

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 162 311

CS 204 456

AUTHOR Kielbowicz, Richard B.
TITLE Limits of the Press as an Agent of Reform: Minneapolis, 1900-1905.
PUB DATE Aug 78
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism (61st, Seattle, Washington, August 13-16, 1978); Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 Plus Postage. EC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Change Agents; *City Government; City Officials; Court Cases; *Crime; *Journalism; Law Enforcement; Local History; *Newspapers; Police Community Relationship; Political Issues; Press Opinion; *Social Action

IDENTIFIERS Ames (Albert); *Minnesota (Minneapolis)

ABSTRACT

The limited effectiveness of the press as an agent of reform is considered in this paper in view of the role of the Minneapolis press in the rise and decline of a corrupt city administration from 1900 to 1905. The paper first posits a continuum along which press effects on reform may be pinpointed; it then discusses the muckraking era, which included the period under consideration, and tells of Lincoln Steffens's "The Shame of Minneapolis," a muckraking article about the Minneapolis scandal. The following topics are then discussed: the scandal, which centered on the gathering of graft by Mayor Albert Ames and his associates, using police authority as leverage; the way the three Minneapolis newspapers covered the administration from 1900 through the 1902 grand jury indictments of administration officials and the resignation of Ames; reform attempts by the new administration; and the 1903 indictment and subsequent trials of Ames. It is concluded that even the two newspapers that opposed the Ames administration did not probe to uncover the underlying pattern of corruption, that the papers printed the most revealing stories about the scandal only after the grand jury had unearthed the details, and that the newspapers' prescriptions for reform were confined to the area of the replacement of corrupt personnel, rather than addressing more fundamental changes in government structures. (GW)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO-
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGIN-
ATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

WARREN C. PRICE AWARD

HISTORY

ED162311

LIMITS OF THE PRESS AS AN AGENT OF REFORM:

MINNEAPOLIS, 1900-1905

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Richard B. Kielbowicz

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND
USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

By

Richard B. Kielbowicz
Doctoral Student

School of Journalism and Mass Communication
University of Minnesota

Presented to the History Division, Association for Education in
Journalism Annual Convention, Seattle, Washington, August 1978.

2.
BEST AVAILABLE COPY

Limits of the Press as an Agent of Reform:
Minneapolis, 1900-1905

Causal relationships are nearly impossible to specify with much precision in historical research. Yet journalism historians--indeed most historians--have sometimes incautiously ascribed great influence to the press in bringing about political and social reform. Historians tend to spotlight the most obtrusive incidents of change and consequently overrate the reforming capacity of the press. Generally, reform is conceived narrowly as removing malfactors from office or revising laws on the books. Less tangible change--or the absence of change--in people's awareness and attitudes goes unrecognized, as do situations where press coverage proved ineffectual. The findings of contemporary research on mass communications effects can be applied to refine historical understandings about the impact of the press. Conversely, applying concepts of media effects to historical episodes might also yield dividends for mass communications researchers.

The January 1903 issue of McClure's Magazine featured a piece of muckraking journalism by Lincoln Steffens, "The Shame of Minneapolis," which chronicled the rise and decline of a corrupt municipal administration. Steffens' article both synthesized the uneven coverage of the city newspapers and reported the results of his interviews

with several of the principal figures. Borrowing concepts from the literature of mass communications effects, this study analyzes the role of the press as an agent of reform in Minneapolis, 1900 to 1905.

Method and Hypotheses

Communications theorists generally have conceptualized press effects as touching people's awareness, attitudes and behavior.¹ And political change, broadly speaking, could take the form of removing officials from their positions, changing laws, or reallocating power within the political system. Combining the two modes suggests a continuum along which to pinpoint press effects on reform:

(see figure 1)

A change in awareness is a necessary precondition for the other changes. By reporting the unfolding story of corruption the press probably increased the public's level of knowledge about certain municipal practices. Communications researchers have identified a major influence of the press in altering the public awareness of issues--the agenda-setting function. Simply, this means that the prominence and frequency of display accorded issues in the press translate into a hierarchy of importance for the audience.²

Political scientists also employ the agenda-setting concept, but with a slightly different import. The process by which issues emerge and are redefined, expanded to broader publics, involve manipulation of symbols, and eventually come to the attention of lawmakers and society, has been described as the dynamics of agenda-building by some political scientists. The press, of course, plays a key role in this process.

Figure 1.

Press coverage may have produced changes in:

awareness—

attitudes—

behavior—

government officials—

enforcement of existing laws—

substance of laws—

structure of the system—

But the political scientist's understanding of agenda-building has an important implication for this study: the press is only one of many entities involved in bringing a matter to the attention of the public. It suggests that the role of the press needs to be isolated within the whole agenda-building process preceding political reform.³

Beyond a change in awareness, press coverage of municipal corruption may have altered attitudes toward the politicians involved, political parties, and the government. Tightly-held attitudes are less susceptible to change by the press than loosely-held ones. Attitudes based on self-interest probably are the most resistant to change.⁴

Methodological problems arise when trying to gauge changes in past awareness and attitudes. Short of resurrecting and surveying the dead there is no way to empirically test for such changes. A historian must therefore infer these changes from information in newspapers and other contemporary accounts.

Fortunately, tangible reforms--changes in personnel and political structure--are relatively easy to identify. Discrediting a public official and prompting his removal from office is one type of press induced reform. More drastically, by showing defects in some part of the political or governmental system, the press may have been instrumental in bringing structural reform. City ordinances, election procedures, and authority delegated to officials are areas where fundamental reforms could have been realized.

Assessments of Muckraking and Reform

The period under consideration was part of the muckraking era



of journalism history. General histories of the era have offered widely divergent assessments of the impact of muckraking on reform. Carl N. Degler sees their most enduring contribution as throwing "a flood of light upon the social results of the factory and the city," largely a change in awareness.⁵ Press exposures altered middle class attitudes by introducing "principles of political realism," according to Vernon L. Parrington.⁶ A common, though imprecise, evaluation is that muckraking mobilized public opinion and was responsible for reforming legislation.⁷ Richard Hofstadter offers the cautious opinion that legislative reforms short of "structural alterations in the American social and economic system" resulted from journalistic exposures.⁸

C. C. Reiger, in one of the most thorough books on muckraking, asserts that the journalistic exposés "touched" almost all Americans and that business and government were conducted on a higher plane following the exposures.⁹ Two other studies agree that the works aroused the public and compelled substantial reform legislation.¹⁰

Disappointingly shallow observations have been made by journalism historians, who perhaps more than any body of scholars should attend to the question of press effects on reform. Older journalism history texts ignore muckraking entirely, probably because it was identified chiefly with magazine journalism.¹¹ Alfred M. Lee's 1939 sociological history of the American newspaper only paraphrased Reiger.¹² Frank L. Mott's American Journalism, one of the best texts in the field, does not raise the question of the impact of muckraking.¹³ Edwin Emery acknowledges that the muckraking "magazines performed the service of coordinating and interpreting information about social, economic and political problems for a nationwide

audience," and concludes that they "thus had great impact."¹⁴ What kind of impact, one might ask.

State and local histories have shed little light on the corruption in Minneapolis. A four-volume state history could not find room to acknowledge the existence of Minnesota's most infamous political scandal.¹⁵ A five-volume state history did sketch the outlines of the malfeasance found in Minneapolis.¹⁶ Other accounts note the mayoralty election that brought the corrupt officials to power, but nowhere mention the conduct of their administration.¹⁷

Steffens' "The Shame of Minneapolis" remains the most comprehensive and incisive analysis of this episode. Virtually all the details of the corruption were known by 1903 when the article appeared, but trials of principal figures ran through 1904 and reverberations from the scandal were felt even later. Thus Steffens, though he made some tentative judgments about the efficacy of press coverage in Minneapolis, was not aware of the full ramifications when he wrote the article.¹⁸ The only two studies of Minneapolis' corruption in this period rely heavily on Steffens' work and are marred by other deficiencies.¹⁹

The Minneapolis Press, 1900

Minneapolis in 1900 supported three daily newspapers plus a half-dozen foreign-language and community weeklies.²⁰ The oldest paper in the city, the Minneapolis Tribune, had a slight edge in circulation, with 44,410 copies, over its nearest rival, the Evening Journal, with 43,587. Both outdistanced the short-lived Minneapolis Times, which had a circulation of only 29,636.²¹

The front page of each paper was crowded with international and



6

national news. Regional and state news sometimes made the front page, though it often was relegated to the inside. And on typical days, local news received minor front-page play; most of it appeared on inside news pages. Editorials were placed on a fixed inside page and were dominated by national and state topics, rarely local ones. The articles on municipal corruption, though usually the dominant local news story, competed with other engaging material for the reader's attention.

Nature of the Corruption

The centerpiece of the corruption uncovered in 1902 was the mayor of Minneapolis, Albert Alonzo Ames. As a physician, Ames had endeared himself to the poor by providing medical assistance at nominal or no cost. Members of the Minneapolis underworld received a sympathetic hearing as well as medical treatment from Ames. He even worked as a fireman, attending all fires in a "tall silk hat and a long frock coat."²²

Capitalizing on his public visibility, Ames entered politics. Following three terms as mayor--twice as a Democrat, once as a Republican--Ames lost a hotly contested race for governor.²³ Returning to private practice in 1889, he remained in the public eye as "the Genial Doctor." An exceedingly handsome man, Ames sought fellowship in city bars and in fraternal organizations.²⁴ Not surprisingly, a biographical sketch at the close of the century portrayed Ames as perhaps the most popular citizen of Minneapolis.²⁵

With this checkered background, Ames entered and won the race for mayor of Minneapolis in 1900. Once in office, Ames and his cohorts set about creating a system of graft which eclipsed that of his previous administrations. On inaugural day, January 7, 1901, Ames appointed his

7

brother, Fred, chief of police and dismissed 107 of the 225 policemen. As mayor-elect, Ames had been screening replacements since December and had interviewed all the finalists personally.²⁶ The structure of Minneapolis city government confined the mayor's authority to the police department; heads of other city departments were elected by popular vote or appointed by the city council.

With hand-picked officers in all key police department posts, Ames and his lieutenants devised various ways to gather graft using police authority as leverage. Criminals were invited to Minneapolis to work under the auspices of the police. Saloons, brothels, and gambling houses flourished by paying for police protection. The police even protected burglars at work and they dissuaded disgruntled victims of fixed gambling games from filing complaints.²⁷

Pre-exposure Press Coverage

Two of the Minneapolis newspapers--the Journal and the Times--had opposed Ames' 1900 bid for mayor. The Journal, for example, had supported the entire Republican slate except for Ames.²⁸ The Tribune emerged as the quasiofficial organ of the Ames administration and was favored by the city council with the contract to print the council proceedings.²⁹

Analyzing the election returns, the Journal noted that Ames enjoyed the backing of many business and church leaders. The papers also had some inkling of the corruption. The Journal detected an influx of criminals into Minneapolis even before Ames' inauguration and speculated they may have come expecting protection. The Journal doubted that replacing a large part of the police force would, as the mayor claimed, save money. Furthermore, that paper believed some of the most capable men on the force

had been among those dismissed.³⁰

Coverage of Ames during his first days in office did not reflect too negatively on the conduct of his administration. Policemen who recently had been discharged created a commotion for awhile, but it quickly subsided. Interestingly, a nonpartisan plan was introduced in the legislature to put the police force under a civil service board appointed by the governor. But the reform measure made little headway. The local chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union complained that the liquor ordinances were laxly enforced. Ames affirmed his intention to enforce the ordinances, and made the rounds of city wineroms to see for himself if there were any violations.³¹

By mid-April, 1901, however, the rupture between Ames and the Times and Journal was evident. The Times, in an editorial, agreed with a sermon urging women to "commence a campaign now against the evil government that has fastened its claws upon us." Appealing to businessmen, the Times added that no outside capital would flow into "a town wherein common decency is mocked at by the authorities and forms of vice that would disgust a yellow curr are suffered to thrive under the very eyes of uniformed officialdom."³²

Ames retaliated by cutting the Journal and the Times off from sources of news within the police department. Police records were thenceforth available only to the Tribune. Officers were ordered not to talk to reporters. "The Tribune has treated me fairly. The Times and Journal have not.... If things go much farther, I'll get back at them in a way that they won't like," the mayor said ominously. The Times cryptically replied that the mayor "should thank the newspapers for not printing a great deal of information that has come into their possession since Jan. 7, 1901."³³

9

Through May and June, 1901, the Journal and the Times reported a grand jury investigation of police graft and misfeasance in other city departments. These first stories only scratched the surface, but they did intimate that the mayor was involved, or at least guilty of nonfeasance. When the grand jury indicted 75 saloon keepers and hotel managers for permitting illegal gambling on their premises, and impugned the integrity of the police, Ames, through the Tribune, lashed out: "Busybodies, tattlers and news mongers find through the grand jury system a most excellent vent where by ex parte evidence they can punish their enemies." The Tribune defended Ames by noting at the top of a front-page news story that if it hadn't been for the fines collected from the saloon keepers, "the present grand jury would have been an expensive luxury."³⁴

As the grand jury began winding down its work, the Journal said the municipal court, city council, and the mayor each had the authority to close down the saloons found violating the law. But the Journal was resigned to the fact that such action was unlikely. The grand jury's preliminary report recommended the removal of two of Ames' henchmen--Norman King, chief of detectives, and A.L. Gardener, license inspector. The final report simply noted that Ames' bad appointments were responsible for the mismanaged police department. The Journal, in an editorial, thought the grand jury should have gone further.³⁵

With the grand jury dissolved, the Minneapolis newspapers were left on their own to unearth the story of continuing corruption. They only picked up a few obtrusive instances of police failings, missing the underlying tangle of corruption. For example, the papers in late June featured a story about a delay in serving a warrant while a police officer went to warn the gambler

of his impending arrest. Under the headline, "In Spite of the Police Charles Loomis was Convicted of Running and Operating a Gambling Establishment," the mayor was quoted as saying the officer responsible for the delay in serving the warrant was "an honorable man."³⁶ Articles such as this occasionally cast doubts on the quality of police protection in Minneapolis.

When possible, the Journal linked specific crimes to the mayor's inept police department. A bank of headlines surmounting an article about a burglary read: "Small Danger of Interruption/ Victims Say they Haven't Seen/ a Policeman for Four Months." But not all citizens thought the rampant vice and crime were a "fit subject for newspaper discussion."³⁷

Corruption Laid Bare

In April, 1902, the grand jury for the summer term was empaneled. Hovey C. Clarke was named foreman; he decided to tackle the Ames' gang. The grand jury worked with Assistant Prosecutor Al J. Smith because the chief prosecutor hesitated to take on Ames. Prominent citizens importuned the jurors to drop the investigation.³⁸

The Minneapolis newspapers caught wind of the grand jury's preliminary findings. Even the pro-Ames Tribune believed the forthcoming report might be a "sensation." The Tribune's rivals, especially the Journal, were less restrained in their forecasts: "Corrupt Machine Falling to Pieces/ Police Department Rottenness Under Investigation--Men Who Have Been Involved Will Testify."³⁹

As indictments were announced the Tribune continued its coverage on the inside pages. On May 11, the Tribune reported that there would be many indictments, but did not speculate how far up in the administration

they might reach. Three days later, Mayor Ames announced he would soon retire to begin a lucrative private business. On May 5, the Tribune noted that indictments "against two trusted officials under the mayor (were already drawn up), and that a little more evidence will be taken before another one is drawn that will cause the greatest excitement yet." An adjacent story reported that machine politicians were pleading with the mayor to remain in office. The story avoided implications that the mayor's retirement and the lengthening trail of corruption were related.⁴⁰

When three of the mayor's immediate subordinates, including his brother, the chief of police, were indicted, the Tribune steadfastly maintained that there was no evidence implicating the mayor. But after testimony by one of the gamblers, and the introduction of a ledger showing the mayor's share of the take, the Tribune conceded "there is a state of affairs in the municipal government of Minneapolis that discounts anything Tammany Hall ever dreamed of."⁴¹ Following this revelation, the Tribune accorded the story of corruption a prominence of display equal to that given it by the anti-Ames Journal and Times.

Although three-column, top-of-the-front-page cartoons were standard fare for all three newspapers, none to this point had been devoted to the unraveling local corruption; national politics was by far the most frequently lampooned subject. But with developments now touching the city's highest officers, the cartoonists aimed some barbs at figures caught in the corruption.

Through the first ten days of June, 1902, the three Minneapolis papers printed verbatim accounts of the first major trial flowing from the grand jury's investigations. Irwin B. Gardener, one of Ames' closest



associates, was convicted of accepting bribes from prostitutes in return for police protection. Testifying in the case, Mayor Ames claimed that grand jury foreman Clarke was out to get him.⁴²

Ames' administration crumbled during July, 1902. Detectives and police captains were convicted or fled the city. The Times, in a display of its own detective work, tracked down and returned a reluctant witness. The Tribune, which a few months before had lagged behind the other papers, now was on the offensive, urging prosecutions without delay.⁴³ On the last day of July, Ames submitted his resignation.⁴⁴

The Aftermath

D. Percy Jones, president of the city council, assumed the duties of mayor and faced the task of shoring-up a dissipated and demoralized police force. Coverage of the Minneapolis scandal by distant newspapers peaked during June and July.⁴⁵ A visitor from Massachusetts, in Minneapolis to deliver a speech, arrived in town knowing that it wasn't safe to walk the streets with \$10 in his pocket.⁴⁶ The papers cried for reform in general terms, but offered little advice for the new administration.⁴⁷

Reorganizing the police department and containing vice in Minneapolis was a herculean task. Acting Mayor Jones appointed a church deacon as superintendent of police. Twenty-two policemen resigned or were fired and the ranks of special officers were thinned, leaving most of the force to patrol the streets. The superintendent's annual report recorded the accomplishments realized by enforcing existing ordinances:

The abolition of houses of prostitution... in the Business and residence districts.

The driving from the streets, and in many cases from the city, of the "roomers" who infested the city for several months.

The more strict control of bawdy-houses in the

districts where they have been tolerated, including the rigid exclusion of minors of both sexes, and the prohibition of the sale of intoxicants on the premises.

The abolition of the system of indirectly licensing houses of ill-fame by periodically fining them for the purposes of revenue.

The suppression of public gambling houses.

The elimination of "penny-" and "nickel-in-the-slot" gambling devices from candy and cigar stores, saloons, and other public places.

The revamped police department also was more successful in recovering stolen property than it had been during the Ames' regime.⁴⁸

The new administration's attempts at reform, however, were not met without resistance. Minneapolis breweries, with investments in city saloons, balked at the stringent enforcement of saloon regulations. Landlords, including some prominent in city churches, protested the crackdown on prostitution because it deprived them of rents from brothels. And fear of public wrath did not deter criminals from attempting to strike a bargain with the acting mayor which would have committed them to contain crime in return for permission to operate illegal gambling houses. The mayor resolved to control crime without the assistance of the criminals.⁴⁹

While Mayor Jones grappled with municipal problems, former-Mayor Ames remained far from Minneapolis. He was indicted February 5, 1903, on six counts of extortion, conspiracy, offering bribes and accepting bribes. Having dropped from sight for a while, Ames was discovered in New Hampshire and induced to return to Minneapolis to stand trial. According to Ames, Minnesota millionaires had engineered his downfall by "subsidizing the Minneapolis papers." Arraigned on March 21, Ames had little trouble finding medical colleagues, friends in brewing companies, and gamblers to post his \$21,000 bail. At the trial Ames pleaded innocent by reason of insanity

but was found guilty. However, the state supreme court reversed on a technicality.⁵⁰

The newspapers called for a new trial so that Minneapolis could recover its reputation in the eyes of the nation. A second trial ended with a divided jury. During the third trial Ames admitted for the first time on the stand that he had known of the grafting while mayor; this also ended in a hung jury. By the fourth trial, which also concluded with a divided jury, coverage had shifted to the inside pages. The fifth and final trial, with an identical outcome, was interpreted by the Tribune as "Public Approval of Municipal Graft." Special prosecutor Judge Kerr maintained the jury "action simply represents the sentiment of the 'community'."⁵¹ The goodwill that Ames had cultivated many years earlier stood him in good stead in the face of incontrovertible evidence that he had shared in the graft.

Findings and Conclusions

Minneapolis newspapers certainly did not play a role like that of the New York Times in deposing the Tweed ring, nor like that of the Washington Post in unraveling Watergate. As Will Irwin, an early twentieth century critic of the press explained, newspapers did not ferret out stories that may have prompted reform, but generally waited until a case came "before court or commission, thus becoming news in the conventional sense...."⁵²

Although the Times and Journal exhibited an antipathy for the Ames administration, they did not probe behind fragmentary crime stories to find the underlying pattern of corruption.

At one point, though, Ames credited the Times' anti-administration tirades with prodding the first grand jury to examine possible police graft.⁵³

That investigation, of course, did not adduce sufficient evidence to indict any policemen. The newspapers waited until the second grand jury in 1902 unearthed the most devastating details.

Press reports of grand jury findings doubtlessly increased people's awareness of the extent of municipal corruption. Yet, according to Steffens, the Journal, and the Tribune some people were vaguely aware of the dishonesty even before it was aired in the columns of the press.⁵⁴ Why, then, wasn't there a groundswell of support for reform much earlier? The findings of communications researchers who study agenda-setting suggest a partial answer. Isolated stories buried inside the paper, even though they imputed dishonesty to Ames and his subordinates, might not have translated into a highly salient issue for the readers. This would be compounded by the low credibility, in the estimation of Ames' many partisans, of the anti-Ames Times and Journal.⁵⁵

As the developments began to warrant front-page play, and especially when the cartoonists could reduce the morass of charges to symbols, even those predisposed to believe Ames became concerned about municipal corruption. In the midst of the exposures, public hostility to the police surfaced. Chief of Police Ames detected a "feeling of deep-seated prejudice and hostility in the public mind to the police department of this city generally...."⁵⁶ This was one manifestation of a change in attitudes.

Many people's estimations of Ames resisted change. After three years of newspaper coverage documenting the graft in the police department, some of which clearly reached up into the mayor's office, four juries failed to convict. Even the Journal, perhaps satisfied with having toppled the administration, had largely forgotten Ames by the end of 1902. But the national

publication of Steffens' "Shame of Minneapolis," in January, 1903, spurred the Journal and the authorities to seek Ames' return for prosecution.⁵⁷

The tangible results of the grand jury's digging and the newspapers' coverage were rather limited. To be sure, the discredited officials were removed from office and existing laws enforced. But there were no changes in laws governing "disorderly houses," prostitution, gambling, and police operations; and there only were inconsequential modifications of liquor ordinances.⁵⁸

The newspapers' prescriptions for reform were confined to the suggestion that bad officials be replaced with good ones. The possibility of alternative government structures--for example, a city manager--was never raised in the columns of the city papers. Admittedly public opinion may not have been ripe for basic change,⁵⁹ or after consideration proposals for structural reform might have been dropped, but the fact remains that the press did not take the initiative to suggest that other arrangements were conceivable.⁶⁰ One editorial did report that San Francisco had achieved "good results" in reducing its corruption by electing a "wide-eyed Socialist mayor.... This brought about a pretty complete revolution in the city government, as the mayor seems to control most of the municipal departments."⁶¹ Even this report implied that most imaginable reforms resulted from changes in personnel. This supports the hypothesis that "The press's institutional bias when it acts as a social critic is to expose individual malfactors rather than to attack social arrangements."⁶²

Heightened awareness of corruption seemingly did not alter the public attitude toward the form of city government. The police administration lost public esteem following coverage of the scandal. Ames was regarded

less favorably, though the massive coverage by no means convinced everyone of his culpability. "The Shame of Minneapolis" laid out in the news columns also did not disturb the attitudes toward law enforcement held by many with vested interests (some landlords, brewery interests, saloon keepers, and gamblers). With a new mayor and police administration, laws on the books were enforced more vigorously, but no changes in the statutes were forthcoming.

These findings should caution historians to examine with greater precision the capacity of the press to effect reform. Changes in personnel or in the enforcement of laws do not always reflect massive underlying shifts in people's attitudes. And probably only in exceptional circumstances can press coverage effect the redistribution of power within the political system. This would seem to be particularly true for communities where officials were personally known to their constituents, where substantial interests might have impeded change, and where newspapers had a shortsighted view of possible alternatives. Further studies, perhaps of the other cities "cracked" by Steffens, could flesh out these tentative conclusions.

- Notes

1. Melvin L. DeFleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach, Theories of Mass Communication (New York, 1975), pp. 255-80.
2. For a discussion of the agenda-setting function see Donald L. Shaw and Maxwell E. McCombs, eds., The Emergence of American Political Issues: The Agenda-Setting Function of the Press (St. Paul, Mn., 1977).
3. See Roger W. Cobb and Charles D. Elder, Participation in American Politics: The Dynamics of Agenda-Building (Baltimore, 1972).
4. See Bernard C. Hennessy, Public Opinion (Northscituate, Ma., 1975), pp. 295-308.
5. Out of Our Past, (New York, 1959), p. 364.
6. The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America: 1860-1920 (New York, 1930), p. 407.
7. Henry Steele Commager, The American Mind (New Haven, 1950), p. 76.
8. The Age of Reform (New York, 1955), p. 197.
9. The Era of the Muckrakers (Chapel Hill, 1932), pp. 197, 201.
10. Fred J. Cook, The Muckrakers (Garden City, 1972), p. 179; and Arthur and Lila Weinberg, eds., The Muckrakers (New York, 1964), p. xviii.
11. George H. Payne, History of Journalism in the United States (1920; rpt. Westport, Conn., 1970); James M. Lee, History of American Journalism, 2d ed. (Garden City, 1923); and Willard G. Bleyer, Main Currents in the History of American Journalism (1927; rpt. New York, 1973).
12. The Daily Newspaper in America (New York, 1939).
13. 3rd ed. (New York, 1962), p. 575.
14. The Press and America, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, 1972), p. 401.
15. William W. Folwell, A History of Minnesota (St. Paul, 1930).
16. Theodore Christianson, Minnesota (Chicago, 1935), II, pp. 277-78.
17. See, e.g., Frank R. Holmes, Minnesota in Three Centuries (Mankato, Mn., 1908); and Charles B. Cheney, The Story of Minnesota Politics (Minneapolis, 1947).

18. "The Shame of Minneapolis" was collected in The Shame of the Cities (New York, 1960), originally published in 1904. Steffens made some observations on the effects of exposing the corruption in his Autobiography (New York, 1931). These observations will be incorporated in this study at appropriate points.

19. Robert Johnson, The Shame of Minneapolis, (unpublished paper, School of Journalism, University of Minnesota, 1953), only looks at the coverage of one of the three Minneapolis newspapers, and his conclusions are consequently limited, though he doesn't acknowledge this; and Pat Lodden, "Betrayed City," Hennepin County History, Fall 1976, simply rehashes the highlights of Steffens' findings.

20. Winifred Gregory, ed., American Newspapers, 1821-1936 (New York, 1937).

21. Bradley L. Morison, Sunlight on Your Doorstep: The Minneapolis Tribune's First Hundred Years (Minneapolis, 1966), p. 18.

22. Minneapolis Journal, Nov. 17, 1911.

23. Judge Issac Atwater, ed., History of Minneapolis (New York, 1895), I, pp. 92-94.

24. Harold Zink, City Bosses in the United States (Durham, N.C., 1930), pp. 337-40.

25. Marion D. Shutter and J.S. McLain, Progressive Men of Minnesota (Minneapolis, 1901), pp. 64-65.

26. Journal, Dec., 27, 1900 and Jan. 7, 1901.

27. Steffens, Autobiography, pp. 376-78.

28. Journal, Nov. 3, 1900.

29. 1901 Minneapolis City Council Proceedings (Minneapolis, 1902), p. 300.

30. Journal, Nov. 7, 1900, and Jan. 5, 1901.

31. Ibid., Jan. 15, 18, 25, 26, 1901.

32. Minneapolis Times, April 16, 1901.

33. Journal, May 29, 30, and June 1, 1901.

34. Minneapolis Tribune, May 30, 1901.

35. Journal, May 29, 30, and June 1, 1901.

36. Ibid., June 28, 1901 (emphasis added).

37. Ibid., Jan. 18, April 7, 1902.
38. Steffens, Shame of the Cities, pp. 57-61.
39. Tribune, May 6, 1902; Journal, May 6, 1902.
40. Tribune, May 11, 14, 15, 1902.
41. Ibid., May 24, June 1, 1902.
42. Tribune, Times and Journal, June 1-11, 1902.
43. Journal, July 1; Times, July 2; Tribune, July 3, 1902.
44. Journal, July 31, 1902.
45. E.g., the New York Times ran stories on June 7, 8, 18, 27, 28, 30 and July 10, 12, 16, 1902. These were the only stories in the Times about the Minneapolis scandal. There was no attempt to cover the aftermath of the exposure.
46. Minneapolis Times, July 22, 1902.
47. See, e.g., Tribune, Aug. 5, 1902.
48. "Report of the Superintendent of Police," and "Report of the Pawnbroker Inspector for 1902," Minneapolis Annual Reports for 1902 (Minneapolis, 1903), pp. 478-79, 490.
49. Steffens, Shame of the Cities, pp. 66-67.
50. Journal, Feb. 5, March 13, 14, 21, May 5, 1903 and Jan. 29, 1904.
51. Ibid., May 16, Oct., 18, 31, 1904.
52. Will Irwin, The American Newspaper (Ames, Iowa, 1969), p. 35.
53. Times, May 31, 1901.
54. Steffens, Shame of the Cities, p. 51; Journal, May 31, 1902; and Tribune, June 18, 1902.
55. Some contemporary studies have shown that when the audience detects a communicator's bias it tends to discount the contents of a reasonably accurate and fair but unpalatable report. See, e.g., John P. Robinson, "Public Reaction to Political Protest: Chicago 1968," Public Opinion Quarterly, 34 (Spring 1970), p. 2.
56. Tribune, July 1, 1902; Also, the Times reported that a Fourth of July "crowd seemed to know and feel that the Minneapolis police department lacked a controlling head and took advantage of it to insult the officers who attempted to keep order." Times, July 4, 1902.

57. Johnson, The Shame of Minneapolis, p. 78.
58. Minneapolis City Charter and Ordinances (Minneapolis, 1925), pp. 66-67, 874-77.
59. Jessie McMillan Marcley, The Development of Municipal Government in Minneapolis as Influenced by Public Opinion (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1924), pp. 110-12, indicates that the people probably would not have been receptive to basic changes in city government.
60. As a contrast, Minneapolis newspapers in the 1977 mayoralty election sometimes discussed alternative arrangements for municipal government. See, e.g., Twin Cities Reader, Nov. 4, 1977, p. 7.
61. Tribune, July 9, 1902.
62. Bernard Roshco, Newsmaking (Chicago, 1975), p. 125.