This diversity of opinions reflected the lack of unity of the NZJA, and the fact that by the 1960s, the constituent branches were operating almost independently. The Auckland branch broke away from the NZJA for the purposes of national award proceedings in late 1954 to seek its own separate award (\textit{The New Zealand Journalist}, September 1954: 1). This move had been considered by the Auckland branch as early as 1945 (\textit{The New Zealand Journalist}, 15 June 1945: 1). The Auckland branch had long believed that because the metropolitan employers in the region were more prosperous, Auckland should have a separate pay scale to the rest of the country's journalists, arguing that if Auckland employers did pay more, this would force other employers to also do to prevent a drift of journalists northwards. However, the rest of the NZJA branches wanted to retain a 'unified approach' (NZJA, 1962: 41-42). The Auckland union remained affiliated with the NZJA until 1973 when it finally broke away completely to become the Northern Journalists' Union (NJU).
Opponents tended to be found among the ‘old hands’ who dismissed ‘professionalism’ as both an occupational ideal (theirs was a ‘craft’ at best), and as a plausible alternative to industrial measures in advancing the interests of journalists. This conflict was reflected in the opposition to the NZJA’s proposal to adopt a code of ethics.

Another factor slowing the adopting of a code was a widespread perception both inside of the NZJA and outside of it that a written code of ethics for journalists in the New Zealand context was unnecessary. The particular operating conditions of the New Zealand press, characterised by comparatively little competition between newspapers, was perhaps another reason behind the lack of urgency behind the NZJA’s adoption of an ethics code. However, with an increasing public (and political) interest in such a code, the NZJA’s effort was also driven by the changing culture in which the NZJA was functioning during the 1960s, with an increasing demand for journalistic accountability. As the ‘lesser of two evils’, it was with the adoption of a code of ethics that the NZJA responded.

**The code of ethics in action**

The first complaint alleging a breach of the NZJA code came in 1970 against two *New Zealand Truth* journalists. The ethics committee of the Wellington branch of the NZJA which considered the complaint found it as ‘not sustained’. In 1971, the ethics committee considered another case brought before it by the Wellington branch concerning an alleged breach of clause 6 of the code: “To reveal their identity as members of the press on all occasions when not to do so would be contrary to ethical standards”. The Wellington union’s complaint alleged the failure of a journalist to identify themself as such prior to conducting an interview. The committee concluded that due to a possible misunderstanding between the two parties involved in the incident it was undecided whether the complaint was justified.

The code was also later used as the basis for the NZJU’s political agitation in response to perceptions of the Muldoon government’s political interference in broadcasting, a threat to press freedom that the NZJU feared could extend to newspapers. A resolution was made thus that:

---

147 NZJA Minutes (4 May 1970: 3).
148 NZJA Minutes (29 April 1971: 1).
149 NZJU Minutes (9 March 1976: 1).
Because the Code of Ethics of New Zealand journalists requires them 'not to suppress essential facts, and not to distort the truth by omission or wrongful emphasis' journalists cannot in conscience accept restrictions on the freedom of the press such as those that were imposed by the 1951 Emergency Regulations under the authority of the Public Safety Conservation Act 1932 and accordingly that the NZU commits itself to absolute opposition to peacetime censorship by any government and that in the event of censorship, the union will still expect all its members to honour the Code of Ethics and will give unlimited support to any members who is prosecuted for ethical journalism.\textsuperscript{150}

6.6 The code is backed with enforcement provisions

The 'voluntary' code of ethics was operated until 1974, when the merger between the provincial branches (excluding the Auckland branch which operated as the Northern Journalists' Union) took place.\textsuperscript{151} The NZJA was renamed the New Zealand Journalists' Union (NZU),\textsuperscript{152} and the code adopted by the former association was incorporated into the NZU's rules.\textsuperscript{153} At the 1972 annual conference, the incoming president Bob Fox had stated that "[o]ur long term aim must be to build up journalism as a profession. We must set ourselves standards".\textsuperscript{154} This ambition perhaps motivated the NZU's decision to back the code with enforcement provisions. Once incorporated into the union's rules, a breach of the code could then be subject to disciplinary procedures. As a breach of the rules, a violation of the NZU code could be used as grounds for dismissal from employment for which the union could refuse to pursue grievance on behalf of the member concerned.\textsuperscript{155} A member could be expelled from the NZU after a second breach of the code.\textsuperscript{156} As former president Ian Templeton notes, the concept of a written code had ultimately found favour amongst the majority of journalists.

While it appeared the adoption of the code had no immediate practical effect, journalists did in fact take "ownership" of the concept, and though we had such strenuous arguments over several years about its value, the fact that the

\textsuperscript{150} NZU Minutes (26 May 1976: 2).
\textsuperscript{151} NZU Minutes (16 January 1974).
\textsuperscript{152} The NZU was registered as the New Zealand (except Northern) Journalists' Union on the 20th December 1973, with the consequent dissolution of the NZJA on that date (NZJA Minutes, 16 January 1974). As discussed further in chapter eight, the name change from 'association' to 'union' was a significant one, as it was symptomatic of a realignment in occupational identity.
\textsuperscript{153} The New Zealand Journalist (July 1973: 2).
\textsuperscript{154} The New Zealand Journalist (October 1972: 6).
\textsuperscript{155} NZU (1975).
\textsuperscript{156} Neville (1975: 14). However, these provisions have rarely been employed since (See Tully, 1992: 146).
NZJU wrote it into the rules eventually underlined that the majority accepted the need for a code.\textsuperscript{157}

**Enforcing ethics and the constraints of industrial demarcation**

Although a consensus appeared to have been attained amongst journalists as to the benefits of a code of ethics, a major weakness of the code was its narrow application. The code of ethics adopted by the NZJA and subsequently, the NZJU, applied only to journalists because news media executives (including editors, deputy editors, editors in chief, and chief sub-editors) were not normally members of the journalists’ union. (These categories of newspaper and magazine staff were usually represented by the NPA). Thus, the industrial demarcation of the wider journalism industry proved to be an inherent weakness of the journalists’ code of ethics, just as it was in the Australian context.\textsuperscript{158} The fact that the NPA did not recognise the NZJA code inevitability meant that, like the parallel Australian case, the district ethics committees could only rule on breaches of the code alleged against NZJA members. Since most editors and many other senior editorial decision-makers were not part of the NZJA’s membership for industrial reasons, the NZJA could not deal with complaints against those with the most power.\textsuperscript{159} Nor could the NZJU always uphold the code’s provisions on areas which fell outside of journalists’ jurisdiction. As a former journalist and national secretary of the journalists’ union wrote:

Standing up for standards has brought, and continues to bring, journalists into conflict with their masters. At times the conflict has been sharp, to the point of industrial action. That has been possible only on the larger and better organised sites . . .\textsuperscript{160}

Normally beyond the direct control of journalists, the issue of ‘advertorials’ was a pertinent illustration of this conflict. In the early 1970s, journalists began voicing their concerns that ‘advertorials’ or advertising supplements compromised journalistic integrity because they masqueraded as news in newspaper columns.\textsuperscript{161} As

\textsuperscript{157} Jan Templeton (27 March 2003: Personal Communication).
\textsuperscript{158} Henningham (1995: 89).
\textsuperscript{159} According to Chadwick (1994: 170-71) this difficulty also plagued the AJA. The code’s narrow application has always been one of its more problematic aspects in both countries because it inherently assumes that journalists have the autonomy and authority to uphold requirements such as “rectify[ing] spontaneously and promptly harmful inaccuracies”. In theory at least, journalists could be subject to the union’s disciplinary procedures for failing to uphold this clause of the code, even though newspaper corrections are not normally the prerogative of journalists.
\textsuperscript{160} Wilton (1992: 195).
\textsuperscript{161} *The New Zealand Journalist* (May/June 1973: 1).
such, most journalists believed that their preparation should be domain of the advertising department. Of course, journalists’ objections were not solely ethical ones; the inconvenience was another prime concern. The NZIU’s 1975 annual conference discussed advertorials’ “unwarranted intrusion into editorial space” and the NZIU executive wrote to the NPA to “express concern at the new type of advertising which could lead to even less desirable practices”. A further attempt to resolve the issue on a national basis with the NPA occurred later that year with a second letter to the NPA “seeking to establish a mutually acceptable policy on the subject”. Then national secretary of the NZIU, Mike Conway, stated that:

If publishers themselves do not maintain reasonable standards the Union will reluctantly step into the breach in order to protect professional standards and the long-term interests of the public … [T]his Union certainly does not wish to exercise any form of control over advertising but control does have to be exercised.

A joint committee ruled that journalists could be required to prepare “supplements and special features on topics specified by the editor to be of public interest, providing they involve the exercise of normal journalistic standards”. A procedure was also suggested for settling disputes over whether a particular supplement qualified, however, the supplement still had to be prepared in the meantime. Journalists rejected this proposal and at their 1976 annual conference resolved “that journalists should not be required as part of their normal duties to writer or process copy for advertising-based features, unless specifically employed for that purpose”. It is perhaps of little surprise then, that given the apparent failure of its code to address such conflicts the NZIU found itself forced to employ industrial tactics to achieve its interests, as chapter eight explores further.

6.7 Code revisions in the 1980s

Following the incorporation of the code of ethics into the rules of the NZIU, no changes to the code itself were made until the following decade. In 1984 when the
AJA undertook a revision of its code of ethics, the NZJU began considering revising its own code. The NZJU believed that “there has been a feeling for some time that the code should be reviewed and strengthened”.\textsuperscript{170} The NZJU decided to consider the AJA’s report of recommended changes to its code with a view to a rules amendment at the following year’s annual conference.\textsuperscript{171} However, it was two years later until the issue of revising the NZJU code of ethics received any further attention.

At a 1986 meeting of the national council of the NZJU, a suggestion was made to incorporate a clause in the code ruling out journalists’ acceptance of ‘freebies’. Brent Edwards, who moved the motion, argued that the code should rule out such practices in order to acknowledge the negative implications of ‘sponsored news’ on journalistic independence.\textsuperscript{172} Executive member Chris Cessford was charged with coordinating the drafting of the new clause, plus any further amendments to the code.\textsuperscript{173} These proposed changes would be considered at the June meeting of the executive after constituent branches had submitted any proposals of their own.\textsuperscript{174}

A proposed ‘freebies’ clause was debated at the NZJU’s 1987 annual conference. The notion of a complete ban on freebies was not well received by a number of delegates. Some contended that freebies were both an important ‘perk of the job’ and gave the ‘less wealthy’ newspapers access to stories otherwise unavailable to them.\textsuperscript{175} The November 1987 edition of \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} recorded that an amendment had been agreed upon, with “the right to refuse free travel, gifts and other personal advantages which would be seen to compromise the integrity of journalists” incorporated as a new clause into the code.\textsuperscript{176} However, this article appears to have been written before the amendment had been finalised, as this particular clause never appeared in the code. Evidently, something of a ‘compromise’ was reached between those who advocated a complete ban on the acceptance of freebies, and those who did not, which was reflected in the amendments tabled in 1988 just prior to the union’s 1989 merger when it became the Journalists and Graphic Process Workers’ Union (JAGPRO).

\textsuperscript{170} NZJU Minutes (21 September 1984: 9).
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid: 9.
\textsuperscript{172} Edwards (1992: 2).
\textsuperscript{173} NZJU Minutes (12 March 1987: 1).
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid: 1.
\textsuperscript{175} Edwards (1992: 2).
\textsuperscript{176} \textit{The New Zealand Journalist} (November 1987: 2).
Rather than entirely ruling out the acceptance of freebies, the revised code reflected an attempt to alert journalists to the fact that freebies can compromise journalistic independence and the integrity of a newspaper. Two new clauses addressed the issue. The first read “[t]hey shall not allow their professional duties to be influenced by any consideration, gift or advantage offered and, where appropriate, shall disclose any such offer”. The second clause proscribed that journalists “… shall not allow advertising or commercial considerations to influence them in their professional duties”. This latter clause also reflected an attempt to confront the issue of advertorials that the NZJU had grappled with in the 1970s. The existing clause ruling out the acceptance of bribes by journalists was altered to require that journalists “… shall not allow their personal interests to influence them in their professional duties”.

The 1988 revision of the NZJU code of ethics

In 1988, a full revision of the NZJU code occurred. Following the lead of the AJA, which had revised its own code in 1984, most of the NZJU’s amendments replicated those of the AJA. In addition to the AJA’s new provisions on freebies, the NZJU incorporated its anti-discrimination requirements. As Hirst explained of the AJA revision, this clause was driven by the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s pressing for the acknowledgement of minority and other rights.\(^\text{177}\) In addition, the existing clause of the NZJU code relating to intrusion into private grief was re-worded and expanded to provide for “the right of the journalists to resist compulsion to intrude” on both private grief and personal privacy.\(^\text{178}\) Other minor amendments to the code in 1988 included the removal of gender exclusive language, the acknowledgement of (private) broadcasting journalists (some of whom were by then NZJA members), and the requirement that ‘harmful inaccuracies’ be corrected. This effort to bring the code up to date with changes in journalistic practice was tempered by the fact that some of the code’s provisions were often outside of a journalist’s control. This of course, posed as a central impediment to its enforcement. For instance, the requirement to make corrections tends not to be the prerogative of

\(^{177}\) Hirst (1997: 72).

\(^{178}\) The wording of the revised privacy clause in the NZJU’s code was the same as that of the AJA code’s new clause on privacy (see Appendix A) although before 1984, the AJA code did not cover the issue of privacy at all (Hirst, 1997: 74) so it is likely that the direction came in part from the NZJA’s 1967 code. See Appendix A for the current version of the AJA code operated by the MEAA.
journalists. Recognition of the limited powers of journalists to enforce their code perhaps explains the seemingly weak wording of this clause in the NZJA code, advising journalists ‘to do their utmost’ to ensure that ‘harmful inaccuracies’ are corrected.

When the NZJU became JAGPRO in 1989, the code was adopted in the same form. However, early in the existence of JAGPRO there was a view that these changes, particularly concerning the issue of freebies, were inadequate. JAGPRO national president Brent Edwards (who was responsible for the 1988 initiative to address the question of freebies in the code) wanted to see further tightening of the existing provisions. According to Edwards, journalistic professionalism was at stake:

When we accept a freebie we immediately allow a commercial consideration to influence our professional duties … The question we need to ask is whether the trip or event we are going to is newsworthy. If it’s not newsworthy enough for the paper to pay its own way then it shouldn’t be covered … There is no place for freebies in the media. By rejecting them we declare openly the media is not for sale and there is no way we open ourselves up to the likelihood of being influenced by ‘any consideration, gift, or advantage offered’ … The only way we can maintain our independence and professionalism is to uphold tough ethical standards. At the moment we fail that test.¹⁸⁰

In 1990, the annual conference agreed that the council should be directed to formulate a new clause to ‘toughen up’ on the use of freebies by journalists.¹⁸¹ However, a ban on freebies altogether was not enacted as the current version of the code confirms.¹⁸² A revision of the journalists’ code, now under the aegis of the media section of the Engineering, Printing, and Manufacturing Union (EPMU), has been considered recently following the MEAA’s 1998 revision.¹⁸³ Not only would such a review bring the code up to date with changes in the journalistic environment over the last fifteen years, it could also serve as a means of re-articulating the role and responsibilities of journalists in a changing media landscape in which the traditional work sphere of journalists is continually being contested and reshaped.

¹⁸⁰ Edwards (1990: 3).
¹⁸¹ Ibid: 3.
¹⁸² See Appendix A for the text of the EPMU journalists’ code.
¹⁸³ Wilton (28 March 2000: Personal Communication). The MEAA review of the journalists’ code of ethics was instigated in 1994 and reported in late 1996. A revised code was adopted in 1998, which elaborates on issues the previous version overlooked such as plagiarism and chequebook journalism. For further discussion on the review, see Elgar (1996); and Hirst (1997; 2002).
Journalists' codes of ethics: Challenges for the future

The commercial pressures facing journalists provide a pertinent illustration of the code's weaknesses. While the code makes an effort to define journalism as an autonomous and independent profession, its prescriptive nature obscures the demands of the contemporary journalistic environment in which eschewing 'commercial considerations' is rarely the prerogative of journalists themselves.¹⁸⁴ For instance, the code instructs journalists not to 'allow personal interests to influence them in their professional duties'; 'not allow their professional duties to be influenced by any consideration, gift or advantage offered, and where appropriate shall disclose any such offer; and states that journalists 'shall not allow advertising or commercial considerations to influence them in their professional duties'. In a journalistic environment in which commercial pressures on journalists are ever-present and increasingly insidious, a code should arguably acknowledge them. A code cannot 'solve' these issues for journalists, but it could feasibly highlight their existence and potential influence on the practice of journalism in a contemporary climate of practice. Overall, the existing code of ethics is an inadequate vehicle for the ethical-decision making required of journalists in a contemporary context. It also does little to address some of the central tensions surrounding the status of journalists that has plagued the development of the occupation since the nineteenth century. These difficulties will only become more pressing in the future, as Step suggests:

As society becomes more complex and contentious, journalists’ decisions invite sharper public scrutiny. The result has been rising concern both inside and outside newsrooms about what constitutes journalistic ethics, who decides what standards apply, and what, if anything, happens when journalists transgress the rules.¹⁸⁵

The development of a code of ethics by New Zealand journalists offered a means of collectively articulating their conception of their role and responsibilities. It presented not only a means whereby journalists could demonstrate a commitment to the public interest and professionalism, but also a means of addressing the tensions surrounding the notion of journalistic professionalism itself. Central to this tension therefore, is the question of journalistic accountability – to whom are journalists

¹⁸⁴ See McManus (1997) for further discussion of the inherent weaknesses of journalists’ codes of ethics due to their failure to acknowledge the limits of journalists’ control over the news product.
primarily accountable? This tension was reflected in the draft creed for journalists produced in 1945 by the NZJA in its statement that:

   The proper test of the value of a daily newspaper is its service to the community ... The journalist owes the fullest loyalty to his/sic/ employer, his newspaper and his fellow workers, and has the right to expect that this should not conflict with his/sic/ ultimate loyalty to the interests of the people.

The continued ambiguity amongst journalists as to the nature and benefits of professionalism has had a visible impact upon the development of ethics and standards for the occupation. This ambiguity resulted in a weaker code than the NZJA leaders perhaps originally envisaged. As such, the contradictions surrounding the role and status of journalists have remained. Questions of whether journalism is a profession accountable to the public, or 'just another business' accountable to shareholders, remain as pertinent as ever. Although simply reforming the journalists’ code is hardly likely to provide a catalyst for the requisite change, it may well offer a basis for further awareness, reflection and debate. As Hirst argues,

   even good Codes of Ethics may be difficult to implement when the dominant culture in the newsroom is based on commercial relations of production ... [T]o change newsroom culture will require more than mild amendments to the Code of Ethics. The aim to is to encourage further debate among media professionals and journalism educators about the history and the social relations of news production. Only by radically overhauling the very foundations of the media as a commodity enterprise can the public interest achieve ascendency over the profit motive.186

The impact of the industrial relations climate on the journalists’ union in the 1990s

The impact of industrial relations within the journalism industry on the development of the journalistic occupation has been a central theme of this thesis. The development of the journalists' code of ethics is no exception. The fact that the code has remained unchanged since 1988 may be related also to the position in which JAGPRO (like other unions) was placed following the Employment Contracts Act (ECA) 1991. The ECA removed compulsory union membership with its principles of ‘freedom of association’, meaning that there would no longer be benefits of union membership for employees.187 The repercussions of this legislation created difficulties

187 Walsh (1997: 279-280). Although there are indications that journalists' union involvement has increased since the enactment of the Employment Relations Act in 1999 (EPMU, 29 September 2003), the new legislation seems unlikely to completely reverse the effects of the ECA.
for JAGPRO in the 1990s. Not only did the decline of union coverage undermine JAGPRO’s authority and ability to play a role in the promotion of professional and ethical standards of journalists, its industrial capacity to deal with professional and ethical issues was significantly weakened through the new legislation. As Wilton notes,

The Employment Contracts Act has reduced the right to strike to the point that journalists who try to block sponsorship deals, as the Evening Post chapel did in 1988, face the sack, injunctions and claims for damages. There is no level playing field in this game.\textsuperscript{189}

\section*{6.8 Conclusion}

This chapter has illustrated that the NZJA employed ‘professionalism’ as both an occupational ideal and as an alternative strategy to traditional industrial measures in advancing the interests of journalists. The desire for professional recognition was an ambition amongst journalists that grew, firstly, out of the view that their status had not kept pace with developments in the wider journalistic environment which made demands on journalists that were not reflected in their social and economic status. Comparisons of the importance of journalistic work to that of ‘other professions’ provided a related foundation for journalists’ ambitions for professional recognition. NZJA leaders were of the view that because journalistic work as of just as much importance to society as that of the ‘accepted professions’ like medicine and law, its practitioners should receive that same recognition as doctors and lawyers. NZJA leaders believed that by emulating the infrastructure of the ‘recognised professions’, journalists could acquire the social esteem and economic rewards these occupations enjoyed.

The adoption of a code of ethics as a hallmark of the ‘recognised professions’ was a strategy NZJA leaders believed would promote both their professional status and their industrial position. The NZJA’s desire for professional recognition for journalists was a driving force behind the emergence of the 1945 draft ‘creed for journalists’, which was also motivated by threats to the autonomy and authority of the journalistic occupation. However, tension over the ‘professional vision’ for, and

\textsuperscript{188} The decline in the regulatory role of the journalists’ union perhaps contributed to the appearance of internal codes in this country after 1991, when journalists were no longer required to be union members and thus adhere to a shared set of ethical guidelines (Warren Page, 23 March 2000: Personal Communication).

\textsuperscript{189} Wilton (1992: 195-6).
among New Zealand journalists had implications for the development of development of ethical codes by New Zealand journalists. Not all journalists concurred with the notion of 'professionalism' as either an occupational ideal for journalists, or as a plausible alternative to industrial routines to advance their social and economic position. Indeed, the ambiguity as to the nature and benefits of 'professionalism' for journalists was the central reason behind the disappearance of the 1945 creed from the NZJA's agenda. However, interest in adopting a code of ethics was re-ignited during the 1960s when pressures on journalists intensified. Not only was the NZJA concerned with increasing the professional status of the journalistic occupation for economic reasons, they feared that if the occupation failed to attract and retain quality journalists, the overall quality of New Zealand newspapers would suffer. Just as the NZJA's efforts to create ethics and standards for journalists were motivated largely by industrial issues, industrial politics and inherent power relations within the wider journalism industry factored heavily in the application of the journalists' code.

An overarching theme of this chapter was that the NZJA's efforts to exert control over journalistic ethics were motivated by both professional and industrial issues. By assuming the role as the primary adjudicator of journalists' ethical standards, the NZJA was attempting to claim for journalists the 'professional prerogative' enjoyed by 'true professionals' including the right to internally regulate ethical standards. At the same time, the NZJA was also asserting its right to oversee journalists' performance without the interference of editors or newspaper owners. Industrial relations issues later influenced the application of the journalists' code. Since most editors and many other senior editorial decision-makers were not part of the NZJA's membership, the NZJA (and later the NZJU) could not deal with complaints against those with the most power. Nor could the union always uphold the code's provisions on areas that fell outside of journalists' jurisdiction. Indeed, this chapter has illustrated that journalists' attempts to codify and uphold ethical standards was undermined by their position in the 'power hierarchy' of the wider industry.

The lack of power of journalists to enforce ethics and standards was only exacerbated by Employment Contracts Act 1991. The subsequent decline of union coverage undermine the journalists' union's (then JAGPRO's) authority and ability to play a role in the promotion of professional and ethical standards of journalists. The new legislation also saw a decline in the power and authority of the journalists' union to address professional and ethical issues, placing increased responsibility on the New
CHAPTER SEVEN
‘Making Standards stick’: The formalisation of journalists’ self-regulatory structures\(^1\)

If the news media system is to exert its control functions with greater vigour it requires that journalists should have much more public professional recognition and responsibility ... [T]he ‘self-righting process’ ... depends on journalists checking and correcting one another. This means that they must construct and use a system of self-government based on professional ethics and in that sense they are in the same situation as lawyers, doctors, academics and other professional groups in the country. Any attempt, however, to advance the professional status of journalists will require machinery of exclusion and qualifications for entry, as well as ethical codes and measures for their enforcement. So far the industry has shown little inclination to move in this direction ... \(^2\)

7.1 Introduction

This comment, made just prior to the establishment of a press council in New Zealand, captured the NZJA’s rationale for self-regulation. This chapter explores the impact of the NZJA’s ambitions for professionalism on the emergence of journalistic self-regulation in New Zealand.\(^3\) In addition to journalists’ ambitions for professionalism, this chapter considers the political and social background to the formalisation of self-regulation via the establishment of the New Zealand Press Council (NZPC). The constraints journalists faced in their attempts to construct a formal system of professional self-control are explored, with particular attention paid to the industrial politics within the journalism industry. Finally, this chapter considers the recent reforms of self-regulation in New Zealand, raising questions about the nature of journalistic professionalism reflected in the contemporary context.

---

\(^1\) Parts of the following chapter have been adapted from the author’s MA thesis (see reference list) however, both the scope and the content has been extended for the present thesis.

\(^2\) Cleveland (1970: 210-11).

\(^3\) Because this thesis confines its attention to the role of New Zealand journalists in the development of professional structures, this chapter concentrates on the evolution of print media self-regulation. By contrast, broadcasting standards regulation has always been the prerogative of governments, rather than of journalists themselves. Not only does the evolution of print media self-regulation illustrate the constraints on journalists’ ability to act to promote professionalism, it also highlights the wider industrial politics that have had a bearing on journalistic professionalism in New Zealand, as is discussed further in this chapter.
Journalists and the promotion of 'professionsm': The pursuit of 'white-collar control'

As illustrated above, before journalistic self-regulation was formally established in New Zealand, the NZJA operated as a quasi-regulatory agency which took on for itself the responsibility for monitoring journalistic standards, albeit in an informal way. While the NZJA did not assume the full range of self-regulatory functions expected of press councils, it was an active promoter of both 'professionsm' and press freedom (duties commonly ascribed to press councils) before such a body was instituted in New Zealand. Indeed, the existence of both a 'professionally conscious' journalists' association and a 'strong proprietors' association' (the NPA) was seen to have forestalled demands for a press council until relatively late into the twentieth century. 4

As the previous chapters have highlighted, the NZJA's promotion of 'professionsm' was motivated by the view that, in essence, the importance of journalistic work was not recognised by society. In this regard, the key social and economic issue facing journalists at the turn of the twentieth century prevailed well into the second half of the century. At the core of this issue was the apparent discrepancy between the relatively high public regard for the social and political functions of newspapers and journalism, and the relatively low status of the occupation of journalists. Many journalists were of the view that because their work was of just as much importance to society as the 'accepted professions' of medicine and law, journalists should receive that same public recognition as doctors and lawyers.

As chapter six illustrated, the NZJA's efforts to articulate and codify ethical standards for their profession culminated in the association's adoption of a code of ethics in 1967. In doing so, the NZJA attempted to construct a system of 'professional self-control' for journalists akin to that of 'other professions' like lawyers, doctors, and accountants whose professional infrastructure (and thus their status) journalists sought to emulate. Although the NZJA's commitment to upholding ethical standards was reaffirmed with the incorporation of the code into the rules of newly reconstituted union in the early 1970s, making standards 'stick' necessitated industry-wide support. As illustrated above, arguments for journalistic professionalism intensified in the face

4 Perry (1982: 5).
of threats to the autonomy, authority and status of the occupation and saw the progressive development of the journalistic occupation inspired by professional ideals and structures which were adapted to suit its occupational role. This was also the case concerning the development of journalistic self-regulation which was modelled on the principle of 'white-collar control', as this chapter explores.

**Industrial politics and the 'politics of industry'**

Further insight into the evolution of self-regulation is offered by the nature of both the journalistic occupation itself and the wider industry’s commercial structure and inherent power relations. New Zealand journalism shares with other comparable countries the characteristic of existing as a complex occupation constituted by significant divisions in its wider membership. This division represents, at its most basic level, a tension between employers and employees, with significant implications for journalistic professionalism. As the previous chapters have illustrated, the realisation of journalists’ professional ideals was undermined, in large measure, by their relative lack of power to act in the face of employer opposition to their professionalising initiatives. This chapter aims to highlight that an understanding of the lack of power and authority of the journalistic occupation in relation to media owners/employers is also crucial to an understanding of the development of self-regulation.

This division between journalists and their employers first appeared at the industrial level in the early twentieth century with the demise of the NZIJ. The NZIJ was an organisation that had been open to 'all classes of journalists' regardless of their status as working journalist, newspaper editor, or publisher. Largely because of the occupational distinctions felt between journalists and newspaper publishers, New Zealand journalism increasingly became organised along trade union lines. The industrial organisation of New Zealand journalists and other industry representatives according to their role as employees and employers respectively served to widen the gaps between the interests of journalists as employees, and those of newspaper publishers as employers. As previous chapters have highlighted, tensions on the industrial relations front have been a central force shaping both journalists ambitions for 'professionalism', as well as publishers/employers' responses to them. Nowhere
was this tension felt more strongly than in the context of the development of industry-wide journalistic self-regulation, as this chapter aims to illustrate.

**Professionalism and ‘press freedom’**

Early on in the existence of the journalists' code, the notion of industry-wide self-regulation presented itself as a potential solution for the lack of recognition of the NZJA-defined ethical standards. However, achieving an industry-wide consensus for the notion of self-regulation was less than forthcoming as this chapter explains. The failure of the NPA to recognise the NZJA’s code was perhaps symptomatic of its view of self-regulation as anathema to the interests of newspaper publishers. Issues of press freedom undoubtedly factored into this attitude. As noted by Palmer, “[i]t is New Zealand press inherited without effort a freedom which was won the hard way in Britain and America”.⁵ Some would suggest that this freedom has been taken for granted by the New Zealand press over the twentieth century.

Encroachment on press freedom has been minimal in New Zealand, especially when compared to overseas' experiences. Although the comparatively high ethical standards of the New Zealand press perhaps justified the apparent lack of parliamentary interest,⁶ others were more cynical about the degree of freedom accorded to New Zealand newspapers. One critic went so far as to suggest that ‘press freedom’ decoded in the eyes of New Zealand newspapers meant “the freedom neither to publish nor to make any effort to improve its standards”.⁷ Though such opinion was rarely expressed, it certainly captured the complacency that characterised the wider industry’s attitude to active journalistic self-regulation until comparatively late in the twentieth century.

---

⁵ Palmer (1951: 12).
⁶ Any comparison of the ethical standards of the New Zealand print media to those of other countries must take into account the market conditions of the respective cases. For example, the highly competitive climate of practice of the British print media contrasts with the relatively limited degree of competition the New Zealand newspapers have enjoyed for the majority of the twentieth century. New Zealand’s daily newspapers have tended to enjoy a monopoly or semi-monopoly situation with many cities or towns dominated by one newspaper company. Consequently, the ethical standards of the New Zealand press have never been challenged to the degree that those of the British press have. As Engel (1998) explains, “when newspapers are under less competitive pressure they can afford to be a bit more restrained”.
⁷ Worth (1964: 2).
In contrast to several European countries, whose systems of journalistic self-regulation were established during the first half of the twentieth century,\(^8\) the New Zealand journalism industry believed that its high standard of ethical conduct did not warrant the implementation of self-regulatory structures. Typical were the comments made in 1957 by the president of the NPA, D. S. Smith: “The standard of our press is frequently praised by visitors, and in modesty we can accept that praise, knowing that we ... strive to maintain a high standard of ethics”.\(^9\) One critic scathingly captured the industry’s reluctance to self-regulate, noting that:

The kindest things, indeed, almost the only kind of things said about New Zealand’s newspapers have been said by their editors or their owners. Self-praise has been indulged in rather lavishly ... Complacency has often been said to be one of the most salient characteristics of New Zealand society. It has certainly been one of the most striking features of our newspapers.\(^10\)

### 7.2 The background: A governmental commission on the New Zealand Press?

The period following the close of World War Two was one of intense interest in the workings of the press in the United States and Europe, an interest which culminated in the formation of both public and private inquiries into the structure and content of newspapers. Notably, in Britain, the first of successive government-appointed royal commissions on the press was convened in 1947 in an attempt to inspire internal reform in the press, breaking with the libertarian tradition of non-interference in the press.\(^11\) Even the constitutional protection afforded to the United States press did not prevent the privately sponsored Hutchins Commission’s efforts to inject ‘social responsibility’ into that country’s press the same year. By contrast, New Zealand governments have generally left the regulation of print media standards to the print media itself.

 Nonetheless, in 1947 there were political murmurings in New Zealand concerning the need for an inquiry into the ownership, control, and conduct of the

---

\(^8\) For example, press councils were established in Sweden as early as 1916, in Finland in 1927, and in Norway in 1928 (Bertrand, 2003).

\(^9\) Smith (1957: ix).

\(^10\) Bassett (1971: 1).

\(^11\) O’Malley (1997: 153). The 1947 Royal Commission on the British press set a precedent for two further such inquiries which were established in 1961, and 1974 respectively. In addition to a 1972 committee on privacy in which the press featured prominently, British governments also instigated a further committee on privacy in 1990, and a review of press self-regulation in 1993. (For further discussion, see Elsaka, 2001a).
press more broadly. Prime Minister Peter Fraser was initially sympathetic to the interests of 'social responsibility' underpinning such an inquiry:

It cannot in any fair or understandable sense be confined to the right of the proprietors of newspapers to publish whatever matter they may decide should be published, but must include the acceptance and discharge by them of the high responsibility of ensuring that there is a fair selection of news and a fair representation of views in their columns.\(^\text{12}\)

However, in 1949 the Labour Government decided against holding an inquiry into the structure and content of the New Zealand press.\(^\text{13}\) This set a precedent for future governments, which was reaffirmed by the National Government the following year, when Prime Minister Holland also denounced the need for an inquiry into the New Zealand press.\(^\text{14}\) Evidently, both major parties had been sufficiently convinced by the NPA’s ‘evidence’ concerning the respective differences between the New Zealand press and that of Britain, the United States, and Australia.\(^\text{15}\)

While both the two main political parties and the NPA were dismissive as to the need for a governmental inquiry into the press, the NZJA’s president Keith Gunn had welcomed the prospect.

If there is any real uneasiness in this country about the conduct of the Press, an open inquiry will be welcomed by journalists ... if it would succeed in dispelling the fog and prejudice with which the conduct of the Press in this Dominion has been invested. The proprietors are doubtless well able to look after themselves, but the working journalist has ordinarily no opportunity to answer the shafts of reflected and direct criticism that come his/[sic] way... Meanwhile, we can only declare ourselves willing and expecting to take a responsible part in any commission of inquiry that may be held into the New Zealand Press.\(^\text{16}\)

Not surprisingly, the NZJA took issue with allegations of suppression, distortion, and falsification that lent support to an inquiry into the New Zealand press because it was on journalists that such accusations typically fell. In the NZJA’s view, these allegations did little to promote the status and public perception of journalists.\(^\text{17}\)

In welcoming a governmental inquiry into the press, the NZJA voiced its concern

\(^\text{12}\) The New Zealand Journalist (15 September December 1947: 1).
\(^\text{13}\) NZPD (1949: 567); NZPD (1950: 1523).
\(^\text{14}\) NZPD (1949: 567); NZPD (1950: 1523).
\(^\text{15}\) The New Zealand Journalist (15 September 1947: 5).
\(^\text{16}\) Ibid: 5.
\(^\text{17}\) Ibid: 5.
about the findings of a recent survey quoted in parliament concerning the attitudes of the public toward the press. An alarming 69% of respondents believed the news and views of the press were coloured by advertisers, with 89% considering that newspaper content was coloured by the views of newspaper proprietors.

The NZJA president, Keith Gunn, told the 1947 annual conference that despite … the knowledge that many of our members hold political views entirely different from those expressed in their newspapers’ editorials, and however scant the regard we have as journalists for advertisers in the news columns, the fact is that we are saddled with the[se] charges.

The NZJA encouraged an inquiry into the press “that would enable the public to learn by way of evidence given by journalists of the attempts at suppression, distortion and even near-intimidation which reporters so often experience at news sources in their efforts to give readers the facts without breaches of bona fide confidences”. Ostensibly, where criticism of the press affected the status of journalists, it was in their interests to do something to remedy this problem. Journalistic self-regulation, via a press council like that found in Britain, was periodically voiced within the NZJA as a means of boosting their public status.

Problems facing the promotion of professional standards at the industry-wide level

The peculiar occupational dimensions of journalism and its wider structures of power posed challenges to the attainment of industry-wide support for journalistic self-regulation. Though journalists tended to couch their ambitions for ‘professionalism’ in terms of improving the conduct of journalists, their ethical standards, and the quality of journalism generally, the NPA appeared unconvinced, and tended to regard cynically such measures as ethical codes and journalistic self-regulation as strategies to increase journalists’ industrial bargaining power. Given that many NPA leaders saw journalists’ pursuit of professional status ‘simply in money terms, as an effort to push up [their] remuneration’, it is perhaps not surprising that their efforts to establish a system of professional self-control akin to ‘other

---

18 Ibid: 5.
19 Ibid: 5.
20 Ibid: 5.
21 Keith Eunson (21 March 2003: Personal Communication).
professions’ did not initially find favour with the employers. The NPA’s attitude towards self-regulation was illustrated by a remark made in 1968:

... New Zealand newspapers tend to adopt a self-righteous attitude. This explains in part the procrastination of the Newspaper Proprietors’ Association towards the establishment of a Press Council. In spite of reluctance to take such a course the NPA should remember that it is not enough that justice should be done. It should be seen to be done.\(^{22}\)

The NPA’s opposition to the notion of ‘professional self-control’ was also aptly illustrated in its response to the NZJA code of ethics, which the NPA chose not to recognise as an industry-wide set of standards applicable to journalists and newspaper executives alike. As noted in chapter six, from the outset newspaper employers believed the journalists’ code to “cut across management prerogative”.\(^{23}\) This implied that as employees, journalists were subject to their employers’ ethical standards and not to any collective standards that their union may adopt.\(^{24}\) Indeed, the notion of the journalists’ union attempting to impose standards on the remainder of the industry would have been viewed with similar disdain. Consequently, the attitude of the NPA meant that there were significant restrictions on the efficacy of the journalists’ code of ethics as a self-regulatory instrument. Like the parallel Australian case, the NZJA’s (and later the NZJU’s) district ethics committees could only rule on breaches of the code alleged against NZJA members. Since most editors and many other senior editorial decision-makers were not part of the NZJA’s membership for industrial reasons, the NZJA could not deal with complaints against those with the most power to actually enforce the standards embodied in the code. These problems continued to plague the NZJU into the 1970s, as chapter six demonstrated.

7.3 Calls for press standards regulation and the establishment of the New Zealand Press Council

Although the NZJA had attempted to codify and monitor journalistic standards with the implementation of its code of ethics in 1967, this development failed to appease those who advocated the formation of journalistic self-regulation at the

\(^{22}\) Parry (1968: 40). It must be noted that this remark was not necessarily one made by an entirely ‘independent observer’ of the New Zealand press; its author, Gordon Parry, was an active member of the Dunedin branch of the NZJA in the 1960s.

\(^{23}\) Tully (1992: 4).

industry-wide level. Ian Templeton was a member of the NZJA executive during the processes leading up to the creation of a press council. He notes that until the late 1960s, "the case for a Press Council fell on deaf ears, even though the example of the UK where a council had been in operation for ten years was arousing the more vocal critics of the newspaper industry to suggest that New Zealand needed one too".25

Indeed, when the ideas for the development of a press council were being floated in the late 1960s, the British Press Council (which was the original 'blueprint' for the NZPC) was nearing its second decade in operation. Having been both the product, and later, the subject of criticism from several government-initiated inquiries into the print media, the BPC thus provided a valuable lesson to the New Zealand press early into its existence: 'Act or be acted on'. Indeed, it is highly likely that there was awareness within the New Zealand press that the implications of failing to acknowledge demands for a self-regulatory body could readily be translated to the New Zealand context. This knowledge perhaps hastened the development of a press council in this country.

As it was, the threat of statutory intervention in the self-regulation of print media standards provided the necessary push for the industry, or in the words of the Press Council itself, "it was self-regulation with a wary eye on the real possibility of statutory intervention".26 As discussed in the previous chapter, the arrival of overseas newspaper barons into the New Zealand market in the 1960s highlighted how that, in spite of the country's tacit commitment to press freedom, the print media were not immune to government intervention; hence the passing of the News Media Ownership Act 1965. Indeed, by 1968, there were rumblings that the Labour Party was planning to include in its manifesto for the 1969 election a commitment to setting up a statutory press council.27 Naturally, this was cause for alarm within the print media industry,

25 Ian Templeton (27 March 2003: Personal Communication).
26 Jeffries (2002).
27 Ian Templeton (27 March 2003: Personal Communication); NZJA Minutes (20-21 September 1968: 2); NZPC (1997: 5). The proposal for "an independent council similar to that of the British Press Council to maintain ethical standards of news dissemination" and for the "establishment of a tribunal for the newspaper industry" were two of seven remits concerning the New Zealand press discussed at the Labour Party's 50th annual conference in May 1966. NZJA members feared that "experienced Labour men/sic/ feel that the party will approve the setting up of a type of organisation such as a press council" and called upon the industry to pre-empt this threat (The New Zealand Journalist, April 1966: 1). One can only speculate as to the rationale behind the Labour Party's proposal for a statutory press council but it is conceivable that the Labour Party was responding to the long-standing perception of newspapers' bias in favour of the National Party (see Holcroft, 1948 for background).
for whom the notion of a state-run Press Council was anathema, cutting across the fundamental principles of freedom of expression and of the press.\textsuperscript{28} It was in response to this threat that the pleas of the NZJA for self-regulation became relevant elsewhere in the newspaper industry.\textsuperscript{29}

While the notion of a government-imposed press council undoubtedly influenced the emergence of an industry-created one, little has been documented about what originally triggered the Labour Party's proposal. However, the socio-political climate of the time is instructive. The 1960s marked a period of significant international interest in press councils by bodies such as UNESCO, the International Press Institute, and the Council of Europe which organised symposiums, and produced various articles, books and reports on the topic of self-regulation.\textsuperscript{30} Although their immediate impact was slight, these activities served to instigate discussion about establishing press councils in a number of countries yet to develop them, including New Zealand. As such, the political interest in the creation of a press council in New Zealand was "not wholly driven by a view that press regulation was needed, but more that it was wanted".\textsuperscript{31}

Moreover, certain social changes and changes in public attitudes have been attributed to the development of a press council in New Zealand. A developing culture of public accountability and institutional transparency was extending to the private sector including the press. The passing of the Ombudsman Act in the early 1960s grew out of the recognition that "the public was no longer prepared to be told that officials and institutions knew best and that complaints could be satisfactorily dealt with 'in-house'. What the public wanted was transparent independence in complaint resolution".\textsuperscript{32} The Act precipitated the adoption of similar systems in the private sector, where the NZPC was one of the first such independent bodies to be developed in New Zealand.\textsuperscript{33}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{28} Ian Templeton (27 March 2003: Personal Communication).  \\
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{30} Bertrand (1990: 8).  \\
\textsuperscript{31} NZPC (1997: 5).  \\
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid: 5.  \\
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid: 5.
\end{flushleft}
The impact of broadcasting standards regulation

Further influences came from the sphere of broadcasting in New Zealand. As in other liberal democratic societies, since its inception the regulatory history of broadcasting in New Zealand has been characterised by direct government attention for reasons of both a practical and political nature.\textsuperscript{34} The ‘scarcity of frequency’ arguments legitimated strict state control of the medium during its formative years. Almost by default, the regulation of broadcasting standards has been a governmental concern ever since. The regulation of programming standards via codes of practice, complete with a complaints procedure and enforcement machinery underwritten by statute, is currently overseen by a statutory watchdog, the Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA). Though formalised in its present form by the Broadcasting Act 1989, New Zealand broadcasters’ system of ‘induced self-regulation’\textsuperscript{35} dates back to the 1960s, when the Broadcasting Corporation was formed as an independent body charged with overseeing broadcasting standards (among a wide variety of other matters). In fact, the free-to-air television code of practice currently operated by the BSA has its origins in the code administered by the Broadcasting Tribunal in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{36} It is conceivable that with the system of self-regulation for broadcasting becoming more structured during the 1960s, some critics believed that a structured system of self-regulation should also apply to the print media.\textsuperscript{37}

The impetus for press industry action

While the decision to establish a self-regulatory regime by the New Zealand print media was not entirely a response to a need to counter abuses it was not entirely without external pressure of press standards either. There was also a degree of public pressure on the industry to institute a self-regulatory body, which appeared to have been simmering for some period. For instance, as early as 1949 a journalism lecturer Alan Mulgan had called for the formation of an ‘Editors’ Association’ with “a committee to which the public could direct complaints against newspapers.”\textsuperscript{38} Mulgan

\textsuperscript{34} See Gibbons (1998: 66-71) and Lichtenberg (1990).
\textsuperscript{35} Burrows and Cheer (1999: 435).
\textsuperscript{36} BSA (2001: 1).
\textsuperscript{37} It is also noteworthy that the informal structures for the regulation of print and broadcast journalists intersected to a degree in the 1960s, with the 1967 NZJA code of ethics applying to both print and private radio journalists who were not eligible for membership of the PSA (for background, see footnote 69, page 226 and footnote 41 on page 263).
\textsuperscript{38} Mulgan (1949: 11).
had envisaged the proposed ‘Editors’ Association’ as a body that would collaborate with the NPA in areas of newspaper ethics and staff training to “raise all standards in the profession, technical and ethical”.

This pressure on the industry to self-regulate in a formal sense came to a head in the 1960s, when various organisations began vocalising their interest in the establishment of press self-regulation in New Zealand. In addition to the United Nations Association of New Zealand, the National Council of Women advocated the establishment of a press council and passed a resolution on the subject at its 1969 annual conference, its views on the subject echoing those of the NZJA. The Radio and Television Journalists’ Society (RTVJS) was another party to express its desire to be kept informed of the NZJA’s plans concerning the press council.

The Post-Primary Teachers’ Association (PPTA) was a further body responsible for earlier requests to have a press council established. The interest of this organisation in a press council stemmed from a high profile case of alleged journalistic misconduct in 1966, which is seen to have brought the idea of a press council “... into the practical realm of politics, and, indeed, gave it urgency”. In response to what was perceived as unethical reportage by the Truth newspaper, an entry in the PPTA Journal in July 1966 claimed that:

39 Ibid: 11.
40 NZIA Minutes (20 October 1969: 2).
41 NZIA Minutes (10 February 1969: 3). While the PSA looked after the industrial interests of journalists that worked for the NZBC, the Radio and Television Journalists’ Society (RTVJS) was formed in 1963 to look after broadcasting journalists’ professional and other non-industrial interests (The New Zealand Journalist, 12 February 1963: 28). The RTVJS had pushed for recognition in the industrial field because broadcasting journalists felt that compulsory affiliation with the PSA (a body highly vocal on public policy issues) made it difficult to defend their objectivity and impartiality (Scherer, 12 July 1971: 4). However, the RTVJS was unable to achieve this objective because the NZBC declined to recognise the body in an industrial capacity. Proposals for an amalgamation with the NZIU in the late 1970s were stymied by the fact that most RTVJS members were already members of another industrial union (the PSA) (NZIU Minutes, 6 May 1977: 6). In 1975, the RTVJS merged with the Current Affairs Broadcasting Society (CABS) to form the Association of Broadcasting Journalists (ABJ) following the reorganisation of broadcasting. However, wage negotiations for broadcasting journalists remained the responsibility of the PSA (The New Zealand Journalist, June 1975: 1). In the mid-1970s, the ABJ had over 350 members consisting of broadcasting journalists employed by the Broadcasting Corporation (NZIU Minutes, 15 February 1976: 4) and was vocal on such issues as political interference in broadcasting in the 1970s (NZIU Minutes, 15 February 1976; 5 July 1976: 4).
42 Perry (1982: 6). The PPTA had long had an interest in press standards, having commissioned in 1949 a publication on the subject of ‘fact and opinion in newspapers’, wherein it was stated that “it must be admitted … that newspapers in this country are not sensational, and in the daily Press, there is a complete absence of sensationalism … There are weaknesses in the New Zealand Press, but its moral standards are as high as anywhere in the world” (Holcroft, 1948: 329).
This type of writing is no credit to the Press of New Zealand. Surely the logical alternative to a controlled press is a press that controls itself. New Zealand needs a Press Council—a body that will take full professional responsibility, including disciplinary action where necessary—and no paper should be allowed to publish that is not affiliated to that council.44

While this particular incident may have also prompted the Labour Party’s subsequent proposal for a statutory press council, the reluctance of the National Government to interfere in such processes was made clear when the subject arose in parliament. When questioned by Labour member Dr A. M. Finlay whether he supported this plea for a press council, Prime Minister Keith Holyoake denounced the need for Government involvement in such matters, stating that “My Government has no present proposals for any action in the Government’s sphere”.45

The NZJA’s response

The NZJA’s interests in the formalisation of journalistic self-regulation were twofold. A press council would contribute to the ‘professional infrastructure’ of journalism, and thus the professional status of journalists. Indeed, the incoming president of the NZJA in 1970 remained committed to ‘building journalism up as a profession by the setting of standards’.46 Furthermore, as the lesser of two evils, a voluntary press council for the print media would also forestall the threat of government intervention. Hence, in the face of the threat of a statutory press council, the NZJA had taken immediate action. The Canterbury-Westland branch drafted a letter to the Labour Party on behalf of the NZJA petitioning against the proposal for a statutory press council,47 and the president of the NZJA, Ian Templeton issued an immediate warning to the industry:

It is known that some influential men[sic] in the Labour Party plan to put forward legislation establishing a press council if their party becomes the government in 1969. Unlike the Press Council, which was established by the industry and not by statute in Britain, the New Zealand version will be set up

---

44 Page (1966: 17). The PPTA journal article concerned criticised a report carried by the Truth newspaper, which Page claimed to have both misrepresented her and had been detrimental to one of her pupils. Of interest was the fact that the Truth newspaper was outside the jurisdiction of the NPA, indicating that the proposed self-regulatory body needed to offer wider representation than the NPA and NZJA in order to function as an independent and effective mechanism for public redress of complaints about newspaper practice (Perry, 1982: 10).
45 NZPD (27 July 1966: 1541).
46 The New Zealand Journalist (October 1972: 6).
47 NZJA Minutes (25 May 1969: 2).
under legislation, according to those privy to Labour’s plans. It will make life exceedingly difficult for the owners of newspapers, and probably also for journalists.\textsuperscript{48}

**Debating the value of self-regulation: A preference for the principle of 'white-collar control'**

The NZJA’s annual conference in September 1968 debated the possibility of establishing a voluntary press council.\textsuperscript{49} As with the development of the NZJA’s code of ethics in 1967, there was a mixed reception among journalists to the idea of a press council. Proponents recognised the threat of statutory intervention, and believed that a non-statutory press council created by the industry was the best course of action. However, according to then NZJA president, Ian Templeton, even the idea of an industry-operated press council faced a degree of hostility from elements of the NZJA. Templeton recalls that:

There was a particular concern that errant journalists could suffer adversely at the hands of the council if a range of penalties were built into the council’s armoury. Practising journalists were conscious that much of the copy they prepared was subject to sub-editing and, more particularly in some newspapers, to re-writing. In the days before by-lined copy became prevalent, uniformity of style was regarded as a virtue and individuality tended to be edited out. So it was important from the initiation of the debate to establish the key principle of editorial responsibility: i.e. that the editor has to take final responsibility for what appears in the paper rather than the writer of the copy, and therefore where complaints were made against newspapers to the Press Council, the editor was answerable.\textsuperscript{50}

These comments indicate that journalists’ objections to a press council were not founded on opposition to a press council *per se*; they arose from some journalists’ concerns about the target of complaints about press performance. What journalists were advocating, then, was a system of self-regulation modelled on the principle of ‘white-collar control’. As Cronin explains:

Underlying the professed ideals was the ... realization that control was professionalism's key quality. True professionals exhibited control; their work was of an expected, consistent quality, they regulated themselves and, as a result, possessed credibility and the public's trust ... Journalists could not have the professional autonomy so valued by doctors and lawyers. They needed the

\textsuperscript{48} *Evening Post* (21 September 1968).

\textsuperscript{49} NZJA Minutes (20-21 September 1968: 1-2).

\textsuperscript{50} Ian Templeton (27 March 2003: Personal Communication).
white-collar discipline of industries instead. Editors were moral guardians and would be held accountable for their actions.\textsuperscript{51}

In other words, while the NZJA’s advocates of professionalism sought a model of self-control similar to the ‘accepted professions’, the principle of individual responsibility on which they were based was seen as impractical, even undesirable, to some journalists. The principle of ‘white-collar control’ that was to underpin the system of journalistic self-regulation in New Zealand therefore represented a departure from the informal self-regulatory system embodied by the NZJA code of ethics. As chapter six noted, the NZJA/U’s code enforcement processes dealt with journalists as individuals. Complaints were made against the journalist alleged to have breached the code, rather than the publication by which they were employed. However, journalists’ wariness about being the subject of complaints during the first negotiations over the form of a press council were to result in a system in which editors and newspapers, rather than individual journalists, were answerable. While journalists’ preference for the principle of ‘white-collar control’ related predominantly to the practicalities and mechanics of newspaper production, it also illustrates how the infrastructure and accountability mechanisms of some professions may not be appropriate for others.

\textbf{The industry takes action}

Journalists’ reservations aside, Ian Templeton recalls how the threat of statutory intervention saw “the pleas of the NZJA suddenly bec[0]me relevant elsewhere in the newspaper industry”.\textsuperscript{52} Subsequently, the NZJA obtained the assurances of the NPA, which confirmed its willingness to co-operate in an investigation of the possibility of establishing a non-statutory press council.\textsuperscript{53} Then NPA president, Neil Blundell, circularised the country’s newspaper editors suggesting meetings with NZJA representatives who had already begun exploring the possibilities for establishing a press council.\textsuperscript{54} Blundell also enlisted the support of Sir Thaddeus McCarthy, a member of the Court of Appeal, in investigating the operation

\textsuperscript{51} Cronin (1993: 233).
\textsuperscript{52} Ian Templeton (27 March 2003: Personal Communication).
\textsuperscript{53} NZJA Minutes (4 November 1968: 2).
\textsuperscript{54} Perry (1982: 7-8).
of the British Press Council,\textsuperscript{55} which was to be the model for the New Zealand council.\textsuperscript{56} In his recommendations, Sir Thaddeus McCarthy raised the question of

\ldots whether the jurisdiction of the Council should be extended to radio and television. There is, so I understand, strong opposition to this from the Press on the ground that while the [British Press] Council works successfully within its own area, it is doubtful whether it could satisfactorily embrace others. My own tentative view deriving from my discussions in England is that in this country we should likewise confine the proposed activities, certainly at the beginning \ldots I envisage a press council, such as is suggested, as \ldots one more broadly representative of the views of employers within the industry than the Newspaper Proprietors' Association or the [Journalists'] Union would seem to be.\textsuperscript{57}

Meanwhile, negotiations between the NZJA and the NPA over the principles and objectives of the press council continued for some time. By October 1968, the NZJA and NPA had come to an agreement on the formation of a press council.\textsuperscript{58} Desmond Fitzgerald, elected NZJA president in late September 1968, met with the Attorney General and the president of the NPA early in 1970 to discuss the position of chair of the council, and the funding for the press council was given consideration.\textsuperscript{59} Further advice was sought firstly from the Chief Justice,\textsuperscript{60} and then from the Minister of Justice on the establishment of a press council.\textsuperscript{61} The working party of NZJA and NPA representatives working on the establishment of a press council were advised by the Chief Justice to approach a retired court judge to chair the council.\textsuperscript{62}

The working committee's report was discussed further at the both the NZJA's and the NPA's respective annual conferences in September 1971.\textsuperscript{63} The NZJA conference endorsed the report with slight amendment,\textsuperscript{64} adding the recommendation that newspapers named in public complaints should be required to publish the press council's decision in full.\textsuperscript{65} The NZJA accepted the NPA's proposals and a joint press release on their progress was to be framed.\textsuperscript{66} By December that year, the draft articles

\textsuperscript{55} The New Zealand Journalist (April 1969: 1).
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid: 1.
\textsuperscript{57} Perry (1982: 10).
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid: 8.
\textsuperscript{59} NZJA Minutes (2 February 1970: 1).
\textsuperscript{60} NZJA Minutes (5 October 1970: 1).
\textsuperscript{61} NZJA Minutes (29 March 1971: 1).
\textsuperscript{62} NZJA Minutes (28 June 1971: 1).
\textsuperscript{63} NPA Minutes (15 September 1971).
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{65} NZJA Minutes (10-11 September 1971: 11).
\textsuperscript{66} NZJA Minutes (10-11 September 1971: 1); NPA Minutes (2 March 1972).
of association had been finished and sent to the constituent branches of the NZJA for comment, and were accepted by the NZJA and the NPA in March 1972.\textsuperscript{67} A press release naming the press council’s nominated representatives was issued later that month.\textsuperscript{68}

With the final preparatory stages completed by August 1972,\textsuperscript{69} the NZPC was officially established by September 1972 in a form similar in constitution and jurisdiction to the British model on which it was based. The NZPC would promote both the freedom of the press and the ‘maintenance of the New Zealand press in accordance with the highest professional and ethical standards’.\textsuperscript{70} In doing so, it would consider complaints about newspapers from the public. The NZPC was formed with one representative of the NPA, one NZJA representative, one public representative with three alternates, and a retired court judge, Sir Alfred North, as its chair. Although the bulk of the funding for the council came from the NPA, the NZJA secured parity of representation, thus ensuring that journalists did not have uncomfortable judgements imposed on them.\textsuperscript{71}

Both the Labour and the National parties were satisfied with the outcome. Deputy Prime Minister John Marshall accorded that “[t]he Press Council is an exercise in self-discipline which will enhance the already high reputation of New Zealand newspapers and journalists”.\textsuperscript{72} Similarly, Dr Finlay concluded that:

I am delighted at the initiative shown by the two bodies within the industry to co-operate in this project. I have always advocated the establishment of such a council, and even more strongly supported the notion that it should come from within the industry itself and not be imposed on it.\textsuperscript{73}

The NZPC in action

Ian Templeton, immediate past president of the NZJA at the time of the NZPC’s formation and subsequently, a member of the council for over twenty-five years, saw the value of the NZJA as follows:

As the NZJA saw it, the Press Council was an ethical body, and as stated in its objects, it [the NZPC] did not seek to supplant the administration of legal justice. But in providing an outlet for members of the public to ventilate

\textsuperscript{67} NZJA Minutes (14 December 1971: 1).
\textsuperscript{68} NZJA Minutes (6 March 1972: 1).
\textsuperscript{69} NZJA Minutes (28 August 1972: 1).
\textsuperscript{70} NZPC (1997: 4).
\textsuperscript{71} Ian Templeton (27 March 2003: Personal Communication).
\textsuperscript{72} Perry (1982: 13-14).
\textsuperscript{73} Cited in NZPC (1981: 3).
grievances, it did in fact ensure that many complainants chose to air their complaints in this forum rather than pursue litigation. In my view, gained over 25 years membership of the council from its formation, it must have saved the industry many thousands in legal costs. Its other great value was to establish in effect a substantial body of ‘case law’ by which editors and journalists could be guided in newspaper practice.74

In July 1973, the Labour Minister of Justice gave formal assurances that his party had no plans to introduce legislation to establish a press council,75 a threat that had hung over the heads of the press since the late 1960s. Seemingly, the public response to the NZPC was also a positive one. Some 300 complaints and inquiries flooded in during the council’s first year, 1972-73, most of them criticising the Truth newspaper (ironically, the ‘excesses’ of which were a catalyst for the NZPC’s formation), for “exploiting sex and nudity in an unwholesome way”.76 Another noteworthy case was the NZPC’s decision to uphold the use of subterfuge by a journalist on the Sunday News.77 Others issues were ironed out during the NZPC’s early years of operation. In 1973, the NZJA representatives on the council complained that some newspapers’ publication of NZPC decisions lacked prominence, which resulted in the requirement that the offending newspaper publish the council’s decision with ‘due prominence’.78 Later that same year, some NZJA members questioned whether the NZPC should have powers to subpoena. In response to this issue, the NZPC reaffirmed its belief that it “didn’t need statutory powers and would be more effective if it remained ‘industry-based’”.79

7.4 Print media self-regulation: A united front?

The current chair of the British Press Complaints Commission (PCC) recently stated that a self-regulatory body “though independent from the industry, can only function with full effectiveness if there is internal solidarity … Internal corrosion is as deadly as external threats”.80 New Zealand’s system of self-regulation has had its own experiences of disunity within the journalism industry. After its first year of operation,
Warren Page reported on his experience as the NZJA’s representative on the NZPC, stating that he “would be interested to see a journalists’ organisation bring matters before the NZPC”.\textsuperscript{81} This wish was granted the following decade when journalists went into battle with their employers over ethical issues on which the NZPC found itself adjudicating.

The 1980s bought some interesting developments in the self-regulation of print media standards. Although the establishment of the NZPC had witnessed an unprecedented degree of co-operation between the NZJA and the NPA in the attempt to promote ethical standards, the NZPC was to find itself forced to deal with the tension between the two bodies. In such instances, the NZPC found itself playing adjudicator in a conflict between journalists and their concerns about ethical issues, and their employers, whose respective trade organisations formed the constituent membership of the NZPC. The issue of commercial sponsorship of news was a pertinent illustration of the conflict. The background to the NZPC’s dealing with the issue was the rise of sponsorship in New Zealand’s daily newspapers during the 1980s, and journalists’ voicing their concerns about the implications of this practice for the independence and integrity of newspapers and journalism.\textsuperscript{82} Such episodes highlighted the continual tension that threatened to shake the system of press self-regulation embodied by the NZPC that other professions’ systems of self-control had mostly managed to avoid.

**Journalists standing up for standards**

Although the creation of the NZPC had, to some extent, taken the responsibility for looking after ethical standards out of the hands of the NZJU, journalists did not relinquish this responsibility altogether. Perhaps in part due to the perceived limitations of the NZPC, the NZJA responded to its concerns about ethics through the use of collective workplace organisation, the chapel. The NZPC’s lack of proactive investigatory powers was highlighted when an attack on practice of news sponsorship was led by the union chapel at the Nelson Evening Mail in 1985. In one of the first instances of its type, Nelson Mail journalists complained to NZPC about their paper’s practice of accepting sponsorship in connection with the publication of

\textsuperscript{81} NZJA Minutes (14-15 September 1973: 4).

\textsuperscript{82} Wilton (1992: 191-2).
sports draws. Another complaint was made about the Auckland Star’s use of logos and sponsors’ names in sports stories. NZJU members argued that there were concerns that although this practice was then confined to the seemingly benign area of sports news, it could spread to more ‘ethically sensitive’ areas of reportage.

To the dismay of the NZJU, the NZPC did not uphold these complaints. The NZJU decried the NZPC’s decision as of ‘inestimable damage to the ethical standards of journalism in New Zealand’. Instead of issuing a clear message to newspaper proprietors to cease the practice, it had ‘encouraged them to seek sponsorship’. The Nelson Mail chapel concluded that, in doing so, the NZPC had ‘abdicated its ethical responsibility’. Indeed, such a ‘clear message’ could have conceivably taken the form of a written code of practice, a measure which may have helped to unite the industry with a benchmark for acceptable practice. However, the NZPC chose (whether conscientiously or not) against taking such a route.

Such issues appear to represent something of a double-edged sword for the NZPC, both in the past, and for the future. On the one hand, as an ‘ethical body’ the NZPC is expected to take a stand on unacceptable journalistic practice, threats to the independence of news being just one of them. This was certainly the attitude of Nelson Mail journalists in the 1980s. On the other hand, the NZPC’s success depends in large measure on the support of industry executives via the NPA, not only in a financial sense but also in terms of their co-operation in the self-regulatory process. The fact that self-regulation is so heavily dependent upon the industry’s owners and publishers places self-regulatory bodies themselves in an uneasy position. As Collins and Muroni capture this difficulty: “There is an inverse relationship between the effectiveness and independence of self-regulatory bodies, as their ability to act depends on the consent of regulated firms.” If promoting journalistic professionalism can be undermined by the commercial interests of the industry, then what does this suggest about the credibility (and long-term sustainability) of self-regulation? This question arose again in the 1990s when the NZPC was once again put to the test. This time, the challenge arose in a more insidious form not from journalists’ chapels, but from the sphere of parliament, as the next section documents.

---

84 Ibid: 191.
7.5 The NZPC: Attitudes towards codes of practice

While the early years of the NZPC’s operation certainly offered some convincing reasons to form a written code (if only to avert the conflict between its constituent members), the NZPC did not take this opportunity until much later on. The NZPC’s early years of operation offer some indications as to why this may have been the case. Consideration to whether the NZPC would utilise a code was given by the subcommittee of journalists and proprietors who had collaborated to plan the council’s establishment.\(^87\) Using the (now defunct) BPC as its prototype, the NZPC reiterated the preference for a system of case law as opposed to a formal written code.\(^88\) This conscious decision to work without a written code is, at first glance, surprising in view of the fact that the New Zealand press had undertaken significant examination of the British scene. By the mid-1960s when a press council was first being deliberated in New Zealand, the British press had already received five threats of statutory intervention, underpinned by the failure of the British Press Council (BPC) to adopt a written code of ethics.\(^89\)

Commenting on its first year of operation in 1973, the NZPC claimed that it had been able to “avoid some of the pitfalls which initially stood in the way of the success of the movement in the United Kingdom”.\(^90\) Certainly, the NZPC had been constituted with an independent chair and with a dominance of non-industry members, two of the early criticisms of the British Press Council. However, a written code of practice was not among the ‘pitfalls’ of the British Press Council that the New Zealand model sought to avoid. Why was this the case? A comment made by the NZPC is revealing:

A Press Council … has the difficult task of trying to maintain the delicate balance of forces that is needed to make standards effective without being suppressive. Success in this field, we think, can only come from experience and not from the application of a formula set in advance.\(^91\)

\(^87\) Perry (1982: 7).
\(^88\) NZPC (1998: 8).
\(^89\) These included a 1953 Private Members Bill, which provided the impetus for the establishment of the General Council of the Press (precursor of the BPC), and the 1962 Royal Commission out of which the BPC was borne as a reconstituted version of the General Council. Concern about the lack of authority that the BPC displayed in the area of privacy intrusion resulted in three Parliamentary Bills seeking to legislate on the press throughout the 1960s. Furthermore, when the final plans for a New Zealand press council were being made, the Younger Committee on Privacy had been convened by the British government, issuing its report in 1972 the year the NZPC began operation. (For further elaboration, see Elsaka, 2001b).
\(^90\) NZPC (1973: 1).
\(^91\) Ibid: 1-2.
Arguably, this reflects a view of a formal written document as a constraint, rather than as a useful mechanism for self-regulation. Such a ‘suppressive’ route would not be welcomed by the press and was thus considered undesirable. However, in choosing this route, the NZPC was to follow in the tradition of its British counterpart with accusations of complacency drawing parliamentary scrutiny.

7.6 Print media self-regulation comes under scrutiny

Since the early twentieth century, the British press has come under parliamentary scrutiny for its intrusive practices. The New Zealand experience, however, has been markedly different.\textsuperscript{92} Therefore, the inclusion of the media (news gathering) in the original Privacy of Information Bill was seen to have come ‘out of the blue’; there was no ‘precedent’ of invasive behaviour by the press on which to justify such restraints on the media.\textsuperscript{93} However, the Bill was not ultimately driven by a perception of the need to restrain, or counteract the abuses of the media. Rather, the Bill was underpinned by the broader imperative of establishing parameters for the use and exchange of personal information in the public sphere in the ‘computer age’; the media were included more or less ‘by default’.\textsuperscript{94} In this respect, it was an extension of the prolonged inquiry into the issue of privacy and computer data banks dating back to 1973.\textsuperscript{95}

Nonetheless, the Bill’s extension to the private sphere meant that the print media’s news gathering activities were captured by its original provisions. This was especially problematic for the news media where no acknowledgement was made in the Bill of their ‘special position’ in the democratic process. It was also perceived to contravene press freedom and freedom of expression more generally. As Burrows noted, “[t]o make the media subject to restraints like that would not only be contrary to the freedom of speech which our Bill of Rights protects, it would contradict the very idea of what the media are about and what they are for”.\textsuperscript{96} Therefore, had it not been amended to allow special provisions for the print media, it would have had implications that were more far-reaching. In the event, the Privacy Act 1993

\textsuperscript{92} See Elsaka (2001a; 2001b) for a comparison of the two cases.
\textsuperscript{93} See Tucker (1997: 17).
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid: 19. See also Taylor (1997).
\textsuperscript{95} New Zealand Law Commission (1973). Given the predominantly manual systems used by the New Zealand press at this time, the print media’s exclusion from the report is probably not surprising.
\textsuperscript{96} Burrows (1994: 90).
addressed the threat to press freedom and freedom of expression with its exemption for the print media (and "in relation to its news activities any news medium") from the 'privacy principles', which remain the cornerstone of the Act.\footnote{The Privacy Act (1993: Section 2 xiii). Nonetheless, journalists have maintained that the Privacy Act is used superfluously as an 'excuse' to deny requests for information of certain classes, or to stifle the process, thus exacerbating the existing difficulties experienced by the media with the Official Information Act (see Taylor, 1997; and Grant and Tully, 1997).}

Contrary to claims from within the print media industry that their behaviour did not warrant legislative intervention, there were indications otherwise. An observation was made around the time of the Bill's introduction that:

[a]n overall trend towards more aggressive and intrusive reporting has gone unchallenged ... There is little evidence that [Press Council] decisions form an informal code of ethics, or conduct that journalists refer to when working on sensitive stories [as the NZPC claimed]. The Council has little impact on professional standards.\footnote{McGregor (1990: 4).}

Further criticism came from the public domain:

As a non-journalist, I believe journalism needs to address its self-regulation if it is to resurrect its status in the public’s eyes to one of a profession. There exists Code of Ethics, but this seems to be expressed less and less in published stories, and at editor level is often totally disregarded in the quest for revenue ... The Press Council, by international standards, lacks credibility. It attempts to promote the integrity of the newspaper industry, yet it has no written standards against which to assess the merits of the (increased) number of complaints referred to it by journalists and members of the public like myself ... I'm promoting a review of the Press Council's objectives and procedures, hopefully by itself, but if not, by the Government.\footnote{Andrews (1993: 2).}

Evidently, such criticisms had not gone unnoticed by the Select Committee which considered the Privacy of Information Bill. While the print media (and 'in relation to its news activities any news medium') were eventually exempted from the Privacy Act 1993, the Bill's passage served to ignite debate about the efficacy of print media self-regulation in New Zealand. While the Select Committee concerned "took on face value the claims of the print media that it would beef up the Press Council to address privacy complaints more effectively and to head off the tabloid-style snooping" characteristic of the British press,\footnote{Harris (1993: 21).} the exemption came with certain provisos:
... [T]he Committee would like to see evidence of further and more effective self-regulation by the news media ... We certainly believe that there is a case for the news media to strengthen the ability of the Press Council to help individual citizens in circumstances in which privacy and other rights have been transgressed ... This is not the end of the matter ... [We] await with expectation some moves on the part of the news media that would indicate ... that they are treating the protection of privacy as a serious issue.\(^{101}\)

The Privacy of Information Bill brought with it the first instance of external scrutiny of press self-regulation in New Zealand.\(^ {102}\) Significantly, it was the first time in New Zealand that the press had been explicitly instructed to strengthen its system of self-regulation from within parliament since the Labour Party’s 1968 threat of a statutory press council. This, in turn, paved the way for yet another ‘first’ in the history of the New Zealand press: the development by the NZPC of a set of ethical guidelines.

While the Select Committee’s message did not have an immediate effect on the reform of self-regulation, the pending review of the Act was scheduled for 1998. The review was significant less for the specific recommendations it was to make, and more for the degree of internal reform of press self-regulation it triggered. Confronted with the possibility that Privacy Commissioner Bruce Slane would bring the media within the scope of the Privacy Act, the imminent review stimulated an unprecedented degree of reforming activity within the New Zealand press. The threat to the print media was captured in the following statement:

[n]ewspaper and magazine publishers, who have the privilege of self-regulation, should realise that they cannot go on indefinitely without a code of practice, particularly in terms of privacy. Inaction will surely result in the initiative being taken by others with a more regulatory perspective.\(^ {103}\)

Indeed, by 1995, there were signs that such warnings were being acknowledged when the NZPC conducted its first major review of its procedures and regulations. The NZPC adopted a rule that in cases of any complaint involving breaches of privacy, it could require a newspaper found to have breached good practice to carry out its own internal audit of its proceedings and to publish the results of that audit.\(^ {104}\) The NZPC also updated its constitution and rules, and expanded in

\(^{101}\) NZPD (18 March 1993: 14133).
\(^{103}\) Tully (1994: 136).
\(^{104}\) NZPC (1995: 3).
size. However, the development of a written document was not among the 1995 changes. On the contrary, the NZPC remained steadfast that “neither the establishment of guidelines for newspaper editors to follow, nor the policing of such guidelines were part of the council’s job”.

Due to its apparent reluctance to strengthen self-regulation, in 1997 the NZPC found itself defending criticisms that it was a ‘toothless tiger’ given its lack of punitive powers aside from the duty of editors to publish the NZPC’s critical adjudications. According to the NZPC:

By requiring publication of the Council’s adjudications, which can be written on a scale of strong condemnation to lightish disapproval for an upheld complaint, there is presently, in the Council’s view, sufficient punitive power. It is professionalism that is at stake, not simply lowering the level of a company bank account. There is likely to be less resentment from editors and thereby a greater chance there will not be a repetition of the subject conduct.

However, then Privacy Commissioner, Bruce Slane, remained unconvinced.

Slane reiterated his earlier criticism of the NZPC and its lack of compensation available to complainants as there was for breaches of privacy by radio and television journalists. The Privacy Commissioner also criticised the fact that newspaper editors, exempt from the Privacy Act, had refused a binding code of practice. Nor had newspapers and magazines ‘come to the party’ and joined the NZPC. These various observations and recommendations took place in the wake of Princess Diana’s death.

---

105 NZPC (1996: 4). As is discussed further in Elsaka (2001a; 2002), other organisations within the New Zealand press were less dismissive of the value of a written code under the circumstances. In 1997, the then two main newspaper and magazine publishers, INL and Wilson and Horton, announced their own intentions to formulate written codes for their respective publications. Suzanne Carty (at the time editor of then INL-owned newspaper the Evening Post) who was instrumental in the preparation of the INL code, confirmed that the decision to produce a written code emerged out of concern that the Privacy Commissioner would recommend that the Privacy Act be extended to cover the media (Private Word, February 1998). The INL code was drafted by a small group of INL’s senior newspaper and magazine editors, and circulated throughout the INL group for comment. After some revision, it was approved across the INL group (Sarah Hard, Personal Communication: 12 January 2001), and was disseminated in 1997, superseding the in-house codes developed in the early 1990s by the Nelson Evening Mail and the Southland Times respectively (Cropp, 1997: 180). However, the operation of the INL code was rather short-lived as INL’s stable of New Zealand newspapers and magazines was taken over by Australian media company Fairfax Holdings Ltd in 2003. The year 2001 had also witnessed the sale of New Zealand’s other major newspaper and magazine giant Wilson and Horton to APN News & Media. (See Appendix B).


107 The Privacy Commissioner also proposed the creation of a system of newspaper ombudsmen pioneered in Sweden and found in the United States. This was not the first suggestion for a system of newspaper ombudsmen in New Zealand. In fact, similar proposals dated back to the 1970s when NZJA members proposed such a scheme (The New Zealand Journalist, May 1974: 5).
and the ensuing debates about press self-regulation in Britain, thus serving to highlight that the New Zealand press was no more immune than that of the UK to calls for more effective self-regulation. New Zealand newspaper editors were heard to defend the degree of responsibility practised by the New Zealand newspapers, and thus the argument that there was ‘no need’ for a code for the New Zealand press. However, Bruce Slane retorted that “some of the quality newspapers in London could say the same thing”.\textsuperscript{108} Slane proposed a ‘sensible and practicable’ direction in which the NZPC could be reformed, which was based on a hybrid of the British PCC and the New Zealand BSA.

Finally, in 1997 there were signs that the NZPC was taking the upcoming Privacy Act review as a serious threat. Hence, the NZPC announced that it was to embark on the production of a written document at the instigation of its newly appointed chair Sir John Jeffries,\textsuperscript{109} in its 1997 annual review:

The Council, after a thorough examination of the opposing viewpoints, has reached the conclusion that the Council should publish its own written document. That document will probably take the form of a statement of principles along the lines of the Australian practice rather than a rigid Code of Practice that exists in the United Kingdom.\textsuperscript{110}

\textbf{The Privacy Act Review: Further warnings to the press}

The review of the Privacy Act was published in late 1998. While the media’s exemption was to remain, the review carried a further message for the print media concerning press self-regulation under the NZPC. Although the NZPC had extended its jurisdiction to magazines in 1998,\textsuperscript{111} its code had yet to appear. The Privacy Act review reaffirmed earlier recommendations made by the Privacy Commissioner (among others) as to the need for a code of practice that adequately addressed the issue of privacy:

In my view, the Press Council would provide an adequate vehicle for self-regulation if it adopted a code detailing standards expected of news media concerning respect for privacy and provided for compensation or redress in cases of breach ... I believe the code of practice ratified by the UK Press Complaints Commission on 26 November 1997 would provide a good model for a code, while the $5000 Broadcasting Act figure would probably cover

\textsuperscript{108} Private Word (18 January 1998)
\textsuperscript{109} Graeme Jenkins (18 September 2000: Personal Communication).
\textsuperscript{110} NZPC (1997: 7).
\textsuperscript{111} NZPC (1998: 6).
many complaints adequately ... If privacy needs to be protected and no adequate self-regulatory code is developed, separate legislation would be more satisfactory than applying the Privacy Act.\textsuperscript{112}

The message to the New Zealand press relayed the need to establish an effective self-regulatory mechanism via a code or face the possibility of statutory restraint. Positive signs came in September 1998, when Wilson and Horton (W&H) and Independent Newspapers Limited (INL) both announced that they had agreed to their titles coming under the NZPC’s jurisdiction,\textsuperscript{113} which was effective from January 1999.\textsuperscript{114}

7.7 ‘Act or be acted on’: The NZPC produces a statement of principles

By the late 1990s, the NZPC was the exception among self-regulatory bodies in not having written guidance for the press and public, a fact which the NZPC recognised in its decision to form a code.\textsuperscript{115} It was also motivated by the view of many complainants and critics that the NZPC’s “… credibility and effectiveness have been impaired by the absence of a firm statement of the principles to which it was committed and of the criteria whereby it judges complaints”.\textsuperscript{116} The NZPC thus recognised that

[t]he failure to tell the industry and the public by way of a code of ethics where the Council stood on the very cornerstone of the mission as a complaint resolution body was a powerful argument that could not be avoided. If the UK and Australian Press Council had written codes why not New Zealand?\textsuperscript{117}

In spite of the NZPC’s recognition that the time had come to frame a written code, the print media industry itself “took some convincing of the necessity to have a written document”.\textsuperscript{118} The NZPC’s chair commented that:

Understandably they [the industry] were a little apprehensive that it might become a charter for the discontents and perhaps result in an increased level of public complaints. It was obvious early in the process that we had to take our constituent members with us in the drafting.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{112} Necessary and Desirable (1998).
\textsuperscript{113} The Evening Post (5 September 1998: 2).
\textsuperscript{114} NZPC (1999: 7).
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid: 6; The Evening Post (1 May 2000: 13).
\textsuperscript{116} NZPC (1999: 6).
\textsuperscript{117} Jeffries (2002).
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
The NZPC proceeded to establish a working party consisting of representatives of the NPA, the journalists’ section of the EPMU, and other members of the NZPC led by the council’s chair.\textsuperscript{120} The NZPC’s ‘Statement of Principles’ (hereafter SoP) was the product of eighteen months of deliberation and research by the working party. The final product took the form of a broad set of guidelines much like the Statement of Principles devised by the Australian Press Council (APC), which were drawn on in the formulation of the NZPC’s code.\textsuperscript{121} The NZPC stated it was “intended to support guidance already available to them [newspapers] in other forms” (presumably, the codes of the journalists’ union, and that developed by INL in 1997).\textsuperscript{122}

The NZPC explained the decision as to the form that its ‘code’ would take in its 1998 annual report:

There are two basic models that could be used. Firstly, only the broadest of powers be given to a council and then it is left to work out through exercise of its jurisdiction the framework of how it will act. This loose system has a very distinguished lineage in the common law developed over the centuries. This is how the United Kingdom model started and which the New Zealand Press Council adopted. The other model is to have a comprehensive and strict set of black letters more akin to statutes and is called a Code of Practice, and that is where the Press Complaints Commission has finally arrived at. The Press Council examined that model but has declined to go down that path basically because it is unnecessary in New Zealand and may be too inflexible. However, the important lesson is that Britain travelled from the loose system to the strict system, and that is an argument for the necessity of a guiding written document.\textsuperscript{123}

In relation to the perceived benefits of the former of these two models, the NZPC further concluded that

... it ought to provide a written document and has preferred a Statement of Principles as most likely to give the public the better result. A Statement will give greater particularity for users of the Press Council, and will help the Council fulfil its three Objectives and provide guidance to editors of

\textsuperscript{120} Mediacom Press Release (22 June 1999).
\textsuperscript{121} Then NZPC secretary Graeme Jenkins explained that while no one existing document was used specifically as a model for the councils set of principles, the Australian Press Council’s ‘Statement of Principles’ as well as the declarations drawn up by the former BPC, “were obviously considered” (Graeme Jenkins, 18 September 2000: Personal Communication). Attention was also given to the codes for radio and television supervised by the Broadcasting Standards Authority (as the Privacy Commissioner had recommended) and to the codes of practice and ethics drawn up by individual newspapers and the journalists’ union (NZPC, 1999: 6).
\textsuperscript{122} NZPC (1999: 7).
\textsuperscript{123} NZPC (1998: 8).
publications as to how and where the Council will place emphasis in its mission.\textsuperscript{124}

The 13-point statement of principles appeared in August 1999 and was to be reviewed after it had been operative for one year to determine “whether it worked in practice and whether any changes are required”.\textsuperscript{125}

\textbf{Verdict on the NZPC’s Statement of Principles}

As noted in Elsaka (2001; 2002), the NZPC continually emphasised the ‘good behaviour’ of the New Zealand print media to justify its long-standing view that a formal code of ethics was not needed. Yet the NZPC rapidly changed its position after external criticism of its credibility and effectiveness without a written code. Evidently, a written document was not seen as ‘necessary’ as a means of being vigilant and proactive in the maintenance of professional standards, as the Privacy Commissioner had urged, but rather as a means of deflecting such interference. Indeed, when presented with the ‘opportunity’ to devise a formal code of practice with enforcement strategies, the NZPC decided against this route on the grounds that it was ‘unnecessary’. Rather, it chose to pursue more of a ‘middle ground’ in developing a broad set of principles. Like the former British Press Council (BPC), the NZPC appears to have attempted the compromise between mounting parliamentary pressure on the one hand, and the prevailing view of a more detailed code as a ‘constraint’ on the other. It remains in the hands of the NZPC to avoid the fate of its former British counterpart.

The preamble to the 13 principles emphasises the importance of freedom of expression. Little reference is made to the NZPC’s corresponding duty to promote professional and ethical standards in the press. This duality could certainly be interpreted as weighing in favour of the media, and does little to reassure critics who see the NZPC’s duty to protect press freedom as an in-built bias for disclosure, undervaluing competing interests like privacy.\textsuperscript{126} It was precisely this perceived imbalance between the interests of freedom of expression and the promotion of ethical standards that was central to the former BPC’s demise, and the reason why the PCC

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid: 8.
\textsuperscript{125} Mediacom Press Release (1999).
\textsuperscript{126} Chadwick (1994: 178).
was subsequently established with solely the latter role. This indicates that while the two duties might have previously proven compatible in New Zealand, the NZPC ought to demonstrate a more proactive commitment to promoting both equally in the future.

**The content of the NZPC’s Statement of Principles**

Both the process of the Statement of Principle’s drafting and its outcome were a pertinent illustration of the notion that “[t]here is an inverse relationship between the effectiveness and independence of self-regulatory bodies, as their ability to act depends on the consent of regulated firms”. This statement goes to the heart of the problems with a ‘two-headed watchdog’ such as the NZPC with its dual objectives of protecting press freedom and promoting ethical standards. Indeed, many of the emergent code’s clauses reflected the compromises that that had been made with the industry during its drafting. For instance, clause 1 on ‘corrections’ was a weak attempt at incorporating right of reply requirements for newspapers. The current chair of the NZPC has explicitly confirmed that the final version of this clause was indeed “a matter of compromise”. Evidently, the NZPC’s need to cater to industry interests in the production of its ‘code’ resulted in a significantly weaker document that perhaps may have been expected from the New Zealand print media’s self-regulatory body.

Further criticisms of the NZPC’s SoP were made following its drafting. These included firstly that there was no obvious logic to the structure to the Statement of Principles. The 12 clauses were not set in the context of fundamental ethical principles such as truth-telling, fairness, and independence. The document was confined to mundane matters such as the handling of letters to the editor, but completely overlooked important issues such as conflicts of interest and chequebook journalism. This *ad hoc* approach resulted in a weak document that reflected the NZPC’s complaints-driven focus. Critics found this unacceptable for a self-regulatory code that was supposed to be relevant across the print media industry in the twenty-first century.

---

The Statement of Principles also reflected more of a concern with the protection of industry interests over those of the public. This was certainly the tone of the NZPC’s ‘corrections’ clause which watered down the principle of right of reply to read ‘Where it has been established that there has been published information that is materially incorrect then the publication should promptly correct the error giving the correction fair prominence. In appropriate circumstances the correction may be accompanied by an apology and a right of reply by an affected person or persons’. Critics took particular issue with the ambiguity of this clause, which failed to explain the ‘appropriate circumstances’ in which an apology and right of reply ‘may’ be given.  

Certainly, the wording of many of the code’s clauses did little to inspire faith in the NZPC’s efforts to promote journalistic accountability. For instance, its clause on ‘discrimination’ instructed newspapers not to place ‘gratuitous emphasis’ on gender, religion, minority groups, sexual orientation, race, colour or physical appearance unless the description is in ‘the public interest’. This clause was originally drawn from a previous version of the APC’s Statement of Principles, which suggested that it could actually be in the ‘public interest’ to place ‘gratuitous emphasis’ on personal characteristics such as gender or race. This clause provided one of many illustrations of the wording difficulties of the SoP, which rendered the code highly disappointing given the time that it took for the NZPC’s statement of principles to emerge.

Another central problem with the Statement of Principles was its failure to offer any explanation of the term ‘the public interest’, which the code says can be used to justify such practices as privacy invasion or subterfuge. The NZPC’s use of the ‘public interest’ conforms to what Tucker suggests is the way that “[t]he media are habitually seduced by John Stuart Mill’s utilitarian principle of the greatest good for the greatest number, a philosophy which it can use to excuse the grossest intrusion and harm to individuals”. Indeed, other critics agreed that if the term ‘the public interest’ can be invoked to justify such practices, then surely there was an obligation to offer some explanation of the term. The bottom line was that if ‘the public

130 Elsaka (2002: 40).
interest' is going to be invoked to defend unethical practice (as well as by self-regulatory bodies when adjudicating on complaints), then a self-regulatory code should elaborate on the concept if it is to promote journalistic accountability.\textsuperscript{134}

Academics have not been alone in their critique of the NZPC's Statement of Principles. Further criticism of the NZPC's attitude towards codes was made in 2003 by Bruce Slane (who had pressed for an NZPC code in the 1990s) just prior to his stepping down from the post of Privacy Commissioner. Questioning whether the print media had kept their side of the bargain after their exemption from the Privacy Act, Slane was also dismissive of the NZPC's code. Suggesting a significant departure from the recommendations he made during the 1990s privacy legislation debate, Slane views the Statement of Principles as "nothing more than some simple statements about respecting privacy".\textsuperscript{135} Further to his criticism of the NZPC's lack of sanctions during the 1990s, Slane highlighted a key anomaly of newspapers' duty to publish adjudication concerning privacy.

The Press Council really offers nothing much in the way of a remedy really for a person who's concerned about their privacy. Publishing a correction is only going to repeat the breach of privacy. It does seem to me that until you have a code that offers some sort of recompense, in appropriate cases -- just as defamation does, it's not going to really mean a lot.\textsuperscript{136}

7.8 The NZPC's 2003 review of the Statement of Principles

It was in view of the SoP's inherent weaknesses that critics eagerly awaited its review, which took place four years after its introduction. The NZPC acknowledged many of the above criticisms in its 2003 review of the Statement of Principles. However, the NZPC's response did little to suggest that the conflict between the NZPC's dual objectives had been addressed. The NZPC's review failed to resolve the fundamental problems identified by critics. While the NZPC stated in its review that it had taken criticisms of the Statement of Principles on board, few had any visible impact if the revised version of the document is anything to go by. By its own admission, the NZPC made "no changes of substance" to the document.\textsuperscript{137} However, it was left to the reader to discern which of the clauses had actually undergone any

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{134} Elsaka (2002: 41).
\textsuperscript{135} Mediawatch (6 July 2003).
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{137} NZPC (2003: 8).
\end{flushleft}
change. As it was, only two cosmetic changes were made to address the ambiguous wording noted by critics in the ‘discrimination’ and ‘corrections’ clauses.

In response to criticism of its failure to elaborate on the term ‘the public interest’, the NZPC contended that “there are strong arguments for not attempting to specify what is meant by ‘the public interest’”, and that “the term is used in legislation of many different kinds without any explanatory gloss”. This may be the case, but given that the NZPC is expected to perform as the self-regulator across the print media industry, this is arguably an unacceptable excuse for not attempting to define a term which can be used to justify unethical practices. Further defending its decision to avoid defining ‘the public interest’ in its code, the NZPC stated that “the better course is for it to survey, from time to time, the adjudications in which ‘the public interest’ has been an issue, and thus present an overview of how the Council has interpreted and applied the principle”. One would certainly expect that after thirty-one years of operation, such a body of precedent would already exist, and therefore offer the NZPC ample scope for incorporating at least some explanation of the term ‘the public interest’ into its principles. If ‘the public interest’ can override other competing interests such as the right to privacy (as the principles suggest), then the NZPC has an obligation to elaborate on the circumstances in which the right to privacy might be overridden (with the added benefit and flexibility of its ‘case law’ on which to draw).

In a further attempt to justify its decision to refrain from producing a more expansive document, the NZPC highlights the fact that its Australian counterpart also ‘confines itself to a Statement of Principles’. Obviously, the NZPC was unaware of the existence of the APC’s separate ‘privacy code’ which elaborates on the privacy provisions contained in the APC’s Statement of Principles. Developed in 2001 to justify the print media’s exemption from Australia’s privacy legislation, the privacy code also incorporates a definition of ‘the public interest’ as “involving a matter capable of affecting the people at large so they might be legitimately interested in, or concerned about, what is going on, or what may happen to them or to others”\(^\text{138}\). The code consists of eight further clauses which aim to highlight the key privacy related issues that may arise for journalists and media organisations. While not without problems of its own, the Australian effort is certainly a step ahead of the NZPC’s weak privacy provisions. As such, the NZPC could take a leaf out of the APC’s book

---
\(^{138}\) Australian Press Council (31 January 2001).
and offer a more detailed set of privacy guidelines, at the very least in order to justify the print media’s exemption from the New Zealand Privacy Act.

At present however, these criticisms of the ‘public interest’ conception reflected in the NZPC’s code still stand. The utilitarian dictum ‘the greatest good for the greatest number’ remains the tone of the code. Its use of ‘the public interest’ provides little more than a potential justification for ‘ethically dubious’ actions, rather than a reason to avoid them in the first place based on their potential harm to others. As critics have previously argued:

References to ‘the public interest’ may offer an ‘out’ for newspapers when their ethical conduct is questioned, but little real assistance to readers who must be aware of the standards expected of the press to participate in the self-regulatory process. If ‘the public interest’ is going to be invoked to defend unethical practice (as it often is), as well as by self-regulatory bodies when adjudicating on complaints, then a self-regulatory code should elaborate on the concept if it is to promote press accountability.\(^{139}\)

An adequate conception of press accountability is something still lacking in the NZPC’s code. The NZPC acknowledged in its review the omissions in the statement of principles, including the failure to address issues such as conflicts of interest and chequebook journalism. However, rather than reforming the code to take account of such issues, the NZPC stated that it

believes that the place for detailed advice on ethical conduct is the industry codes produced by journalists and newspapers, rather than the NZPC’s Statement of Principles. This seems particularly appropriate for such topics as ‘conflicts of interest’ and ‘chequebook journalism’.\(^{140}\)

The fact that the NZPC finds it acceptable to divert its self-regulatory responsibilities for establishing ethical guidelines says little about the conception of public accountability it embodies. Arguably, it is unacceptable that the NZPC attempts to justify the glaring omissions in its Statement of Principles by placing the onus upon other industry organisations to develop codes covering such issues as chequebook journalism and conflicts of interest. While critics would undoubtedly also encourage such developments, the NZPC should set a precedent for the industry by establishing an acceptable benchmark for ethical standards. As the self-regulatory body for the New Zealand print media, the NZPC should certainly take the lead here.

\(^{139}\) Elsaka (2002: 37-8).
\(^{140}\) NZPC (2003: 9).
In its review, the NZPC wrote that "there is need for greater understanding of the purpose of the Statement of Principles" which it said was "to inform the industry and the public of the ethical values that the council brings to bear in considering complaints".\(^\text{141}\) The NZPC also cautioned its critics "to note the emphasis the Council places in the preamble on freedom of expression as a fundamental principle." The council maintained that "[e]very adjudication involves weighing that principle, that value, against other principles, other values".\(^\text{142}\) Critics will undoubtedly dispute the claim that the adjudication process involves the weighing up of ethical principles and values against other competing ones. However it is difficult to see how the ad hoc arrangement of 'do's and don'ts' that constitute the code could either be likened to a set of ethical values or principles, or how it could be of much assistance in balancing competing ones.

If the notion that a profession is accountable to those it serves applies to the occupation of journalism, then journalists fall behind other professions if their self-regulatory structures are anything to go by. The NZPC can only go on so long without resolving the conflict between its dual objectives of promoting the industry’s interests and those of the public in ethical and accountable journalism. The NZPC could learn a lesson from the British experience where the former BPC was ordered by parliament to be disbanded ultimately due to a perceived conflict between its dual objectives of protecting press freedom and promoting ethical and professional standards. According to Sir David Calcutt, who was appointed by the UK government to make recommendations for the future of self-regulation in 1990, protecting press freedom interfered with the BPC’s primary self-regulatory duty of upholding ethical standards. Calcutt’s central objection was that priority was given to protecting the industry’s interests in press freedom and that the exercise of control over journalistic conduct had always been placed second.\(^\text{143}\) On the advice of Calcutt, the replacement self-regulatory body, the PCC, was subsequently established with only the latter role.

Indeed, the credibility of a ‘two-headed watchdog’ such as the NZPC necessitates a genuine commitment to balancing freedom and responsibility. This involves the will to monitor and respond to changes in journalism practice and the

\(^{141}\) Ibid: 8.
\(^{142}\) Ibid: 9.
\(^{143}\) Home Office (1990: para. 2.15: 7).
media environment, and a proactive policy toward initiating reform rather than merely reacting to political pressure. The NZPC must therefore act further to demonstrate more of a proactive commitment to its duty of promoting press responsibility to ensure the long-term effectiveness and credibility of self-regulation. As the current chair of the PCC recently remarked, “External threats to self-regulation may go into remission, but they are never wholly eliminated. Like Dracula ... they are always pushing up the coffin lid”\textsuperscript{144} The NZPC would be wise to take note of this possibility in the New Zealand context by practising what its chair, Sir John Jeffries, preaches:

The balance question between self-regulation and independence from the industry being regulated is largely a question of fact concerning the conduct of the press council. If a self-regulating press council is not acting independently of the industry it is regulating it is a bad press council. No press council worth its salt would countenance a compromised independence ...\textsuperscript{145}

7.9 Conclusion

In addition to journalists’ ambitions for professionalism, this chapter has considered the political and social background to the formalisation of self-regulation via the establishment of the New Zealand Press Council (NZPC). It has illustrated that the industrial politics within the journalism industry had a significant bearing on journalists’ efforts to construct a formal system of professional self-control. Prior to the formalisation of journalistic self-regulation, the NZJA’s code of ethics represented an attempt to create a system of ‘professional self-control’ akin to that of ‘other professions’ like lawyers, doctors, and accountants whose professional infrastructure (and status) journalists sought to emulate. Although the NZJA’s commitment to upholding ethical standards was reaffirmed with the incorporation of the code into the rules of newly reconstituted union in the early 1970s, journalists alone lacked the power to make standards ‘stick’ on an industry-wide level. Hence, the model of professional self-control desired by NZJA leaders was to be modified to suit the peculiarities of journalism.

While the NZJA’s advocates of professionalism sought a model of self-control similar to the ‘accepted professions’, the principle of individual responsibility on

\textsuperscript{144} Meyer (2003).
\textsuperscript{145} Jeffries (27 January 2003).
which they were based was seen as impractical, even undesirable, to some journalists. The principle of ‘white-collar control’ that was to underpin the system of journalistic self-regulation in New Zealand therefore represented a departure from the informal self-regulatory system embodied by the NZJA (and later the NZJU) code of ethics. While the NZJA/U’s code enforcement processes dealt with journalists as individuals the NZPC embodied a system of self-regulation in which editors and newspapers, rather than individual journalists, were answerable. While journalists’ preference for the principle of ‘white-collar control’ was largely an issue of the practicalities and mechanics of newspaper production, it also illustrates how the infrastructure and accountability mechanisms of some professions may not be appropriate for others.

Other factors that have had a bearing on the evolution of journalistic self-regulation concern the nature of both the journalistic occupation itself and the wider industry’s commercial structure and power relations therein. While effective self-regulation requires collaboration between journalists and editors/owners on a ‘professional front’, they have long been divided on an industrial front. As previous chapters have highlighted, tensions on the industrial relations front have been a central force shaping both journalists ambitions for ‘professionalism’, as well as publishers/employers’ responses to them. Nowhere was this tension felt more strongly than in the context of the development of industry-wide journalistic self-regulation. Although the NZJA had long promoted industry-wide collaboration in the maintenance of ethical standards, the dominance of newspaper owners/employers’ (predominantly economic) interests meant that the NPA resisted the idea of collective self-regulation. Indeed, collaboration between the NPA and the NZJA only occurred following the threat of a government-imposed press council in the late 1960s.

While the NZPC was duly established in 1972, the road ahead was not always a smooth one. Although the establishment of the NZPC had witnessed an unprecedented degree of co-operation between the NZJA and the NPA in the attempt to promote ethical standards, industrial politics posed as a continual threat to the efficacy of self-regulation. On occasion, the NZPC found itself playing adjudicator in a conflict between journalists and their concerns about ethical issues, and their employers, whose respective trade organisations formed the constituent industry representation on the NZPC. Such episodes highlighted the continual tension that
threatened to shake the system of press self-regulation embodied by the NZPC that other professions’ systems of self-control had mostly managed to avoid.

The power struggles and disunity within the journalism industry have not been the only challenge to press self-regulation in New Zealand. A further test of the credibility of journalistic self-regulation has been the apparent conflict between the NZPC’s dual role of protecting press freedom on the one hand, and the promotion of professional and ethical standards on the other. This conflict has been aptly illustrated in the evolution of self-regulatory codes of practice. As a development triggered by threats of ‘imposed reform’, the NZPC’s Statement of Principles raises questions about the nature of journalistic professionalism reflected in the contemporary context. If the notion that a profession is accountable to those it serves applies to the occupation of journalism, then journalists fall behind other professions if their self-regulatory structures are anything to go by, as this chapter has highlighted. Furthermore, the credibility of a two-headed watchdog such as the NZPC involves a genuine commitment to balancing freedom and responsibility. Therefore, the NZPC must act further to demonstrate a proactive commitment to its duty of promoting press responsibility to ensure the credibility and long-term effectiveness of self-regulation.
CHAPTER EIGHT

The decline in appeal of professionalism: A survey of contemporary New Zealand journalism’s professional infrastructure

The news media are dangerously under-debated in New Zealand society. There is a worrying absence of critical scrutiny about such issues as ownership and control, the role of the news media, what values they employ and the relationship between politics and the news media ... While the news media need close examination and warrant the same type of scrutiny and analysis they impose on other institutions, there is not a strong tradition of media criticism in this country. Nor are the media themselves properly self-critical. A thin-skinned reaction to complaint and a general tendency to minimize responsibility for their own deficiencies is a media characteristic. Journalists have a reputation for dishing out bad news, but possess an inability to take it in return.¹

8.1 Introduction

Journalists’ claims to ‘professionalism’ are founded on the notion that journalists serve a public interest that transcends the commercial role of the media. Journalists claim to be agents of democracy, providers of public information and watchdogs of the public interest.² Although the importance of journalists’ public role can hardly be disputed, their claims to professionalism can. In other words, journalists have failed to attain the public regard enjoyed by the ‘accepted professions’.³ What factors undermine journalists’ claims to professionalism in a contemporary context? This chapter aims to shed some light on this question through a survey of contemporary New Zealand journalism’s professional infrastructure, and the wider journalistic culture in which it resides.

Through a consideration of the limitations of the ‘professional infrastructure’ of New Zealand journalism, this chapter contends that contemporary New Zealand journalism is marked by an ‘invisibility of professionalism’. The following discussion

³ The relative status of journalists compared to that of other occupational groups is typified by poll results which record the level of public trust in various professions. For example, journalists have consistently ranked poorly in the Reader’s Digest annual poll of public trust in professions across various countries, including New Zealand. The most recent poll rated journalists at number 21 out of 25 professions (New Zealand Herald, 27 November 2002) with only marketers, car sales-people and politicians ranking below them since 2000 (New Zealand Herald, 6 November 2000). In the 2001 poll, journalists ranked even more poorly at number 23 out of 25 occupations, ahead only of car sales-people and politicians (The Timaru Herald, 30 October 2001).
aims to offer insight into the relative lack of a definite professional culture within New Zealand journalism where the professional and ethical issues of everyday journalistic practice are deliberated on a regular basis amongst practitioners.

A lack of legislative, organisational, and philosophical foundations

This chapter argues that there are three central forces pervading New Zealand journalism that have served to undermine the media’s commitment to professionalism. It is contended that New Zealand journalism lacks the legislative, organisational, and philosophical foundations to sustain a long-term commitment to professionalism. In the absence of constitutional or legal guarantees of the nature and limits of press freedom, the print media have assumed the responsibility of protecting their freedoms and rights (read ‘privileges’) themselves. Consequently, other important duties such as promoting both ethical standards and professional discourse tend to receive less attention than they deserve within the New Zealand media.

A second factor impinging upon the limited culture of professionalism apparent in contemporary New Zealand journalism is the obvious lack of organisational structures to sustain it. This is partially due to the perceived need within journalism to assume the duty of promoting press freedom, and the tendency for this set of interests to dominate the corresponding duty of the media to uphold professional and ethical standards. New Zealand journalism’s limited professional culture can also be associated with the occupation’s organisational tendencies toward trade unionism. Certainly, the comparatively smaller size of this country has not permitted the existence of a separate ‘professional body’ co-existing with a journalists’ union. This chapter argues that although the NZJA operated from 1912 as a ‘hybrid’ industrial/professional body, the appeal of professionalism as an occupational ideal and strategy to advance journalists’ interests decreased markedly post-1970s, which further accounts for the present state of play. This chapter contends that unless these various limitations are acknowledged and addressed at the institutional level, efforts to reform the professional culture at the organisational level will be ultimately ineffective.
Historical insights into the decline in appeal of professionalism

To understand the present state of New Zealand journalism, its history is instructive. The historical pursuit of professionalism by working journalists in New Zealand has been documented in the previous chapters of this thesis. From the early twentieth century, the representative organisation of New Zealand journalists, the NZJA, actively pursued professionalism as an occupational ideal, and as an alternative to traditional industrial strategies. As shown above, the key organisational, educational, and regulatory reforms pursued by the NZJA were motivated by the belief that the status of journalists was neither commensurate with the importance of journalistic work to democracy, nor the status of the ‘accepted professions’. In an attempt to improve their social status, journalists sought to emulate the professional infrastructure of the ‘recognised professions’. Although the NZJA’s motivations remained largely constant, both the pursuit and portrayal of professionalism manifested itself on different levels and in different ways depending on the status and economic situation of journalists, their available resources, and industry support at a given time. While adapted to suit the journalistic occupation, the ‘professional infrastructure’ of New Zealand journalists was inspired by a professional ideal modelled on that of other professions whose status New Zealand journalists sought to attain.

Hence, by the early 1970s, New Zealand journalism’s professional infrastructure comprised of measures to standardise journalistic responsibilities and practices through formal education and training, with an industry-body charged with overseeing the provision of journalism education and training via the NZJTO. New Zealand journalism had also enacted written standards and a means for promoting public accountability via the NZJA/U code of ethics, and later through the establishment and operation of the NZPC. However, as this chapter argues, the tension surrounding the role of journalists, and the nature of journalistic work remained unresolved, a factor which has significantly undermined the professional culture of contemporary New Zealand journalism.

Certainly, in a contemporary context there are institutional indications that journalists and the media have accepted that public accountability comes as part of their role; that ‘the watchers must themselves be watched’. However, the requisite self-reflection and self-criticism required to sustain journalists’ claims to
professionalism is lacking. This raises questions as to the media’s genuine commitment to promoting ‘the public interest(s)’. Indeed, by the 1990s there were signs that journalists’ commitment to professionalism was waning on a number of fronts. As this chapter explores further, through no (or little) fault of its own, the representative organisation of New Zealand journalists had lost its voice on the professional concerns with which it had been comparatively active in the past. Furthermore, the wider journalistic industry also appeared to be making little effort to demonstrate a genuine commitment to professionalism. Although the print media’s self-regulatory body, the NZPC continued operation, it did so on a somewhat minimalist basis with reforms only being undertaken in the face of external scrutiny and criticism. As chapter seven illustrated, the NZPC’s reforms of the 1990s were ultimately triggered by the interests of industry self-protection rather than a genuine commitment to professionalism.

8.2 Journalism’s ‘glass jaw syndrome’

I think that one of the criticisms I’d make of journalists is that if we’re honest with ourselves we tend to have a bit of a glass jaw. That we’re good at dishing out the criticisms but aren’t so flash at taking it. The web, and indeed programmes generally that seek to review the media … are I think, very important both in discussing matters important to journalists and important to the media more widely, and also I think bringing journalists down to earth reminding us that perhaps we’re not as important as we like to think we are.\(^4\)

Made in 2003 by Chris Warren (federal secretary of the MEAA and president of the IFJ), this comment captures the ‘glass jaw syndrome’ of most journalists which is symptomatic of the limited professional culture characteristic of New Zealand journalism. Indeed, one of the central paradoxes of contemporary journalism concerns journalists’ claims to professionalism. On the one hand, New Zealand journalists have employed their ‘watchdog’ functions to justify their claims to professional status, which has been granted in the form of autonomy from ‘draconian’ legislative restraints and the privilege of self-regulation. On the other hand, the ‘watching’ tends to be restricted to activities that occur outside of their own. While journalists vociferously defend their right to scrutinise the practices and performance of social and political institutions, their own are rarely the topic of debate within the media.

\(^4\) Mediawatch (5 October 2003).
In New Zealand, the media tend to be much quicker to ‘call to account’ any other social or political institution other than itself. In other words, the self-reflection and self-criticism integral to genuine journalistic professionalism is lacking within journalism itself.

The future of New Zealand journalism: Signs of change?

However, there are indications that the ‘glass jaw syndrome’ of New Zealand journalism – the inability of most journalists to either engage in the requisite self-scrutiny for ‘effective professionalism’, or to tolerate constructive criticism from the ‘outside’ – is being acknowledged. In a journalistic environment in which little formal criticism of the practice and culture of journalism had occurred for some time, the creation of Radio New Zealand programme Mediawatch in 2001 was a positive development. TVNZ has also recently introduced a media criticism programme entitled Eating Media Lunch. In the print sector, some magazines such as North and South, and the National Business Review have columns dedicated to discussion of media-related issues.

Not very often does one hear journalists themselves calling for tighter self-regulatory structures for their occupation. This, of course, is symptomatic of the anti-professional attitude that characterises New Zealand journalism today. However, over the last few years, there have been signs that New Zealand journalism is starting to recognise its lack of professional culture and its implications for the practice of journalism generally. Although in the minority, journalists themselves have recently begun questioning the depth of their occupation’s commitment to professionalism, and have forwarded proposals for reform of their own. For instance, some journalists have advocated the establishment of an independent organisation to scrutinise the professional standards of journalists and media organisations. The promotion of professional discourse within journalism also provided the impetus for the

---

2 As expounded further in Dunbar (2003).

6 Hosted by Jeremy Wells (a.k.a. ‘Newsboy’), its satirical content and ‘soundbitten’ format reflect more of an attempt at ‘mainstreaming media studies’ and less of the serious in-depth analysis of media practice some might have hoped for.

7 In the past, there have been New Zealand television programmes dedicated to media analysis such as Column Comment, and The Fourth Estate, which screened in the 1970s and early 1980s. The Listener also used to produce a column on media issues written by former journalist turned academic Judy McGregor.

8 For example, see McLaughlan (2000).
Intermediate conference held in Auckland in March 2002. Organised by the British Council and Auckland University of Technology (AUT), the conference was lauded as an occasion for top British journalists to mix with New Zealand’s leading practitioners to ‘examine themselves and their profession’, and to provide a forum for discussion and debate for working journalists. Though an admirable concept, aside from those invited to speak few working journalists actually attended which says little about the level of industry commitment to such forums of professional self-reflection and discussion.

Indeed, there is a contradictory undercurrent to the claims of journalists in favour of increased discourse and debate about the practice of journalism. A striking example began in 1998 with a prominent New Zealand journalist lamenting the lack of scrutiny of the New Zealand media performance in a lengthy newspaper article. The author noted that unlike the United States media, with its host of publications dedicated to media analysis, the New Zealand media operated “largely without scrutiny” and as such, there was a pressing need for “some form of regular public scrutiny of the too-often shoddy performance of our media”. However, in 2003, the same journalist reviewed an edited collection of academic articles analysing the New Zealand media entitled What’s News? in a North and South magazine column. The tone of the review certainly appeared to contradict this journalist’s earlier proclamations as to the need for more external scrutiny of the media. In spite of the fact that the book constituted one of the first such collections of media criticism in New Zealand for several years, the journalist declared the book “curious because it doesn’t seem to have a legitimate raison d’être other than to provide the means for some academic research papers of dubious worth to be published”. The contributors, the journalist advised, “need to get out more. It’s easy to theorise and postulate from an ivory tower … It’s a whole lot harder to actually do it”.

---

9 Oram (2002: 2).
12 Roger (2003: 92). The journalist concerned indirectly acknowledged a potential conflict of interest when he noted in his review that he had “not always enjoyed harmonious relations” with one of the book’s editors. It would therefore be fitting to mention that a chapter in the book concerned was co-written by the author of this thesis.
Similarly, a recent research paper criticising the New Zealand media’s lack of self-scrutiny was scathingly denounced by the Listener’s editor Finlay McDonald,\textsuperscript{14} which only reinforced his own observation that “the commonest expression of scepticism [about media criticism] is, from journalists, that academics tend not to understand the daily realities of news production”.\textsuperscript{15} This comment is fallacious when one notes that almost all of New Zealand’s leading journalism academics are themselves former journalists and therefore very much aware of the ‘daily realities of news production’ that McDonald speaks of. (Not to mention the fact that “the little monograph” at which MacDonald’s comments were directed was in fact written by a working journalist).

Evidently, then, although some journalists may acknowledge the lack of media scrutiny in New Zealand, they are scathingly dismissive of any ‘interference’ from outside. This attitude typifies the ‘glass jaw syndrome’ of New Zealand journalism and is symptomatic of the limited professional culture of New Zealand journalism generally. This trend is highly disturbing because the media’s ability to both engage in internal self-scrutiny and accept external criticism are prerequisites for a profession whose claims to that status are based upon its self-proclaimed right to function as a watchdog on behalf of the public. Moreover, external criticism and self-scrutiny are vital to the health of journalism in a democratic society. What factors can be attributed to the limited professional culture of contemporary New Zealand journalism? What do they suggest about the potential for future reform? The remainder of this chapter aims to shed some light upon these questions.

\section*{8.3 Understanding the professional culture of contemporary New Zealand journalism}

To understand the present state of New Zealand journalism, and the inconsistencies surrounding journalists’ attitudes to professional self-criticism and external scrutiny, its history is instructive. From the 1970s to the present day, New Zealand journalism has witnessed a shift from a comparatively active ‘professional culture’ as evidenced in the activities of the NZJA/U, to a relatively ‘inactive’

\textsuperscript{14} The research paper in question was Dunbar (2003), the full bibliographic details of which are included in the list of references at the end of this thesis.
\textsuperscript{15} McDonald (2003).
professional culture, both historically and cross-nationally. This has resulted in an
'invisibility of professionalism' in the current journalistic environment. While there
are structural indications that the media and journalists accept that their privileges
carry corresponding responsibilities, the 'professional spirit' required to make these
structures truly effective appears to be lacking. The invisibility of professionalism
characteristic of contemporary New Zealand journalism is therefore an issue
pertaining not only to the professional and ethical frameworks that comprise New
Zealand journalism's professional infrastructure but also to the lack of professional
discourse required to give effective force to these structures. The current state of play
is thus a consequence of both a declining sense of professionalism within journalism
and the lack of consensus within journalism about the nature and benefits of
journalistic professionalism. As noted at the outset of this chapter, the current state of
play can be attributed to some central historical processes, which the following aims
to highlight.

Ambiguity as to the nature and limits of press freedom

The limited professional consciousness and culture of contemporary New
Zealand journalism can be attributed in part to the fact that New Zealand does not
offer constitutional or legal guarantees of the nature and limits of press freedom.
Indeed, the degree to which press freedom is constitutionally protected in a given
country offers insight into the inviolability of that freedom. New Zealand lies in
contrast to the United States which consolidates the freedom of the press through the
First Amendment to the United States Constitution 1791. This effectively rules out the
possibility of government intervention in, and the imposition of controls restrictive to,
the press. In doing so, the nature and boundaries of press freedom are consolidated
through legislation. In contrast, although the general right to freedom of expression is
acknowledged in the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, New Zealand does not
have a written constitution that specifically guarantees press freedom. As such, the
nature and limits of press freedom in New Zealand remain vague, a factor which has
implications for the limited professional culture of New Zealand journalism today.

An apparent imbalance between press freedom and professionalism within
New Zealand journalism may be largely attributable to the ambiguity over the nature
and limits of that freedom compared to a country like the United States in which press
freedom is constitutionally defined and protected. The constitutional guarantee of press freedom afforded to United States journalism and its comparatively more active professional culture is no coincidence, as the following extract suggests.

The philosophy and principles of journalism are not popular debating points in Westminster democracies. In the United States, where the constitutional principle of freedom of speech is highly valued and practical journalism is backed up by academic tradition, they are better debated ... New Zealand journalism has been terribly slow to pick up on the debates and developments. There are a number of possible reasons for this. We tend to look towards Britain rather than the United States for our models, which means we miss out on the vitality that is generated by the value placed by that society of freedom of speech and the academic tradition that has built up around it.16

As noted at the outset of this thesis, these remarks indicate that the 'professional culture' of journalism in the United States can be attributed to the first amendment guarantee of press freedom. Such guarantees have evidently fostered a more 'professionally conscious' media, which in turn, has been sustained by active professional associations of journalists since the nineteenth century. In other words, United States journalism has both the legislative and organisational frameworks to support the type of professional culture that New Zealand journalism evidently lacks. Dring reinforces this point:

The historical background to the sense that the responsibility for the maintenance of journalistic ethics falls on the individual journalist in the United States of America is, of course, in part because of the constitutional protection afforded to freedom of the press. This, and a greater sense of perceived freedom of information ... leads to a different journalistic environment.17

In the absence of such formal guarantees of press freedom, the New Zealand media have assumed the responsibility of protecting their freedoms themselves. In New Zealand journalism, the promotion of press freedom has come to exist as a central duty of journalists' organisations and other representative bodies within the media. Although in theory, the interests of press freedom may co-exist with other interests such as the promotion of professionalism, the former set of interests tends to outweigh the latter. Due to the ambiguity as to the nature and limits of press freedom, important duties such as promoting both ethical standards and professional discourse

tend to receive lesser priority within New Zealand journalism than they do within overseas’ journalists’ organisations and self-regulatory bodies, as is illustrated further below.

Further insight into the constraints of press freedom on professionalism can be gained from a consideration of the professional infrastructure of the print media in relation to that of broadcasters. As chapter seven noted, the regulation of broadcasting standards has been a governmental concern since its inception in New Zealand, and the regulatory structures for the maintenance of broadcasting standards continue to have a statutory overlay. Although the legislative framework for broadcast journalists has shaped and constrained their ambitions for professionalism and efforts to convey them,\textsuperscript{18} it has also ensured that professionalism is demonstrably promoted through the regular and systematic reform of broadcasters’ regulatory structures. By contrast, the New Zealand print media have enjoyed much wider latitude than their broadcasting counterparts, with comparatively little government intervention in press standards. However, this lack of external scrutiny appears to have fostered complacency (rather than a genuine ‘professional spirit’) on the part of the print media, as chapter seven highlighted. Although to enter into a discussion of the benefits of statutory regulation for all news media is beyond the scope of this thesis,\textsuperscript{19} it can be said that the ‘voluntary’ nature of print media self-regulation limits the degree to which professionalism is publicly ‘seen to be done’.

**New Zealand journalists and the protection of press freedom**

During the history of New Zealand journalism, there have been pertinent illustrations of the way in which professionalism has been undermined by the interests of press freedom, particularly on occasions when journalists and the media perceive threats to that freedom. For example, in the 1960s, the NZJA’s progress on the development of a code of ethics was sidelined when the defence of press freedom

---

\textsuperscript{18} See Farnsworth (1989) on the issue of broadcasting journalists and their self-perceptions.

\textsuperscript{19} Most arguments for and against statutory control for the print media have taken place in the context of the notorious British national press, and sway towards the ‘against’ for a variety of reasons. Notably, Gibbons (1998: 279) maintains that “a principal reason why self-regulation in the press has persisted for so long [in Britain], despite its patent inadequacies, is that both the press and its owners have been able to exploit the reluctance of government to be seen to interfere with free speech in a democracy. They have been able to identify the media’s interests with the broader constitutional principle”. Such defences apply similarly to the New Zealand case. Not only would the enactment of statutory controls on the print media significantly hinder ‘serious’ (news and current affairs) journalism, it would inevitably be ‘political suicide’ for any government, as Gibbons (1998: 279) tacitly highlights.
emerged as a 'more pressing' concern. It will be recalled from chapter six that in 1963, following the imprisonment of two British journalists for failing to disclose their sources, the NZJA took steps toward formalising New Zealand journalists' own stance on 'non-disclosure'. Although journalists' privilege to retain confidential sources was a 'professional issue' that the NZJA saw as "closely related to that of an ethics code", defending the (unwritten) rights and freedoms of journalists took priority over the production of a written document codifying their responsibilities. Later in 1963, the NZJA became concerned with issues of press freedom that arose with the introduction of the Indecent Publications Bill. The NZJA perceived the Bill as unnecessarily draconian and a threat to press freedom, and took immediate steps to promote its amendment. This threat to press freedom provided another diversion from the development of the NZJA's code of ethics. Furthermore, between 1964 and the end of 1965, a central concern of the NZJA was the News Media Ownership Bill. The progression of the Bill saw perhaps one of the most intense periods of debate about understandings of press freedom in the history of New Zealand journalism and its implementation in 1965 certainly challenged journalists' understandings of that freedom. Ultimately, however, the NZJA's efforts to defend press freedom during the 1960s saw the progression of its ethics code delayed for some seven years.

The New Zealand media's response to the 1991 Privacy of Information Bill provides another illustration of the priority given to defending their freedoms over promoting professionalism. As chapter seven explained, the original Bill's extension to the private sector meant that the print media were captured by its provisions. This was especially problematic for the news media where no acknowledgement was made in the Bill of their 'special position' in the democratic process. It was also perceived to contravene press freedom and freedom of expression more generally. While the Privacy Act 1993 addressed the threat to press freedom with its exemption "in relation to its news activities any news medium", its passage was especially significant for the media's defensiveness and vocal opposition to the prospect of its freedoms being threatened.

In its submission to the justice and law reform select committee that considered the Privacy of Information Bill, the NPA was quick to decry the Bill's

---

“undue stress on the privacy of the individual over the public’s right to know” and its “capacity to seriously damage press freedom”. However, the NPA quietly ignored proposals from within parliament and the public that the media’s exemption from the Privacy Act required justification via the adoption of an editorial code of ethics, a proposal that did not make it onto the agenda of the NPA itself. With the NZPC failing to produce a written code, and the journalists’ union’s failure to amend its existing code to adequately address privacy issues, the responsibility fell on former newspaper publishing company, INL, to develop a company-wide code to deflect criticism. As chapter seven highlighted, while all the major representative organisations in the New Zealand media had become highly vocal at the prospect of press freedom being contravened, suggestions made that their responsibilities be codified were, for the most part swiftly deflected, if not ignored.

Moreover, it took the print media’s self-regulatory body, the NZPC, until 1997 (notably, just prior to the pending 1998 Privacy Act review) to embark upon the production of a written code. Although the final product emerged in the guise of a written code, it resembled more of an ‘insurance policy’ to protect the print media from further external scrutiny and criticism. Although the NZPC acknowledged external criticisms of the emergent Statement of Principles in its 2003 review of the document, it did not actively address these through any substantive changes to the code. Instead, the NZPC claimed that “the place for detailed advice on ethical conduct is the codes of conduct created by the industry itself”. As chapter seven argued, the fact that the NZPC deemed it acceptable to divert its self-regulatory responsibilities for establishing ethical guidelines for publications does little to convince critics that its duty to promote professionalism is taken seriously.

Overall, the 2003 review of the NZPC’s Statement of Principles failed to convince critics that the conflict between its dual role of protecting both the industry’s interests and those of the public had been resolved. Rather telling was the NZPC’s claim that “there is need for greater understanding of the purpose of the Statement of Principles” which it stated is “to inform the industry and the public of the ethical values that the council brings to bear in considering complaints”. The NZPC also

24 Ibid: 8.
cautioned its critics “to note the emphasis the Council places in the preamble on freedom of expression as a fundamental principle.” Unwittingly perhaps, the NZPC reaffirmed suspicions as to its overarching commitment to press freedom relative to professionalism when it concluded its review with the statement that “in any discussion of the Statement of Principles it is important to note the emphasis the Council places in the preamble on freedom of expression as a fundamental principle. Every adjudication involves weighing that principle, that value, against other principle, other values”. These comments only reaffirm suspicions that the media tend to be much quicker to defend their freedoms than they are to accept their responsibilities. This does not present a healthy picture of the professional consciousness and culture of New Zealand journalism.

A lack of organisational foundations to sustain professionalism

As indicated above, further insight into the limited professional consciousness of New Zealand journalism can be gained from a comparison with the organisational tendencies of United States journalism. United States’ journalism has long been noted for its high rate of professional affiliation, boasting a wide range of active professional associations that hold seminars and conferences, publish newsletters, establish computer and personal networks and forums, and act generally to facilitate the sharing of ideas for the professional advancement of journalism. By contrast, New Zealand journalism has long been organised primarily along industrial lines. The lack of organisational foundations for professionalism is arguably a large-scale impediment to New Zealand journalism’s professional culture, and perhaps assists in understanding the relative lack of discourse and rigorous debate (both external, but especially internal) to the journalistic environment about the practises and performance of the New Zealand media.

Industrial demarcation as an impediment to professionalism

The division between journalists and their employers at the industrial level began in the early twentieth century with the demise of the NZIJ. Chapter four illustrated that the NZIJ considered itself a ‘professional organisation’ which was

---

open to 'all classes of journalists' regardless of their status as working journalist, newspaper editor, or publisher. In large measure because of the occupational distinctions felt between journalists and newspaper publishers, New Zealand journalism increasingly became organised along trade union lines. The industrial organisation of New Zealand journalists and other industry representatives according to their role as employees and employers respectively served to widen the gaps between the interests of journalists as employees, and those of newspaper publishers as employers. As previous chapters have highlighted, tensions on the industrial relations front have been a central force shaping both journalists ambitions for 'professionalism', as well as publishers/employers' responses to them.

Although journalists have attempted to collectively pursue professionalism in the past, namely through the NZJA, their efforts have been undermined by several forces. Firstly, the industrial demarcation characteristic of the wider journalism industry has weakened the efforts of journalists to collectively stand up for professional standards. This difficulty was highlighted in chapter four through a discussion of the NZJA's attempt to establish a professional institute. This initiative arose of the belief that if media executives were aligned with the NZJA through the proposed professional institute, the interests of journalists could be furthered both in an industrial and professional sense. Thus, the professional institute idea was effectively an attempt to address some of the key difficulties the NZJA faced in promoting professionalism.

As this thesis has also illustrated, the conception of professionalism embodied by NZJA leaders did not appeal to all working journalists. Some journalists criticised what they perceived as 'lofty and unrealistic ambitions' for professionalism among their younger counterparts. At the core of the issue was a conflict amongst journalists themselves as to the status of the journalistic occupation; whether it was a 'trade' or a 'profession', and whether organising along traditional trade union or professional lines was the best means of advancing the position of journalists. This conflict persisted over several decades in spite of 'generational replacement' within the journalistic occupation, as this thesis has shown.27

27 Lauk (1996: 98) uses the term 'generational replacement' to denote the replacement of older generations of journalists as new ones enter the occupation.
The attitude of employers represented by the NPA did little to resolve the tension surrounding the notion of journalistic professionalism. As this thesis has illustrated, NPA leaders tended to see journalists' pursuit of professional status "simply in money terms, as an effort to push up [their] remuneration". The fact that some journalists associated professionalism with a right to higher pay did little to gain employers' sympathy for journalists' professionalising efforts. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that journalists' efforts to establish a system of professional self-control akin to 'other professions' did not initially find favour with the employers until the threat of external intervention forced industry collaboration, as chapter seven illustrated.

While the NZPC was established in 1972 as New Zealand journalism's attempt at 'professional self-control', the road ahead was not always a smooth one. Although the establishment of the NZPC had witnessed an unprecedented degree of co-operation between the NZJA and the NPA in the attempt to promote ethical standards, on occasion the NZPC found itself forced to deal with the tension between the two bodies. In such instances, the NZPC found itself playing adjudicator in a conflict between journalists and their concerns about ethical issues, and their employers, whose respective trade organisations formed the constituent industry representation on the NZPC. As chapter seven highlighted, such episodes of internal conflict highlighted the continual tension that threatened to shake the system of press self-regulation embodied by the NZPC that other professions' systems of self-control, unencumbered by journalism's inherent industrial politics, had mostly managed to avoid.

8.4 The decline of professionalism as occupational ideal and strategy for advancement

The impediments to journalistic professionalism in New Zealand overviewed above were extended over the period post-1970, which saw a waning belief amongst journalists as to the benefits of professionalism. The declining appeal of professionalism as an occupational identity for journalists post-1970 sheds light upon the limited professionalism culture of New Zealand journalism today. As this thesis

---

has shown, the NZJA’s pursuit of professionalism was driven by some central forces, which remained pertinent into the 1970s. The following statement typified these concerns:

Many skilled and experienced journalists give up and leave for higher rewards elsewhere. Many intelligent and academically qualified youngsters do not consider journalism as a career when they learn of the low rates of pay and other conditions. Journalists are concerned about what this will do for the future standard of journalism.\(^{29}\)

These views had their origins in the early twentieth century when the representative organisation of New Zealand journalists, the NZJA, adopted professionalism as an unwritten policy initiative to advance the interests of working journalists. As shown in the preceding chapters, the key professional, educational, and regulatory reforms pursued by the NZJA were motivated by the belief that the status of journalists was neither commensurate with the importance of journalistic work to democracy, nor the status of the ‘accepted professions’. In an attempt to improve their social status, journalists sought to emulate the professional infrastructure of the ‘recognised professions’.

As noted at the outset of this chapter, both the pursuit and portrayal of professionalism manifested itself on different levels and in different ways depending on the status and economic position of journalists, their available resources, and industry support at a given time. While adapted to suit the journalistic occupation, the ‘professional infrastructure’ of New Zealand journalists was inspired by a professional ideal modelled on that of other professions whose status New Zealand journalists sought to attain. Hence, by the early 1970s, New Zealand journalism’s professional infrastructure comprised of measures to standardise journalistic responsibilities and practices through formal education and training, with an industry body charged with overseeing the provision of journalism education and training via the NZJTO. New Zealand journalism had also enacted written standards and a means for promoting public accountability via the NZJA (and later the NZJU) code of ethics, and through the establishment and operation of the NZPC.

\(^{29}\) The New Zealand Journalist (October 1972: 2).
The limitations of professionalism for journalists

However, in spite of these various processes and developments, the tension surrounding the role of journalists and the nature of journalistic work remained unresolved. Although the NZJA adopted professionalism as both an occupational ideal and alternative strategy to industrial routines in an attempt to align journalists with the white-collar status of the ‘accepted professions’, a consensus about the nature and benefits of professionalism remained elusive. The NZJA’s attempt to create a ‘professional infrastructure’ modelled on the ‘accepted professions’ had ultimately failed to produce the desired outcomes for journalists (namely, improved social and economic status). Hence the appeal of professionalism as an occupational ideal was waning.

As an occupational identity, ‘professionalism’ had failed to address the overarching contradictions surrounding journalists’ occupational role. On the contrary, the tension between the ‘white-collar ideals’ of journalistic work (the notion of journalists as an autonomous profession, whose work was an intellectual/literary pursuit of significant social and political importance), and the ‘blue-collar reality’ of that work (as reflected in the pay, conditions and social status of journalists) remained into the 1970s.\textsuperscript{30} Professionalism as an occupational ideal to which the NZJA leaders aspired and as a strategy to advance journalists’ interests had failed to resolve the contradictions surrounding the role of journalists. This conflict amongst journalists as to the status of their occupation and the best means of advancing their interests came to a head in the 1970s.

A preference for traditional trade union activity

Into the 1970s, NZJA’s leaders remained convinced of the importance of journalistic work relative to ‘other professions’. They also maintained that the demands in the journalistic environment were not being acknowledged in journalists’ social esteem or economic rewards. These were not new claims. What was new from the 1970s was journalists’ responses to them. The declining preference among

\footnote{Hirst (2002) explores the notion of ‘grey collar journalists’ who occupy contradictory class locations in the social relations of news production. He argues that journalists’ ‘in between’ status is a central determinant in the ambivalent consciousness of journalists and the ‘contradictory emotional dialectic of newswork’ (2002: 278). Hirst (2002: 262) suggests that in view of these contradictions, the label ‘profession’ is inappropriate for journalists and that any proposal for future reform must begin with a recognition of the antagonistic class divisions of capitalism.}
journalists for professionalism as an occupational identity was matched by an increasing preference for traditional industrial routines to advance their interests. This represented a significant departure from the NZJA’s longstanding approach to advancing journalists’ interests. As this thesis has illustrated, prior to the 1970s, NZJA leaders were motivated by the belief that industrial methods were more suited to blue-collar workers rather than white-collar workers. As such, they promoted professionalism as an alternative means of advancing journalists’ interests in an attempt to align themselves with the white-collar status of the ‘accepted professions’. However, this preference was challenged during the 1970s, with a growing belief in the efficacy of traditional trade union activity over professionalism to advance journalists’ interests.

Far from posing as an effective strategy to advance the interests of journalists, professionalism was increasingly seen as an ‘ideological weapon’ of newspaper managements in the separation of shared labour interests of printers and editorial workers by providing promises to journalists of social status and professional independence. In the words of one New Zealand journalist, it was increasingly recognised that:

In the past employers have used the idea of professionalism to divide journalists from other workers in their trade ... Ideas which tend to set white-collar workers apart from industrial workers are breaking down.

It became evident that professionalism was no longer seen as an effective alternative to industrial routines, hence the progressive decline in the former set of strategies, and the increase in the use of the latter post-1970. Instead of attempting to mimic the ‘professional infrastructure’ of the accepted professions to advance their interests, during the 1970s, the NZJU increasingly favoured traditional industrial routines. (The fact that the former journalists’ association changed it name to journalists’ ‘union’ in late 1973 further illustrated this realignment in the occupational identity of New Zealand journalists).

33 People’s Voice (10 July 1978: 4).
The effects of new newspaper production technologies

New Zealand journalists increasingly identified with the class interests of other occupations in the wider industry and adopted industrial methods to further them. A central force underpinning this shift in journalists' orientation and affiliation with other newspaper workers was the introduction of new newspaper production technologies in the 1970s, notably computerisation. The effects of the new technologies on newspaper workers (including printers, readers, copyholders and journalists) united the journalists' union and other employee unions in the industry. Journalists increasingly affiliated (first informally, then later formally) with other 'blue-collar' industrial unions from which they had traditionally disassociated themselves. The printing union was the first to pledge its support for the journalist union with the realisation that "we are in the same industry, with the same employers". With this realisation came reciprocal assurances that in the event of a work stoppage by journalists, members of the printing union would not undertake work normally done by journalists and vice versa. The NZUJ adopted a formal policy on technology in 1977 "that any use of the new technology by journalists should not take away work traditionally done by other unions until or unless those unions agree". From this point, NZUJ leaders agitated for formal amalgamation with the printing union.

The printing union's agreement on a 'black ban' on copy produced by journalists during strike action represented a significant departure from the approach the NZJA took in the 1950s. As chapter four highlighted, the NZJA's attempt to create a professional institute that cut across industrial boundaries arose out of the belief that if media executives were aligned with the NZJA through the proposed professional institute, journalists would have more power in the event of industrial action to prevent the production of a newspaper. In this case, the NZJA was attempting to align journalists with the 'white-collar' interests of media executives. Having ultimately failed in this attempt, the NZUJ sought to gain the support of the

---

34 Appendix B provides some more background on major technological developments in the New Zealand press during the twentieth century.
35 *The New Zealand Journalist* (July 1973: 1).
36 NZUJ Minutes (8 May 1974: 1).
37 Ibid: 1.
38 NZUJ Minutes (11 September 1981: 1).
'blue-collar' workers in the wider journalism industry to further journalists' own industrial objectives. This pattern of industrial alignment was a feature of journalists' occupational identity and basis for advancement during the 1970s and beyond.

The NZJU's concerns about the effects of new newspaper technology on journalists continued into the 1980s with the introduction of computer setting. On the one hand, NZJU leaders believed that technology was edging into the traditional work done by journalists. Direct inputting by journalists was seen to cut across the work of printers and readers but, in doing so, 'heaped the responsibility for that work onto journalists'. The introduction of new newspaper production technology in the 1970s coincided with the first major instances of strike action taken by New Zealand journalists, as discussed further below. This was a further indication of an increasing preference amongst journalists for trade unionism as both an occupational identity and as a method of advancing their interests.

**Direct wage negotiation and the application of ‘Nordmeyer relativity’**

The NZJU’s increasing preference for traditional trade union activity was both illustrated and reinforced by the introduction of a new mode of wage negotiation – ‘Nordmeyer relativity’. Nordmeyer relativity originated in 1972 when Sir Arnold Nordmeyer (a retired politician) was appointed as an independent arbitrator during an award dispute about relativities and other factors affecting journalists’ wages. Nordmeyer used several occupations as indicators, and recommended that journalists’ wages be maintained relative to wages in those trades. Significantly, Nordmeyer determined that a senior journalist’s wages should be equivalent not to those of doctors or lawyers (as the NZJA had consistently claimed), but to those of a senior police sergeant. Thus, Nordmeyer ruled that journalists be awarded wage increases ranging from 19% to 42% for 1972. This new formula for wage negotiation was accepted at the 1977 meeting of the liaison committee of the NZJU and the Northern Journalists’ Union (NJU), and provided the basis for strike action in 1978.

---

40 NZJU Minutes (11 September 1981: 1).
41 *The New Zealand Journalist* (May/June 1972: 1).
42 *People’s Voice* (10 July 1978: 4).
43 *The New Zealand Journalist* (October 1972: 1). More details on Nordmeyer relativity can be found in Appendix B.
44 NZJU Minutes (15 September 1977: 1).
The perceived failure of employers to maintain relativity was at the heart of New Zealand journalists' second major episode of strike action in 1978. The NZJU decided to strike after conciliation talks over pay increases had broken down because the NPA and the NZJU could not agree on a basis for restoring pay relativities set by Nordmeyer in the 1972 award dispute. The NZJU was claiming a pay rise of 23% of the existing rates while employers were offering increases of between 3% and 7%. The strike was an attempt to force employers to negotiate the NZJU's relativity claims, but was called off after 84 hours when agreement was reached to resume conciliation talks. This period of strike action set a precedent for further episodes during the 1978-9 wage round and beyond.

**Journalistic independence in question: To affiliate or not to affiliate?**

The NZJU's dramatic shift in attitude toward the question of journalists' affiliation with the Labour movement was also symptomatic of its realignment with the subjective interests of class over those of 'objective professional'. During the twentieth century the NZJA grappled with the subjective interests of journalists in their own upward mobility (improved economic and social status) while at the same time attempting to distance themselves discursively from the subjective interests of class in relation to their work role as independent servants of the 'public interest'. This tension had long been reflected in the NZJA's dual function as both trade union and professional organisation and in the ambiguity as to the role of journalistic work among members.

As chapter four highlighted, the NZJA initially eschewed all connection with other unions and the growing Labour movement. Although the NZJA's founders wished to have New Zealand journalists' wages and working conditions regularised in the same manner as their Australian counterparts, the NZJA pledged to "stand apart politically from the general body of trade unions" and to "remain free from outside entanglements". Indeed, this stance was formalised with the first journalists'

---

46 *New Zealand Herald* (30 June 1978: 3).  
47 *New Zealand Herald* (4 July 1978: 3).  
industrial award made in Christchurch in 1913. The award included the proviso
that “the provisions of the foregoing clause shall operate ... only so long as the Union
shall not be associated in any way with any other industrial union or trade union or
association of such unions or association of other workers”.52 Although this
compulsion had lapsed by 1935,53 it embodied a principle of ‘voluntary
disassociation’ with the labour movement that was accepted by the NZJA, albeit in an
informal way.

When the New Zealand Federation of Labour (FoL) was formed in 1937 as the
national body representative of private sector trade unions in New Zealand, the NZJA
re-examined the question of affiliation. At the time, the majority of journalists
remained opposed to affiliation on the grounds that “journalistic work requires strict
political impartiality, and the alliance of journalists as a body to any party would
contravene the ethics of the profession”.54 The question of affiliation was
reconsidered again during the 1970s. Not all branches of the NZJU were convinced of
the merits of affiliation, fearing that “FoL militants would drag the NZJU into
stoppages over issues journalists might oppose”.55 Members of the Canterbury-
Westland union were among the more vocal opponents of affiliation on the grounds
that it would undermine the professional independence of journalists. These
sentiments were conveyed in a remit to the NZJU’s 1974 annual conference “that this
conference supports the principle of independence of journalists and, in furtherance of
this principle, adopts as a basic policy of the NZJU that the Union will not affiliate
with the Federation of Labour”.56 Although on this occasion the motion was lost,
further consideration was given to the issue over the following five years.

Having considered the potential threat of affiliation to professional integrity of
journalists,57 the NZJU (excluding the NJU) made the decision to affiliate with the
FoL in August 1979.58 The decision was made after a secret ballot conducted at
chapel meetings in the NZJU areas with 339 journalists voting for, and 258 against
affiliation.59 The NZJU’s decision to affiliate was a significant departure from the

---

52 Ibid: 1.
54 The New Zealand Journalist (12 July 1937: 2).
56 NZJU Minutes (14 September 1974: 4).
57 NZJU Minutes (5 February 1979: 1).
58 NZJU Minutes (2 November 1979: 4).
59 Truth (21 August 1979: 4).
stance its predecessor, the NZJA, had embodied. Interestingly, the NZJU was not fazed by the concerns expressed by NPA officials who “hoped that joining the FoL would not affect the traditional independence of newspapers”, to which the NZJU responded: “there is nothing independent, traditional or otherwise, about most papers in this country”.60 Employers were not the only ones with reservations about the links that journalists had forged with the Labour movement and their subsequent effect on journalistic independence. As the NZJU’s voting results had indicated, a significant proportion of journalists remained opposed to the idea of affiliation. In addition to the potential threat to journalistic independence, censorship was another concern. Opponents to affiliation questioned whether journalists would now be expected to withhold critical reportage concerning the FoL.61 Certainly, the division within the NZJU on the issue of affiliation was a major challenge to its unity at the time when the occupational identity of journalists, and the solidarity of their union, was already under threat by the processes described above. Ultimately, however, the move towards affiliation showed that the union’s previous commitment to professional independence (and the public perception thereof) had been superseded by the industrial advantages that affiliation were seen to bring to the NZJU.

**Embracing ‘militancy’**

The 1970s also saw the NZJU embrace militancy, an approach union leaders had traditionally shied away from since the inception of the NZJA in 1912. As chapter four explained, the NZJA began operation having overcome the central limitations of its predecessor, the Canterbury Journalists Union. Firstly, due to the antipathy to the principles of trade unionism prevalent at the time, the NZJA purposely avoided the label ‘union’ to encourage as wide a membership among working journalists as possible. Instead, the NZJA drew on the name of its recently established Australian counterpart, the Australian Journalists’ Association. New Zealand journalists were in

---

60 NZJU Minutes (2 November 1979: 4).
61 *Truth* (21 August 1979: 4). These concerns appeared to be founded when, in 1980, some journalists complained of being warned against writing anti-FoL stories (*Truth*, 11 November 1980: 6). Further, in 1983 there were calls for a plebiscite on affiliation with the FoL because the NZJU’s membership was “seen by some people as aligning reporters with a political party” and due to the “constant criticisms and allegations of bias in the printed media’s coverage of political events” especially the activities of the FoL (*The Auckland Star*, 21 June 1983: 4). This issue was never fully resolved as the EPMU (which incorporates journalists) is affiliated to the Council of Trade Unions (CTU), which was established in 1988 to create a single voice for public and private sector unions.
agreement with their Australian contemporaries that “[t]heir wages might be low and their tenure precarious, but they did not wish to be confused with the working class”.\footnote{Walker (1976: 238).} Thus, from the outset the NZJA adopted a moderate stance toward unionism, a necessary precaution to quell disquiet about the ‘perils’ of journalists’ unions from employers that “it would be impossible for journalists, once in a union, to keep an objective view of politics”,\footnote{NZJA (1962: 35).} and that journalists “would be unfitted to give the public trustworthy reports …”.\footnote{NZJA (1962: 20).}

However, this stance was significantly challenged in the 1970s with the NZJU’s move toward militant trade unionism. NZJU president Bob Fox confirmed that “although journalists had avoided militancy in the past because it was ungentlemanly, they later realised that good guys come second”\footnote{Neville (1975: 14).}. Militancy, NZJU leaders maintained, was responsible for the securing of higher economic rewards for journalists post-1970. A report presented to the NZJU’s 1979 annual conference by secretary Mike Conway entitled ‘In Praise of Militancy’ noted that journalists had “lagged behind other workers not just in terms of wages but also conditions until militancy”\footnote{NZJU Minutes (2 November 1979: 2).}. It claimed that “militancy had forced the NPA to agree to the Grills Committee of Inquiry into journalist wage relativity and this year it forced the NPA to agree to the 16.12% wage increase recommended by Grills”\footnote{Ibid: 4. Walter Grills, referred to in this extract, was an industrial mediator at the time.}.\footnote{Ibid: 4.} The report concluded that:

...we have fought and won a lasting victory on wages and I believe we are held in considerable respect both by our employers and other unions and organisations. But let no one doubt that in all our struggles, militancy has been our sword and our shield.\footnote{Ibid: 4.}

Indeed, this was a significant departure from the NZJA’s original views that affiliation and militancy would compromise journalistic professionalism. The fact that by the late 1970s, the NZJU had formally affiliated with the FoL, and openly acknowledged its more militant orientation were further indicators that the appeal of professionalism had been superseded by a preference for trade unionism as an occupational ideal and strategy for pursuing journalists’ interests. Ultimately, this
preference undermined the professional identity of journalists, with implications for the current state of play.

The impact of the 1990s industrial relations climate on journalistic professionalism

By the 1980s, then, New Zealand journalists' organisations had evidently come full circle in their professionalism-unionism orientation. The journalists' union's declining preference for professionalism in favour of trade unionism as both an occupational identity and method for advancing journalists' interests, was extended during the 1990s. The Employment Contracts Act (ECA) 1991 was at the centre of this transition. The ECA was intended to replace collective agreements with individual contracts and to marginalise unions. Consequently, the journalists' union, like others, suffered a heavy loss of membership. The subsequent union amalgamations triggered by the ECA also affected the journalistic occupation. As a repercussion of the ECA, there was a substantial decline in the power and authority of journalists as an occupational group. Along with the decline in union membership amongst journalists was a decline in the sense of collegiality amongst journalists an occupational group of the past. The effect of the ECA was to render the journalists' union relatively powerless to play a role in the promotion of professional and ethical standards of journalists.

The response of the unions within the wider printing industry to the ECA was to amalgamate with other related unions to build a larger and stronger union. However, the amalgamations that took place during the 1990s served to reinforce journalists' lack of power and authority as a union. In 1989, the NZJU had merged with the graphic processors' union to become JAGPRO. JAGPRO later merged with the printers' union in 1995, formalising the co-operative relationship forged during the 1970s, to form the Printing, Packaging and Media Union (PPMU). Even during discussions between the two unions, concerns were voiced within JAGPRO which, with 3000 members, was around a third of the size of the Printing Union.\(^6^9\) It would be unrealistic, argued some, to ignore the 'shop floor' antipathy that existed between many JAGPRO members and printers, in part rooted in industrial history, and part of it through the conflicts arising out of the nature of the jobs, and part of it through a so-

called ‘blue-collar/white-collar’ division.\textsuperscript{70} Nonetheless, arguments in favour of journalists formally aligning themselves with the class interests of the printing industry won out and the amalgamation went ahead. Further union mergers occurred in April 1996 when the PPMU merged with the engineering union to become the New Zealand Amalgamated Engineering, Printing, Packaging and Manufacturing Union (EPMU).

Journalists currently form a very small proportion of the EPMU, which with some 55,000 members from sixteen different industries, remains the largest private sector union in New Zealand.\textsuperscript{71} Because of the broad (industrial-oriented) interests that the EPMU tends to pursue, the voice of the journalists' sector of the union is now rarely heard and the advancement of their professional interests tend not to be seen as the domain of the EPMU. Both the alignment of journalists' occupational identity with trade unionism, and the swallowing of journalists' voice by a larger industrially-focussed trade union has seen a substantial loss of the autonomy of journalists to address ‘journalist specific’ issues, and the increasing occupational identification of journalists within unionism rather than professionalism. Although designed to be more ‘union friendly’ than the ECA, the current Employment Relations Act (ERA), implemented in 1999, appears to have done little to reverse the difficulties the journalists' union faced post-1991. The fact that the journalists' code of ethics has not been revised since 1988 is merely one reflection of these trends, and does not paint a very promising picture for the future.

8.5 Conclusion: Towards reforming and reviving New Zealand journalism’s professional culture

This chapter has considered the limitations of the ‘professional infrastructure’ of New Zealand journalism, arguing that contemporary New Zealand journalism is marked by an ‘invisibility of professionalism’. It has illuminated the principal historical processes that offer insight into the relatively limited professional culture

\textsuperscript{70} EPMU (N.D.).
\textsuperscript{71} Franks (2001: 290). The EPMU’s recent strategic review proposed trials of ‘industry councils’, to represent the various industries that comprise the EPMU’s membership. The industry councils proposed included aviation, electro-technology, postal services, forestry and timber, and printing and media (which would have 2 Broadcasting, 2 newspaper printing, 3 commercial printing, and 2 newspaper journalist representatives) (\textit{Metal}, May/June 2003: 5).
within New Zealand journalism. This chapter has argued that New Zealand journalism lacks the legislative, organisational, and philosophical foundations to sustain a long-term commitment to professionalism. The absence of constitutional or legal guarantees of the nature and limits of press freedom has given rise to a tendency for the media to give priority to protecting their freedoms. Consequently, the promotion of both ethical standards and professional discourse such as that undertaken by overseas’ journalists’ organisations and self-regulatory bodies tend to receive less attention in New Zealand.

Although journalists have attempted to pursue professionalism collectively in the past, their efforts have been weakened by several forces. Firstly, the conception of professionalism embodied by NZJA leaders did not always appeal to all journalists. At the core of the issue was a conflict amongst journalists themselves as to the status of the journalistic occupation; whether it was a ‘trade’ or a ‘profession’, and whether organising along traditional trade union or professional lines was the best means of advancing the position of journalists. This conflict persisted over several decades, and was compounded by the industrial demarcation characteristic of the wider journalism industry. The fact that some journalists associated professionalism with a right to higher pay did not go unnoticed by the NPA, and did little to gain their sympathy for journalists’ professionalising efforts. It is therefore hardly surprising that journalists’ efforts to establish a system of professional self-control akin to ‘other professions’ did not initially find favour with employers until the threat of external intervention forced industry collaboration.

This chapter has illustrated that insight can also be gained into the limited professional culture of contemporary New Zealand journalism by examining the historical processes that suggest a decline in the appeal of professionalism among journalists. Although from its inception, the NZJA adopted professionalism as both an occupational ideal and alternative strategy to industrial routines in an attempt to align themselves with the white-collar status of the ‘accepted professions’, the 1970s witnessed a decline in the appeal of professionalism among journalists. A central theme of this chapter has been that the tension surrounding the role of journalists, and the nature of journalistic work remained unresolved, a factor which has significantly undermined the professional culture of contemporary New Zealand journalism. As an occupational identity, ‘professionalism’ had failed to address the overarching
contradictions surrounding journalists’ occupational role. On the contrary, a tension between the ‘white-collar ideals’ of journalistic work (the notion of journalists as an autonomous profession, whose work was an intellectual/literary pursuit of significant social and political importance) and the ‘blue-collar reality’ of that work (as reflected in the pay, conditions and social status of journalists) remained unresolved.

The renamed journalists’ organisation, the NZJU, increasingly identified with the class interests of other occupations in the wider industry and adopted industrial methods to further them. The NZJU’s increasing preference for traditional trade union activity was both reinforced and illustrated by the introduction of a new mode of wage negotiation (‘Nordmeyer relativity’), the NZJU’s decision to become affiliated with the FoL, and its embracing of militancy. This realignment of journalists’ occupational identity was furthered with the enactment of the ECA in 1991. Although the newspaper industry union mergers triggered by the legislation were intended to strengthen the unions in this sector, the effect was that with the journalists’ union subsumed by larger unions encompassing a range of industries, the autonomy of journalists to address ‘journalist specific’ issues was significantly undermined. Although the 1999 ERA was intended to reverse the ‘anti-union’ climate created by the ECA, it has not had a visible impact on the relative voice of the journalists’ sector of the EPMU.

Ultimately, the EPMU’s promotion of the ‘generic’ industrial interests of workers has only reinforced the increasing occupational identification of journalists within unionism rather than professionalism. The fact that the journalists’ code of ethics has not been revised for over fifteen years serves as a pertinent illustration of these trends, with implications for the current state of play. An examination of these various historical processes and their contemporary implications suggest that efforts to reform the limited professional culture at the organisational level will be ultimately ineffective unless the limitations of New Zealand journalism are acknowledged and addressed at the institutional level, an issue that will be addressed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER NINE

Conclusions and implications of the research

Professionalism defines the relevance of journalism in the public interest. Ethics and professionalism provides the journalist with a brand, and something to sell to the public. Professionalism offers journalists the tools, and the map, to avoid succumbing to cheap gimmicks, to jingoism and pandering and quick commercial tricks like sensationalism and infotainment ... That, in a nutshell, is professionalism. Why does it scare people? Because it limits the freedom of journalists to do whatever they want by allowing the public to have a basis for judging [them] ... The answer is to make sure 'an ethical conscience' governs journalism ... That, accountability to the public, is what makes ethics and professionalism intimidating. It is also our best hope.¹

9.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the story that this thesis has told concerning the appeal of 'professionalism' to New Zealand journalists since the late nineteenth century. Although the previous chapter’s discussion of the declining appeal of professionalism during last decades of the twentieth century suggests that this story does not have a 'happy ending', the implications of this thesis are more complex. It would be easy to fall into the structural-functionalist trap of identifying a pattern of 'more and less professionalism' in the organisational, educational, and regulatory reforms pursued by journalists over the twentieth century. However, this approach ignores the very forces, both internal and external to the journalistic environment, which this thesis has explored to account, firstly, for the appeal of professionalism as a model for reform during the twentieth century, and its subsequent decline in the last decades of the twentieth. To conclude this thesis with a statement simply observing the lack of professionalism apparent in the contemporary culture of New Zealand journalism would also ignore the implications of this trend for the future health of journalism generally.

Why journalistic professionalism must be ‘seen to be done’

It is insufficient to dismiss journalists’ claims to ‘professionalism’ simply as rhetoric that has been employed in their pursuit of higher economic rewards and

---

¹ Rosenstiel (2003: 7-8).
political advantages. As illustrated in chapter two, this has been the typical response of the ‘power theorists’ to various occupations. However, to draw such a conclusion for the case of journalists is to ignore its implications for the role and performance of journalism in a democratic society. At the heart of the issue is that given the importance of journalism to society, journalism’s claims to professionalism must function as more than simply ‘claims’. The critical factor is that professionalism must not only be ‘said to be done, but also be seen to be done’. As a crucial measure of professionalism, self-scrutiny and reflexivity are prerequisites for a profession whose claims to that status are based upon its self-proclaimed right to function as a watchdog on behalf of the public. Moreover, self-scrutiny is vital to the health of journalism in a democratic society.

In drawing this thesis to a close, this chapter provides a platform from which some directions for future reform are considered. It synthesises the issues raised in this thesis, showing how the marrying of (reformed) theory with practice may represent a direction for the future. At the core of the issue is the apparent lack of a professional culture in New Zealand journalism, the reasons for which reside both internal and external to the journalistic environment. However, this chapter argues that as a starting point for future reform attention might be paid to the limited professional consciousness of journalists themselves.

9.2 Summary of thesis

This thesis began by introducing the topic for investigation; an exploration of the appeal of professionalism to New Zealand journalists since the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century. On a theoretical plane, a central objective of this thesis was to ‘put to the test’ an alternative approach to the analysis of journalistic professionalism which explores the conditions both internal and external to the journalistic environment that have contributed to the appeal of professionalism to journalists. As an explicit rejection of the dominant ‘traits based’ analyses of journalistic professionalism of past research, this thesis sought to explore the changing nature of journalists’ conceptions of professionalism over time, as well as the structures through which their professional ideals have been conveyed. Seeking also to challenge the ‘professionalism as conspiracy’ assumption inherent in much previous work on journalistic professionalism, this thesis aimed to explore the appeal
of professionalism to working journalists as both an occupational ideal, as a collective strategy to advance their interests, and as a model for internal reform. In doing so, this thesis has offered insight into the historical development of the journalistic occupation, as well as its contemporary configuration.

**Theoretical framework**

Chapter two expounded this alternative approach to analysing the appeal of professionalism to journalists, beginning with a critical analysis of the dominant approaches from within the sociology of professions. It argued that the taxonomic tradition of theorising on professionalism offers limited theoretical utility for an analysis of journalistic professionalism. A comprehensive understanding of journalistic professionalism necessitates moving away from a preoccupation with 'professional traits'. In this regard, the advantages of the 'power approaches', which acknowledge the wider forces contributing to an occupation's professionalising ambitions, must be acknowledged. These are approaches that also tend to acknowledge that the particular strategies employed and their 'successes' in the pursuit of professionalism are historically and culturally contingent. This was shown to be the case in the history of New Zealand journalism, thus challenging the taxonomic assumption of the qualitative distinctiveness of professions vis-à-vis so-called 'non-professions'. In spite of the occupation's contested professional status, New Zealand journalists have employed both 'professional' and trade union strategies and modes of organisation to further their interests at different points in time. As Burrage suggests, "[t]his pattern of divergence and convergence rather suggests that the differences between professional and non-professional occupations are not differences in kind at all but historically contingent differences of strategy".²

**Challenging the 'professionalism as conspiracy' assumption**

The limitations of the power approach become particularly evident when one observes how they have given rise to the 'commercial conspiracy assumptions' underpinning most journalism research that has abandoned the functionalist framework. While an advance on research that simply dismisses journalism as a 'true profession', the emphasis on the primacy of the commercial interests of media owners

---

² Burrage (1990: 152).
leaves much unsaid. Notably, these approaches do not adequately address the appeal of professionalism to working journalists as an occupational identity and model for internal reform. Chapter two thus argued that the ‘power approach’ has some serious limitations that undermine its explanatory potential for a variety of occupational groups including journalism. The ‘professionalism as conspiracy’ assumption inherent in the power approach was a major criticism identified in chapter two. Indeed, sociologists of the professions have increasingly acknowledged the limitations of the more extreme versions of the power approach that simply dismiss the organisational/social structural aspects of professions (such their organisational and self-regulatory structures) as ‘ideological resources’ deployed in the pursuit of ‘collective mobility’ as a source of legitimation, privilege and prestige.

**Exploring the relationship between professionalism and public trust**

This thesis sought to challenge the ‘professionalism as conspiracy’ assumption by adding a new dimension to its analysis of New Zealand journalism which power theorists would presumably leave unexplored. This dimension of analysis was based upon the view that journalists’ claims to providing essential (information) services to citizens, and ensuring a high quality of service through the implementation of ethics codes and other regulatory structures cannot exist merely as claims, as self-serving ideological resources. The legitimacy of these claims (and of the occupation itself) rests on their being fulfilled in practice. Just as in the context of law, justice must not only be done, but also ‘be seen to be done’, journalism’s claims to professionalism must be seen to be fulfilled in the eyes of those whom the occupation claims to serve; the public. As Morgan captures this premise,

[p]rofessional authority and autonomy rely on public trust and must be earned by subordinating their own interests to those of others and especially the ‘common good’ ... [Journalists] wishing to establish their credentials as professionals must be able to sustain that trust.

In this sense, ‘professionalism’ is ultimately an issue of public trust, which as Fournier argues, “... is never established once and for all but needs to be continuously

---

3 See Evetts (1999a: 123; 2003b: 26) for further critique of the ‘professionalism as conspiracy’ assumption.
4 Evetts (1999a and b; 2003a and b); Brain (1991); Saks (1983; 1998; 2003); and Edman (2001) provide illustrations of the growing scepticism as to the validity of the power approaches, as chapter two highlighted.
5 Morgan (2000: 10).
negotiated`. All professions need to establish and continuously work at maintaining their legitimacy. From this perspective, ‘vestiges’ of professionalism cannot function simply as ideological resources of an occupation seeking professional privileges. They are more usefully seen as part of the process by which an occupational group attempts to construct its work roles and responsibilities and gain public acceptance of these. Codes of ethics, for instance, are seen neither as arbitrary ‘milestones’ on the road to professionalisation (as the functionalist view holds), nor simply as ideologies concealing the group’s self-interested claims to power and status (as the power approaches maintain). Instead, this thesis set out to understand the development of journalism’s ‘professional infrastructure’ as part of a wider process whereby the occupation has attempted to articulate its ideals and role perceptions, as part of an effort to publicly assert its aims and duties and to gain acceptance of these.

From this approach, codes of ethics reflect an occupation’s efforts to establish for itself a professional identity that is related to its role perceptions, and a conception of its purpose in society through defining standards toward which members must strive. In doing so, the group attempts to legitimate its claims of trust, and of providing a service of value to society. While codifying ‘professional standards’ specific to journalism can be seen as an important aspect of the process of negotiating the boundaries of an occupation and laying claim to certain areas of responsibility, these ‘professional standards’ must be upheld in order to sustain legitimacy. This was the theoretical framework from which this thesis sought to investigate the appeal of professionalism to New Zealand journalists.

**The ‘multiple identities’ thesis**

This thesis situated journalists’ appeals to professionalism over a time period of a century in which professionalism as a model for occupational reform was constructed, reconstructed, and contested. Indeed, early into this thesis it became apparent that journalists’ ‘multiple identities’ had a significant impact on their occupational ideals. The presence of conflicting occupational identities within a single occupation is an issue that the power approaches have not adequately addressed in the past, as chapter two highlighted. The notion of the ‘professional project’, with its emphasis on concerted, collective action, which has come to typify the power

---

approach generally,\(^7\) is also symptomatic of another of the power approaches' limitations. The power orthodoxy shares with the earlier traits-based models the assumption of professional unity, shared identity, and homogeneity.\(^8\) In both approaches, the concept of professionalism both underscores and assumes "a social movement towards an occupational identity conditioned by shared consciousness of ideas, beliefs, values, and interpretations of social life surrounding a world of work".\(^9\) Even in cases where researchers have acknowledged the potential for, or existence of within-profession disputes, factions, and aspirations, "... these have tended to be dismissed as profession-specific or a time-limited problem to be resolved. Unity and community are assumed to be the norm against which professions are measured".\(^10\) Ultimately, it is assumed that intra-professional conflict has little impact on the possibilities for strategic action by a profession.\(^11\)

On the contrary, this occupation-internal disunity can have a significant bearing in the processes by which an occupation seeks to lay claim to the title of 'profession'. As Edman acknowledges, "[t]here are many identities, many values, and many interests to be found within the same profession",\(^12\) which affect its ability to act in the pursuit of professionalism. Indeed, this thesis has shown that the appeal of professionalism among New Zealand journalists has been tempered by the presence of conflicting occupational ideals and aspirations among members of the occupation during the twentieth century. The lack of unity of the journalistic occupation in New Zealand thus offers significant insight into the development of the journalistic occupation as well as its present configuration.

**Theory meets practice: The rise of the journalistic occupation**

Chapter three stepped back from the theoretical into the nineteenth century history of New Zealand journalism in order to provide an historical backdrop for the remainder of the thesis. It explored the various economic, technological, social, political and cultural forces that presented themselves during the last four decades of the nineteenth century, combining to create the institutional preconditions for the rise

---

\(^7\) C.f. Edman (2001: 310).
\(^8\) Evetts (1999b: 80).
\(^10\) Evetts (1999b: 80).
\(^12\) Ibid: 310.
of the journalistic occupation in New Zealand and with it, an occupational identity rooted in the notion of political independence. It was argued that over this period, newspaper work transformed from being the domain of political figures to the occupational work sphere of journalists, a process which was consolidated in the twentieth century. The role of the newspaper thus expanded from a political institution to its modern form as a social institution. Expounding on themes of chapter two, chapter three also attempted to show in relation to the New Zealand case, that the dominating economic and technology-centred accounts do not adequately explain the emergence of ‘independent’ journalism. These approaches tend to treat such developments as the telegraph or commercialisation as the catalyst for journalistic independence. It was argued that this economic reductionism and technological determinism obscures several crucial issues. These various economic, technological and other processes are better understood as having created the institutional preconditions for journalism to emerge as an occupation, which drawing on the cultural responses available to it at the time, embraced the notion of political independence in order to garner social legitimacy. This process was extended by the organisations of journalists that began appearing in New Zealand in the late nineteenth century.

**Professionalism as a (contested) model for organising journalists**

Chapter four considered the organisational tendencies of New Zealand journalism during the period from 1890 through until the mid-1950s. It highlighted the appeal of ‘professionalism’ as both an occupational ideal, a model of organising journalists, and as a strategy for the advancement of their occupation. The NZIJ, as the first journalists’ organisation to appear in New Zealand, was informed by an understanding of ‘professionalism’ that emphasised the prestige, honour and ‘genteel’ image of journalism as a whole. However, this understanding of professionalism was challenged at the turn of the twentieth century when the impact of press commercialisation on working journalists’ wages and working conditions gave rise to the establishment of a ‘journalists-only’ body, the CJU, in 1901. However, this union was short-lived due to antipathy within the industry to the principles of trade unionism. The NZJA, established in 1912, represented an attempt to reconcile the industrial and professional interests of working journalists. Overall, chapter four highlighted that the organisational efforts of the NZJA in the post-war period
represented sites of struggle over whether ‘unionism’ or ‘professionalism’ would best advance the interests of journalists as an occupational group.

**Journalists’ claims to professionalism revisited**

Journalism— the greatest profession there is in this world for the man/sic/ with a brain and a heart. The lawyer can serve the country occasionally. But the journalist does it every day. The minister’s message gets itself uttered once in seven days. But the journalist’s seven times, line by line, precept upon precept. No other profession gives a man/sic/ such an opportunity.\(^{13}\)

As illustrated above, during the post-war period, advocates of ‘professionalism’ as an occupational ideal for journalists appealed to some key claims about the nature and importance of journalistic work. The belief that the status of journalists did not reflect the importance of journalistic work to democracy was a central rationale for professionalism. A related argument was that the various technological, social, political and economic developments in the journalistic environment made increasing demands on journalists that were not acknowledged in their social status or economic rewards. Relativity was another theme that appeared repeatedly in journalists’ claims to professionalism. Journalists claimed that their work was just as (if not more) important to the community as that of other professions. It followed that the journalistic occupation should be accorded the status of the ‘accepted’ or ‘recognised’ professions. These themes underpinned the early organisational efforts of New Zealand journalists, culminating in the effort to establish a professional institute of journalists in the 1950s.

**Embracing professionalism as an alternative to trade union activity**

NZJA leaders’ ‘professional ideal’ was informed by the belief that journalism was (or should at least aspire to be) a ‘true profession’. As a strategy for improving the position of journalists, ‘professionalism’ appeared preferable to traditional industrial measures because it was more consistent with the status and ‘white-collar’ image that NZJA leaders sought for journalists. It was out of this ambition that the effort to form a professional institute of journalists grew. However, ‘professionalism’ was not a universal ambition among journalists, neither as an occupational ideal nor as a plausible alternative to union activity. Indeed, the early organisational tendencies

\(^{13}\) *The Australasian Journalist* (15 May 1924: 1).
of New Zealand journalists reflected both the ambiguity surrounding the status of the journalistic occupation, and the conflict over whether ‘professionalism’ was a preferable strategy to traditional industrial routines to advance the interests of journalists. This observation lends support to the proposition advanced at the outset of this thesis that “[t]here are many identities, many values, and many interests to be found within the same profession”,¹⁴ which give rise to intraprofessional conflict and undermine an occupation’s ability to act in the pursuit of professionalism. Certainly, this was true of the NZJA’s effort to build a professional institute.

Moreover, a conflict within the wider journalism industry between journalists as employees and their employers as to what exactly the most important interests of journalists (and of journalism) were hampered the NZJA’s efforts to create a professional institute that cut across the existing industrial demarcation boundaries. The failure of the professional institute plan clearly illustrated the relative lack of power and authority of journalists to act in the pursuit of professionalism in the fact of employer opposition. Indeed, the early organisational efforts of New Zealand journalists set the pattern for later efforts to develop a ‘professional infrastructure’ for journalists which occurred without a consensus about journalistic professionalism and whether ‘professionalism’ was in fact the best means of promoting the position of journalists.

‘Making professional journalists’ revisited

In spite of the conflict among journalists as to the appeal of professionalism as a model for organising their occupation, it provided the model for the NZJA’s attempts to build a ‘professional infrastructure’ for journalists over the twentieth century. This contention was explored in part three of this thesis. Chapter five illustrated how the ambiguity surrounding journalistic professionalism has been played out in the sphere of journalism training and education during the twentieth century. It was shown that that the field of journalism education in New Zealand has represented a site of struggle over the definition of journalistic work (is it ‘professional work’?) and the status of journalists (does theirs constitute ‘a profession’?).

The introduction of the first Diploma in Journalism in New Zealand represented the first major challenge to the previously dominant understanding that a journalist was 'born, not made'. However, this debate was replaced with questions as to whether journalism education should emphasise the mechanical aspects of journalistic work, or whether priority should be given to the teaching of primarily academic subjects with a bearing on journalistic work. It was argued that although the history of journalism education in New Zealand has witnessed a progressive decline in support for the notion that a journalist 'is born, not made', it was replaced by a new set questions about the content of journalism programmes. 'What body of knowledge was required for journalists?' became a central question underpinning the debate about journalism education and training. NZJA leaders favoured a model of journalism education that advocated a broad education in a variety of disciplines (including the practical aspects of journalism). This was because this emerging ideological agenda underpinning views of journalism education and qualifications—a 'professional model' of training—appeared consistent with this group of journalists' ambitions for 'professionalism'.

Indeed, the appeal of professionalism to NZJA leaders was evident in their pursuit of formal journalistic qualifications. Advocates of professionalism believed that controlling entry into the occupation would increase the 'value' and calibre of practising journalists, and the quality of journalism generally. NZJA leaders were also motivated by their belief that journalism was failing to attract (and retain) the 'best minds'. Arresting a potential decline in the quality of journalism meant ensuring that journalism was just as 'worthwhile' or as economically attractive a career option as 'other professions'. Formal qualifications for journalists, obtained through the university, a social institution of prestige, would encourage the 'best people' into journalism, and improve the pool of practising journalists. Not only would better-qualified and academically trained journalists increase the 'worth' of journalists relative to other professionals, it would ultimately improve the quality of New Zealand journalism as a whole.

Chapter five demonstrated that although the NZJA sought to improve university education and cadet training as a matter of policy during the twentieth century, a consensus about the nature and benefits of formal educational qualifications for journalists remained elusive within both the journalistic occupation and the wider industry. Some journalists were unconvinced of the appeal of professionalism as a
model for journalism education and training. The interests of these journalists lay predominantly with the 'value' of educational qualifications for their social and economic status. This debate over the nature and benefits of formal journalism education and qualifications (as with the appeal of professionalism generally) persisted over the twentieth century despite the 'generational turnover' that occurred within the journalistic occupation over this period.

The sphere of journalism education also provided a platform for discord between journalists and newspaper publishers. For many employers, their interests in journalism education lay with whether such qualifications reduced the cost (and necessity) of time-consuming in-office training, and resulted in improved efficiency in the production of newspapers. This set of (predominantly economic) interests was not always compatible with those of working journalists in increasing their professional status. For obvious reasons, where journalists’ pursuit of ‘professional education’ and controlling entry into journalism is seen by employers as a means of increasing their industrial bargaining power, their support is not likely to be forthcoming.

While the nature and benefits of formal journalistic education remained contested, one certainty was that developments on the education front were contingent upon the support of employers. The dominance of the industry’s owners/employers was pertinently illustrated by the establishment of the Journalists’ Training Committee in 1971. As chapter five highlighted, the creation of a systematic nationwide training scheme (with a committee of industry representatives to oversee it) had been the brainchild of the NZJA, originating as part of an effort to promote the status of journalists in relation to ‘other professionals’. However, the eventual realisation of these goals occurred only at the instigation of employers through the NPA and the CPU, suggesting conformity to overseas trends observed by Reese that the economic self-interest of media organisations encourages tertiary institutions to subsidise the cost of training and to screen and credential talented prospects.15

'Making standards' for a profession on the make

Extending the argument that the NZJA employed ‘professionalism’ as both an occupational ideal and an alternative strategy to traditional industrial measures to

15 Reese (1999).
advance the interests of journalists, chapter six explored the NZJA’s efforts to develop written codes of ethics. NZJA leaders believed that by emulating the infrastructure of the ‘recognised professions’, journalists could acquire the social esteem and economic rewards these occupations enjoyed. The adoption of a code of ethics, as a hallmark of the ‘recognised professions’, was a strategy NZJA leaders believed would promote both their industrial position and their professional status. Just as the NZJA’s desire for professional recognition for journalists was a driving force behind the emergence of the 1945 draft ‘creed for journalists’, its fall from the NZJA’s agenda was largely a consequence of the ambiguity surrounding the nature and benefits of ‘professionalism’ for journalists.

Not all journalists concurred with the notion of ‘professionalism’ as an occupational ideal, or as a plausible alternative to industrial routines to advance their social and economic position. The tension over the ‘professional vision’ for, and amongst New Zealand journalists had implications for the NZJA’s development of ethical codes. However, interest in adopting a code of ethics was re-ignited during the 1960s when both existing pressures on journalists intensified and new ones arose. The NZJA remained concerned with increasing the professional status of the journalistic occupation to advance both the interests of journalists and those of the public in ethical journalism, fearing that if the occupation failed to attract and retain quality journalists the quality of New Zealand newspapers would suffer. Threats to journalists’ professional prerogative, and to press freedom, were also contributing forces culminating in the NZJA’s adoption of a voluntary code of ethics in 1967.

Chapter six showed that just as the NZJA’s efforts to create an ethical code for journalists were motivated largely by industrial issues, industrial politics and power struggles within the wider journalism industry factored heavily in the application of the code adopted in 1967. An overarching theme of chapter six was the idea that the NZJA’s efforts to exert control over journalistic ethics were in large measure industrially motivated. As such, the eventual emergence of the NZJA code of ethics can be understood as both a professional and industrial strategy. By assuming the role as the primary adjudicator of journalists’ ethical standards, the NZJA was laying claim to the ‘professional prerogative’ enjoyed by the ‘accepted professions’ to internally monitor practitioners’ ethical standards. At the same time, the NZJA was also asserting its right to oversee journalists’ performance without the interference of their employers (and other external agencies).
However, the industrial demarcation of the New Zealand journalism industry influenced the application of the journalists’ code of ethics, contributing to its narrow application. Most editors and many other senior editorial decision-makers were not part of the NZJA’s membership. This meant that the NZJA (and its later permutations) was unable to deal with complaints against those with the most power in the news gathering/presenting process. The union was also powerless to uphold the code’s provisions on areas which fell outside of journalists’ jurisdiction. The lack of power of journalists to enforce ethics and standards was exacerbated by the Employment Contracts Act 1991. Not only did the decline of union coverage undermine the journalists’ union’s (then JAGPRO) authority and ability to play a role in the promotion of journalists’ professional and ethical standards, its industrial capacity to deal with journalist-specific issues was significantly weakened through the 1991 legislation. The subsuming of the journalists’ union into a larger industrial-oriented union comprising of various industries has also meant that the Employment Relations Act (1999) has done little to reverse these trends.

**Making standards ‘stick’ and the quest for industry-wide collaboration**

Chapter seven explored the impact of the NZJA’s ambitions for professionalism on the evolution of journalistic self-regulation in New Zealand. Through a consideration of the political and social background to the formalisation of self-regulation via the establishment of the NZPC, chapter seven identified trends of an increasing public (and parliamentary) interest in journalistic accountability from the 1960s in New Zealand. Also explored were the constraints journalists faced in their attempts to construct a formal system of professional self-control, notably the industrial politics and power relations within the journalism industry. The NZJA’s efforts to construct an effective system of ‘professional self-control’ for journalists akin to that of ‘other professions’ like lawyers, doctors, and accountants, whose professional infrastructure (and status) journalists sought to emulate, required industry-wide support. As such, the model of professional self-control desired by NZJA leaders was to be modified to suit the peculiarities of journalism.

While the NZJA’s advocates of professionalism sought a model of self-control similar to the ‘accepted professions’, the principle of individual responsibility on which they were based was seen as impractical, even undesirable, to some journalists. Consequently, the principle of ‘white-collar control’ that was to underpin the system
of journalistic self-regulation in New Zealand represented a departure from the informal self-regulatory system embodied by the NZJA-formed code of ethics. While the NZJA/U’s code enforcement processes dealt with journalists as individuals, the NZPC embodied a system of self-regulation in which editors and newspapers, rather than individual journalists, were answerable. While journalists’ preference for the principle of ‘white-collar control’ was largely an issue of the practicalities and mechanics of newspaper production, it also illustrates how the infrastructure and accountability mechanisms of some professions may not be appropriate for others. As such, chapter seven’s discussion of the adaptation of professional self-control structures to suit the idiosyncrasies of journalism illustrated the contention presented at the outset of this thesis that attention needs to be paid to how variations between occupations can impact upon the particular definitions of ‘professionalism’ they aspire to, and the ways these are conveyed publicly.

**Industrial politics and professional self-control**

Chapter seven also explored how the nature of both the journalistic occupation itself, and the wider industry’s corporate structure and ‘power hierarchy’ had a significant bearing on the evolution of journalistic self-regulation. While effective self-regulation requires collaboration between journalists and owners/employers on a ‘professional front’, they have long been divided on an industrial front. Indeed, tensions on the industrial relations front were a central force shaping journalists’ ambitions for ‘professionalism’, as well as their employers’ responses to them. Nowhere was this tension felt more strongly than in the context of the development of industry-wide journalistic self-regulation. Although the NZJA had long promoted industry-wide collaboration in the maintenance of ethical standards, the dominance of newspaper owners/employers’ (predominantly economic) interests meant that the NPA resisted collective self-regulation. Indeed, collaboration between the NPA and the NZJA only occurred following the threat of a government-imposed press council in the late 1960s.

While the NZPC was established in 1972, industrial politics remained a potential threat to the efficacy of journalistic self-regulation. Although the establishment of the NZPC in 1972 had witnessed an unprecedented degree of cooperation between the NZJA and the NPA in the attempt to promote ethical standards, on occasion the NZPC found itself forced to deal with the tension between the two
bodies. In such instances, the NZPC found itself playing adjudicator in power struggles between journalists (and their concerns about ethical issues) and employers, whose respective trade organisations formed the constituent industry representation on the NZPC. Such episodes highlighted the continual tension that threatened to shake the system of press self-regulation embodied by the NZPC that other professions’ systems of self-control had mostly managed to avoid.

Disunity and power struggles within the wider journalism industry have not been the only challenge to press self-regulation in New Zealand. A further test of the credibility of self-regulation has been the apparent conflict inherent in the NZPC’s dual role of promoting both press freedom and professional standards. This conflict has been aptly illustrated in the evolution of self-regulatory codes of practice. As recent developments triggered by (both explicit and implicit) threats of ‘imposed reform’, the development of the NZPC’s Statement of Principles in 1999 and its subsequent review in 2003 raised questions about the nature of journalistic professionalism reflected in the contemporary context. Chapter seven concluded that if the credibility of the NZPC involves a genuine commitment to balancing freedom and responsibility, then the NZPC must act further to demonstrate more of a proactive commitment to its duty of promoting press responsibility to ensure the long-term effectiveness and credibility of journalistic self-regulation.

Assessing the historical appeal of professionalism from the present

Chapter eight opened with a consideration of the limitations of the ‘professional infrastructure’ of New Zealand journalism. It was argued that contemporary New Zealand journalism is marked by an ‘invisibility of professionalism’. The central historical processes that offer insight into the limited professional culture characteristic of contemporary New Zealand journalism were then identified. It was argued that New Zealand journalism lacks the legislative, organisational, and philosophical foundations to sustain a long-term commitment to professionalism. The absence of constitutional or legal guarantees of the nature and limits of press freedom has given rise to a tendency for the media to give priority to protecting their freedoms. Consequently, the promotion of ethical standards and professional discourse, such as that undertaken by overseas’ journalists’ organisations and self-regulatory bodies, tends to receive less attention than it deserves.
The occupational consciousness of journalists was also considered as a significant indicator for the present state of New Zealand journalism. A central theme of chapter eight was that the tension surrounding the role of journalists and the nature of journalistic work remains unresolved. This has significantly undermined the professional culture of contemporary New Zealand journalism. Although the NZJA adopted professionalism as both an occupational ideal and alternative strategy to industrial routines to improve the position of journalists by aligning themselves with the white-collar status of the ‘accepted professions’, this preference was challenged during the 1970s.

Understanding the decline in the appeal of professionalism to journalists

The 1970s witnessed a decline in the appeal of professionalism as both an occupational identity (as evidenced by the NZJA’s name change to ‘union’), and as a strategy to advance journalists’ interests. As an occupational identity, ‘professionalism’ had failed to address the overarching contradictions surrounding journalists’ occupational role. On the contrary, a tension between the ‘white-collar ideals’ of journalistic work (the notion of journalists as an autonomous profession, whose work was an intellectual/literary pursuit of significant social and political importance), and the ‘blue-collar reality’ of that work (as reflected in the pay, conditions, and social status of journalists) remained unresolved. It was argued that the contradictions surrounding the status of journalists also contributed to a decline in the appeal of professionalism as a strategy to advance journalists’ interests.

The NZJU increasingly identified with the class interests of other occupations in the wider industry (which had long organised along traditional trade union lines) and adopted industrial methods to further them. The NZJU’s increasing preference for traditional trade union activity was both reinforced and illustrated by the introduction of a new mode of wage negotiation (‘Nordmeyer relativity’), the NZJU’s decision to become affiliated with the labour movement via the Federation of Labour, and its embracing of ‘militancy’ during the 1970s. This realignment of journalists’ occupational identity was furthered with the enactment of the ECA in 1991. Although the newspaper industry union mergers the legislation triggered were intended to strengthen the unions in this sector, the effect was that with the journalists’ union subsumed by larger unions encompassing a range of industries, the autonomy of journalists to address ‘journalist specific’ issues was significantly undermined.
Ultimately, the EPMU’s promotion of the ‘generic’ industrial interests of workers has only reinforced the increasing occupational identification of journalists with unionism rather than professionalism. The fact that the journalists’ code of ethics has not been revised for over fifteen years serves to illustrate this point.

The limitations of the ‘professionalism as escalator’ assumption

This thesis has illustrated that the notion of journalistic professionalism is inextricably linked to social and historical context and subject to change via forces both external and internal to the journalistic occupation. However, while the concept of journalistic professionalism has demonstrably shifted over time, the means journalists believed they could attain professional status remained relatively static. As shown throughout this thesis, in an attempt to improve their social status journalists sought to emulate the professional infrastructure of the ‘recognised professions’. Their approach was grounded in a ‘professionalism as escalator assumption’, taking for granted that adopting more and more ‘trappings’ of the traditional professions would inevitably bring journalists higher status. However, this thesis has illustrated that in spite of the ‘professional infrastructure’ that existed for journalists by the 1970s, journalists remained dissatisfied with their social and economic position; the escalator on which journalists were perched somehow never arrived at the expected destination.16 In other words, ‘professionalism’ had failed to reap the expected rewards for journalists, hence the decline of professionalism as both an occupational identity and strategy for pursuing their interests post-1970.

9.3 Addressing the ‘why bother, we’re not a profession’ mentality

The limited professional culture of contemporary New Zealand journalism may be attributed to the particular occupational consciousness that exists amongst journalists. The belief that journalism is not ‘a true profession’ has evidently persisted into the twenty-first century and has implications for the professional ideals, infrastructure, and also the quality of contemporary journalism. Reminiscent of the prescriptive traits/taxonomic approaches that dominated the sociology of professions

16 The escalator metaphor is borrowed from Abbott (1999).
prior to the 1970s, one prominent New Zealand journalist recently expressed the following conception of the relationship between journalism and professionalism.

A profession is a closed occupation which requires a university degree and is subject to some sort of self-regulation or government regulation: medicine, the law, accountancy, architecture, engineering etc. A craft is something for which technical training is necessary but which can be learnt on the job, for which there are no entry requirements (at least no requirement for a degree) and no self-regulation or government regulation. Anyone can be a journalist, right off the street, right now. To be a good journalist requires some skills, however, which makes it at least a craft. [But a] lot of modern journalists like to think they are professionals because it gives them a sense of self-worth. In fact, journalists are generally despised by the public as lying, up-themselves parasites, [and] they are paid far less than PR operatives which sends a strong message about society’s valuation of the two crafts ...¹⁷

This statement is a far cry from the proclamations made by journalists in the past to sustain their claims to professionalism that have been illustrated throughout this thesis, and is symptomatic of the ‘anti-professional attitude’ still found in contemporary New Zealand journalism. This view is based upon a conception of professionalism that is necessarily inimical to journalistic autonomy and press freedom. The assumptions inherent in the ‘anti-professional attitude’ of many journalists can be summarised as follows:

Professionalism would give a few institutions the power to limit and standardise journalism. This inevitably would make journalism elitist, which in turn would put it out of reach of the common citizen. Journalism must remain a craft, something marinated in the street and forged by doing it rather than thinking about it. Only this will make it responsive to the public, and ensure its economic vitality.¹⁸

Not surprisingly, the assumption that professionalism necessarily requires licensing has long engendered hostile reactions from journalists in democratic societies. Indeed, the tradition of press freedom has precluded the licensing/registration of journalists, a ‘professional trapping’ that New Zealand journalism has failed to cultivate for this central reason, as chapter four highlighted. In liberal democracies, the premise remains prevalent that what may be detrimental for journalists’ status advancement is good for the public. As Allen illustrates, “[t]he inability to establish precise occupational boundaries can be seen as evidence of the

---

¹⁸ Rosenstiel (2003: 2).
public nature of journalism”. In other words, restrictions on who can practice as a journalist would restrict freedom of expression and would thus be detrimental to the public interest more generally.

The limits of structural reform in a changing media landscape

However, several theorists have pointed out the flaws of journalists’ ‘anti-professional’ attitude based on their (similarly flawed) assumptions about licensing of journalists. As Rosenstiel observes of the American case, the negative connotations that professionalism engenders for many journalists is based upon the false assumption that professionalism entails compulsory (governmental) licensing of journalists. However, the failure to understand (both within journalism and without) that it is not necessarily licensing, but an explicit acknowledgement of their public responsibility that constitutes professionalism, means that the ‘anti-professionalism’ attitude within journalism remains to the present day. As Rosenstiel argues,

[w]hat links professions like law, medicine, civil engineering, and-accounting is that they involve public interest obligations that rise above commerce. Licensing is merely a means to ensuring that end – a way but not the only one of establishing professional standards and aspirations. But it is this public responsibility these aspirations are designed to serve, not licensing, that makes these careers into professions. Journalism cannot escape professional responsibility. By failing to recognise itself as a profession, journalism hasn’t avoided developing norms and standards. It has merely failed to think them through thoroughly.

Other theorists have proposed remedies to the anti-professionalism (read ‘anti-licensing’) stance of many journalists. According to Whitehouse, if one is to distinguish the concept of governmental licensing from that of ‘professional licensing’, the ostensible threats to press freedom associated with the former can be overcome. The central principle underlying this alternative is one of (voluntary) organisation.

Professional licensing would require that journalists organize and structure state and national associations. They would establish universal requirements, standards, ethics, practices, and mechanisms for self-policing the conduct of their members. This ... would establish and identify (by license) truly professional journalists, authorising the licensee to practice with the endorsement of the professional association.

---

20 Rosenstiel (2003: 3).
21 Whitehouse (1986: 3).
Similar sentiments have been expressed in the Australian context:

Journalists need to expect of themselves the same level of professionalism they demand of all other professions, medicine, law, and engineering; professions which are accountable to the public for their actions. The only way to do this is to agree on a set of standards, establish one common code of practice and enforce that code by a complaint and appeals program that could end up in expulsion from the profession … The formation of a single national accreditation and registration body for journalists, would protect the profession from dodgy operators within their own ranks who bring journalism into disrepute and further erode public confidence in the overwhelming majority of ethical journalists. It would also protect the journalism profession itself from people outside its ranks who simply claim to be journalists.22

Indeed, the contemporary journalistic environment is one in which the proliferation of information technologies serve to challenge both conventional understandings of journalism as well as traditional definitions of journalistic work. Internal reflection and debate therefore become increasingly important as other theorists suggest. “The issue facing members of the journalism community today,” Singer argues, “is how to define their professional niche as it is challenged by those who now work in a new medium”.23 Begbie concurs that the threats that new media forms and technologies pose for journalists must be acknowledged and actively addressed.

Journalists are increasingly finding they are being squeezed out of places they had previously had to themselves … In trying to master their more complex chores and find a new space for themselves in the digital domain, journalists have found themselves at their own ground zero. Infotainment reporters, content and information providers, public relations professionals have all successfully appropriated the endlessly flexible and easily recognisable news formats of television, print and radio for their own purposes … So the question is how do professional journalists distinguish themselves from non-journalists? And what is journalism anyway? If it looks and sounds like news then is it news?24

However, maintaining the already-tenuous occupational boundaries of journalism is not the only issue at stake. In an environment in which citizens are confronted with a proliferation of news and information sources, journalism’s accountability and quality assurance structures arguably become more important than ever before. The existing professional infrastructure of journalists therefore requires

---

strengthening in order to cater for the demands of the contemporary media landscape. The route to this eventuality, however, remains uncertain.

**Taking heed of lessons from the past**

Appeals for 'more professionalism' in the contemporary journalistic environment share in common an emphasis on structural reform. Indeed, in New Zealand, following the demise of the NZIJ at the turn of the twentieth century, suggestions for reforms such as the creation of a professional institute have been voiced periodically. However, proposals that emphasise solely structural reform are problematic for some central reasons which this thesis has explored as underlying themes. Significantly, the failure of New Zealand's first and only 'professional institute' for journalists was largely due to the ambiguity surrounding journalistic work and the status of journalists. Furthermore, this ambiguity precluded the NZJA's effort to create a new professional body (which, significantly, was to embody a system of 'voluntary licensing' like that illustrated above) in the 1950s. Recent discussions among a handful of interested journalists about the formation of a 'professional body' have proven similarly unproductive. Irrespective, this thesis concludes that these structural 'remedies' for the limitations of contemporary journalism will inevitably prove ineffectual unless the limitations of journalism's professional culture and consciousness (and the historical forces that have undermined them) are acknowledged.

The story this thesis has told of New Zealand journalists' pursuit of professionalism only serves to highlight that simply attempting to emulate the professional infrastructure of the 'accepted professions' serves neither the interests of journalists, nor those of the public. The professional infrastructure of New Zealand journalism has developed without a consensus about 'journalistic professionalism', and how best to promote it. Prior to the 1960s, before issues of journalistic accountability arose on the public and political agendas, the appeal of professionalism as a means of increasing journalists' social and economic position was the primary force driving their efforts to develop a 'professional infrastructure', at the centre of which was the NZJA code of ethics. In spite of an increasing public (and parliamentary) interest in journalistic accountability from the 1960s, the conflict within the wider industry on the issue of journalistic professionalism continued. Hence, the *ad hoc* and fragmented manner in which the professional and regulatory
framework for New Zealand journalists has evolved since the establishment of the NZPC in 1972 throughout the remainder of the twentieth century. Having now entered the twenty-first century, it is clear that these trends must be addressed for the future.

9.4 Beyond Consensus?: Remaking journalists’ occupational consciousness

By failing to recognise itself as a profession, journalism hasn’t avoided developing norms and standards. It has merely failed to think them through thoroughly.²⁵

This thesis has illustrated that journalists’ conceptions of their occupational status have implications for the journalistic culture in which they work, and thus the quality of their performance. As such, the ambiguities surrounding the concept of ‘professionalism’ that have featured prominently in the development of the journalistic occupation in New Zealand must be overcome. Indeed, the limited professional culture of New Zealand journalism must be addressed in order to give effect to journalists’ existing accountability structures. As a starting point, a reformed conception of professionalism is required to promote the health of New Zealand journalism. In concluding this thesis, the remainder of this chapter advocates a ‘bottom up’ approach to reform, beginning with the occupational consciousness of journalists, in an attempt to improve the professional culture of New Zealand journalism for the future.

Journalists’ current attitudes towards ‘professionalism’

Where calls for ‘increased professionalism’ in journalism are more and more frequently heard, the preoccupation with journalism’s lack of ‘professional traits’ must cease. Indeed, the occupational consciousness of contemporary journalism is evidently based upon understandings of journalistic professionalism derived from the outdated taxonomic approaches from the sociology of professions. As chapter two highlighted, traditional understandings of professionalism focus on journalism’s ‘have nots’; the occupation’s lack of ‘professional traits’ (such as an abstract, ‘esoteric’ body of knowledge, government licensing, and an industry-wide professional association) vis-à-vis the ‘true professions’. Although the ‘traits approach’ to

²⁵ Rosenstiel (2003: 3).
professionalism has been gradually dismissed within the sociology of professions, it remains that dominant yardstick for assessing professional status within both journalism and society. More importantly, the dominance of traits understandings of professionalism within public opinion has perpetuated scepticism amongst journalists as to their professional status.

The way in which journalists’ occupational consciousness appears to be informed by outdated ideas about professionalism has arguably done little to sustain a professional culture within journalism. As such, the emphasis on the journalism’s ‘have nots’ must be overcome. What journalism does have is the potential to cultivate a professional consciousness based on the importance of the occupation’s role and work tasks, a necessary measure to revitalise the existing ‘professional infrastructure’ and to improve the quality of journalism generally. As a starting point for change, the concept of journalistic professionalism requires re-thinking and requires the input of working journalists, journalism educators, and the public, to transmit and sustain it.

**Professionalism as ‘good work’**

As Evetts notes, “[i]n everyday usage, the idea of professionalism involves doing work well, doing a good job . . .”\(^{26}\) This is one aspect of the ‘folk conception’ of professionalism that journalists, journalism schools, and the public alike should retain as a basis for promoting the reform of New Zealand journalism’s professional culture. Although the context in which journalists practice has evolved significantly, their claims to professionalism made in the twentieth century remain valid into the twenty-first. The public duties of journalists and of journalism in a democracy, and the impact of their work on society are critical determinants. As Belsey and Chadwick argue,

> What is important is not a precise definition of a profession, which is bound to be too restricted to apply to the variety of groups that have some fair claim to be professional these days, but rather the quality of the conduct of members of these groups whether it be in medicine or journalism, so long as it has a potential for good or harm. What is important is that the activity that wishes to call itself professional be conducted on an ethical basis and that its practitioners be accountable for their actions.\(^{27}\)

For the future, discourse about the professional status of journalists must move beyond the structural or organisational ‘deficiencies’ of journalism. What is required

---

\(^{26}\) Evetts (1999a: 124).

\(^{27}\) Belsey and Chadwick (1992: 12).
is the cultivation of an occupational consciousness among journalists that emphasises the public significance of journalistic work, and thus the professional nature of journalistic work. In doing so, the fallacies of journalism’s so-called ‘non-professional’ status might be overcome with a reformed understanding of their occupational role. In this regard, the ‘generic’, traits-based understandings of professionalism that have infiltrated contemporary journalism’s occupational consciousness may be replaced with a more constructive definition of the term for the future. Though over half a century old, the ‘social responsibility theory’ provides a more useful understanding of a ‘profession’ for the twenty-first century.

A profession is a group organized to perform a public service ... The group seeks to perform its service and to maintain the standards of the service even though more money could be made in ways that would endanger the quality of the work ... Keeping in mind the inescapable individual responsibility, society should see to it that every effort is made to develop a more institutionalized or communal responsibility.28

As this thesis has argued, there is a pressing need to increase the ‘visibility of professionalism’ in New Zealand journalism both to give effective force to the existing accountability structures for the media, and to promote the quality of journalism more broadly. To promote a more constructive understanding of their occupation, journalists must become versed in an alternative conception of professionalism that focuses less on the presence or absence of traits per se, and more on their uses to promote journalists’ professional consciousness and the quality of journalism generally. Increasing the visibility of professionalism requires extending the scope for more discussion and debate among journalism practitioners about the public role and duties of their occupation in the twenty-first century. The need for journalistic accountability to the public must be reaffirmed. Indeed, the existing accountability mechanisms such as the NZPC must demonstrate a genuine commitment to promoting ethical standards and public accountability. However, the responsibility for increasing the visibility of professionalism in New Zealand journalism also lies beyond the realm of the industry itself.

For the future, journalism educators must attempt to foster a conception of journalistic professionalism that explicitly avoids the pitfalls of the outdated ‘traits approach’ to professionalism. By taking advantage of the fact that in the

contemporary context, journalism schools are usually the first point of contact for perpetuating an occupational consciousness amongst prospective journalists, journalism educators are in a prime position to eradicate the existing ‘anti-professional attitude’ of journalists and to cultivate one that can contribute to improving the professional culture of journalism more generally. Understandings of professionalism that rely on the cultivation of certain ‘professional trappings’ characteristic of the traditional professions do not provide journalists with the tools to combat the antipathy to notions of professionalism in the wider industry where commercial imperatives (rather than professional ones) currently dominate. However, an understanding of professionalism that emphasises the public responsibilities of journalism in a democratic society and the corresponding need for public accountability offers a more useful basis from which a professional culture might be restored. Indeed, because the role of the public is equally important for future reform, further discourse and debate about the public role of the media by, and especially through, the media may also serve to encourage public input in reforming the professional culture of journalism, and also to dispel the folk understandings of ‘professionalism’ that dominate public opinion.

9.5 Suggestions for further research

This thesis has documented the efforts of New Zealand journalists to build a professional infrastructure based on that of the ‘accepted professions’ whose status journalists sought to emulate. As this thesis has argued, various impediments to the pursuit of professionalism saw an apparent decline in the appeal of professionalism, which has negative implications for the contemporary journalistic culture. Whether or not reforming New Zealand journalism’s professional culture can be furthered through the recommendations suggested in this chapter, they provide a potential starting point for action based on the historical trends this thesis has depicted.

However, this particular story is certainly not an exhaustive account of the history and development of ‘journalistic professionalism’ in New Zealand. As noted in chapter one, the fact that this thesis concentrates on working journalists’ ‘side of the story’ means that the voices of the industry’s employers are comparatively absent. Moreover, it is conceivable that there are other potential interpretations of the events
and processes described in this thesis. For instance, this thesis has not explicitly addressed the question of whether the apparent decline in the appeal of professionalism among New Zealand journalists post-1970 reflected a wider societal shift away from the value of professionalism. Certainly, there are indications that the concept of ‘professionalism’ has undergone something of a ‘semantic shift’ over the last few decades away from traditional ideas of professions as autonomous, insular, and accountable to only their peers and colleagues toward an emphasis on accountability to the public. Indeed, this thesis has observed trends of an increasing public concern in the ethics and accountability structures of New Zealand journalists since the 1960s, witness the fact that public (and parliamentary) calls for public accountability provided the major impetus for the creation of the NZPC, as well as its recent reforms. These observations may provide a starting point for further research that directly addresses the changing social meanings attached to the concept of ‘professionalism’ in New Zealand society.

There are also issues that this thesis has not addressed due to the scope and time constraints on the completion of this research. One such topic worthy of future research concerns the issue of how the ‘feminisation of the journalistic workforce’ in New Zealand contributed to occupational change, especially during the latter half of the twentieth century. As noted (albeit fleetingly) in chapter four, the journalistic occupation in New Zealand was, certainly for the first half of the twentieth century, predominantly a ‘male domain’, and the impact of increasing numbers of ‘women journalists’ from the 1960s and 1970s is a topic awaiting formal investigation. Indeed, interviews undertaken for this thesis indicated that the feminisation of the journalistic workforce had a significant impact on several facets of New Zealand journalism, including the nature of entry into the journalistic occupation, the educational backgrounds of its practitioners, and the culture of the newsroom and of journalism generally. In addition, questions as to the impact of the overwhelmingly tertiary-educated journalistic workforce of today on the culture and practice of New Zealand

---

29 I would like to thank Professor Mark Pearson (Bond University, Gold Coast) and Dr John Farnsworth (University of Otago) for highlighting this point.
30 As Evetts (1999a) suggests, this redefinition of professionalism away from autonomy and towards increased public accountability is a feature of contemporary professions in Anglo-American society.
31 As a seminal work in the area of gender and professions, Witz (1990) offers a useful theoretical starting point for such an analysis.
journalism in the twenty-first century is another issue that provides scope for further research.

9.6 Conclusion

This thesis has illustrated that the claims advanced by journalists to sustain their arguments for professionalism indicate the potential for the pursuit of private interests to coexist with the promotion of the public interest. Professionalism provided the NZJA with a model for occupational reform based upon the idea that controlling entry into the occupation would increase the ‘value’ and calibre of practising journalists, and thus the quality of journalism. Arresting a potential decline in the quality of journalism meant ensuring that journalism was just as ‘worthwhile’ or as economically attractive a career option as ‘other professions’. The attainment of professional status for journalists would increase their ‘worth’ relative to other professionals, and would ultimately improve the quality of New Zealand journalism as a whole.

However, the appeal of professionalism was undermined firstly, by the multiple identities within the journalistic occupation itself. While some journalists simply dismissed professionalism as a lofty and unrealistic ambition, others could not reconcile the ‘elite’ nature of professionalism with the idea of journalists as neutral and independent of social classes and interests. The industrial demarcation of the wider journalism industry also weakened the NZJA’s efforts to promote professionalism. Tensions between journalists and their employers at the industrial level were particularly evident in the development of self-regulatory structures, including the adoption and application of the NZJA-devised code of ethics. Though journalists tended to couch their ambitions for ‘professionalism’ in terms of improving the conduct of journalists and the ethical standard of journalism generally, the NPA appeared unconvinced and tended to regard journalists’ professional self-control measures as strategies designed to increase their industrial bargaining power. This disunity within both the journalistic occupation and the wider industry offers significant insight into the development of New Zealand journalism during the twentieth century.

Although professionalism provided the NZJA with a model for the internal reform of the journalistic occupation, the assumption that journalists could acquire the
social esteem and economic rewards of the ‘recognised professions’ by simply emulating their professional infrastructure proved flawed. The NZJA’s ‘professionalism as escalator assumption’ was ultimately flawed from the outset because it failed to foresee that the idiosyncrasies of the journalistic occupation would create difficulties for the creation of a professional infrastructure that mirrored other (in some cases very different) professions. The industrial demarcation of the wider journalism industry, the ensuing power struggles between journalists and their employers, and the deep-seated traditions of press freedom were all factors that affected the development of professional structures for journalism. At the core of these difficulties, perhaps, was the ‘public-private duality’ of journalistic work as both the provision of a public service, as well as the creation of a commercial product. The dominance of the industry’s owners/employers’ economic interests throughout the history of New Zealand journalism has meant that this latter interpretation of journalism has prevailed, significantly undermining journalists’ ambitions for professionalism.

Hence, in spite of the ‘professional infrastructure’ that existed for journalists by the 1970s, journalists remained dissatisfied with their social and economic position; the escalator on which journalists were perched somehow never arrived at the expected destination. In other words, ‘professionalism’ had failed to reap the expected rewards for journalists, hence the decline of professionalism as both an occupational identity and a strategy for pursuing their interests post-1970. As this thesis argued, the decline in the appeal of professionalism offers insight into the limited professional consciousness and culture of contemporary New Zealand journalism.

In concluding this thesis, this chapter has made some suggestions for the reform of New Zealand journalism’s professional culture based on the premise that any future reform must take heed of lessons from the past. Proposals for ‘more professionalism’ in the contemporary journalistic environment are increasingly heard, but are problematic given their tendency to focus on structural reform, ignoring the limitations of the journalistic culture in which these structures are presumed to operate. Hence, this chapter had argued that structural ‘remedies’ for the limitations of contemporary journalism will inevitably prove ineffectual unless the historical forces that have undermined journalism’s professional culture and consciousness are acknowledged.
The road ahead: Gaining and sustaining public trust

...[R]eclaiming and reinterpreting the concept of professionalism requires the professions themselves to lead the way in the monitoring and assessment of professional competences and development, and in demonstrating accountability ... since this enables the professions’ practice of self-regulatory and autonomous control to be continued.32

To make New Zealand journalism’s existing accountability structures truly effective, journalists’ professional responsibilities must be reaffirmed for the twenty-first century. A revised conception of journalistic professionalism is necessary to provide journalists with the tools to combat the antipathy to notions of professionalism in the wider industry where commercial imperatives (rather than professional ones) tend to dominate. An understanding of professionalism that emphasises not certain requisite traits, but rather the public responsibilities of journalism in a democratic society and the corresponding need for public accountability, offers a more useful basis from which New Zealand journalism’s professional culture and its existing accountability structures might be revitalised for the future. In a contemporary context, New Zealand journalists enjoy many of the privileges of the ‘accepted professions’, notably the privilege of self-regulation. The legitimisation of these privileges requires a demonstrable commitment by journalists to balancing their own interests with those of the public. Indeed, gaining and sustaining public trust will be the real test for journalistic professionalism for the future.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Journalism codes of ethics referred to in this thesis

British National Union of Journalists’ Code of Conduct (1936)

A member of the union should do nothing that would bring discredit on himself, his union, his newspaper, or his profession. He should study the rules of the union, and should not by commission or omission, act against the interests of the union.

Unless the employer consents to a variation, a member who wishes to terminate his employment must give notice according to agreement or professional custom.

No member should seek promotion or seek to obtain the position of another journalist by unfair methods. A member should not, directly or indirectly, attempt to obtain for himself or anyone else any commission, regular or occasional, held by a freelance member of the union.

It is unprofessional conduct to exploit the labour of another journalist by plagiarism, or by using his copy for lineage purposes without permission.

A member holding a staff appointment shall serve first the paper that employs him. In his own time a member is free to engage in other creative work, but he should not undertake any extra work in his rest time or holidays if by doing so he is depriving an out-of-work member of a chance to obtain employment. Any misuse of rest days—won by the union on the sound argument that periods of recuperation are needed after strenuous hours of labour—is damaging to trade union aims for a shorter working week.

While a spirit of willingness to help other members should be encouraged at all times, members are under a special obligation of honour to help an unemployed member to obtain work.

Freedom in the honest collection and publication of news facts, and the rights of fair comment and criticism, are principles which every journalist should defend.

A journalist should fully realise his personal responsibility for everything he sends to his paper or agency. He should keep union and professional secrets, and respect all necessary confidence regarding sources of information and private documents. He should not falsify information or documents, or distort or misrepresent facts.

In obtaining news or pictures, reporters and Press photographers should do nothing that will cause pain or humiliation to innocent, bereaved, or otherwise distressed persons. News, pictures, and documents should be acquired by honest methods only. (Source: The New Zealand Journalist, 12 January 1941: 5).
International Federation of Journalists’ Statement of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists (1954)

This international Declaration is proclaimed as a standard of professional conduct for journalists engaged in gathering, transmitting, disseminating and commenting on news and information in describing events. (Adopted by 1954 World Congress of the IFJ. Amended by the 1986 World Congress).

1. Respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist.

2. In pursuance of this duty, the journalist shall at all times defend the principles of freedom in the honest collection and publication of news, and of the right of fair comment and criticism.

3. The journalist shall report only in accordance with facts of which he/she knows the origin. The journalist shall not suppress essential information or falsify documents.

4. The journalist shall use only fair methods to obtain news, photographs and documents.

5. The journalist shall do the utmost to rectify any published information which is found to be harmfully inaccurate.

6. The journalist shall observe professional secrecy regarding the source of information obtained in confidence.

7. The journalist shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origins.

8. The journalist shall regard as grave professional offences the following:
   * plagiarism;
   * malicious misrepresentation;
   * calumny, slander, libel, unfounded accusations;
   * acceptance of a bribe in any form in consideration of either publication or suppression.

9. Journalists worthy of the name shall deem it their duty to observe faithfully the principles stated above. Within the general law of each country the journalist shall recognise in professional matters the jurisdiction of colleagues only, to the exclusion of every kind of interference by governments or others.

NZJA Creed for Journalists (1945)

WE BELIEVE:
The proper test of the value of a daily newspaper is its service to the community.

Any controversial interpreting of events lies in the editorial sphere, and should be clearly separate from the work of full, impartial and fearless news presentation.

In gathering and editing news the journalist must not be swayed by personal, political, economic, racial or religious prejudice, must respect the genuine opinions and activities of the individual and the minority, and must strive to observe at all times scrupulous fairness and honesty. Any failure in this deserves the condemnation of the profession.

The journalist at the same time, as a citizen and a servant of the public, has a duty to reveal and oppose, within the bounds of fair reporting, instances of danger to the people’s fundamental right of self-government and security. The journalist opposes cruelty, greed and oppression.

In his work and conduct, in keeping with the best traditions of the profession, the journalist should assist to bring his profession to its rightful place in the life of the community.

The journalist owes the fullest possible loyalty to his employer, his newspaper and his fellow-workers, and has the right to expect that this should not conflict with his ultimate loyalty to the interests of the people.

(Source: The New Zealand Journalist, 15 July 1945: 1).
A journalists’ reputation is staked on the standard of the written material that passes from his or her hand. All journalists must take full responsibility for accuracy, and must also consider tone, fairness, and the general impression left with the reader.

An employer expects loyalty, but a journalist owes a duty also to the craft of journalism and to his own reputation.

A responsible journalist:

- Is completely objective, although not necessarily unsympathetic.
- Does not overlook the need for good taste, and is tactful with the public.
- Assesses the merits and demerits of the subject and does not close his eyes to significant facts.
- Does not slant a story, except in the interests of the story itself, and guards against harming those lacking opportunity to present another viewpoint.
- Will not accept a bribe, either concrete or in the form of a personal favour.
- Does not allow personal insult or threat to colour his writing.
- Respects a confidence and regards as sacred the name of an informant who desires anonymity (except in a matter of vital national interest, and then the informant should be advised before the source is disclosed).
- Despises plagiarism; and does not seek to profit from a direct competitor.
- Is aware of the legal pitfalls that beset his employment.
- Has a vested interest in the English language and is expected to uphold the laws of grammar.

Draft NZJA code of ethics (1967)

The NZJA desires and encourages its members to maintain high standards of workmanship and conduct.

A member of the union should be loyal to his union and his employer. These loyalties need not clash, so long as the employer complies with the agreed union conditions and makes no demand for forms of service incompatible with the honour of the profession or the principles of trade unionism.

Freedom of information and of the press are fundamental human rights; those freedoms will best be safeguarded when journalists constantly strive to maintain the highest sense of responsibility, and are imbued with the moral obligation to be truthful and to search for the truth in reporting facts.

NZJA members pledge themselves to the following code and stand by their fellow members in its observance and enforcement:

1. To report and interpret the news with scrupulous honesty.

2. To maintain, through their conduct, full public confidence in the integrity and dignity of their calling.

3. To observe professional secrecy in matters revealed on confidence. This privilege should always be invoked to the furthest limits of law and consciousness.

4. To use only honest methods to obtain news, pictures and documents.

5. Never to accept any form of bribe, offered either to publish or suppress information.

6. To reveal their identity as members of the press on all occasions when not to do so would be contrary to ethical standards.

7. Not to suppress essential facts, and not to distort the truth by omission or wrongful emphasis.

8. To observe at all times the fraternity of their profession and never take unfair advantage of a fellow member of the NZJA.

9. To identify and treat as such rumour and unconfirmed news, to rectify spontaneously and promptly harmful inaccuracies and to avoid plagiarism.

(Source: The New Zealand Journalist, June 1967: 1).
NZJA Code of Ethics adopted in 1967

Members of the NZJA pledge themselves to accept the following code and stand by their fellow members in its observation and enforcement.

1. To report and interpret the news honestly

2. To promote through their conduct full public confidence in the integrity and dignity of their calling.

3. To observe professional secrecy in matters revealed in confidence, to the furthest limits of law or conscience.

4. To use only honest methods to obtain news, pictures and documents.

5. Never to accept any form of bribe, either to publish or to suppress.

6. To reveal their identity as members of the press when not to do so would be contrary to ethical standards.

7. Not to suppress essential fact, and not to distort the truth by omission or wrongful emphasis.

8. To observe at all times the fraternity of their profession and never take unfair advantage of a fellow member of the N.Z.J.A.

9. That journalists should accept no compulsion to intrude on private grief.

(Source: The New Zealand Journalist, September 1967: 1)

Respect for truth and the public’s right to know are overriding principles for all journalists. In pursuance of these principles journalists commit themselves to ethical and professional standards. All members of the AJA section engaged in gathering, transmitting, disseminating and commenting on news and information shall observe the following code of ethics in their professional activities. They acknowledge the jurisdiction of their professional colleagues in the AJA judiciary committees to adjudicate on issues connected with the code.

1 They shall report and interpret the news with scrupulous honesty by striving to disclose all essential facts and by not suppressing relevant, available facts or by distorting by wrong or improper emphasis.

2 They shall not place unnecessary emphasis on gender, race, sexual preference, religious belief, marital status or physical or mental disability.

3 In all circumstances they shall respect all confidences received in the course of their calling.

4 They shall not allow personal interests to influence them in the course of their professional duties.

5 They shall not allow their professional duties to be influenced by any consideration, gift or advantage offered and, where appropriate, shall disclose any such offer.

6 They shall not allow advertising or commercial considerations to influence them in their professional duties.

7 They shall use fair and honest means to obtain news, films, tapes and documents.

8 They shall identify themselves and their employers before obtaining any interview for publication or broadcast.

9 They shall respect private grief and personal privacy and shall have the right to resist compulsion to intrude on them.

10 They shall do their utmost to correct any published or broadcast information found to be harmfully inaccurate.

(Source: http://www.alliance.org.au/).

Respect for truth and the public’s right to information are fundamental principles of journalism. Journalists describe society to itself. They convey information, ideas and opinions, a privileged role. They search, disclose, record, question, entertain, suggest and remember. They inform citizens and animate democracy. They give a practical form to freedom of expression. Many journalists work in private enterprise, but all have these public responsibilities. They scrutinise power, but also exercise it, and should be accountable. Accountability engenders trust. Without trust, journalists do not fulfill their public responsibilities. MEAA members engaged in journalism commit themselves to

- Honesty
- Fairness
- Independence
- Respect for the rights of others

1. Report and interpret honestly, striving for accuracy, fairness and disclosure of all essential facts. Do not suppress relevant available facts, or give distorting emphasis. Do your utmost to give a fair opportunity for reply.

2. Do not place unnecessary emphasis on personal characteristics, including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, family relationships, religious belief, or physical or intellectual disability.

3. Aim to attribute information to its source. Where a source seeks anonymity, do not agree without first considering the source’s motives and any alternative attributable source. Where confidences are accepted, respect them in all circumstances.

4. Do not allow personal interest, or any belief, commitment, payment, gift or benefit, to undermine your accuracy, fairness or independence.

5. Disclose conflicts of interest that affect, or could be seen to affect, the accuracy, fairness or independence of your journalism. Do not improperly use a journalistic position for personal gain.

6. Do not allow advertising or other commercial considerations to undermine accuracy, fairness or independence.

7. Do your utmost to ensure disclosure of any direct or indirect payment made for interviews, pictures, information or stories.

8. Use fair, responsible and honest means to obtain material. Identify yourself and your employer before obtaining any interview for publication or broadcast. Never exploit a person’s vulnerability or ignorance of media practice.

9. Present pictures and sound which are true and accurate. Any manipulation likely to mislead should be disclosed.

10. Do not plagiarise.
11. Respect private grief and personal privacy. Journalists have the right to resist compulsion to intrude.

12. Do your utmost to achieve fair correction of errors.

**Guidance Clause**

Basic values often need interpretation and sometimes come into conflict. Ethical journalism requires conscientious decision-making in context. Only substantial advancement of the public interest or risk of substantial harm to people allows any standard to be overridden.

(Source: http://www.alliance.org.au/).
EPMU Code of ethics for journalists (1988)*

Respect for truth and the public’s right to information are over-riding principles for all journalists. In pursuance of these principles, journalists commit themselves to ethical and professional standards. All members of the Union engaged in gathering, transmitting, disseminating and commenting on news and information shall observe the following Code of Ethics in their professional activities:

(a) They shall report and interpret the news with scrupulous honesty and striving to disclose all essential facts and by not suppressing relevant, available facts or distorting by wrong or improper emphasis.

(b) They shall not place unnecessary emphasis on gender, race, sexual preference, religious belief, marital status or physical disability.

(c) In all circumstances they shall respect all confidences received in the course of their occupation.

(d) They shall not allow personal interests to influence them in their professional duties.

(e) They shall not allow their professional duties to be influenced by any consideration, gift or advantage offered, and where appropriate shall disclose any such offer.

(f) They shall not allow advertising or commercial considerations to influence them in their professional duties.

(g) They shall use fair and honest means to obtain news, pictures, films, tapes and documents.

(h) They shall identify themselves and their employers before obtaining any interview for publication or broadcast.

(i) They shall respect private grief and personal privacy and shall have the right to resist compulsion to intrude on them.

(j) They shall do their utmost to correct any published or broadcast information found to be harmfully inaccurate.

A breach of this Code shall be a breach of the Union’s rules and thus may give rise to disciplinary procedures under the rules. If a member is dismissed from employment or otherwise disadvantaged by an employer, and a breach of the Code is claimed and substantiated as a ground for the employer’s action, the Union may decline to pursue a personal grievance on behalf of the member.

*The code was last revised in 1988 while operated by JAGPRO, which became the EPMU in 1996 (see Appendix B).

Preamble

There are some broad principles to which the Council is committed. There is no more important principle than freedom of expression. In a democratically governed society the public has a right to be informed, and much of that information comes from the media. Individuals also have rights and sometimes they must be balanced against competing interests such as the public’s right to know. Freedom of expression and freedom of the media are inextricably bound. The print media is jealous in guarding freedom of expression not just for publishers’ sake, but, more importantly, in the public interest. In complaint resolution by the Council freedom of expression and public interest will play dominant roles.

It is important to the Council that the distinction between fact, and conjecture, opinions or comment be maintained. This Principle does not interfere with rigorous analysis, of which there is an increasing need, and is the hallmark of good journalism.

The Council seeks the co-operation of editors and publishers in adherence to these Principles and disposing of complaints. Editors have the ultimate responsibility to their proprietors for what appears editorially in their publications, and to their readers and the public for adherence to the standards of ethical journalism which the Council upholds in this Statement of Principles.

These Principles are not a rigid code, but may be used by complainants should they wish to point the Council more precisely to the nature of their complaint. A complainant may use other words, or expressions, in a complaint, and nominate grounds not expressly stated in these Principles

1. Accuracy
Publications (newspapers and magazines) should be guided at all times by accuracy, fairness and balance, and should not deliberately mislead or misinform readers by commission, or omission.

2. Corrections
Where it is established that there has been published information that is materially incorrect then the publication should promptly correct the error giving the correction fair prominence. In appropriate circumstances the correction may be accompanied by an apology and a right of reply by an affected person or persons.

3. Privacy
Everyone is entitled to privacy of person, space and personal information, and these rights should be respected by publications. Nevertheless the right of privacy should not interfere with publication of matters of public record, or obvious significant public interest.

Publications should exercise care and discretion before identifying relatives of persons convicted or accused of crime where the reference to them is not directly relevant to the matter reported.

Those suffering from trauma or grief call for special consideration, and when approached, or enquiries are being undertaken, careful attention is to be given to their sensibilities.
4. Confidentiality
Editors have a strong obligation to protect against disclosure of the identity of confidential sources. They also have a duty to take reasonable steps to satisfy themselves that such sources are well informed and that the information they provide is reliable.

5. Children and Young People
Editors should have particular care and consideration for reporting on and about children and young people.

6. Comment and Fact
Publications should, as far as possible, make proper distinctions between reporting of facts and conjecture, passing of opinions and comment.

7. Advocacy
A publication is entitled to adopt a forthright stance and advocate a position on any issue.

8. Discrimination
Publications should not place gratuitous emphasis on gender, religion, minority groups, sexual orientation, race, colour or physical or mental disability unless the description is in the public interest.

9. Subterfuge
Editors generally not sanction misrepresentation, deceit or subterfuge to obtain information for publication unless there is a clear case of public interest and the information cannot be obtained in any other way.

10. Headlines and Captions
Headlines, sub-headings, and captions should accurately and fairly convey the substance of the report they are designed to cover.

11. Photographs
Editors should take care in photographic and image selection and treatment. They should not publish photographs or images which have been manipulated without informing readers of the fact and, where significant, the nature and purpose of the manipulation. Those involving situations of grief and shock are to be handled with special consideration for the sensibilities of those affected.

12. Letters
Selection and treatment of letters for publication are the prerogative of editors who are to be guided by fairness, balance, and public interest in the correspondents’ views.

13. Council Adjudications
Editors are obliged to publish the substance of Council adjudications that uphold a complaint. Note: Editors and publishers are aware of the extent of this Council rule that is not reproduced in full here.

(Note: Changes made since the 1999 version are indicated by *)

Preamble
There are some broad principles to which the Council is committed. There is no more important principle than freedom of expression. In a democratically governed society the public has a right to be informed, and much of that information comes from the media. Individuals also have rights and sometimes they must be balanced against competing interests such as the public’s right to know. Freedom of expression and freedom of the media are inextricably bound. The print media is jealous in guarding freedom of expression not just for publishers’ sake, but, more importantly, in the public interest. In complaint resolution by the Council freedom of expression and public interest will play dominant roles.

It is important to the Council that the distinction between fact, and conjecture, opinions or comment be maintained. This Principle does not interfere with rigorous analysis, of which there is an increasing need, and is the hallmark of good journalism.

The Council seeks the co-operation of editors and publishers in adherence to these Principles and disposing of complaints. Editors have the ultimate responsibility to their proprietors for what appears editorially in their publications, and to their readers and the public for adherence to the standards of ethical journalism which the Council upholds in this Statement of Principles.

These Principles are not a rigid code, but may be used by complainants should they wish to point the Council more precisely to the nature of their complaint. A complainant may use other words, or expressions, in a complaint, and nominate grounds not expressly stated in these Principles.

1. Accuracy
Publications (newspapers and magazines) should be guided at all times by accuracy, fairness and balance, and should not deliberately mislead or misinform readers by commission, or omission.

*2. Corrections
Where it is established that there has been published information that is materially incorrect then the publication should promptly correct the error giving the correction fair prominence. In some circumstances it will be appropriate to offer an apology and a right of reply to an affected person or persons.

3. Privacy
Everyone is entitled to privacy of person, space and personal information, and these rights should be respected by publications. Nevertheless the right of privacy should not interfere with publication of matters of public record, or obvious significant public interest.

Publications should exercise care and discretion before identifying relatives of persons convicted or accused of crime where the reference to them is not directly relevant to the matter reported.

Those suffering from trauma or grief call for special consideration, and when approached, or enquiries are being undertaken, careful attention is to be given to their sensibilities.
4. Confidentiality
Editors have a strong obligation to protect against disclosure of the identity of confidential sources. They also have a duty to take reasonable steps to satisfy themselves that such sources are well informed and that the information they provide is reliable.

5. Children and Young People
Editors should have particular care and consideration for reporting on and about children and young people.

6. Comment and Fact
Publications should, as far as possible, make proper distinctions between reporting of facts and conjecture, passing of opinions and comment.

7. Advocacy
A publication is entitled to adopt a forthright stance and advocate a position on any issue.

8. Discrimination
Publications should not place gratuitous emphasis on gender, religion, minority groups, sexual orientation, race, colour or physical or mental disability. Nevertheless, where it is relevant and in the public interest, publications may report and express opinions in these areas

9. Subterfuge
Editors should generally not sanction misrepresentation, deceit or subterfuge to obtain information for publication unless there is a clear case of public interest and the information cannot be obtained in any other way.

10. Headlines and Captions
Headlines, sub-headings, and captions should accurately and fairly convey the substance of the report they are designed to cover.

11. Photographs
Editors should take care in photographic and image selection and treatment. They should not publish photographs or images which have been manipulated without informing readers of the fact and, where significant, the nature and purpose of the manipulation. Those involving situations of grief and shock are to be handled with special consideration for the sensibilities of those affected.

12. Letters
Selection and treatment of letters for publication are the prerogative of editors who are to be guided by fairness, balance, and public interest in the correspondents' views.

13. Council Adjudications
Editors are obliged to publish the substance of Council adjudications that uphold a complaint. Note: Editors and publishers are aware of the extent of this Council rule that is not reproduced in full here.
Appendix B: Significant Newspaper Industry Developments

1840 April 18. The first newspaper in New Zealand The New Zealand Gazette was published by Samuel Revans, who came to New Zealand as the official journalist to Port Nicholson for the New Zealand Company (NPA, 2003).

1861 May 25. Christchurch’s The Press first published as a weekly newspaper.

1861 November 15. New Zealand’s longest running daily newspaper The Otago Daily Times is first published. This was followed by the emergence of several other ‘commercial dailies’ during the 1860s, some of which are still produced (including The Southland Times on 12 November 1862; The New Zealand Herald on 13 November 1863; The Timaru Herald on 11 June 1864, and The Nelson Evening Mail on 5 March 1866).

1876 Wilson & Horton (W&H) founded when NZ Herald merges with Alfred George Horton’s The Southern Cross.

1880 The United Press Association (UPA) is established. The name was changed to the New Zealand Press Association (NZPA) in 1942 to avoid confusion with overseas’ news services.

1891 NZIJ established. (Existing records do not specify the exact date the NZIJ ceased operation but no reference is made to the NZIJ after the 1920s in the records consulted for this research).

1894 Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act implemented.

1898 October 13. The first meeting of Newspaper Proprietors’ Association (NPA) was held in Wellington at the United Press Association Office. The first annual meeting of the NPA was held in Christchurch. George Fenwick was elected President and J. C. Wilken of the Lyttleton Times as Vice President. The first secretary was James Hunter and his successor in 1900 was William Easton who were both employees of the Otago Daily Times (NPA, 2003). The NPA changed its name from ‘proprietors’ to ‘publishers’ in 1971.

1901 CJU established. (Ceased operation in 1908).

1906 The Wellington Publishing Company Ltd (WPC) founded to publish Wellington’s morning daily, The Dominion.

1911 The newspaper industry consisted of 193 publications which could be classified as newspapers (67 dailies, 32 tri-weeklies, 26 bi-weeklies and 68 weeklies).

1912 NZJA formed.
1936 Labour Government elected which passed the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Amendment Act (provisions included a minimum wage, a forty hour week and compulsory unionism).

1937 The first metropolitan award secured for New Zealand journalists, providing a 40 hour week, deduction of meal times from working time, exclusion of chief reporters from graded staffs, three weeks’ annual holiday for most employees, overtime for work in excess of 11 hours daily, and the restoration of pre-depression wages (NZJA, 1962: 25).

1949 Transmission of news pictures by wire was introduced into New Zealand after World War Two and a photograph taken for The Press was the first illustration transmitted by the Post Office from the South Island to the North Island.

1954 Introduction of radio teletype transmission.

1958 119 registered newspapers existed of which 41 dailies and one tri-weekly were members of the NZPA.

1960s Introduction of radio teletype transmission.

1960 June. First official television news broadcast.

1962 First official radio news broadcast.

1963 Radio and Television Journalists’ Society (RTVJS) formed to look after the professional interests of broadcasting journalists (Their industrial interests were the responsibility of the PSA).

1964 Introduction of photocomposition (coldtype).

1964 The Nelson Mail became the first daily newspaper to print on an offset printing press.

1964 News buys 24% of WPC, subsequently increased to 49%.

1965 The National Government’s News Media Ownership Bill is passed in November, limiting foreign ownership of New Zealand news media to fifteen percent of shares in any one company.

1967 The Nelson Mail was the first daily newspaper in Australasia to print a full colour advertisement.

1970 WPC buys Truth (NZ) Ltd.


1971 October. The Newspaper Proprietors' Association becomes the Newspaper Publishers' Association (The New Zealand Journalist, October/November 1971: 5).

1972 WPC buys Blundell Bros Ltd, publisher of Wellington's Evening Post.

1972 WPC becomes Independent Newspapers Limited.

1972 INL forms INL Print Ltd (later Inprint Ltd) to combine the printing and publishing operations of group's commercial printing companies.

1972 'Nordmeyer relativity' established after Sir Arnold Nordmeyer (a retired politician) arbitrates on the NZJA's wage claim. Nordmeyer ruled that journalists be awarded wage increases based on the average ordinary-time weekly wage of all workers in New Zealand. (According to Nordmeyer, a senior journalist should receive the equivalent wage to a senior police sergeant). In April 1972, the average weekly wage of all workers was $60.97. According to Nordmeyer relativity, this meant that a J1 journalist should receive $57.75 (94.7% of the average wage) and that the J8 should receive $103.95 (70.5% above the average wage) (NZJU, 1977: 11).

1972 The New Zealand Press Council (NZPC) is established.

1973 NZJTC renamed the Journalists' Training Board (NZJTB).

1973 The NZJA and the Auckland branch split and are a renamed the New Zealand Journalists' Union (NZJU) and the Northern Journalists' Union (NJU) respectively.

1974 Press ownership in New Zealand concentrated in the hands of three main players; NZ News Limited (controls 25.1% total daily circulation); W&H (22%) and INL (20.8%) (O'Malley, 1974: 330).


1975 The RTVJS merges with the Current Affairs Broadcasting Society (CABS) to form the Association of Broadcasting Journalists (ABJ).

1976 New Zealand's first large-scale strike by journalists lasting 84 hours due to a breakdown in award negotiations between the NZJU and the NPA (Priestly, 1982: 673). Relativity claims were at the heart of this strike. By October 1976, the average weekly wage had risen to $109.75, which meant that Nordmeyer relativity for the J1 was $103.93 (but was only receiving $92.56). Relativity for the J8 was $187.12 (but was only receiving $156.09) (NZJU, 1977: 11).

1978 NZPA introduces computerised message-switching system.
1978 Second major journalists' strike due to the NPA not maintaining 'Nordmeyer relativity'.

1978 INL announcement of a 10% cut in staff numbers follows in a strike involving all the INL group's publications.

1979 The NZJU votes to affiliate with the Federation of Labour (FoL).

1980 INL buys The Manawatu Standard Ltd.

1983 *The Press* was the first metropolitan newspaper to print in offset colour.

1984 INL buys *The Southland Times*.

1985 INL buys *The Timaru Herald*.

1986 *Sunday Star* launched by NZ News Ltd.

1987 INL buys Christchurch Press Co Ltd, publisher of *The Press*.

1988 The *Timaru Herald* was the first newspaper to use (DEI) direct editorial input.

1989 INL buys Taranaki Newspapers Ltd.

1989 INL buys part of NZ News Ltd, including Auckland *Star*, the *Sunday Star* and Suburban Newspapers (Auckland), New Zealand's largest group of free community newspapers.

1989 NZJU merges with the Graphic Process Workers' Union to become JAGPRO.


1993 INL buys *Nelson Evening Mail* (later renamed *The Nelson Mail*).

1993 NZJTB reconstituted as the Journalists' Training Organisation (NZJTO).


1995 Independent Newspapers PLC of Dublin buys stake in W&H.

1995 W&H buys the Northern Publishing Company, publisher of the *Northern Advocate* and the *Whangarei Report*.

1995 W&H buys the *Hawkes Bay Sun*, a community newspaper with 50,000 circulation.

1995  JAGPRO merges with the Printers' Union to form the PPMU.

1996  The PPMU amalgamates with the Engineering Union to become the EPMU.

1996  Independent News and Media moves to control of W&H.

1998  Independent News and Media buys remaining shares in W&H.

1998  INL buys *The Marlborough Express*.

1998  January 5. *The Otago Daily Times* changed from letterpress to offset printing meaning that all daily and Sunday newspapers are now printed on offset printing presses.

1999  W&H establishes *Hastings Hawkes Bay Today* through merger of the Napier *Daily Telegraph* and *Hawkes Bay Herald Tribune*.

1999  Employment Relations Act implemented.

2000  INL sells Gordon & Gotch Australia to PMP Communications.

2000  INL buys *New Zealand Fisherman*.

2001  INL closes *Grace* magazine.

2001  INL buys Canterbury *Northern Outlook* and *Central Canterbury News* community newspapers.

2001  New Zealand news media dominated by two companies; INL (49% of daily newspaper circulation) and W&H (41.6% of daily newspaper circulation) (Rosenberg, 2002: 59).

2001  Newspaper and magazine giant Wilson and Horton is merged with Australian-based APN News & Media, which is controlled by Tony O'Reilly's Independent News and Media Company.

2002  APN buys *The Wairarapa Times-Age*.

2002  Wellington's *Evening Post* merged with the *Dominion* to form the *Dominion-Post*.


2003  INL buys *Cuisine* magazine (established 1985).

2003  INL sells *Te Puke Times*.

2003  INL’s stable of New Zealand newspapers and magazines taken over by Australian media company Fairfax Holdings Ltd., which now operates its New Zealand publications under a division of the company, Fairfax NZ Ltd.

2004  July. APN News and Media announces its intention to launch a Sunday edition of the *New Zealand Herald* in Auckland, entitled the *Herald on Sunday*. 
REFERENCE LIST

1. Books and Chapters from Edited Collections


Hight, J. and A. M. F. Candy (1927) *A Short History of the Canterbury College*. New Zealand: Whitcome and Tombs Ltd.


Parry, G. (1968) *Behind the Headlines*. Dunedin: John McIndoe Ltd.


2. **Newspaper, Magazine and Journal Articles**


Christchurch, NZ: Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Canterbury.


Employers Give in after Four Days of Seven Day Strike (10 July 1978: 4) *People’s Voice*.


3. **Speec hes, Conference Papers and Lectures**


4. Theses, Research Essays and other Unpublished Papers


5. Databases and World Wide Web Resources


*New Zealand Parliamentary Debates* (23 September 1965) Volume 344, August 31-October 1 1965. Wellington: Hansard GP.


7. Industry Publications and Documents

(Note: Articles from The Australasian Journalist and The New Zealand Journalist without by-lines are listed below in order of publication date rather than alphabetically due to the 'by date only' system used to reference these items in the body of this thesis).


The Australasian Journalist, 15 September 1920, III (9): 203. ‘Salary Status Inadequate’.


The Australasian Journalist, 15 November 1922, XI(11):194. [Untitled].


The Australasian Journalist, 15 February 1925, XIII (2): 30. ‘What’s a Journalist?’

The Australasian Journalist, 15 March 1925, XIII (3): 44. ‘Clean Up The Profession!’


The New Zealand Journalist, 20 June 1911, 1 (2): 7. ‘University Course: Comments on Prof. Hight’s Article’.

The New Zealand Journalist, 20 May 1911, 1(1):8. ‘In The Institute: Notes from the Beginning’.


The New Zealand Journalist, 8 May 1935, 1(5):1. ‘Journalism Course “a Waste of Time”’.


The New Zealand Journalist, 12 March 1937, 3(3): 4. ‘The NZJA’s Case in the Court’.

The New Zealand Journalist, 12 July 1937, 3(7): 2. ‘Should Journalists Affiliate?’

The New Zealand Journalist, 12 November 1937, 3(11):1. ‘Out With the Amateur!’


The New Zealand Journalist, 12 March 1941, 7(3):4-5. ‘State Control of News’.

The New Zealand Journalist, 12 May 1942, 8(5): 2. ‘Censorship of News’.


The New Zealand Journalist, 12 September 1942, 8(9): 6. ‘By-Lines’.

The New Zealand Journalist, 12 October 1942, 8(10):4. ‘Complacency Bias: Presentation of War News’.


The New Zealand Journalist, 12 July 1943, 9(7):1. ‘Reporting the War: Whose The Blame for Poor Job?’.


The New Zealand Journalist 15 June 1944, 10(6): 5. ‘Time for Code of Ethics?’

The New Zealand Journalist, 15 September 1944, 10(9): 3. ‘N.Z.J.A. To Frame Code of Ethics’.


The New Zealand Journalist, 15 August 1945, 11(8): 3. ‘Is There to be a Second Migration?’


The New Zealand Journalist, 15 October 1945, 11(10):5. [Untitled].

The New Zealand Journalist, 15 February 1946, 12(2):3. ‘Call for More Light on Kemsley Scheme’.

The New Zealand Journalist, 15 March 1946, 12(3): 5. ‘Rules For Cowan Prize’.


The New Zealand Journalist, 15 December 1946, 12(12):1. ‘Are We Men or Mice?’


The New Zealand Journalist, April 1948, 14(4): 3. Improved Dip. J. 'Course Likely to be Arranged Soon'.

The New Zealand Journalist, 15 November 1948, 14(11):1. 'Uncovering Ruapehu Crash Censor: Council Special Meeting'.


The New Zealand Journalist, 15 June 1950, 16(6): 2. 'Journalism is a Profession, Not Trade; It's up to Members to Keep Standard, Says Spedding'.

The New Zealand Journalist, 16 November 1950, 16(11): 3. 'Degree or Not to Be ... Professional Status'.

The New Zealand Journalist, 15 December 1950, 16(12): 5. 'No New Award ... So Examine Our Professional Status Urges Silcock'.

The New Zealand Journalist, 15 February 1951, 17(2): 1. 'Training is Now Top Topic'.

The New Zealand Journalist, 15 March 1951, 17(3): 2. 'Kemsley's Juniors Get Two Training Periods Weekly'.

The New Zealand Journalist, 16 April 1951, 17(4):5. 'Silcock Wants Action from Committee on Training'.

The New Zealand Journalist, 15 May 1951, 17(5): 1. 'Order of Reference Issued by Training Sub-Committee'.

The New Zealand Journalist, 15 May 1951, 17(5): 1. 'Wrong and Harmful: Wellingtons View of Regulations'.

The New Zealand Journalist, 15 August 1951, 17(8): 3. 'Council Sums up on the Regulations'.

The New Zealand Journalist, 15 August 1951, 17(8): 4. 'What about a Bit of Morale-Building in Cadets Training?'.

The New Zealand Journalist, 20 September 1951, 17(9): 3. 'Outline of Professional Body to Set Standards for Training and Status'.


The New Zealand Journalist, 20 September 1951, 17(9): 5. 'What Proposed Institute Should Arrange in Training'.


The New Zealand Journalist, August 1952, 18(8): 3. ‘Would Rather win my way into Institute than have it Granted’.


The New Zealand Journalist, September-October 1952, 18(9): 5. ‘Institute Idea is 60 Years Old’.


The New Zealand Journalist, November 1952, 18(10):3. ‘Award Anomalies Deserve Greater Attention than Futile Scheme for Institute’.


The New Zealand Journalist, May 1955, 22(4): 4. 'Newspaper Standards: Depressive Effect of Award Rates is Claim'.

The New Zealand Journalist, March-April 1957, 23(17):2. ‘Need for one Award’.


The New Zealand Journalist, 6 March 1959, 25(1): 4. ‘Over-Payed[sic]’.

The New Zealand Journalist, 6 March 1959, 25(1): 5. ‘Prof. Algie Best Speaker at Cadet Course’.


The New Zealand Journalist, 18 April 1964, 29(2): 1. ‘An Encouraging Response: First Polytech Courses Started This Year’.

The New Zealand Journalist, 18 April 1964, 29(2): 2. ‘Discussion with Dean: NZ 30 Years behind in Training’.


The New Zealand Journalist, 19 October 1964, 29(7):1. ‘Uniformity in Training Should be Next Step’.

The New Zealand Journalist, 18 December 1964, 29 (9): 1. ‘A Two-Stage Plan: Dean Barrett Backs University Course’.


The New Zealand Journalist, October/November 1971, 35(17): 5. ‘Employers Adopt New Name’.


The New Zealand Journalist, 5 September 1974, 39(8):1. ‘Should We Join FoL?’. 


The New Zealand Journalist, November 1987: 2. ‘You Can Say No’.


NPA Minutes (18 September 1963). General Committee Meeting.

NPA Minutes (4 March 1964).

NPA Minutes (14 September 1965). Labour Committee Meeting.

NPA Minutes (10 December 1965).

NPA Minutes (1 March 1967).

NPA Minutes (13 September 1967).

NPA Minutes (18 September 1968).

NPA Minutes (17 September 1969).

NPA Minutes (15 September 1971).

NPA Minutes (2 March 1972).


NZJTC (1972) *National Training Course For Newspaper Journalists A Kitset of Lessons and Exercises Prepared by the New Zealand Journalists Training Committee*. Wellington; NZJA.


8. ** Archives and Manuscripts


NZJA Minutes (13 August 1938). Annual Conference. New Zealand Printing, Packaging and Media (Union) Records, 64/1, 1936-1945. Victoria University of Wellington MSS.

NZJA Minutes (7 Nov 1939). Annual Conference. New Zealand Printing, Packaging and Media (Union) Records, 64/1, 1936-1945. Victoria University of Wellington MSS.

NZJA Minutes (7 September 1945). Annual Conference. New Zealand Printing, Packaging and Media (Union) Records, 64/1, 1936-1945. Victoria University of Wellington MSS.

NZJA Minutes (10 September 1947). Annual Conference. New Zealand Printing, Packaging and Media (Union) Records, 64/1, 1936-1945. Victoria University of Wellington MSS.

NZJA Minutes (10 August 1948). Dominion Council Meeting. New Zealand Printing, Packaging and Media (Union) Records, 64/2, 1945-1955. Victoria University of Wellington MSS.

NZJA Minutes (15 September 1948). Annual Conference. New Zealand Printing, Packaging and Media (Union) Records, 64/2, 1945-1955. Victoria University of Wellington MSS.


NZJA Minutes (6-7 October 1950). Annual Conference. New Zealand Printing, Packaging and Media (Union) Records, 64/2, 1945-1955. Victoria University of Wellington MSS.


NZJA Minutes (18 September 1951). Dominion Council Meeting. New Zealand Printing, Packaging and Media (Union) Records, 64/2, 1945-1955. Victoria University of Wellington MSS.


NZJA Minutes (8 December 1953) Dominion Council Meeting. New Zealand Printing, Packaging and Media (Union) Records, 64/2, 1945-1955. Victoria University of Wellington MSS.


NZJA Minutes (23 March 1955). Letter from Professor Logie to the President of the NZJA. New Zealand Printing, Packaging and Media (Union) Records, 64/3, 1955-1962. Victoria University of Wellington MSS.


9. Interviews and Correspondence


Eric Beardsley (28 March 2003) Telephone Interview.

Doug Borman (28 March 2003) Telephone Interview.

Margaret Clark (3 July 2003) Email Correspondence.


George Griffiths (23 March 2003) Postal Interview Reply.

Sarah Hard (12 January 2001) Email Correspondence.

Colin James (16 October 2001) Email Correspondence.

Graeme Jenkins (18 September 2000) Email Correspondence.

Richard Keeble (17 September 2001) Email Correspondence.


Binney Lock (18 March 2003) Telephone Interview.

Binney Lock (2 April 2003) Personal Interview.
Bruce Martin (22 April 2003) Telephone Interview.
Bruce Martin (10 May 2003) Postal Interview Reply.
Don Milne (12 May 2003) Telephone Interview.
Peter Muller (25 April 2003) Postal Interview Reply.
Warren Page (23 March 2000; 7 November 2001) Email Interview Replies.
Peter Scherer (1 May 2003) Telephone Interview.
Keith Stinson (23 April 2003) Postal Interview Reply.
Ian Templeton (27 March 2003) Postal Interview (Reply via Email).
Tony Wilton (28 March 2000) Email Interview Reply.