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How the media view public-sector workers: A critical discourse analysis of a 2009 municipal workers' strike in Windsor, Ontario

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HOW THE MEDIA VIEW PUBLIC-SECTOR WORKERS: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE
ANALYSIS OF A 2009 MUNICIPAL WORKERS' STRIKE IN WINDSOR, ONTARIO

by

Travis G. Reitsma

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through Communications & Social Justice
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the Degree of Master of Arts at the
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2012

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A Critical Discourse Analysis of a 2009 Municipal Workers' Strike in Windsor, Ontario

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

Research in the field of media coverage of organized labour has found that there often exist biases in the way in which unions and their workers are presented. With the ever increasing influence of both the media and neoliberal political and economic ideologies, the public image of organized labour has come under attack. This thesis seeks to expose another instance of this bias in the *Windsor Star's* coverage of a 2009 municipal workers' strike in Windsor, Ontario, Canada; a public-sector strike. A detailed critical discourse analysis (CDA) was conducted on 480 texts regarding the strike in 2009. An anti-union bias was found especially throughout the coverage. This bias can be seen to have a detrimental effect on the image of public-sector workers which serves to further discredit them in their struggle against neoliberal power structures which seek to minimize their influence.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father, mother and my grandparents who taught me from a young age to stand up for myself and what I believe in.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The process of writing this thesis came at a very difficult time in my life. Early on in the process, I lost my mother to a brain tumor and just a few short months later, I lost my grandmother to complications from type-1 diabetes. Without the guidance of the Communication, Media & Film department at the University of Windsor, there is simply no way I could have finished this project. Their patience, understanding and friendship were not only helpful, but absolutely necessary in getting my life back on track.

Drs. James Winter and Valerie Scatamburlo-d'Annibale have not only been excellent advisors and terrific teachers, but they have made me a better person. I cannot begin to describe the kindness they have shown me over the years. Departmental secretaries Sharron Wazny and Josette Reaume were always there to field my annoying questions and provide friendship and all my fellow graduate students kept me motivated and inspired. Thank you.

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I. INTRODUCTION

It is no secret that the corporate mainstream media in North America tend to report in heavily biased ways against the activities of organized labour. Aside from casual observation, many academics have also observed this trend. Puette (1992) writes that the media's negative image of labour has been prevalent since its early inception, however it has been more damaging in the last few decades, “when the impact and influence of the media have grown to exceed practically any other source of public opinion” (p. 3). This has increasingly become the case since Puette’s writing with the advent of the internet and the continuing emergence of the media-saturated environment.

In the section of his book, *Inventing Reality: Politics and the Mass Media* entitled ‘Giving Labor the Business’, Parenti (1993, pp. 76-88) illustrates how the media overtly aid in the oppression of the working class. “As compared to upper-income persons [working class people] are more apt to be victimized as employees, taxpayers, and consumers, and more apt to be slighted and negatively represented in the media” (p. 76). In terms of columns and editorial pieces, this anti-labour bias is often much more deliberate and obvious. The motives of editors and publishers of newspapers are not difficult to understand. As Puette (1992) explains:

Local publishers and their editors are themselves employers dealing with their own workers—often unionized—in the less than happy circumstances that surround the process of collective bargaining. It is no surprise, then, that they should approach labor relations stories from a management perspective. And when these same publishers, as is often the case, are social companions with the very employers in their community likely to be embroiled in labor disputes, class loyalties can be expected to prevail. (p. 60)

It would seem, then, that the reaction of the press to labour activity is less an isolated incident focusing on local issues than it is a pre-determined formula executed repeatedly throughout the mainstream media.

The 2009 municipal workers' strike in the industrial city of Windsor, Ontario by CUPE locals 543 and 82 was one of the more polarizing public events in the city's history. From April to July of 2009, the workers were embroiled in an increasingly bitter dispute with the Corporation of the City of Windsor over, among other things, the continuation of benefits for new hires. To the casual observer, the local press coverage in Windsor's only daily newspaper the *Windsor Star* seemed to be subtly, if not overtly, anti-labour. The purpose of this study will be to analyze that coverage and see if the research bears similar results. An in-depth critical discourse analysis will be applied taking into account the political economy of the news media to see if this anti-labour bias was real or if it was merely perception.

Increasingly, with the recent economic downturn, workers' rights world-wide have been under assault. The strike which this thesis will address fits into an overall pattern of neoliberal oppression of the working class in North America. Recently, it seems, there has been a more aggressive attack on public sector workers specifically. The culmination of this occurred last year in Wisconsin when the state's Republican governor sought to repeal the right of public sector workers to collectively bargain (Smathers, 2011). The workers, led by their unions, called a general strike and occupied the Wisconsin state congress for a number of days. The protests led to a recall election in August 2011, but the deeply divided state solved very little with a nearly 50-50 vote split

that saw the Republicans retain power in the state's legislature (Kroll, 2011), meaning more strife can be expected in the future.

In Canada, Canada Post recently locked-out its employees, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), after weeks of rolling strikes by the union. The government later legislated the union back to work. In these cases and countless others, the message is clear: In order to fix the ravaged economy, public-sector workers must concede to appease state, provincial, and federal governments and their budgets, or be made to suffer the consequences.

Given its relatively small size and insulated nature, analysis of the 2009 municipal workers' strike in Windsor can give some insight into the role of the media in the overall oppression of the working class.

This thesis will investigate whether or not the *Windsor Star's* coverage of the strike was biased against CUPE members and organized labour as a whole. Casual observation shows this to be true, but it is my hypothesis that a more in-depth and nuanced analysis will support this and perhaps allow for more insight. Previous research illustrates how the mainstream corporate media help foster an environment of mistrust surrounding unions and other forms of organized labour.

Before delving into my thesis directly, I will delineate a theoretical foundation rooted in the traditions of critical theory and the political economy of communication. Then I will outline some of the general research of union coverage of labour activity by scholars such as Parenti (1993), Winter (2007), Puette (1992), and others. Finally, I will go over my chosen methodology of critical discourse analysis.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis is situated within the tradition of critical theory—broadly construed. Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) assert that “critical researchers often regard their work as a first step toward forms of political action that can redress the injustices found in the field site or constructed in the very act of research itself” (p. 305). Critical theorists diverge in many ways from more traditional methods of research; the most important distinction centers on the active nature of critical research. They also rely on theories that are “normative in their statement of preferred values and that are activist in their commitment to social change” (Miller, 2005). For the purposes of my research, these distinctions are important as my work is concerned with the potential for social change. Moreover, within the broad parameters of critical theory/research, my thesis will draw extensively from the political economy of communication.

Political Economy

The political economy of communication suggests that large media companies will share many of the same interests as other large corporations, and therefore the ‘elite class’ of society. As Chomsky (2002) notes, “there is a very noticeable split between elite and popular opinion, and the media consistently reflect *elite* opinion” (p. 19). Given that the labour movement is seen by big business as costly in terms of their bottom line, and the elite are generally in favour of unfettered capitalism free of interference from outside sources such as government regulation or organized labour, it is no surprise that the elite, and therefore, media opinion are in lockstep and generally support the notion of a labour movement with as little power and influence as possible.

Without an understanding of how the political and economic structures in our society affect the media, it is impossible to gauge the power they hold over public opinion. As Garnham (1990) argues, political economy “is always concerned with analyzing a structure of social relations and of social power. But it is particularly concerned to analyze the peculiarities of that system of social power called capitalism” (p. 7).

Mosco (1996) says that the political economy of communication is a very complex realm of study and that it has many wide-ranging perspectives. He defines political economy as “the social relations, particularly the power relations that mutually constitute the production, distribution and consumption of resources.” Mosco also claims that political economy centers on a “specific set of social relations” that is concerned with powerful entities’ ability to control populations and processes, “even in the face of resistance” (p. 25). Mosco delineates three main points of entry to the study of the political economy of communication; *commodification*, *spatialization*, and *structuration*. These entry points are meant to provide a focus “for thinking about characteristic social practices” but they do not provide “the essential definition that captures the totality of the field” (p. 10).

Commodification refers to the process of changing use values into exchange values and is an important aspect of the study of communications. Not only are physical media items such as newspapers or films turned into commodities, but so too are audiences for these media goods; as Mosco notes, echoing research by Smythe (1994; 1957), Garnham (2000) and others, “the audience is the primary commodity of the mass media” (Mosco, 1996, p. 148). Smythe notes in much of his work that the mass media, through the companies that own them, are in the business of producing audiences to sell

to advertisers. Large media do this to facilitate paying for the inexorably high cost of production, as I will discuss later in this section. This notion of media audience as commodity allows me to deconstruct the relationship between media companies and advertisers that answer to client corporations which might have a vested interest in a subdued and powerless labour movement.

Spatialization, when used with the political economy of communication, refers to the ability of modern day media to transcend barriers of space and time and is addressed chiefly in terms of “the institutional extension of corporate power in the communications industry” (p. 175). Like commodification, this also has a double meaning. It can refer to the ease with which space and time are eliminated as barriers to communication by new technologies; and it also refers to the elimination of space by corporate media concentration and ownership convergence. Over the past few decades, ownership of the mainstream media has become increasingly concentrated into the hands of fewer and fewer large corporate conglomerates. This concentration “permits companies to better control the production, distribution, and exchange of communication, and also limits competition and therefore the diversity of information and entertainment available in society” (2009, p. 158), not to mention an increase in profits.

Herman and Chomsky (2002) detail the consequences of this spatial convergence of media ownership in the first filter of their Propaganda Model which focuses on the “size, ownership, and profitability of the mass media” (p. 3). They claim that the integration of the media into the marketplace has led to a loosening of the regulations on media corporations and this has created an environment where profit trumps all other motives. Additionally they claim that this deregulated environment has increased the

ability of large media firms to merge; this “has forced the managements of the media giants to incur greater debt [in corporate mergers] and to focus ever more aggressively and unequivocally on profitability” (p. 8).

Spatialization as it relates to corporate convergence of the mass media also dictates that large media conglomerates will operate across many differing areas of media, communication and information. Conglomerates such as Time Warner, Bertelsman, News Corporation, Walt Disney, Sony, Google, Microsoft, General Electric, and Viacom, among others in the U.S., and like Bell Globemedia, Rogers Communications, and Postmedia, Inc. in Canada all have vast holdings across all forms of mass communication. As Mosco notes, these large media firms “integrate vertically by securing control over production, distribution, and exhibition; horizontally across a range of media products, including hardware and software; and globally by taking advantage of an international division of labor” (Mosco, 2009, pp. 161-2). This division of labour makes possible the “flexible and cost-effective use of labor, capital, research, and development” (p. 162).

Mosco’s final entry point for the study of political economy of communication, structuration, refers to the structure of power in relation to class, race, gender and social movements (Mosco, 1996, pp. 212-245). It helps define how the economic ideals of neoliberalism saturate the media landscape in order to support a dominant ideology; namely how corporate interests and hegemonic structures intersect with social class through media discourses.

Central to this idea is the concept of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is an economic and ideological concept that finds itself at the centre of many biases within the

mainstream media. Harvey (2005) observes that neoliberalism “proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (p. 2). Asquith (2007) suggests that “the neo-classical economic tenets of private property and self-interest underlie neoliberalism and an uninhibited ‘free market’ is worshipped” (p. 26). This point is furthered by Lebowitz (2004) who says neoliberalism “is simply neoclassical economics enforced by finance capital and imperialist power” (p. 3).

Neoliberalism, then, can be seen as an ideology which sets at its core the minimization of social programs for the poor and working class coupled with the slashing of wages for workers. It is an ideology that favours the elite and ruling class as it is set up in such a way as to move the distribution of wealth further up the economic ladder. As Roy (2003) observes:

Neoliberal capitalism isn't just about the accumulation of capital (for some). It's also about the accumulation of power (for some) and the accumulation of freedom (for some). Conversely, for the rest of the world, the people who are excluded from neoliberalism's governing body, it's about the *erosion* of capital, the *erosion* of power, the *erosion* of freedom. (p. 321)

To understand how neoliberalism directly affects the working class today, it is important to understand the dominant ideology that came before it. Determined to stave off a second economic depression coming out of World War II, policymakers in the U.S. and Britain (among others in developed Western nations) sought to come to a compromise between communist economics and laissez-faire capitalism. The term ‘embedded liberalism’ was coined by political scientist John Ruggie (1982) to describe that compromise. He noted that “the task of postwar institutional reconstruction...was to

maneuver between these two extremes and to devise a framework which would safeguard and even aid the quest for domestic stability without, at the same time, triggering the mutually destructive external consequences that had plagued the interwar period” (p. 393).

According to Harvey (2005), the thinking at the time can be most accurately summed up in a seminal text by two influential social scientists, Robert Dahl and Charles Lindblom in which they argue that both capitalism and communism had failed in their most extreme forms and that the “only way ahead was to construct the right blend of state, market, and democratic institutions to guarantee peace, inclusion, well-being, and stability” (p. 10). This hybrid system would allow for capital gains similar to those achieved in laissez-faire capitalism, but at the same time, protections would be put into place by the state to ensure inclusionary growth for as many people as possible. Under embedded liberalism, there was a worldwide acceptance that “the state should focus on full employment, economic growth, and the welfare of its citizens and that state power should be freely deployed, alongside of or, if necessary, intervening in or even substituting for market processes to achieve these ends” (p. 10).

Embedded liberalism led to sustained economic growth through most of the 1950s and 1960s but began to show signs of strain under that growth by the late ‘60s and early ‘70s. The ‘70s were marked by an increase in capital accumulation along with inflation and unemployment which led to the development of new theories by policy makers in the West (Harvey, 2005). A debate formed around those who advocated for “social democracy and central planning” and those who were “concerned with liberating corporate and business power and re-establishing market freedoms” (p. 13).

The election of Ronald Reagan in the U.S. and Margaret Thatcher in the U.K. in the early 1980s signaled a victory for the latter group and established neoliberalism as the dominant political and economic ideology. Canada followed suit with the election of Brian Mulroney in 1984. All three believed in the main tenets of neoliberalism from a political standpoint, which “centered on the notion that all governments should liberalize, privatize [and] deregulate” (Wade, 2008). Implementing this notion of neoliberalism meant crushing rollbacks for labour including wage decreases and more unemployment and forced union busting to lower the cost that the working class was supposedly leveling on big business.

The erosion of embedded liberalism and the steady growth of its predecessor have led to an across-the-board assault on workers and their rights. As Kumar (2007) observes, the key issues raised by workers such as “part-time employment, stagnant wages, subcontracting, speedups, job safety and health protection, and the pension grab...are the product of a global corporate strategy, adopted...by numerous corporations around the world, and workers nearly everywhere have felt the effects” (p. xi). Kumar calls this strategy corporate globalization which he says is the vehicle by which the neoliberal ideology is driven home.

The tenets of neoliberalism apply directly to any study of mainstream media bias as any content found in the media is either directly or indirectly influenced by the opinion of ownership.

Drawing on the work of Giddens (1984), Mosco argues that structures in society can be viewed as a duality. This means that structure “both constitutes action and is reproduced by it” (Mosco, 2009, p. 186). In other words human agency cannot take place

outside of the structures in which it operates. The mass media operate within the structure of the elite class, given their ownership and commercial size. The non-elite structures of society such as the working class, women, and visible minorities tend to be marginalized and/or underrepresented within the mainstream media.

Another important perspective on the political economy of communication is derived from McChesney (2004) who says there are two main dimensions of the field. One dimension of for McChesney “looks specifically at how ownership and other support mechanisms...influence media behaviour and content” (2004, p. 43). This dimension is concerned with evaluating “how market structures, advertising support, labor relations, profit motivation, technologies, and government policies [shape] media industries, journalistic practices, occupational sociology, and the nature and content of the news and entertainment” (2007, p. 79).

The second dimension “examines how media and communication systems and content reinforce, challenge, or influence existing class and social relations” (p. 42). In other words, a central question should be, “[Do] the media...serve as a progressive force to draw the masses into political debate as informed and effective participants, or [does] the media system as a whole tend to reinforce elite rule and inegalitarian social relations?” (2007, p. 77).

McChesney has also done a great deal of work on how political economy affects professional journalism (2003), which is of particular value to this thesis. He argues that political economy can explain the “deep-seated biases that are built into the professional code that journalists follow” (p. 302). He argues that there are three major biases that illustrate this point. First is the reliance on official sources as the basis of news.

McChesney argues that this bias is built into the code of professional journalism “to remove the controversy connected with the selection [and interpretation] of stories” (McChesney, 2003, pp.302-3). Reliance on these sources provides a useful scapegoat if their story is challenged by readers, allowing them to blame factual errors on ‘the experts’ because in the paper’s eyes, they are merely reporting on what their sources say. This bias also “gives those in political office (and to a lesser extent, business) considerable power to set the news agenda by what they speak about and, just as important, what they keep quiet about” (p. 303).

In the third filter of their Propaganda Model, Herman and Chomsky also deal with the reliance on official sources to dictate news content:

The mass media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest. The media need a steady, reliable flow of the raw materials of news. They have daily news demands and imperative news schedules that they must meet. They cannot afford to have reporters and cameras at all places where important stories may break. Economics dictates that they concentrate their resources where significant news often occurs, where important rumors and leaks abound, and where regular press conferences are held (Herman & Chomsky, 2002, pp. 18-19).

Official sources, such as those from governments and corporations, also have the added perk of being recognizable and therefore are perceived as credible, which in turn helps the media appear to be accurately reporting events and saves them from finding additional sources for their stories. This creates an obvious problem in producing news content that is critical of government or of corporations as many important viewpoints not seen as ‘credible’ will be excluded from the scope of the story.

The second bias for McChesney is that professional journalism altogether avoids proper contextualization. Professional standards dictate that providing “meaningful context and background for stories...will tend to commit the journalist to a definite

position and enmesh the journalist (and medium) in the controversy professionalism is determined to avoid” (McChesney, 2003, p. 304). The journalist may only take a controversial side when that stance reflects the worldview of the media outlet’s management or ownership. The problem arises when the reader inevitably fails to fully understand the issue, or merely understands the issue through the discourse being offered by the media.

Herman and Chomsky (2002), in the discussion of their fourth filter, detail another aspect of this bias which they refer to as ‘flak’ or the “negative responses to a media statement or program” (p. 26). If journalists, as McChesney contends, provide context that enmeshes them in controversy then they may be subjected to this negative backlash. “If flak is produced on a large scale, or by individuals or groups with substantial resources, it can be both uncomfortable and costly to the media” (Herman & Chomsky, 2002, p. 26). Flak is generally produced by individuals or groups with a large amount of power and influence, such as government representatives, large corporate advertisers, or even the media firm’s own ownership. This constant threat provides a significant deterrent for journalists and editorial staff who may produce content that commits the paper or news program to the wrong side of a controversial argument.

Finally, McChesney argues that professional journalism is far from neutral in that it tends to subtly and sometimes overtly represent “values conducive to the commercial aims of the owners and advertisers as well as the political aims of the owning class” (McChesney, 2003, p. 305). Again, this notion is further articulated within Herman and Chomsky’s first filter. They assert that large media conglomerates are “controlled by very wealthy people or by managers who are subject to sharp constraints by owners and other

market-profit-oriented forces; and they are closely interlocked, and have important common interests, with other major corporations, banks, and government” (Herman & Chomsky, 2002, p. 14).

The political economic approach to communication here derived largely from the work of McChesney, Mosco, and Herman & Chomsky provides insights necessary to explore the nature of the *Windsor Star*’s coverage of the 2009 city workers’ strike. Using Mosco’s three entry points to the study of political economy of communication—*commodification, spatialization* and *structuration*—will allow me to look past my own observations and ask why the *Star* would cover the strike in a certain way. Special attention must be paid to the commoditized nature of modern mainstream media, the hyper-concentration of modern media corporations, and how structures of power work to legitimize and prioritize certain messages over others.

The following section will situate this thesis within the established literature concerning the media’s coverage of labour.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I will situate myself, briefly, within the existing literature on the media coverage of labour activity generally. The work of scholars such as Parenti (1993), Winter (2007), Puette (1992), and Steuter (1999) will be central to this section as they all detail the systematic bias against labour activities in the mainstream media. Further, I will refer to smaller studies of individual strikes such as those offered in an analysis of the media pre-framing of a 1996 public service strike in Ontario (Knight, 2001), and another of the mainstream media coverage of the 1997 Ontario teachers' strike (Greenberg, 2004).

Puette has conducted a thorough examination of media treatment of labour in his book *Through Jaundiced Eyes: How the Media View Organized Labor* (1992). Not only does Puette suggest that the mainstream media have a bias against labour in print and television news coverage, but also (and perhaps equally so) in movies, television dramas, and cartoons. Like Parenti (1993), Puette suggests that the public views organized labour as a mechanism set up to strike as much as possible contending that the vast majority of survey respondents “estimated a much higher annual average of strike activity than the 2 percent or less that occurs in an average year” (p. 6). This negative public perception, for Puette, is rooted in media coverage, suggesting that “these responses appear to reflect the current image of labor unions common to the general public as communicated through the popular media” (p. 6). Parenti strengthens the point by suggesting that despite a constant struggle between labour and capital that tilts toward management, workers are surprisingly unwilling to strike; they “do not wish to endure the hardships that come with

the loss of income and the possible loss of employment. Usually the strike is their weapon of last resort” (Parenti, 1993, p. 81).

One starting point for the explanation of anti-labour bias in the media is the lack of labour-centric coverage in the mainstream news. As Winter (2007) notes, “labour reporters have disappeared, even in labour towns such as Windsor Ontario. While business sections have expanded...labour no longer warrants a single reporter” (pp. 32-33). Puette observes the same trend and concludes that labour news “should be covered by trained labor reporters who are committed to the subject, not by staff writers who have only a general understanding ...of labor relations” (1992, p. 135).

National newspapers in Canada, such as the *Globe and Mail* have also slashed labour coverage, reassigning their one remaining labour beat reporter in 1989 (Winter, 2007). Today, the *Globe* employs 13 regular business *columnists* and many more business reporters. Things are similar at the *Windsor Star* where there are no labour reporters on staff.¹

Winter observes that a test for journalistic objectivity in regards to labour is the coverage given to strikes or lockouts at newspapers themselves. This is because these “case studies show how well the newspaper can put aside biases and report objectively” (p. 33). He finds by looking at both the *Calgary Herald* strike in 1999-2000 and the five-and-a-half-year-long strike by the *Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* employees that ended in 2000 that management’s perspective is predominant; “Columnists write, defending their decision to cross picket lines, while the other side isn’t seen or heard” (p. 33).

¹ One recently retired reporter did often report on labour issues from the perspective of workers, but was still classified as a “business” reporter by the paper.

Another important study on the media's coverage of labour was conducted by Steuter (1999) who examined how daily newspapers in New Brunswick covered the Irving Oil Refinery strike from 1994-1996. The Irving Group has monopoly ownership of the newspaper industry in New Brunswick so this case study is a clear example of how ownership influences the content of the news. Steuter found that the coverage revealed a "now-familiar pattern of labour news that typically shows demanding, potentially violent workers causing delays and harassing the public in a selfish attempt to increase wages" (p. 640).

Other studies have come to very similar conclusions including a study of the news coverage of the 1997 Ontario teachers' strike, where it was found that "the coverage portrayed the teachers' action as an affront to the law and socially acceptable standards of political action, as well as the main cause for considerable harm and inconvenience to the public and business community" (Greenberg, 2004, p. 366). Other public sector strikes have also been studied and have yielded similar results (Gunster, 2008; Knight, 2001).

The labour actions of teachers and other public sector workers bear particular importance to my research as the 2009 municipal strike in Windsor also occurred in the public sector. Unlike strikes that take place under the auspices of private companies, wages and benefits for workers in the public sector are provided indirectly by taxpayer dollars. This means that the government assumes the role of employer and this implies that they must be accountable to the public. Because "governments cannot invoke the privacy rights of private property as a way to justify evading or rationing media access," the strike becomes not just a struggle between employee and employer, but a political event (Knight, 2001, p. 76). This means that public opinion of the dispute has far more

weight in a public sector strike than in the private sector; mainstream media, in support of neoliberal ideologies will most often use this to their advantage when discrediting the activities of organized labour in the public sector.

Puette contends that “the treatment of labor in the press, and local newspapers in particular, has been and continues to be negative. The image of labor projected in the press...is one of corruption, greed, self-interest, and power” (1992, p. 59). He further analyses two separate labour disputes and their handling in the media and comes to similar conclusions. First, he describes the Hawaiian newspaper coverage of a labour dispute between a Carpenters’ union and a Maui construction contractor in the 1980s and concluded that the coverage was biased against the union (p. 115). Next, he detailed the coverage of the Pittston mine workers’ strike in 1989-1990 and found similar instances of bias observing that “coverage of the Pittston strike suggests a most unwholesome class prejudice underpinning the prevailing anti-union attitudes” (p. 135).

Parenti (1993) says that the media perpetually ignore how strikes are “part of the larger class struggle between labor and capital” and that they regularly portray labour struggles as being devoid of concrete origin (pp. 84-85). In a chapter dealing with media coverage of labour, Parenti identifies trends toward a neoliberal, anti-labour bias in the mainstream news and outlines seven “generalizations” about the media’s treatment of labour’s struggles (pp. 84-86). The first generalization deals with the way in which the media portray collective bargaining. Labour is said to be “unwilling to negotiate in good faith, even when it might be management who refuses all compromises and forces a strike” (p. 85). This generalization gives the reader the impression that unions are always the cause of strikes and are the principle agents of unrest.

The second generalization, according to Parenti, involves selective reporting on a company's "offer" to workers. He suggests that the press will publicize "those portions...that might reflect most favorably on management...while making no mention of...takebacks...that may actually be the central issues of the strike" (p. 85). This continual downplaying of takebacks forced upon employees makes unions and workers within them appear "irrational and greedy, [and] self-indulgent to the point of being self-destructive" (p. 85).

Parenti's third generalization details the hypocritical notion put forth by the media's insistence that workers are too highly paid and enjoy lavish benefits without mentioning that those higher up the ladder enjoy the perks that go along with their elevated position (p. 85). When adjusting this generalization to a strike involving workers employed in the public sector, the connection between the elite corporate class and government officials must be made. As Winter (2007) observes, "our 'western-style democracies' are anything but. What we have, in fact, more closely approximates an oligarchy or plutocracy (rule by the few and by the rich, respectively) rather than a democracy" (pp. 208-209). Although this is often less the case on a municipal level, Windsor still relies on substantial funding from provincial and federal government bodies which certainly fall under this distinction. It is still true most of the time that individuals at the municipal level of government are still in much higher income brackets than the average citizen.

Parenti's fourth generalization observes that the focus of the media is less on issues causing the strike, and more on issues affected by it. The impact of the strike on the local or even the national economy is stressed along with the impact on individuals

who may be suffering from a lack of service the workers are meant to provide; while the reasons for the strike itself are omitted or downplayed (Parenti, 1993, p. 85).

The fifth generalization for Parenti is related to the fourth. Although the impact of the strike is brought forward, the effect the strike may be having on the workers is also downplayed or omitted. While the damage the strike may cause for the economy is stressed, “nothing is said about the damage to *workers*’ interests if they give up the strike and accept management’s terms” (p. 85).

The sixth generalization acknowledges that the media downplay or omit instances of worker selflessness or solidarity with other workers. Although this is a staple of most (if not all) labour organizations, it is seldom reported on, especially during times of labour unrest (Parenti, 1993, p. 85). As Parenti observes, by “ignoring the existence of worker solidarity and mutual assistance within and between occupations, the press denies the class dimension of the strike and underplays the support strikers have among other sectors of the public” (Parenti, 1993, p. 85).

Parenti’s final generalization relates to the role of governments in strikes. They are seen as neutral arbiters safeguarding the “national interest” and most often want to see the strike conclude as quickly as possible (pp. 85-86). In the case of the 2009 municipal strike in Windsor, the government (or at least the local branch of it) was the employer. As Parenti notes, the government will often hire security forces to act as strikebreakers to intimidate the workers on the picket lines (p. 86). This is precisely what happened in the strike my study is centered on.

These seven generalizations provide me with a starting point in the formation of themes for my own research. Many of the patterns exhibited in Parenti’s work are

obvious to even the casual observer of the *Windsor Star*'s coverage of the municipal strike.

The pioneering work of scholars such as Cirino (1971), Puette (1992) and Parenti (1993) help establish a foundation with which to work from for my own research. Individual studies such as those found in the work of Kumar (2005), Greenberg (2004), Steuter (1999) and others add to that foundation and also provide me with a framework for my own research and give me clues as to what I may find in my study. The overwhelming majority of research on the subject of media coverage of labour finds several deep-rooted biases in the way in which workers are presented both on television and in print news.

It is my hope that this thesis can further aid in the development of this field of research so as to better understand why the mainstream media react the way they do towards organized labour and what can be done to remedy the situation. In the following section, I will detail my chosen methodology: critical discourse analysis.

IV. METHODOLOGY: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

As Phillips and Hardy (2002) explain, the standardized methods in more foundational approaches, especially in the hard sciences, do not typically apply to CDA. “To be too systematic, too mechanical, undermines the very basis of discourse analysis...inducing the reification of concepts and objects that it seeks to avoid” (p. 74). Creativity within the bounds of CDA is encouraged and is one of the method’s more attractive qualities, but there are some common steps and concepts that can be applied and that will be employed in my own work. Huckin (2000) articulates them most succinctly.

Huckin begins by suggesting that the text should be read in two different ways. First, the researcher should read the text as a casual observer in an uncritical manner. Next, the researcher should look at the text more critically. “This involves revisiting the text at different levels, raising questions about it, imagining how it could have been constructed differently, mentally comparing it to related texts, etc.” (p. 4). For my work, this can be done by imagining how an overtly, or perhaps subtly, anti-union article in the *Windsor Star* might have been written if a more neutral or even pro-union stance were taken by the writer. As previously noted in my discussion of McChesney’s work on professional journalism (2003), journalists and editors often hide behind the use of official sources when accused of taking a biased or slanted position. Visualizing ways in which the article could have been written differently or perhaps comparing it to a similar article with a different stance allows me to debunk that myth. Huckin argues that this second, more critical reading should be approached in three ways: reading the text as a whole, reading sentence-by-sentence, and reading word-by-word.

Reading the text as a whole involves analyzing certain features such as the text's genre. For example, is the text an advertisement, news report, editorial, government document, or something else? Establishing the genre of a given text allows the researcher to "see why certain kinds of statements appear in the text and how they might serve the purposes of the text-producer, as encoded in that genre" (Huckin, 2000, p. 5). For example, all of the texts being analyzed for my study fall under the genre of 'newspaper article' and further into four sub-genres, 'news report,' 'opinion column,' 'editorial,' and 'letter to the editor.' Keeping in mind each of these sub-genres allows me to deconstruct them with the appropriate lens. Obviously, I would approach a news report differently than I would approach an opinion column. For example, news reports reputedly are known for their seemingly objective language, but as Huckin notes, "some reporters will insert an occasional loaded word to slant the report" (p. 5). Paying attention to genre allows me to keep in mind the differences in the intention of each article.

Additionally, reading the text as a whole allows the researcher to pay special attention to how a text is framed. "Framing refers to how the content of a text is presented, [and] what sort of perspective (angle, slant) the writer is taking" (p. 5). For instance, in an opinion column, how is the columnist framing the argument? Is it strictly anti/pro-union? Is she or he favouring one group over another? The answers to these questions are important for me in establishing just how much of a bias (if any) exists in the articles and how much balance the paper has as a whole.

Foregrounding and backgrounding are also of importance in my study. News reports are generally written in a style known as the 'inverted pyramid,' emphasizing the points near the beginning of a news article over the points at or near the end. This is done

based on the time and reading habits of the casual reader and allows editors to easily cut from stories for space considerations. This is the chief reason why news reports are generally not written in narrative or chronological form (Winter, 2007). This automatically exposes the biases of reporters and editors since they are the gatekeepers who decide what is more important (foregrounded) or less important (omitted entirely or backgrounded) (Huckin, 2000). In my study of the CUPE labour action, it will be important for me to know why certain sources are generally cited at the beginning of a story, why certain ones appear at the end, and why some fail to appear altogether. I can also use this element of CDA to analyze whether or not the overarching context of the strike and its issues are foregrounded, backgrounded or omitted.

Presupposition is another important aspect involved in CDA. Does the reporter or columnist take certain ideas for granted? A popular presupposition in media discourses about labour is that unions are inherently violent (Parenti, 1993; Puette, 1992; Winter, 2007). These and other presuppositions will be an important aspect of my study.

Next, Huckin (2000) argues that the text should be read on a sentence-by-sentence level. What is the topic of each sentence? Who are the agents in each? Are agents of a certain kind (e.g. union workers, management, citizens, etc) acting in certain, perhaps patterned ways? When a reporter topicalizes a sentence, she or he is creating a perspective, or slant, “that influences the reader’s perception” (p. 6). This is foregrounding on a sentence level. Huckin argues that there are agent-patient relations in sentences which establish who “is doing what to whom? Many texts will describe things so that certain persons are consistently depicted as initiating actions...while others are depicted as being...recipients of those actions” (pp. 6-7).

Similar to the whole text reading, a sentence-by-sentence reading also reveals agent- deletion or omission. This “occurs most often through nominalization and the use of passive verbs” (Huckin, 2000, p. 7). For example, Parenti (1993) argues that strike coverage in the media is presented in such a way that focuses on the strike’s impact on the public. This effectively omits the impact strikes have on workers and thus de-emphasizes the individual worker’s importance.

Presupposition also occurs on the sentence level. Again drawing on an example from Parenti’s work, the media often presuppose that the costs of labour are too high. Possible cuts to other areas, such as benefits or wages to *management* are never mentioned as possible solutions to the problem. This also presupposes that the wages and benefits of workers are the root cause of economic problems.

Huckin (2000) continues by suggesting that the researcher should take into account insinuations on a sentence level. Insinuations are far more opaque and difficult to root out in a given text because they “typically have double meanings, and if challenged, the writer can claim innocence, pretending to have only one of these two meanings in mind.” Huckin argues that this gives insinuations a particularly powerful element in texts (p. 7).

Finally, Huckin (2000) argues that the text should be read on a word-by-word level. This frame of analysis roots out special meanings of singular words within a text. Connotations are especially powerful in this sense. Reporters in the media often describe local labour leaders as ‘labour bosses’ which has an overtly negative connotation (Parenti, 1993; Winter, 2007). The word ‘boss’ implies that they lord over the rest of the union in an authoritarian manner, despite the fact that leaders in unions are elected by the

entire local in a democratic vote. Loaded words such as this litter the landscape of labour reporting (Kumar, 2005; Gunster, 2008; Picard & Lacy, 1997; Steuter, 1999; Winter, Reitsma, & Wilson, 2010).

Using Huckin's formulation and breakdown of critical discourse analysis, I can go beyond traditional discourse analysis and not only come to conclusions about the *Windsor Star's* coverage of the 2009 municipal strike in Windsor, but ask why the events may have been covered that way. Using CDA tenets such as presupposition, framing, insinuation, foregrounding, backgrounding, and omitting, I can imagine how the coverage could have been presented differently and I can begin to imagine how media discourses can be changed in order to more fairly represent labour and the working class.

V. ANALYSIS

The data pool for this thesis has been secondarily obtained from the data analyzed for a conference paper, limited to five pages, which was presented at the International Symposium on Social Communication in Santiago, Cuba in January 2011. Results for this pool were obtained by searching the words “CUPE” and “strike” in the *Windsor Star* database found on the University of Windsor’s library website. The search was limited to the calendar year 2009 and turned up 480 texts, including letters to the editor. Each article was catalogued into a coding sheet with all of the necessary information including date, headline, article author(s), page placement within the paper, section, type, length in words, and sources used. Before going any further, it is necessary to talk about the ‘type’ section of the coding sheet. Each article was catalogued into one of four types: news articles, columns, editorials and letters to the editor. Regardless of the section that the article appeared in (for instance, many columns are actually listed under the ‘news’ section) they were catalogued in their appropriate type. A news article was any non-opinion-based piece by one of the *Star*’s beat reporters or provided by an outside wire service. A column was any opinion-based piece attributed to a specific author, while an editorial was an anonymous, opinion-based piece not attributed to any one writer. Letters to the editor were found in the back section of the paper and consisted of letters written by any member of the public (Winter, Reitsma, & Wilson, 2010).

The articles were then analyzed according to the stipulations outlined by Huckin (2000) for critical discourse analysis. Based on this analysis, more information was inputted into the coding sheet. First, each article was assigned a ‘stance’ based on a seven-point Likert scale as follows:

- 1 – Hardline anti-administration/pro-union
- 2 – Anti-administration/pro-union
- 3 – Somewhat anti-administration/pro-union
- 4 – Neutral in stance
- 5 – Somewhat anti-union/pro-administration
- 6 – Anti-union/pro-administration
- 7 – Hardline anti-union/pro-administration

These stances were assigned based on the overall feel of the article or letter in order to glean some quantitative information.

Finally, the articles were coded based on whether or not the texts contained evidence of one of eleven themes (Winter, Reitsma, & Wilson, 2010), many of which were based on or developed from the research conducted by Parenti (1993), Puette (1992), and Winter (2007). For the purposes of this thesis, those eleven themes were pared down to eight in order to eliminate some of the redundancies found within them as they were originally constructed. This paring down simply merged a few themes into more comprehensive and easily understood categories. The eight resulting themes are as follows:

Theme A – The union and its workers were often presented as “the other” or separate from the rest of the public while management was presented as acting in the interest of the public.

Theme B – Negative words or phrases were often used to describe the characteristics or actions of the union and its workers, while positive words or phrases were more often associated with management and their actions.

Theme C – Demands for union concessions are presented as justified by the economic conditions of the city/province/country.

Theme D – Management is presented as willing to negotiate in good faith, while the union is presented as stubborn and unwilling to negotiate in good faith.

Theme E – Information pertinent to the union or its workers is backgrounded or omitted altogether, while information pertinent to management is foregrounded and given prominence.

Theme F – Focus is diverted away from strike issues such as negotiations, sticking points, or conditions of workers on the picket lines to various mundane, irrelevant or sensational topics.

Theme G – The private sector and the workers therein are presented in a positive light, while the public sector and its workers are presented negatively.

Theme H – The citizen reaction to the strike and its inconveniences are exaggerated.

Each of these themes will be analyzed thoroughly in the following sections and it should be noted, are at times overlapping in form and content.

Limitations of study

As I discussed earlier, CDA works best on written texts so I will not concern myself at this time with texts from the *Windsor Star* that are not fully-written articles. The daily cartoons of Mike Graston provide great insight into the biases at the *Star*, but they are not analyzed within this context. My analysis will also not take into account photographs included with articles. Again, fruitful insights can be provided by this analysis, but for the purposes of this thesis, they will not be included. The focus will be

limited to the written portion of each document. This analysis will also only briefly touch on media coverage of the strike by other local media outlets such as the local *A-Channel* television station or CBC TV. In-depth analysis of these outlets will not be a part of my study. Abundant insights can also be gained by critically analyzing the *Windsor Star's* website content, both in terms of additional 'blog' entries by reporters and columnists and also in terms of the response of the users of the site. However, this also will not be included in this thesis.

Letters to the editor will not be a primary focus within the themed analysis as rendering any kind of hard and fast conclusions based on them is difficult. I do, however subsequently, discuss them after the theme-based analysis.

Theme A – The union and its workers were often presented as “the other” or separate from the rest of the public while management was presented as acting in the interest of the public.

In his description of CDA, Huckin (2000) suggests that framing in discourses of mainstream media can occur on a micro- or macro-level. For instance, “a news report might be framed as a narrative, or story; and within that frame it might set up a Good Guys vs. Bad Guys frame with one group of participants being given favorable treatment over the other” (p. 4). In terms of reporting on labour, the press frame much of their discourse on the idea that unionized workers are separate from the average citizen and that the interests of management are more in line with the public interest (Parenti, 1993; Winter, 2007; Kumar, 2007). This becomes even more evident during a public sector strike such as the 2009 municipal strike in Windsor where management is framed as not

only representing the interests of the public, but as the safeguards of the public's tax dollars.

The media, by framing the argument this way will consistently drive a wedge between the public and the workers, despite the fact that workers often have more in common with the average citizen than anyone in management and are themselves taxpayers. As Winter notes, "most of us are workers rather than managers or owners, and our sympathies should lie with our own kind...[Unions] can represent a bulwark against the ravages of corporatism" (2007, p. 38). When the media frame unionized workers as "the other," they are denying the readership class consciousness and representing the interests of those in power as the interests of the working class when indeed the opposite may be true. Parenti suggests when the mainstream media ignore "the existence of worker solidarity and mutual assistance within occupations, [they deny] the class dimension of the strike and [underplay] the support strikers have among other sectors of the public" (1993, p. 85).

Representing management's view, in this case the view of city administrators, as the view of the citizenry at large demonstrates how the media actively use hegemony to win the consent of the readers. The idea is that the media will seek to convince the reader that the class interests of those in power are natural, inevitable, eternal and hence inarguably the interests of the general citizenry (O'Sullivan, 1983).

In the *Star's* coverage of the strike in Windsor, this theme was prevalent, appearing either subtly or overtly in nearly 36% of all articles including news, columns and editorials². In columns and editorials, this theme, as with most themes, is more overt. In one of many examples, columnist Chris Vander Doelen makes explicit the idea that the

² A quantitative breakdown of the themes according to article type may be found in Appendix A.

strike pitted the city's workers against the city's citizens. In the second paragraph of a column entitled "Put it to a vote" written on June 11th, Vander Doelen remarks, "With each passing week in the nine-week battle of wills between Windsor and its 1,800 striking employees, the citizens of the city seem more determined to adapt to its hardships" (2009, June 11). Vander Doelen frames the argument very explicitly by making the strike a battle "between Windsor and its 1,800 striking employees."

Throughout the column, Vander Doelen continues to frame the narrative in this manner. In the very next paragraph, he says the strike "was supposed to have Windsorites on their knees... given the weed-choked public spaces, the stinking chicken bones in every garage and the cancelled summer sporting events" (2009, June 11). This, again, explicitly states who Vander Doelen thinks the workers are targeting by striking. He seems to stress, rather unabashedly, that the strike is not a struggle between workers and the city's management, but that the union and its workers are waging an all out offensive on the citizens of the city. Again and again, Vander Doelen raises this divide. In a column exploring the possible options for ending the strike, Vander Doelen brings up arbitration, but dismisses it immediately because he perceives provincial arbitrators as being subservient to labour. He suggests that there is no point in suffering through a long strike if in the end, victory is handed "to the other side" (2009, June 16). In this case, the "other side" is CUPE. Rather than stating that CUPE workers are the bad guys, he just presupposes this as common knowledge as if anyone reading the column would agree.

Another of the *Star*'s columnists, Gord Henderson, also framed the strike in similar ways. In a column entitled "The story that's emerging as strike drags on", Henderson claimed that Sid Ryan, at the time the President of CUPE National, was waging "war

against the taxpayers of Windsor” (2009, June 17). Even Ann Jarvis, the columnist who supposedly represents progressive interests within the *Star* framed the strike as a battle between the workers and the public, suggesting that city administrators were under pressure to curtail the demands of the union because “residents...have lost jobs and taken concessions and perceive the public sector as rich” (2009, July 24). This position presupposes that all Windsor residents do in fact perceive the public sector as “rich” and puts them in stark opposition to the workers.

Perhaps the most stark example of this theme is illustrated in an column by Henderson entitled “Where city workers live” (2009, May 2) in which he lambasts CUPE workers for “having their cake and eating it too” because 30% of them reside outside of the city. The message is clear: these workers are not the same as us; they do not share our passion for the city and they do not care what happens here. From Henderson:

Nearly a third of the *CUPE* strikers trying to make life miserable for Windsor residents, on instructions from a publicity-craving Toronto area union boss, don't live in Windsor and don't pay a dime in Windsor taxes.

According to the latest stats, a stunning 30 per cent of the city's 1,511 inside workers, members of *CUPE* Local 543, are non-residents. Meanwhile, 31 per cent of Windsor's 362 outside workers, members of *CUPE* Local 82, live outside the city.

In other words, if you see three pickets demonstrating in front of a day care or trying to block managers from preventing an environmental disaster at the besieged sewage treatment plant, chances are at least one has zero stake in this community, apart from collecting a paycheque and some of the most lavish benefits in the country.

Little wonder these folks have no compunction about preventing construction workers from earning an honest living, no reservations about interfering with Enwin Utilities workers in a bid to keep us all in the dark and no guilt about harassing golfers and Spitfire fans.

For almost a third of these pickets, there is no downside to their actions because they're not invested in this community. Not my city. Not my problem. (Henderson, 2009, May 2)

For Henderson and indeed the other columnists at the *Star*, the city workers are not simply exercising their rights in collective bargaining, they are actively trying to destabilize the city out of some sort of misdirected spite. This kind of rhetoric, repeated often enough paints city workers as deviant outsiders bent on destroying the city's stability.

The editorial staff shared many of the same views as the columnists. In 2009, there were 21 editorials written in *The Star* about the CUPE strike; 11 of them contain this theme in some form or another. In a piece written on July 4th, the strike is framed in no uncertain terms as a fight between the taxpayers and the union. The editorial staff suggests that the “beleaguered taxpayers of Windsor have quietly resolved to take a stand on their own behalf and the real victims in our region – the unemployed, the poor, the old, the disadvantaged and their families” (Editorial, 2009, July 4). Not only does this fit within the theme, but also insinuates that CUPE is somehow out to get the disadvantaged and poor of Windsor. This ignores the role unions traditionally play in our society and also reveals a fundamental contradiction. CUPE was fighting to keep pensions and retirement benefits for its workers; in other words, they were trying to ensure that their workers would be able to retire with dignity. This seems to gainsay the insinuation that CUPE and its workers are somehow against the “old” and “disadvantaged.”

Although the methods may be more subtle, this framing also occurs in the language of news articles. Unlike columns or editorials, news articles are said to be more “objective” and supposedly do not attempt to take a stance in favour of one side or the

other. Unfortunately, framing the union as “the other” and management as “us” is still prevalent, even if it is more nuanced. In an article, the reporter states that the “tables were turned on striking workers Monday when angry residents carrying protest signs picketed their union hall” (Schmidt, 2009a, July 7). This sentence presupposes that CUPE workers spend their days on the picket lines harrasing residents and also that there were many residents protesting even though the total number is not mentioned in the article. Other articles proclaim that “taxpayers are being held hostage by union demands” (Battagello, 2009a, July 9) while many others consistently mention that city administrators have a responsibility to taxpayers, without mentioning the union’s side to that argument.³

Consistently, the *Windsor Star* framed the strike as a battle between the workers and the taxpayers, rather than the workers and the city administrators. This framing serves to deemphasize the very real class connections between the majority of the public and workers and also fails to recognize the importance of class solidarity in winning a higher standard of living for all. This exemplifies the neoliberal ideological tenet of divide and conquer where the subordinate class is pitted against itself in order to weaken its overall position to the benefit of the elite (Babe, 2008).

Theme B – Negative words or phrases were often used to describe the characteristics or actions of the union and its workers, while positive words or phrases were more often associated with management and their actions.

In study after study of the mainstream media’s coverage of unions and organized labour, researchers find that the activities of organized labour are shrouded in negative language, while their counterparts in management are framed in a much more positive

³ This will be explored further when discussing Theme E.

discourse. Adjectives such as ‘violent’, ‘greedy’, ‘inefficient’, and ‘self-destructive’ are either used directly or implied by the language present in the media content concerning labour, while much more mundane, normal or even favourable language is used to describe management (Cirino, 1971; Gunster, 2008; Kumar, 2005; Parenti, 1993; Puette, 1992; Steuter, 1999). If the association between union workers and negative or loaded words are made often enough, the reader begins to associate all union activity in a negative or derogatory fashion, even if no descriptive words are present. To illustrate how these connotations work, Huckin (2000) uses the example of abortion by suggesting someone “who opposes abortion would likely be labeled pro-life by sympathizers but anti-choice by opponents. Most educated...readers seeing one or the other term would immediately understand this additional connotation” (p. 8). No matter how subtle many of these words and phrases may appear to be, the connotations they represent and their constant repetition can alter the non-discerning reader’s opinion. As McGregor (2003) explains, even one word can convey strong meaning through connotations. Connotations, she asserts, that are “associated with one word, or through metaphors and figures of speech, can turn the uncritical viewer’s mind.”

One example, illustrated by McGregor uses the words ‘protestor’ and ‘demonstrator.’ Both could, in theory, be used to describe the same person in a given news story, but the writer makes a conscious choice to use one of the words over the other. McGregor notes that the dictionary definition of each word may not include the added connotation as they are assigned on the basis of the cultural knowledge of the reader/writer. Using the word protestor instead of demonstrator conveys a certain message since the protestor opposes something while a demonstrator is simply trying to

make something evident to the wider audience. She argues that the “media conveys (sic) a negative image of those advocating for peace when it paints them as *protesting* against the government or corporate establishment” (pg. 19).

The *Windsor Star*, like other mainstream media, repeatedly used loaded words to create negative connotations when describing CUPE and its workers. Once again, in columns and editorials, this kind of negative discourse is more overt and purposeful as the writers often take an outward stance against the strike and the union’s activity overall. In news articles, the use of loaded words is much more casual and nuanced, but the effect remains the same. This was by far the most prevalent theme found in the research appearing in nearly 85% of all news articles, columns and editorials.⁴

Attempts to paint the union and workers as violent are often made through the use of militaristic terms to describe action. In one column while discussing a simultaneous CUPE municipal workers’ strike in Toronto, Vander Doelen writes, “Toronto’s 25,000 CUPE municipal workers won’t be on the street before next Monday. The last time they struck Toronto in 2002, they were out for 16 days” (2009, p. A.3). Although Vander Doelen could just as easily written something more passive in nature, he chose instead to play on the double-meaning of the verb ‘strike’ to insinuate that CUPE workers literally struck Toronto in the militaristic sense. As Huckin (2000) illustrates, insinuations such as these can be especially powerful because they “typically have double meanings, and if challenged, the writer can claim innocence, pretending to have only one of these two meanings in mind” (p. 7). Later in the same column, Vander Doelen referred to CUPE workers as “the troops” as they demonstrated at City Hall in June. In another column,

⁴ A more detailed statistical breakdown can be found in Appendix A.

Jarvis claims that pickets “hijacked” a “city council meeting” (2009, p. A.3) giving the impression that workers physically took over the meeting with force.

Militaristic language is also used to describe union activities in news articles. One such article, headlined “Business group takes on CUPE; Public sector wages, benefits come under fire” solicits several examples including the one in the headline. First, the author refers to the strike as a “battleground” and later writes that taxpayers are “being held hostage” by the union. Finally, CUPE Local 543 leader “blasted” a local business organization for commenting on the strike.

On top of the use of militaristic language, using other words to connote violence on the part of the union and its workers was prevalent. For instance, the word “angrily” occurred three times in the articles and all three times it was attributed to a union member (Schmidt, 2009a, p. A.1; No Author, 2009, p. A.3; Schmidt, 2009b, p. A.1). Other times, union supporters and council members sympathetic to the CUPE workers ‘storm out’ (McArthur, 2009a, p. A.3; Schmidt, 2009c, p. A.2).

By contrast, the language used to describe city administrators or management is much more positive or left out altogether as the media adopt management’s view as their own. Rather than ‘storming’ or ‘blasting,’ city administrators are more often painted in favourable light. For instance, in an article that appeared near the end of the strike, the reporter was explaining the remaining obstacles for a settlement and painted a picture of a greedy union trying to squeeze every last penny out of the taxpayer. The depiction of management, meanwhile is much more positive. While the opening paragraph proclaims the only remaining obstacle is “cold, hard cash” which makes the union look greedy, the rest of the article paints the city’s negotiating team as exceptionally generous. After

explaining that the union was taking a rather large concession (in giving up its main sticking point of benefits for new hires), the reporter explains that “the offer is richer than it appears at first blush. The offer would have actually cost taxpayers more over the long term” than if the concession was not made in the first place (McArthur, 2009a, p. A.1).

In an article reporting on a meeting between Mayor Eddie Francis and Canadian Autoworkers (CAW) President and Windsor-native Ken Lewenza, Sr., Lewenza is presented as “storming” and “angry” and apparently told the Mayor to “F-Off.” Francis, meanwhile, is shown in a much more even keel way and comes off as the victim in the confrontation. He “bristled” at Lewenza’s accusations and is allowed to reiterate his respect for the collective bargaining process and goes further to suggest that “caving in to demands by Lewenza and CUPE” would be a “cowardly and expedient” political copout (McArthur, 2009, May 30). All of this serves to paint Lewenza (and by extension the labour movement) as irrational and angry while simultaneously making Francis (and by extension his administration) look rational and even heroic in the face of violent behaviour.

Another incident involving Mayor Francis took place on May 26th when CUPE picketers decided to demonstrate outside of his home. Although the public relations strategy behind such a move by CUPE is up for debate, the picketers themselves were peaceful and no violence on the part of the union was reported. Despite this, the *Star*, through Francis, display the picketers as violent. The first few paragraphs of the article are as follows:

Pickets target mayor’s home; Move by CUPE ‘crossed a line,’ says Francis

By Dalson Chen, May 27, 2009.

Mayor Eddie Francis is outraged that CUPE has "crossed a line" by sending striking workers to picket his private residence and the homes of other council members.

"They can picket me all they want. They can hurl names at me. They can follow me during the entire course of the day," said the mayor with noticeable anger.

"But when you take this to the family home, you've crossed a line (and) I think it's offensive to all of us."

According to Michelle Prince, the mayor's wife, about 25 sign-toting CUPE members arrived on Huntington Avenue in South Windsor around 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, just as Francis was preparing to take his two-year-old daughter Sienna to a private daycare.

The pickets reportedly parked up the road from the mayor's house, then made their way down the street.

Prince said that when her husband saw the marchers, he hurried to put Sienna in his car and left. The pickets made no attempt to stop or delay the mayor.

But Prince said she "absolutely" feels part of the intent of the demonstration was to intimidate.

"If the union cannot get control of their members, and lets them do something as disrespectful as this, it's disgusting," she said. "It will win them no votes in this city. They're losing them daily anyway."

The CUPE members dispersed after about 20 minutes. A Windsor police sergeant arrived a few minutes later, only to find the strikers were gone.

Prince -- who is five months pregnant with the mayor's second child -- said she was unnerved by the incident, and worried for her children's well-being. "I won't stand for it... This is my house, my family, and I will protect it."

Prince's concerns were matched by Francis, who said the picket sent a dangerous signal. "It says 'You know what? Family members are fair play, fair game.'" (Chen, 2009, May 27)

Starting with the headline, loaded words are used; CUPE "targets" the mayor's home. In the article, Francis and his wife Michelle Prince are given a lot of space to air their

grievances without a single word from the union or any of the picketers.⁵ Francis accuses the workers of “hurl[ing] names” at him, while his wife insinuates that the workers could become violent with their children. She goes on to refer to the picketers as “marchers” which gives them an inherently militaristic bent and then she insinuates that they were out of control. Prince later says that she felt the demonstration was intended to “intimidate” her family. The author does mention that the picketers “made no attempt to stop or delay the mayor” but the rest of the first part of the article gives the reader the impression that workers would have done something horrific had Francis and his family not escaped quickly.

Again and again, loaded words and phrases are used to describe the union and its workers. They are “raucous and inappropriate” and they “harass” (Editorial, 2009, May 28), their jobs are “cushy” and “insulated” (Henderson, 2009, August 1), they “interfere” with and “delay” the public (Chen, 2009, June 11), and their leaders are referred to as “bosses” which has an overtly negative and dictatorial connotation (Henderson, 2009, May 2; May 30; June 13; June 27; July 18; August 1; September 5; Schmidt, 2009, June 1; McArthur, 2009, July 23; Thompson, 2009, August 7).

Over a number of months, these negative connotations assigned to union agents and positive ones assigned members of the city’s administration would in all likelihood serve to alter the opinion of the reader accordingly. When relying on the *Windsor Star*’s coverage of the strike, the uncritical reader may develop a negative image of CUPE and of unions more generally; an image of violence, greed, laziness, and dysfunction. As was demonstrated earlier, this tactic is used across the mainstream media in reference to organized labour and of the working class more generally.

⁵ More on suppressing or omitting the union’s argument will be presented in the analysis of Theme E.

Theme C -- Demands for union concessions are presented as justified by the economic conditions of the city/province/country

An effective way to frame the justification for the call for the repealing of workers' rights is to blame their apparent high standing for depressed economic conditions. This kind of thinking presupposes that labour costs are the chief reason for hard times economically and often ignores the profit-driven thinking of large corporations. As Huckin (2000) says, presupposition "is the use of language in a way that appears to take certain ideas for granted, as if there were no alternative" (p. 6). Uncritical readers of a text are "reluctant to question statements that the author appears to be taking for granted" (McGregor, 2003). Often, in mainstream media reporting on strikes and lockouts, the companies' apparent financial hardships are used as a reason to force concessions upon the workers. It is also presupposed that concessions by the workers will solve all of the financial ills incurred by the company.

In the *Windsor Star's* coverage of the 2009 city workers' strike, this theme was present in almost 29% of all news articles, columns and editorials, including more than three-quarters of all columns. This suggests that, although the theme does appear in the news, the narrative is being driven more extensively by senior staffers at the paper such as the editors and columnists. Far more space was given to city administrators espousing this perspective than to union sources that could have presented an alternative.

As usual, this theme is presented in far more obvious ways in columns and editorials. In a column headlined "Fair offer in tough times" printed just days before the workers went on strike, Vander Doelen espouses that CUPE should accept the deal the city has offered them because of the tough economic conditions the city finds itself in. He

writes, “In a deal that any member of the CAW or the rest of the auto industry would kill for right now, CUPE’s City of Windsor members have been told [by their local leaders] they can keep every cent of their current wages, pensions and benefits package” (2009, April 14). Using the concessions made by CAW locals in Windsor to justify the call for similar concessions by CUPE was a well-worn tactic during the strike. This, of course, fails to recognize the differences between the two industries and also serves to drive a wedge between workers who traditionally support one another during labour strife. It also presupposes that CAW was more than willing to make these concessions and also that it was in fact the right move in the interest of its members. It could be that the two CUPE locals in Windsor saw the damage to frontline workers in the CAW and refused to make similar choices; it could also be that the CAW made those concessions in the face of intimidation from management. None of these issues are addressed in the *Star*’s coverage.

This kind of rhetoric on the part of the corporate media also promotes a kind of ‘race-to-the-bottom’ where concessions demanded of unions are used as a precedent for other workers to do the same, ending only when the progress made by workers for the last century is lost. Rather than asking why other workers are not enjoying the same benefits as city workers, the press frames the question in the opposite manner, criticizing the workers for receiving the benefits, pension and wages they do.

In an editorial headlined “CUPE Strike; Sid Ryan’s agenda” the *Star*’s editorial staff castigates CUPE National President Sid Ryan for attempting to intimidate Windsorites and proceeds to accuse CUPE of not understanding the current financial situation in Windsor. The article insists that the Windsor economy is “imploding before

our eyes and there is no end in sight. Large groups of employees in the private sector are on the receiving end of reduced compensation packages and increased uncertainty about their jobs” (Editorial, 2009, June 8). The article goes on to claim that the city’s largest employers are facing bankruptcy and that many of the city’s taxpayers are unemployed or make less than the striking workers (Editorial, 2009, June 8). The presupposition here is that large corporate employers and the city itself are in such a financial predicament because of labour costs and that workers must sacrifice because of something they had nothing to do with. The company the editorial alludes to that is facing bankruptcy is General Motors, which despite forcing its workers to take massive concessions, received over \$13-billion in bailout money from the U.S. government and saw its COO Fritz Henderson take home \$8.7-million in total compensation in 2008 (Associated Press, 2009, March 31).

Invoking the suffering of other workers in Windsor is a tactic used over and over again in columns and editorials. In a column headlined “CUPE ignoring the economic reality around us,” Henderson says that it “boggles the mind that city employees, members of the region’s most envied and secure workforce, would hit the bricks at a time when countless Windorites are looking over a shoulder and wondering when the guillotine will fall” (Henderson, 2009, April 18). Another editorial espouses that CUPE “just doesn't get what this community is up against in terms of the weakening economy, the degree to which the recession has hurt the city's and taxpayers' financial abilities, and the need to find solutions to our worst economic downturn since the 1930s” (Editorial, 2009, April 28).

The presupposition that reigning in labour costs would curtail the city's financial problems is stated more obviously in another editorial headlined "City contracts; Remember the taxpayer." The authors claim that most people "would agree that in these tough economic times, nobody asks for close to a three-per-cent wage increase and goes on *strike* when the answer is "no"" (Editorial, 2009, April 17). This assumes that most people would, in fact, agree with that statement when this may not be true. The uncritical reader may read a statement like that and assume, along with the writers, that the statement is true. If claims such as those are repeated often enough then it may begin to change or reinforce public opinion.

Similar tactics were used in news reporting on the strike. For instance, in an article headlined "Francis galvanized by Maclean's grade," the reporter details a study done by Maclean's magazine which called Windsor one of the worst-run cities in Canada according to things like governance, taxation, finance, transportation, environmental health and recreation. Rather than focusing on the study, however, the reporter gives Mayor Francis almost the entire article and it becomes an opportunity to defend his administration's stance on the CUPE strike. Instead of accepting some responsibility for the Maclean's findings, Francis says "It's one study of many...that reinforces for me that the steps we're taking are the right steps" (Schmidt, 2009, July 20). Francis is allowed the space in the article to say that municipal services are a "burden" and that those services are remaining the same despite the city's apparent inability to provide them. Despite the fact that city workers (or any workers for that matter) are not mentioned in the Maclean's study itself, Francis and the reporter presuppose that the reason for such a low ranking is

the cost of labour. No space is given in the article for a response from the union or any worker.

In another article, toward the end of the strike, CUPE member are reported to have said ‘no’ to a proposal from the city after a vote. While union leadership is quoted often, no reason is given as to why the union rejected the proposal. Instead, the details of the proposal are presented without context and Mayor Francis is quoted as saying the offer was “more than fair and reflective of our economic circumstance and the ability of the taxpayer to pay” (Schmidt, 2009, July 17). Most of the article focuses on the vote itself which gives the reader the impression that the union is untrustworthy and manipulative in supervising a vote of its membership. Since Francis is the only source who espouses an opinion on the deal itself, the uncritical reader may assume that the deal was “more than fair” which is only one perspective.

Other articles make reference to the “city’s sputtering economy” (McArthur, 2009, July 21) and how CUPE workers in Windsor wanted benefits which only a few other cities offer their workers. In a headline at the end of the strike reading, “Back to work; What the deal cost” the insinuation is that the deal was very costly to taxpayers. The article talks about the details of the new agreement between CUPE and the city, but mentions only the financial numbers that affect the taxpayer. They background the effect the new agreement will have on the workers while ignoring altogether the union’s rationale for seeking the deal they did (Battagello, 2009, July 25).

The presupposition that labour costs are to blame for the city’s financial troubles also assumes that the Corporation of the City of Windsor actually *has* financial troubles. What is never mentioned in the pages of the *Star* is that the city is more than willing to

spend money on certain things. The construction of the WFCU Centre, for instance, cost the Windsor taxpayers \$62-million (Danese, 2007, January 22) but such critical perspectives on issues such as these are almost entirely omitted from the *Star*'s reporting.

Theme D -- Management is presented as willing to negotiate in good faith, while the union is presented as stubborn and unwilling to negotiate in good faith.

One of the main generalizations outlined by Parenti (1993) regarding mainstream media coverage of labour, frames management as willing to negotiate in good faith, while the union, conversely, is presented in the opposite fashion. "The press regularly presents labor as unwilling to negotiate in good faith when in fact management—in pursuit of high-profit policies—is usually the side that refuses all compromises and forces a strike" (p. 93).

Framing the discourse this way allows the media to negatively portray labour as a stubborn, lazy and corrupt institution that seeks nothing more than a bigger share of the perceived pie. The problem, as Parenti alluded, is that management is usually the side that is stubborn or unwilling to negotiate and it is usually management that is demanding often unreasonable concessions from labour, not the other way around.

This theme was present in 20% of all news articles, columns and editorials in the *Star* during the CUPE strike. The difference between the news articles and columns/editorials was not significant with the concentration of the theme found in news articles sitting at 19.4% and in columns/editorials at 21.8%. Although this theme not found in nearly 80% of the coverage, the narrative it purports is particularly powerful when placed in the context of the study overall.

In an editorial discussing the merits of CUPE and city management going to arbitration, the editorial staff at the *Star* posited that the problems faced by the city through the strike could not be solved by binding arbitration and then they went on to blast the union for uncooperative negotiation tactics:

“We believe the fundamental challenges we face are rooted in problems that cannot be solved through an arbitration process, and that this approach was precluded on the day that intimidation tactics began. Far more complicated labour disputes have recently been resolved without the kind of tactics we have seen from CUPE.

Windsor must be a place where intimidation tactics -- especially when used against children and families -- must fail. At the point when tactics like this are used, the right to claim the moral high ground is forfeited.” (Editorial, 2009, June 8)

What exactly constituted “intimidation tactics” by the union is not mentioned or elaborated upon, but the message here is clear: the union is refusing to negotiate without intimidation. What is often missed in reporting of strikes is that management often hires private strike breakers in order to keep pickets in line during strike activity. Despite the fact that this often constitutes a far more invasive and dangerous method of intimidation than anything the workers partake in, it is rarely, if ever, mentioned by the mainstream media. Indeed, during the Windsor CUPE strike, the city hired private security firms who were present at all CUPE rallies or picket lines across the city (Schmidt & Willick, 2009, July 4). This is most often lost on the *Star*.

In a column discussing more failed strike negotiations, the union is faulted for the breakdown of talks. The author states that an adjacent strike by another CUPE local in Toronto is the real cause for the breakdown. He says that the more powerful Toronto local is pulling the strings and influencing Windsor’s strike (Vander Doelen, 2009, July

18). Despite this accusation of bad faith bargaining, there is no mention of the fact that the breakdown in talks could just as easily have been caused by management's unwillingness to compromise, a point that is made by CUPE repeatedly, including in a news article published that same day, albeit at the end of the article (McArthur, 2009a, July 18).

Another fact that is rarely mentioned in the pages of the *Star* is that CUPE actually filed a complaint of bad faith bargaining on the part of the city with the Ontario Labour Board on at least two occasions during the strike (McArthur, 2009, June 30). When it is mentioned, the city is often allowed to respond to the allegations before any union voice is heard and columnists repeatedly scold CUPE for filing the complaint in the first place.

As is the case during many strikes, intimidation tactics such as the use of strike breakers, threatening to take away benefits, and the threat of discipline for picketing workers are often glossed over by the mainstream media in favour of painting the union as negotiating in bad faith. Indeed, all of these things took place during the CUPE strike in Windsor but were rarely if ever touched upon by anyone at the *Star* unless it was to deny the allegations outright. In this way, the *Star* acted as a voice for the city's administration to publicly decry union allegations and to create a narrative that framed the negotiating tactics of the union in a negative light.

Theme E -- Information pertinent to the union or its workers is backgrounded or omitted altogether, while information pertinent to management is foregrounded and given prominence

Traditional storytelling as it is written in most every genre follows a cause-and-effect style of narrative; the main crux of the story is not revealed until after the causes of it are explored. Newswriting, however, follows a very different style where the “lead comes first, dispensing with suspense, while explanation, rather than developing through the story, may follow the ‘result’ of the events described” (Bird & Dardenne, 1997, p. 342). This writing style, as mentioned earlier, known as inverted pyramid style, is a creation of the journalism industry and allows editors to cut the bottom off stories for space considerations. Marketing research for newspapers also found that readers often stop reading after the headline and first few paragraphs of a story, never getting to details at the end (Winter, 2007).

Schudson (1997) notes that the inverted pyramid style gives political agency to journalists who have to decide what details of a story go where. He says that it is a “peculiar development of late 19th century journalism and one that implicitly authorized the journalist as political expert and helped redefine politics itself as a subject appropriately discussed by experts rather than partisans” (p. 20). Journalists will often include multiple perspectives in a given article, but because of the inverted pyramid style, some are given prominence over others. This allows the journalist and the newspaper to claim balance and objectivity when in reality; one perspective is given prominence over another (Winter, 2007). As Huckin (2000) notes, the “top-down orientation of news

reports decrees that sentences occurring early in the report will be foregrounded while those occurring later will be backgrounded” (pp. 5-6).

This style of writing has detrimental effects that go beyond the simple backgrounding of information. Bird & Dardenne (1997) claim that while the inverted pyramid style may be the most efficient means of writing for the journalist and their editors, the consequences for the reader are innumerable. They claim that readers “ignore much of a newspaper because the subject does not interest them, but they may also ignore a great deal because the narrative form repels them” (p. 342). Studies by Rayfield (1972), Scholes (1982), Donohew (1983; 1984), Graber (1984) and others have found that stories presented in standard cause-and-effect narrative form are generally understood and remembered at a much higher rate than stories written in alternative forms such as the inverted pyramid. Not only, then, does the inverted pyramid style lead to the suppression of perspectives routinely found at the bottom of news articles, but it also “encourages partial reading, and it may help ensure that readers forget much of what they do read” (Bird & Dardenne, 1997, p. 342).

Therefore, the inverted pyramid style, most commonly used in newswriting, ensures that readers will come away with only a partial understanding of events; if ordered in a certain way, they may only come to understand a series of events from one perspective.

This style of writing, of course, permeated the *Windsor Star*'s coverage of the 2009 civil strike. As a result, facts, perspectives and information pertinent to the union's perspective tended to be marginalized or omitted altogether. This theme of privileging management and backgrounding workers, appeared in nearly 40% of all news articles,

columns and editorials, but was most prominent in news articles, appearing in nearly half of them.

In an article detailing an elderly man's struggle with union workers who prevented him from leaving a city-owned dump site for an extended period of time, the reporter goes into painstaking detail about the man's medical condition and the union's apparent refusal to let him leave. The article begins with the headline "Trapped inside the dump; CUPE causes delays inside compound" and continues by saying a "Windsor woman and her diabetic husband say they are fed up with striking city workers after he was trapped at the public garbage depot for more than three hours" (Chen, 2009, June 11). The article continues for several paragraphs documenting the man's missed appointments and dangerous medical condition, while he decries CUPE for involving the public in the dispute. Not until the 18th paragraph is anyone from the union allowed to tell their side of the events. At that point, Local 82 president Jim Wood says the police asked the strikers to delay drivers on their way out of the depot, rather than the traditional method of delaying them on their way in to avoid a potentially dangerous traffic scenario outside the depot. He then said he would meet with management at the depot to discuss placing signs at the entrance of the depot to prevent any further incidents (Chen, 2009, June 11). Although this information could very easily have been placed nearer to the beginning of the article, the reporter made a decision to suppress the information that told the union's side of the story.

Another article published in June talks about the leaking of confidential bargaining information to the media for which CUPE filed a claim of unfair labour practice against the city. In the second paragraph, the mayor calls the claim "frivolous"

and was then given several more paragraphs of space to promise an internal investigation and to note that his negotiating team would be back at the table the next day. Not until the eighth paragraph is anyone from the union consulted to elaborate on their claim and give context from the union side. At the very end of the article, a veteran union negotiator claims that she had “never seen such a bizarre round of negotiating” in her life (Thompson, 2009, June 19). This is a strong statement coming from a respected source, yet it appears just a few paragraphs from the bottom of an 821-word article.

In another article, the union calls for a new mediator to renew talks and recommends a particular mediator named Gerry Lee. The reporter then spends several paragraphs detailing deals brokered by this mediator, foregrounding only the details favourable to unions without mentioning any concessions that may also have been negotiated. The reporter then allows space for the mayor to speak on the issue of a new mediator and finally in the 13th paragraph, one of the union leaders is given space to speak on the request for a new mediator (Battagello, 2009, June 23). It seems odd that an article that focuses on a request given by the union would wait until the 13th paragraph to consult a single union source.

The backgrounding of information pertinent to the union was not exclusive to news articles. In the middle of the strike, the International Dragon Boats for the Cure race was scheduled to take place in Windsor to help raise money for breast cancer research. Due to the strike, the event was moved to Tecumseh and the *Star* used the opportunity to blame the union entirely for the loss of the race. In an editorial, the *Star* claimed to be “dumbfounded to learn that striking *CUPE* workers had flatly refused to accommodate these women and their cheering friends and family” (Editorial, 2009, June 26). In the

very last paragraph, the *Star* acknowledges that the union was still trying to work out an agreement with the event's organizers. Omitted entirely from the article is the fact that CUPE actually sponsors the event and therefore would have a vested interest in seeing the event happen as scheduled.

The ultimate form of backgrounding is omission. While some details of a story may be buried at the end of a story, more details may be absent altogether, leaving certain perspectives out of the conversation entirely. For Huckin (2000), omission is often “the most potent aspect of textualization, because if the writer does not mention something, it often does not even enter the reader's mind and thus is not subjected to his or her scrutiny” (p. 6).

One example of omission in the *Star*'s coverage of the strike involved the main sticking point of post-retirement benefits for new hires. In the union's attempt to keep their benefits, they called into question the right of elected civil servants to collect those same benefits. In response, many articles and columns explained that city councillors and the mayor only collect on those benefits in certain circumstances, usually after several years of service. One columnist says that “councillors don't automatically qualify for these benefits. They have to serve four terms to be eligible. Even then, they pay 50 per cent of the cost. The city pays the entire cost only if a councillor has contributed to the municipal pension fund for 30 years” (Jarvis, 2009, June 17). Later, in an editorial written just after the strike's conclusion, the *Star* lauds a member of council for bringing forth a motion to eliminate post-retirement benefits for councillors and the mayor (Editorial, 2009, July 30). The idea is that when benefits are removed for councillors and the mayor, the city's workers can no longer complain that the city's financial structure is unfair.

Unfortunately, the *Star* completely omits the fact that many elected city officials have careers outside of public service. In many of those cases, the elected officials have post-retirement benefit plans and therefore do not need those same benefits from their public service career.

Along with the omission of facts and points of information, the mainstream media may also omit pertinent sources from their coverage of an event. This was apparent in the *Star*'s coverage as well. Appendix E shows a breakdown of the main sources used by *Star* reporters.⁶ The data reveal that front-line union workers were used as sources in only extremely rare instances; only 12 times over seven articles. This compares to 144 main management sources, 172 union leadership sources, 137 city councillors, 97 members of the public, and 87 miscellaneous professionals such as professors and lawyers with 'expert' knowledge of labour relations. Of those sources, only one front-line worker was used as a first source, compared to 60 management, 45 union leadership, 32 councillors, and 20 members of the public.

Table 1

Each major source broken down by type and by order in which they appeared in the article. City management and union leadership sources were limited to the major players (i.e. Management sources from other labour disputes or organizations were excluded as were labour leaders from other locals).

Source	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th-10th	Total
City Management	60	38	24	15	5	2	144
Union Leadership	45	57	41	25	2	2	172
City Councillors	32	32	22	22	14	15	137
Public/Residents	20	16	17	11	9	24	97
Professionals	28	20	13	10	7	9	87
Front-line Workers	1	2	2	2	1	3	12

⁶ The management sources were limited to the four major sources involved in everyday negotiations mainly to eliminate excess noise. Management from other companies, such as GM or the City of Toronto were left out. Similarly, the union leadership sources were limited to local leaders and other lead negotiators within the two union locals involved in the strike. Union sources involved with other unions were not included.

The virtual elimination of rank-and-file workers from the coverage in the *Star* may have detrimental effects on the public perception of the strike. Coverage of strikes in the mainstream media routinely ignores the perspective of these workers who are, arguably, more effected by the strike than any other group involved.

Theme F -- Focus is diverted away from strike issues such as negotiations, sticking points, or conditions of workers on the picket lines to various mundane, irrelevant or sensational topics.

One of the most prevalent themes that came up in the research involved stories, columns and editorials that diverted focus away from pertinent strike issues and instead trained their attention on various topics that were not necessarily related to the strike itself, but rather on peripheral issues. The largest such example was for the writer or reporter to focus on the impact the strike had on the local economy or the public's daily functioning rather than the impact the strike may have been having on individual workers or the strike issues themselves. Over and over again, the reader of *The Star* was regaled with tales of pickets disrupting art festivals, causing elderly gentlemen to miss appointments with their physician, or how the strike was affecting the business of local for-profit establishments such as restaurants and other shops in the city. As Parenti (1993) notes in his seven generalizations of strike coverage in the media, this is not an unusual tactic on the part of the mainstream media. "While having little of substance to say about the causes of strikes, the press greatly emphasizes the damage they do to the economy and the inconveniences inflicted upon the public" (p. 93). Lippmann notes a similar trend by suggesting if "you study the way many a strike is reported in the press, you will find,

very often, that the issues are rarely in the headlines, barely in the leading paragraphs, and sometimes not even mentioned anywhere” (cited in Puette, 1992, p. 70).

In his study of the media coverage of the 1997 UPS strike, Kumar (2007) noted a similar trend amongst television commentators who routinely suggested that a healthy economy was the key to a healthy workforce and therefore any interruptions to this (i.e. a work stoppage) was bad for everyone. During a particular episode of *Good Morning America*, a labour relations professor and UPS consultant was asked if the strike could have a profound economic impact nationwide. Kumar suggests that one response to the question could have been “that a successful nationwide strike against low-wage, part-time employment could set a trend, both nationally and internationally, for better wages and jobs.” Unfortunately, the host and the guest chose to focus instead on the negative impact to the economy and the public, suggesting the strike would have a “huge impact...and retail showrooms, factories, warehouses, can get emptied fairly soon” (pp. 64-65).

At the strike’s commencement, an article headlined “City services grind to halt; Inside workers poised to join strike,” fails to mention a single strike sticking point before the 13th paragraph when a sentence is dedicated to what management was asking the workers to give up. The entire article instead focuses on “heaps of garbage” that “continue to grow outside the city’s Central Avenue transfer station” and the fact that the striking workers had “forced the city to shutdown non-essential municipal services.” At the end of the article, the reporter focuses his attention on that fact that striking workers may slow down entry to a Windsor Spitfires hockey game set to occur that evening (Battagello & Chen, 2009, April 18). Aside from the single sentence about strike issues,

no mention is given of what management would like the union to concede and no mention is given to the potential impact of a strike on the workers.

In an article headlined “City eyes trash disposal as garbage piles up; ‘Contingency plan’ sent to the MoE” the focus is placed exclusively on the public’s new burden of trash disposal (Wolfson, 2009). There is no mention of the strike’s main issues, which wouldn’t be a problem in and of itself, except it is the only article in the entire paper that focused on the strike that day.

Throughout the duration of the strike, the *Star* invoked the appearance of the local parks far more often than any pertinent strike issue. They gave voice to random residents who were angered at the overgrown weeds and grass and talked endlessly about the effect on children who might otherwise want to play in these parks. They claimed the city’s bottom line would be affected because of dipping tourist spending. All of this with very little mention of the strike’s effect on its workers, or the potential effect the concessions management were demanding might have on them. In one such article, headlined “Trash, weeds clog park,” a resident of a nearby town says a local park looks “tragic” and that it “looks like a ghetto.” The article goes on to interview several residents who use words like “shame” and “terrible” and concludes with the Mayor promising to outline a contingency plan to help the public deal (Battagello, 2009, May 15). Not a single mention is made of the workers who are normally charged with maintaining these areas and what they might be experiencing as a result of the work stoppage.

Focus on the effect of the strike on the local economy is also emphasized over strike issues as time and time again, *Star* reporters and senior staffers regale us with stories of private businesses being affected by the strike. In one column, focus is placed

on the upcoming festival season and its importance to the tourism industry and the overall economy in Windsor:

“With downtown businesses counting on the festival season to draw thousands of tourists to their bars and restaurants, that’s where [back at the bargaining table] both sides need to be.

The Red Bull Air Race over the Detroit River, which drew 750,000 people and \$40 million in spinoffs on both shores last year, is back in only six weeks. The province anted up \$3 million for this event, and Mayor Eddie Francis flew to London to convince organizers to return.

If they arrive to angry pickets and garbage strewn about the riverfront, will they come back next year?” (Jarvis, 2009, May 1)

Additionally, during the CUPE strike, the *Star* published articles that diverted focus away from pertinent strike issues in other ways. One such tactic was to focus on slogans and mundane points from pickets. Several times throughout the *Star*’s coverage, reporters would talk about chants and sign slogans that appeared in the crowd without actually talking to any particular worker. Again, this is a phenomenon that has been seen in other studies. Parenti notices the trend during the coverage of a New York hotel-worker strike in 1985, “One newscaster said union representatives ‘have been yelling and screaming words throughout the brief negotiations.’ At no time did the reporters discuss the substantive issues of the strike nor did they ask either side to give details about the content of the dispute” (1993, p. 89).

In another article, the reader is led to believe that the content of the piece will revolve around whether or not CUPE would accept a recently tabled offer from the city, judging by the headline, “Deal or no deal?; CUPE members decide today.” However, the first six paragraphs of the article talks to a few residents who all voice their discontent with the way the city looks. After a brief recanting of what a settlement would mean and

a brief recap of a few of the major happenings over the last few months, the reporter begins to write about the signs on the picket lines urging CUPE members to reject the city's latest offer. It reads, "signs in the window of CUPE's headquarters urged members to reject the deal as did signs on the picket line" (Thompson, 2009, July 16). Rather than talk to frontline workers about why they should reject a deal that is likely not in their interest, the *Star* decides to focus only on their signs and slogans. This lack of context not only serves to muddy the details of the workers' struggle, but it also serves to detach the reader from the human element of the front line striker. After all, it's harder to agree with, or at least sympathize with, someone's perspective when their voice is replaced merely with signs and slogans, usually taken without context.

In an article which also invokes a lot of troublesome language regarding the workers, this tactic is used ad nauseam. The piece talks about a rally held in downtown Windsor by CUPE. The headline reads "CUPE swarms downtown; Civic employees face delays" which not only uses the word "swarm" to summon a stereotypic notion of collective action in animalistic terms, but also right away puts the focus on the action itself and not the purpose behind it. Not to mention that the focus in the second portion of the headline is on the impact felt by non-unionized civic employees. The article goes on to focus on the action itself; its slogans, the trouble and disruption it caused and the reaction to it by the public and the Mayor. Not until the last 100 words of the 930-word piece did the reporter think it necessary to write about the strike negotiations, and not once were the broader purpose or implications of the rally explained or even explored (LaJoie, 2009, June 30).

Another tactic used by the mainstream media to distract the substance of their content away from pertinent issues surrounding the strike is to focus on sensational topics; usually alleged worker deviance on the picket lines. Rather than focus on the abuses of management, or the real-life consequences of a worker going on strike, an act that risks their own financial security and often that of their family, the media will choose to focus more on abnormal behaviour on picket-lines (Puette, 1992; Winter, 2007; Parenti, 1993; Knight, 2001; Kumar, 2007). During the CUPE strike in Windsor, workers were accused of a seemingly endless list of deviant and self-destructive things; everything from placing wire fencing in the long grass of a local park, to verbally abusing a man and his granddaughter for picking up trash, to slashing tires of management, to keying the cars of *Star* columnists, to a car-bombing, were attributed to CUPE workers either subtly or overtly. Most of these allegations were overblown and/or completely unproven, yet the *Star* thought it necessary to use these activities to build a case against CUPE's cause for striking; mostly through columns and editorials.

In probably the most infamous incident of the strike, a tape was sent to the local A-Channel television station which showed a woman (allegedly, although certainly not proven to be) a CUPE worker ripping open a garbage bag and strewing its contents in the grass in front of the person holding the camera. The person holding the camera was allegedly a man who was out with his granddaughter picking up trash in a riverside park. The worker, apparently upset with this activity, came over and told the pair that if they wanted to pick up garbage, they were going to have to pick up a lot more and dumped out the bag she was carrying. The 48-second video went viral and was regarded as a major

issue in the news coverage. The grandfather apparently wanted to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation from the union.

Even though both union local presidents came out and condemned the individual for their actions and the evidence that the individual was actually a CUPE worker was scant at best, the *Star* ran with the story. Columns and editorials mentioned the incident several more times and used it, and other incidents, as justification to punish the union and to demand concessions from them. So again, rather than focusing on issues that are pertinent to the strike or to the state of the public sector more generally, the *Star* chose to focus on sensational stories meant to incite visceral reactions rather than critical thought.

Other sensationalized incidents that the *Star* chose to focus on were captured quite conclusively in one particular article headlined “Tension rising on the line; City strike turns ugly.” The article starts off with a scathing recounting of the various incidents on the picket lines:

“Tempers are boiling over and nerves are wearing thin as the CUPE strike drags into week six, with the frustration manifesting itself in allegations of picket line fights, vandalism, threats and stolen garbage.

Papa Cheney's owner Alissa Coutts said her business has been one of the most recent targets of striking city workers. She said her employees, who have been removing the bar's garbage during the strike, are getting "harassed" by pickets.

"I definitely feel that some lines have been crossed," Coutts said Thursday. "They started by harassing some employees who offered to help. They yelled derogatory comments at them. One comment was they hope maggots crawled in their mouth and out their -- I won't say the word."

"Just screaming profanities at them. At that point, they told us we were in for it."

About 1,800 of the city's inside and outside workers went on strike in April. The long strike appears to be taking its toll, with reports of several incidents from mischief to fighting.” (Wilhelm, 2009, May 22)

The picture painted by the reporter is one of chaos, incited almost entirely by deviant union members. There are no details about the strike, the individual tolls it may be taking on workers or the broader implications of the strike’s impact on the city from a macro point of view. All that is shown is deviant workers who are causing major inconveniences for the public and the economy and inciting violence and bad behaviour. There is no analysis of whether or not what management is doing to the CUPE workers is ethical. In short, there is no critical reporting, only exaggeration of sensational topics.

After the initial diatribe, there is one sentence that admits the police had received no serious calls regarding strike activity, before the reporter launches back into detailing more deviant behaviour. Then, almost inexplicably the reporter writes, “someone torched a luxury car in the parking lot of the CUPE building” (Wilhelm, 2009, May 22). He lets the sentence hang there on its own before finally allowing someone from the union to speak. CUPE 543 President Jean Fox responds:

“Fox said the allegations aren’t true.

"We have no reports of our picketers doing anything," she said. "There have been no police reports, no charges laid. There has been no vandalism, no damage, no anything. We've been accused of bombing a car, which we have nothing to do with. The guy that shares the lot beside us parked his car there and God knows what happened."

She said *CUPE* members have been the ones taking the brunt from residents.

"I know that our picketers are being harassed," said Fox. "We have court injunctions that we are honouring. We are doing our best to inform the public of our position. It's unfortunate that people treat each other the way they do."" (Wilhelm, 2009, May 22)

The insinuation the reporter makes before allowing Fox to respond is far more dangerous than a picketer dumping a bag of garbage on the grass. The reporter leads the reader to assume that CUPE was responsible for the destruction of a vehicle despite absolutely zero evidence or just cause to assume such a thing. Fox is allowed to respond to the numerous accusations, but only well after those accusations have been stated and assumed to be true.

Mainstream media reporting on strikes and other forms of labour activity tends to focus on the impact labour's actions will have on the public or local economy, mundane or inconsequential points and events such as picket slogans and chants, and sensational topics such as worker deviance on the picket line. They often do so at the expense of points of information that are of far more importance, not only to the strike's causes, but also to the wider implications of working class struggle in ideologically hostile environments.

Theme G -- The private sector and the workers therein are presented in a positive light, while the public sector and its workers are presented negatively

In line with neoliberal, hyper-free market ideology, the mainstream media tend to give credence to all things private sector, while simultaneously devaluing the role of the public sector in the operation of the modern economy. One of the main tenets of neoliberal economic ideology is the act of privatization, or taking assets or services away from government control and handing them to private companies (Baker, 2002; Harvey, 2005; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). During the CUPE strike in Windsor, a certain narrative was set in place by the *Star* that tended to put added value

on the ideals of the private sector, while discrediting publically-run services. This manifested itself in several forms.

First, the *Star* often referenced the efforts and apparent successes of privately-owned garbage collectors during the strike. Secondly, the paper regularly lambasted the public sector (and by extension CUPE workers) for generally being wasteful, corrupt, inefficient or downright ineffective. Thirdly, the *Star* often incited the Canadian Autoworkers (CAW) and other unions in the private sector as a comparison to CUPE and public sector workers more generally. The discourse followed that the CAW recognized the need for concessions in tough economic times, while the stubborn public-sector workers in CUPE refused to take similar cutbacks with comparable grace.

The appearance of this theme in the *Star*'s pages fits into broader narratives found in the discourses of neoliberal and neo-conservative ideologies which seek to minimize the role of government, while maximizing the role of private capital in the affairs of policy-making. Within this ideology, cutbacks to government spending are seen as necessary for the proper functioning of society more broadly. This ideology is often a taken-for-granted truism that and is presented without alternative, often by the mainstream media and other socializing tools (Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Baker, 2002).

This theme is found in a relatively small amount of the total articles in the *Star* as compared to most of the ones being analyzed in this thesis. It is, however, found in much higher concentrations in columns and editorials than in news articles. This could suggest that the issue of private vs. public sector is being deliberately foregrounded by the upper-level staffers at the paper, but is not as important to the actual narrative of events. Not that much in the way of conclusions can be drawn, but the same theme was present in

only 14 of 185 total letters to the editor regarding the strike, or just 7.6%. It seems, then, that the issue of private vs. public sector was one more or less created by senior staffers at the *Star* and was not an issue that existed in the strike's natural narrative. Because of this, the private/public sector theme becomes more important than initially assumed based on the quantitative results.

The agenda-setting nature of editorials and columns would suggest that the *Star* is very much focused on purporting neoliberal ideals, which would, unsurprisingly, implicate them with other mainstream media. As I mentioned in the discussion of my theoretical underpinnings, the media cannot operate outside of the established norms of neoliberalism given that the ownership structure of media firms is beholden to its ideological tenets, among other reasons.

The theme was most often invoked, as was the case with most themes, in reference to the outdoor workers such as garbage collectors, park maintenance workers and parking enforcers. It was suggested often by the senior staffers at the *Star* that both services (especially garbage collection) would be better served being run by private companies outsourced by the city. The thinking was that not only would it be cheaper and more efficient, but that it would also prevent another long strike where services would be interrupted. In one column headlined "Ways to work around CUPE's garbage strike," the columnist tells a personal story of how he started to get rid of his piling garbage during the strike. In his words, he set off "on a couple of no-fuss, no-muss trash runs to privately operated Windsor waste disposal facilities" and mentions that they were "cheap and convenient" (Henderson, 2009, April 25). This, is of course, set against the apparently inconvenient and expensive methods of the public sector where one merely drags her or

his trash to the curb the night before trash pickup. But the message is clear: the solution is to simply rely on the private sector.

Later in the same piece, the columnist regales the reader with his story of successful trash extrication remarking that there were only a “handful of busy-bee workers, not the customary bloated platoon overseeing the rigmarole” (Henderson, 2009, April 25). Again, this is apparently in contrast to the bloated, inefficient workings of the public sector’s version of a trash facility.

This narrative is repeated often throughout the strike. Words like “inefficient,” “wasteful,” “bloated,” “expensive,” and “unnecessary” dot the discourse’s landscape when describing the public sector and its workers, while conversely, the private sector is viewed as not only a reasonable alternative to the apparent abuses of municipal or government jobs, but as “efficient,” “cheap,” and “inexpensive.” As was evident in the previously mentioned column, public sector workers are also viewed as being lazy relative to their private-sector counterparts. This narrative is repeated often in the *Star*’s editorial and columns pages.

In another column by the same author, shortly after the conclusion of the strike, acquiescing to the dreaded ‘P-word’ is brought up again. This time, the author talks about a city councillor, Dave Brister, who suggested, mere days after the strike’s resolution, to launch an intense study into the merits of privatizing certain municipal services such as garbage collection:

“The ink was barely dry on the *CUPE* Local 82 and 543 contracts when Brister issued his bombshell motion calling for an in-depth study of the outsourcing of various municipal services, including garbage collection.

CUPE's reaction was predictable. They howled in collective indignation.

But some of Brister's fellow councillors, who were apparently looking forward to peace, tranquillity and a nice long snooze, at least for the remainder of this term, also went through the roof over his "grandstanding" and "insensitivity."

They charged that his timing was awful, with workers just settling back into their jobs after 101 days of bitter confrontation.

In the eyes of some, there's never a good time to bring up the dreaded P-word.

Privatization, farming out municipal work to a more efficient private sector, is their ultimate bogeyman, something to be fought tooth and nail at all times, regardless of the impact on taxpayers.

In reality there's never been a better time to address this issue.

Windsorites are in no mood to forgive and forget after months of standing up to *CUPE*. We achieved a decisive victory but it came at a huge cost and it's an ordeal we're not looking forward to repeating in four years when the current contracts expire.

Councillors say they received a study (yet to be made public) at budget time, before the strike started, which showed "minimal" savings from contracting out garbage collection. I have yet to hear what "minimal" means, but if there's a buck to be saved, even one thin loonie, what's not to like?

Do we like being held hostage every contract? Did we enjoy hauling our own junk to the dump? That gets tiresome after a while, even if the nice folks at Windsor Disposal Services and Pillette Recycling bent over backward to make it a positive experience.

With garbage collection the ground zero of any strike against the City of Windsor, it would be utter madness to leave it in the surly hands of a union that regards it as its most potent weapon." (Henderson, 2009, August 8)

The author starts out by chiding the union for being upset at the idea of farming out their jobs to the highest bidder as if they are supposed to be happy about such a proposition. He goes on to suggest that the city should do anything possible to save "even one thin loonie" for the taxpayer and that the city was "held hostage" by the strike. Of course, this line of thinking ignores the fact that private-sector

workers, just like their counterparts in the public sector, have the right to organize collectively and also to strike.

Although this theme was found far more often in articles written by the opinion-makers at the *Star*, there were more subtle instances of it in news articles. In one such article, the reporter dedicates a large portion of a 1,000-word piece to the opinion of a downtown Windsor business association that decries public sector workers for contracts that they deem far more than generous. The organization's Vice-President claims that precious "few private sector employees can even dream of such benefits." She goes on to claim that taxpayers are "being held hostage by union demands" and are "over a barrel" (Battagello, 2009, July 9). No union voice is heard until far further down in the article and only long after an image of public-sector abuse of taxpayers is well-established.

All of the drum-beating for the virtues of the private sector ignores what privatization actually does to workers. Almost no attention was paid in the pages of the *Star* to counter the argument that privatization is inherently better than public-run services. Studies, however, consistently show that privatization has a direct and negative effect on workers in the form of loss of job security, lower wages, less robust benefits and pension packages, less opportunities for women and visible minorities, and more dangerous working conditions (Kuttner, 1999; Dantico, 1987; White & Janzen, 2000; Hebdon, 2006; Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 2005). The *Star* chooses to frame its narrative, mostly through the lens of senior staffers and opinion-makers at their paper, in terms of the cost effectiveness of the private sector for taxpayers and the overall impact to them. It

chooses to ignore the real-world effects of privatization in the workplace and therefore shows only one perspective on the argument.

Theme H -- The citizen reaction to the strike and its inconveniences are exaggerated

One of the ways the mainstream media introduces bias regarding organized labour is to overemphasize the reaction to strikes and the inconveniences they cause to the public. In the case of public sector workers, this is a particularly effective strategy considering taxpayers pay, indirectly, for the service offered by the workers. As Greenberg (2004) notes, “the emphasis on harmful effects also tends to be stronger in public sector strikes than is the case with other types of labour protest, since the disruption is affecting public services for which there are limited or no available alternatives” (p. 357).

As was stated earlier, the most visible aspect of the CUPE strike in Windsor was the effect it had on curb-side garbage/recycling pickup and also the landscaping and maintenance of the city’s parks and boulevards. Despite this being the most tangible aspect of the strike to the casual observer, what was often ignored, at least in the pages of the *Star*, was the fact that only about one in five striking workers were “outdoor” workers. 1,400 of the 1,800 workers were members of Local 543 representing inside workers; social workers, city secretaries, desk clerks and not garbage collectors or park maintenance workers.

Regardless, the *Star*, when framing the strike’s narrative, rarely mentioned the indoor workers, choosing to stick to what the public could see directly. As was discussed in the earlier theme regarding the various foci of the *Star*’s narrative which served to

divert attention from the tangible issues of the strike, focus was often placed on the inconveniences the strike had on the public, but the exaggeration of the public reaction to those inconveniences was also very prevalent.

In a similar fashion to the previous theme, this heavy exaggeration of the public's reaction was found in a relatively small amount (although certainly still significant) of news articles, but was far more widespread in columns and editorials suggesting that this particular narrative was driven more by the senior staffers at the paper than the actual strike narrative itself. Out of 217 total news articles, it was mentioned on 29 occasions, while conversely, in just 78 columns and editorials, this theme was invoked slightly more often (30 times). This in itself serves to show how this perceived public reaction to the strike and its peripheral inconveniences was greatly overblown. After all, if the kind of hyperbolic citizen reaction summoned by the senior staffers actually existed corporeally, one would think it would appear slightly more often in the news articles than it did.

Again, if we use the letters to the editor as some sort of loose gauge of public feelings on the strike (while acknowledging how that may be problematic), exaggerated reactions to the strike only occurred in 22 out of 185 total letters, or about 11%; certainly significant enough, but not nearly as concentrated as with the columns and editorials.⁷

For instance, in a column published well after the strike's conclusion (during the subsequent discussion over the proposed privatization of the city's garbage services), the author talked about an apparently brave stand taken by council in the face of CUPE while deciding whether or not to privatize the city's garbage collection. He states that "taxpayers ordered council to make sure they aren't held to ransom ever again" (Vander Doelen, 2009, October 29). The strong language that the columnist uses here suggests

⁷ Quantitative theme information can be found in Appendix A.

that *all* taxpayers felt that they were not only “held to ransom,” but also that they “ordered council” to put CUPE in its place.

Along the same lines, another column, published in late July, right around the conclusion of the strike says that public “attitudes have also hardened against the union’s members in ways that are probably permanent. Empowered by their own resolve during the strike, many voters are now pressuring city council to continue their fight against CUPE even though the strike is over” (Vander Doelen, 2009, July 28). Again this statement assumes that the “public attitude” has somehow shifted when the columnist likely has no such evidence either way. The notion that the public at large is sitting at home, concocting ways of forcing their council representatives into decisive action against CUPE is doubtful; especially considering the strike, and its issues, were resolved.

The details of a union’s collective agreement with their employer (even in a public sector strike) are unlikely to receive news coverage unless a strike is underway or imminent. What the columnist suggests in this instance is that the public will continue caring long after the strike is over, which is likely untrue. As Greenberg notes, “although collective bargaining is most often successful in reaching mutual agreement with management without recourse to official work stoppage, press representations of organized labour still tend to be dominated by images of picket lines, conflict and greed” (2004, p. 356).

In an editorial discussing the viability of privatizing garbage collection, the authors claim that “angry residents made it clear that if CUPE outside workers ever strike again, they do not want to deal with mounting mounds of trash the way they did this summer” (Editorial, 2009, November 14). The suggestion here, as was discussed at

length in the previous theme analysis, is that private sector workers would not strike, which obviously is not necessarily the case since unionized (and even non-unionized) private sector workers are extended the same right to walk off the job if they are unhappy with their working conditions. The suggestion here that “angry residents” are crying out for some sort of post-strike discipline to be handed out to CUPE via privatization is entirely overblown and such action would in fact be illegal.

In another column published during the strike, the author posits that the public steadfastly and loudly stands in opposition to CUPE and its workers, with again, a subtle focus on the outdoor workers. He suggests that something “has changed in Windsor. Suddenly, the rumble of public discontent with CUPE and its strikers is growing into a roar of angry opposition the union may not be able to overcome.” He continues by inciting ‘insiders’ who tell him that “public demands to outsource garbage pickup after the strike have become so insistent that worried negotiators for CUPE Local 82, which represents garbage collectors, have asked nervously about it at the bargaining table” (Vander Doelen, 2009, May 28). This suggestion that *the public* was pressuring for the outsourcing of garbage collection was not only false, but ignored the fact that neoliberal-influenced governments are constantly looking for ways to privatize services that exist within the public sector.

What strikes me as odd is that none of this discussion seems to be rooted in hard numbers. For all of the senior staffers’ claims that the public thinks one way or another, there are no surveys cited or opinions from individual members of the public invoked. All indications are that only a very vocal and very small minority ever really spoke out harshly against the workers or their strike, yet according to the authors of columns and

editorials, the public's hostile conduct was so obvious and in-your-face, that further thought need not be wasted. What instances *did* occur between the public and the pickets were prominently placed as lead stories and over-sensationalized by the *Star* and other local media, not only lending credence to the notion that the workers were overly violent and aggressive, but also that the public was in constant physical and hegemonic struggle with them.

In 'news,' although this theme of exaggerating the public's reaction to the strike was relatively less prominent than some others, it still found its way into roughly 13% of all news articles. Given the power and strength this particular narrative carries, the small numbers can still have a drastic effect on the reader's formulation of strike discourses and opinions, no matter how subtle its inclusion may be. In the article detailing the infamous trash throwing incident, Windsor residents are portrayed as reacting with "revulsion" and "outrage." In perhaps the most stark example of this theme, the *Star* printed an article, right after the strike's conclusion interviewing a woman named Lisa Ward. Ms. Ward was quoted several times throughout the strike as the ringleader of a series of small protests outside CUPE's headquarters in Windsor. In this final sendoff for Ms. Ward, the reporter begins by writing:

When Lisa Ward heard that the citywide strike was over, she drove her car by the CUPE headquarters, honking for joy. The last time she went by the 1500 block of Parent Avenue [the site of the headquarters], she was armed with picket signs and angry words.

"I'm relieved, very relieved and happy. I didn't want to get the picket sign out again," said Ward, who was one of several neighbours to picket against the garbage piling up near CUPE's headquarters. (Poliakov, 2009, July 25)

Ms. Ward's many protests of CUPE's actions garnered much attention within the *Star* (as was mentioned in the first theme) and seemed to suggest that most Windsor residents had similar feelings. While there were several articles about Ward and her protests, including a front page photo (Schmidt, 2009, July 7; Schmidt, 2009, July 8; Poliakov, 2009, July 25), there was only one article about a 2,000 person rally for CUPE at the city's riverfront and it was placed on the second page (Schmidt, 2009, June 13).

The mainstream media's sensationalization of the public reaction toward strikes tends to give the impression that a vocal, and often very small, minority of the citizenry speak on behalf of the larger public. Most people are only concerned about the inner workings of collective bargaining when a strike is occurring or imminent (Parenti, 1993), a phenomenon that is driven mostly by the narratives put in place by the mainstream media.

An illustrative example – Contrasting columns

There were two specific columns published in the *Star* during the strike that require a bit more analysis, not covered by the themed approach above. The two were set up in contrast to one another both in perspective and in oddity. The first was a column by then-CUPE National President Sid Ryan who submitted a piece discussing the relative merits of binding arbitration and giving the *Star* reader a rare glimpse at the unimpeded union perspective (Ryan, 2009, June 11). The second was a piece by the *Star*'s editor-in-

chief Marty Beneteau which was published in the paper's opinion section shortly after the resolution of the strike (Beneteau, 2009, July 29).⁸

The first thing to note about these two columns is their sheer rarity. The editor-in-chief of a paper rarely enters the fray by offering her/his opinion unless it comes from behind the editorial wall where articles are written anonymously and attributed to the entire editorial staff. Nor is it common that a major national union president would be allowed to write a column that stands in such stark opposition to other opinion-makers at the paper. The opportunity allows us to deconstruct some of the larger philosophies at play in the mainstream news media.

In early June 2009, almost two full months into the strike, the union called on the city to go to binding arbitration to break the impasse at the bargaining table. Binding arbitration is best described as follows:

“She [the arbitrator] expects that she will receive evidence and written submissions; will hear from parties, witnesses and lawyers; will evaluate contentions put to her with respect to alleged breaches of contract; and will finally prepare and render an award which upholds or rejects claims. She assumes that the parties, like it or not, will comply with her decision.” (Paulsson, 2011, p. 292)

Essentially, in binding arbitration, as Ryan puts it in his column, “the arbitrator reviews our [the union's and management's] respective positions and decides where, within those positions, a reasonable settlement exists” (Ryan, 2009, June 11). The word ‘binding’ is an important one here as it means whatever the arbitrator decides, whether she or he decides in favour of the union, in favour of management, or somewhere in between, the resulting deal has to be accepted by both sides.

The suggestion of going to binding arbitration was met with ire by the *Star's* opinion-makers with columnists suggesting that “binding arbitration produces a saw-off

⁸ Each article is presented in its entirety in Appendices A & B respectively

between the last offers from either side, with the tilt almost always favouring the labour side of the deal” (Vander Doelen, 2009, June 2). An editorial suggests that “the best evidence provided so far suggests that this approach will result in a settlement that the city doesn't want” (Editorial, 2009, June 6). Narratives such as this are repeated ad nauseam by the senior staffers at the paper with almost no alternative argument being rendered with the exception, of course, being Ryan’s column.

Ryan defends the arbitration process in his piece by pointing out that it is “a quasi-judicial process that relies on precedent, case law and most importantly, impartiality” and goes on to say that thinking otherwise suggests “Canada's entire industrial relations system is tilted in favour of organized labour” (Ryan, 2009, June 11). Of course, the research conducted in this and many other studies finds the opposite case to be true (White & Janzen, 2000; Winter, 2007; Winter, Reitsma, & Wilson, 2010; Knight, 2001; Gunster, 2008; Greenberg, 2004), as Ryan points out.

The interesting thing about Ryan’s piece is that it offers a singular voice of thought that runs counter to the dominant narrative found in the *Star*. It is unabashedly from the perspective of workers and explicitly tackles many of the themes found in this analysis. But it is the only one. Out of all 78 opinion pieces (columns and editorials) within the confines of this study, Ryan’s was the only one that received a rating of ‘1’ on the earlier discussed seven-point Likert-type scale, representing a hardline anti-administration/pro-union stance. It was the only piece that was truly and openly critical of the city’s administration and was the only one that dealt substantively with the larger structural issues at play such as the hegemonic dominance of neo-liberal ideology that seeks to weaken, or render powerless, the working class in favour of the ruling class. This

counterhegemonic discourse was otherwise unheard from in the *Star*'s pages during the strike.

Although the *Star* should be commended on some level for allowing Ryan's piece to run, Beneteau mentions in his later column that they did not ask him to write in rather, CUPE asked if they would publish his piece (Beneteau, 2009, July 29). Not only that, but they ran the piece on the same day that Chris Vander Doelen, perhaps the most anti-union, staunchly conservative columnist at the *Star*, had his column run. In that piece, Vander Doelen slams the union for "pick[ing] on grandparents and toddlers picking up garbage in parks" and "little leaguers and soccer players." He goes on to chide the union for wanting to go to arbitration, calling it "not neutral and...anything but fair" (2009, June 11). Often when a mainstream news outlet publishes a piece or runs a segment that is counter to the conventional narrative, it does so alongside something that reconfirms that narrative, whereas those confirming the narrative often stand alone (Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Winter, 2007). Whether or not Ryan's piece was purposefully published on the same day as Vander Doelen's, the result is the same.

Beneteau's piece meanwhile, was unique in its own right, because of the rarity of an editor-in-chief breaking the proverbial fourth wall and writing under his or her own name. Clearly, Beneteau wanted to write something that allowed his personal feelings of the strike and the workers affected by it to be known to the wider public; he had an axe to grind. He lambastes the union for not understanding modern Windsor and for acting with arrogance, anger and violence on the picket lines. He defends his paper by saying that CUPE leadership, and specifically Ryan, do not understand the difference between news and opinion. He commented that Ryan's "assertion that 'there's absolutely no impartiality

whatsoever' failed to make the distinction between opinion writers and news reporters, people paid to check their points of view at the door." Later he encouraged union leaders to "try learning the difference between news and opinion," to "treat journalists with some respect," and to "burn the bell bottoms" (Beneteau, 2009, July 29). This mixture of accusation and ad homonym attack fits in seamlessly with much of the *Star's* commentary on the strike; Beneteau's merely confirming that this started right at the top.

There are a few other issues with Beneteau's piece that bear importance to the study. First is the idea that opinion and news are separate and do not influence one another, when this is simply not the case. Although ratings on the seven-point Likert-type scale were far higher for editorials and columns, the average news article still ranked at 5.15, or a bit on the high side of 'somewhat anti-union/pro-administration,' while the mode (or the most often occurring ranking) was '6 – anti-union/pro-administration.' As many studies, including this one, have observed, subtle biases in news articles occur as a result of editorial policy and decisions (Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Winter, 2007; Baker, 2002; Cirino, 1971; Parenti, 1993; McChesney, 2003; Schudson, 1997). Beneteau is himself the second-most influential member of the *Star's* editorial team behind the publisher of the paper, and therefore of the entire paper and so his influence is very much felt in supposedly objective news reporting.

Secondly, Beneteau fails to mention that even in the paper's columns, a diversity of opinion should be represented, but again, turning to the Likert stance scale, we see that only four total opinion pieces (editorials and columns) fell '4 - neutral' or lower. Two of them, one editorial and one column, were ranked '4' or 'neutral,' one was ranked at '3' or 'somewhat anti-administration/pro-union' and the fourth piece was Ryan's. The other

two non-editorial pieces were both written by Anne Jarvis, who is often cited by the *Star* as the alternative voice to the other major columnists. Unfortunately, even her overall ranking (Table 2), although significantly more neutral than that of the more conservative columnists such as Vander Doelen or Gord Henderson, was still on the ‘anti-union/pro-administration’ side of the scale.

Table 2

Author	Total Columns	Stance Rating Median/Mode
Anne Jarvis	10	5.3/6
Chris Vander Doelen	24	6.9/7
Gord Henderson	16	6.9/7
Editorial Staff	22	5.9/7

Thirdly, Beneteau mentions that Eddie Francis, the Mayor of Windsor, has “many influential people, including journalists, on his speed dial” and further asks, “Are we supposed to not answer the phone?” (Beneteau, 2009, July 29). This seems to be tacit acknowledgement his own journalists were being influenced directly by the Mayor. Any attempt to claim objectivity after that should be prefaced with this knowledge. In fact, Beneteau’s own Editorial Page Editor has a rather nepotitous relationship with the Mayor given that his wife is actually the Mayor’s Chief of Staff (Interactive Online Forum, Windsor Star Online, 2009). The contrasts in perspective between Ryan’s piece and Beneteau’s is striking, and plainly illustrates the bias within the *Star*.

Letters to the Editor

One of the data sets included in the original sample compiled by Winter, Reitsma & Wilson (2010) were the letters to the editor. It is, however, difficult to figure out what can be gathered from their analysis. Each letter was inputted to the coding sheet in much

the same way as the rest of the articles and were then analyzed using the same critical discourse analysis method outlined by Huckin (2000). As a result, each letter has a corresponding 'stance' rating as measured on the Likert scale and each was coded according to the themes that were present within them.

The natural assumption with the letters to the editor is that they can give some representation of the public's opinion on the strike. However, this assumes that letter writers represent an accurate cross-section of the public at large. This assumption is rendered false, or at least impossible to prove, given that it cannot be known what the opinions of non-letter-writers were without further survey information not gathered for the purposes of this thesis. One would assume that residents who take the time to write in to the editor of a paper actually read the paper and so any Windsor resident who does not regularly read the *Windsor Star* would not likely be represented by such a sample. There is also evidence that shows media consumers generally subscribe to outlets that fit within their worldview politically (McChesney, *Communication Revolution*, 2007; Herman & Chomsky, 2002). In other words, someone with a left-wing political outlook is unlikely to be a regular consumer of a particularly conservative media outlet such as FOX News, and a conservative individual is unlikely to seek out the perspective of Democracy Now! It is therefore conceivable that large subsections of political perspectives would rarely if ever show up in the letters.

The letters can and do, however, allow for alternate perspectives to be shown within the *Star's* pages for the reading audience to consume. In this way, the letters offer a potential for counterhegemonic narratives to surface where they otherwise are not given voice. Of course, given the editorial filters that exist and also the influence of the central

discourses in the paper, most of the letters still fall in line with the dominant editorial tone. A breakdown of the stances found in the letters is shown in Table 3:

Table 3 – Letters to the Editor by stance

Total number = 185

Mean word count = 157.8 words

Mean stance = 5.04/7

Mode Stance = 7/7

And then for each stance:

Stance	# of letters	% of total
1 – Hardline anti-administration/pro-union	22	11.9%
2 – Anti-administration/pro-union	15	8.1%
3 – Somewhat anti-administration/pro-union	15	8.1%
4 – Neutral	17	9.2%
5 – Somewhat anti-union/pro-administration	9	4.9%
6 – Anti-union/pro-administration	20	10.8%
7 – Hardline anti-union/pro-administration	86	46.5%

The average stance of the letters was the closest to ‘neutral’ of any type of article at 5.04 and also had far more content on the ‘pro-union’ side of the Likert scale than any other type of article. This would seem to indicate that the best source for material that runs counter to the dominant anti-striker narrative in the *Star* can actually be found in the letter section being voiced by people who are not gainfully employed by the paper.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Since the rise of neoliberalism as a dominant ideology in North America, harsh measures have been put in place to reduce the power and influence of the working class. The main tenets of neoliberalism: Deregulation, privatization and free trade, have widespread detrimental effects on the working class. Decreased wages, the erosion of peripheral benefits such as health plans and pensions, decreased job security, higher unemployment, more dangerous working conditions, and decreased bargaining power are all results of this ideology (Roy, 2003; Harvey, 2005; Wade, 2008).

The media play a crucial role in the legitimation and the winning of consent for dominant narratives, conventional wisdom and prevailing ideologies (Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Winter, 2007) and are therefore key in the reification of neoliberal discourses that seek to suppress labour and the working class more generally. Studies of media coverage of labour have shown repeatedly that the “news media manifest a marked pro-business, anti-labor bias” (Parenti, 1993, p. 83). This bias exists not only to delegitimize the labour movement in the eyes of the public, but also, a negative image of unions “discourages workers from unionizing and leaves them suspicious of labor organizations” (p. 94).

Increasingly, this ideology has been aimed toward workers in the public sector as decreased government spending has become the latest focus of neoliberalism in the face of widespread economic recession. However, as Naylor (2012, April 9) points out, “austerity measures are not just a reaction to economic crisis, but rather part of an ongoing attempt to shift power relations.” She continues to say that debt is used as an

effective weapon by neoliberalism to intimidate the public into accepting the harm caused by austerity.

Austerity measures and their effects (and resulting backlash) have been firmly in the public eye lately in Greece and in Wisconsin and Indiana, but increasingly the phenomenon has been permeating Canada. One example of the attempted rollback of the public sector can be found in the 2009 Municipal Strike in Windsor, Ontario by CUPE Locals 82 and 543. A study of the coverage in the city's only daily newspaper, the *Windsor Star*, revealed a heavy-handed and often deliberate bias against the activities of CUPE and its workers. This bias manifested itself in many ways but existed in both opinion columns and editorials and also in the news. This backlash against the workers was a major crux used by the city's administration to continue its assault on CUPE and eventually won the main sticking point of the strike, taking back post-retirement benefits from new hires. As the only daily newspaper in Windsor, the *Windsor Star* came to represent vociferous public opposition to the strikers, whether or not this was accurate.

The study revealed the presence of eight overarching themes in the *Star's* coverage: First, the union and its workers were often presented as separate from or in opposition to the interests of the public, while management conversely was presented as acting in the interest of the wider public. Most often, this theme was invoked by city management to safeguard the taxpayer. This ignores the fact that most taxpaying members of the public are themselves members of the working class. Given the precedent set by this and other assaults on labour, it would seem to be in the interest of the public to support labour whenever possible (Winter, 2007).

Secondly, the discourse used to describe the union and its activities was often negative, connoting violence, greed, self destructive activities, deviance, or laziness; while corresponding discourse used to describe management was often much more positive: connoting loyalty, servitude, good will, kindness, and fairness. In isolation, this kind of language can be construed as harmless, but over a large enough sample size, this loaded discourse can affect public opinion.

Thirdly, harsh demands by the city administration and the *Star* for concessions on the part of the union—such as a discontinuation of benefits for new hires—were presented as justified by the economic conditions of the city. Windsor, Ontario is a city that depended heavily on the now-failing auto industry and has thus become perhaps the hardest hit city centre in the country. As of March 2012, Windsor has the second-highest unemployment rate in Canada behind only Abbotsford-Mission, British Columbia, an area with a much smaller population base (Stats Canada, 2012). Repeatedly, the *Star* brought up the city's struggles and those of the taxpayers as justification for the reining in of the apparently rich CUPE workers. This ignores the fact that the city's municipal workers do not enjoy wages, benefits, or working conditions that are out of line with similarly-sized cities across the country. The constant presentation of this theme also promotes a kind of race-to-the-bottom mentality. Rather than propping up workers in order to raise the overall working conditions across the city, the mentality embraced by the *Star* has an "If I can't have it, neither can you" tone.

Fourth, management is usually presented as willing to negotiate in good faith while the union is presented as stubborn and unwilling to negotiate in good faith. However, as Parenti (1993), Winter (2007) and Puette (1992) all attest, the opposite is

often the case and indeed was during the CUPE strike. The union filed a bad-faith bargaining complaint against the city for, among other things, refusing to negotiate, intimidation tactics on the picket lines, the leaking of confidential information regarding the strike to the media, and the threatening of post-strike discipline to workers (McArthur, 2009, June 30).

Fifth, information pertinent to the union and its workers, such as sources or opinions, were backgrounded or omitted altogether, while information pertinent to city management was foregrounded and given prominence. Given the inverse-pyramid construction of most news stories, studies have shown that information provided in the headline and lead paragraphs are read at a far more prevalent rate than information provided later in the article (Bird & Dardenne, 1997; Donohew, 1983; Graber, 1984; Huckin, 2000; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Winter, 2007). The *Star* often backgrounded the opinion of labour in favour of management, but perhaps most egregiously, the paper almost completely omitted the frontline worker. This is consistent with the findings of Parenti (1993) who suggests that even when workers are consulted directly by the media, they are almost never “treated as experts regarding issues that directly [affect] them” (p. 92).

Sixth, focus is often diverted away from strike issues such as negotiations, sticking points, or the conditions of workers on the picket lines to various mundane, irrelevant or sensational topics such as alleged worker deviance, strikers’ slogans and signs, and the effect of the strike on the public or local economy. This diversion from the actual focus of the strike serves to discredit it and render it a spectacle rather than an important societal issue underpinned by class issues and notions of social justice.

Seventh, the private sector and the workers therein are presented in a positive light while their counterparts in the public sector are presented negatively. Descriptors such as efficient, inexpensive and hard-working are used to describe institutions and workers in the private sector while the public sector and its workers are described as inefficient, expensive, bloated, lazy and outdated. This theme was found in a relatively small amount of news articles as compared to some of the other themes, but was found in much higher concentrations in both editorials and columns, suggesting that this narrative was more of a creation of opinion-shapers and senior staffers at the paper, rather than anything inherently found in the strike's news narrative.

Finally, the citizen reaction to the strike was often exaggerated. Again, this theme was more prevalent in editorials and columns where authors would often drum up the hyperbolic reaction of certain residents and allow them to speak for the city as a whole. Doing this gave the impression that everyone in the city was outraged at the CUPE workers and made for a sustained offensive against them in the strike.

The seven-point Likert-type scale used to represent stance also reveals a heavy-handed bias on the part of the *Star*. The mean stance for all 295 news articles, columns and editorials was 5.5 out of 7 where '4' is neutral. This clearly shows a significant anti-labour bias in the *Star*. The bias was far more prevalent in columns and editorials where the vast majority fell in to the '7' range representing a 'hardline anti-union/pro-administration stance. Out of those 295 total articles only 19% were recorded as a '4,' meaning neutral, while only 7.1% could even be construed as mildly pro-labour. A quantitative breakdown of the Likert-type scale information can be found in Tables 4-7.

Table 4 - News

Total number = 217 (73.6% of all articles)

Mean word count = 590.2 words

Mean Stance = 5.13/7

Mode Stance = 6/7

And then for each stance:

Stance	# of articles	% of total
1 – Hardline anti-administration/pro-union	0	0.0%
2 – Anti-administration/pro-union	6	2.8%
3 – Somewhat anti-administration/pro-union	13	6.0%
4 – Neutral	33	15.2%
5 – Somewhat anti-union/pro-administration	73	33.6%
6 – Anti-union/pro-administration	78	35.9%
7 – Hardline anti-union/pro-administration	14	6.5%

Table 5 - Editorials

Total number = 22 (7.5% of all articles)

Mean word count = 471.5 words

Mean Stance = 6.23/7

Mode Stance = 7/7

And then for each stance:

Stance	# of editorials	% of total
1 – Hardline anti-administration/pro-union	0	0.0%
2 – Anti-administration/pro-union	0	0.0%
3 – Somewhat anti-administration/pro-union	0	0.0%
4 – Neutral	1	4.5%
5 – Somewhat anti-union/pro-administration	5	22.7%
6 – Anti-union/pro-administration	4	18.2%
7 – Hardline anti-union/pro-administration	12	54.5%

Table 6 - Columns

Total number = 56 (19.0% of all articles)

Mean word count = 757.0 words

Mean Stance = 6.45/7

Mode Stance = 7/7

And then for each stance:

Stance	# of columns	% of total
1 – Hardline anti-administration/pro-union	1	1.8%
2 – Anti-administration/pro-union	0	0.0%
3 – Somewhat anti-administration/pro-union	1	1.8%
4 – Neutral	1	1.8%
5 – Somewhat anti-union/pro-administration	5	8.9%
6 – Anti-union/pro-administration	8	14.3%
7 – Hardline anti-union/pro-administration	40	71.4%

Table 7 – Total (all types)*Total number = 295**Mean word count = 436.1 words**Mean Stance = 5.46/7**Mode Stance = 6/7**And then for each stance:*

Stance	# of texts	% of total
1 – Hardline anti-administration/pro-union	1	0.3%
2 – Anti-administration/pro-union	6	2.0%
3 – Somewhat anti-administration/pro-union	14	4.7%
4 – Neutral	35	11.9%
5 – Somewhat anti-union/pro-administration	83	28.1%
6 – Anti-union/pro-administration	90	30.5%
7 – Hardline anti-union/pro-administration	66	22.4%

The findings of this thesis confirm and extend the findings of other studies regarding the mainstream media coverage of labour and exemplify a heavy bias in favour of management and the corporate class. Given that the media are owned by rich, elite business interests, this should come as no surprise. The mainstream media's role in the continued hegemonic dominance of the ruling class over workers is perhaps best exemplified by their treatment of labour. As Parenti notes:

“With its monopoly over mass communication, business has been able to present a largely unchallenged picture of ‘Big Labour’ as an avaricious, narrowly self-interested, and often irrational force that does itself, the economy, and the public no good, driving up prices with its incessant demands, making gains only for itself while creating costs that must be passed on to the rest of the public.” (1993, p. 94)

This bias is also heavy-handed in public sector strikes where government apparati are seen as safeguards of the public interest and taxpayer dollars. Unfortunately, the media's aiding in hegemonic dominance weakens the working class' position overall to the detriment of the vast majority.

It is my contention that there are steps that can be taken to improve labour's image in the mainstream media. This improvement could help re-establish unionized labour as a legitimizing force for the working class and could help improve the labour movement's public image. One potential aid could be teach-ins and workshops for workers on how to be proactive in dealing with the media. During the 2009 CUPE strike in Windsor, front-line workers seemed to be at first surprised by the media's portrayal of them, and then adversarial to their presence on the picket lines, often refusing to talk to anyone from a mainstream media outlet. Although this reaction is justifiable, it may not be the best way for workers to handle the situation. Unions such as CUPE could draw on sympathetic alliances in universities, for example, and set up these teach-ins and workshops to educate workers on how to better deal with the media and how to talk to reporters. A worker who is both aware of traditional mainstream media biases toward labour and is educated on how to combat these biases is better prepared to help workers win the hegemonic battle with those in positions of power. University allies could also be persuaded to conduct public opinion polls which would, presumably, demonstrate strong public support for fellow workers.

Another potential solution is for unions to use some of their capital to start up their own media. Many of the biases found in traditional mainstream media could be directly countered by independent media funded by labour unions. If mainstream media can be counted on to represent the interest of their owners (big business), then clearly, setting up media owned by the major opposition to big business (labour unions) could be effective in helping unions and the labour-force more generally counter the messages seen in the mainstream. These media would be set up to report on issues that go far

beyond the narrow scope of labour to the broader interests of labour. Issues regarding social justice, such as gender rights, gay rights, the environment and even war can be more effectively challenged in union-owned media where many of the structural biases that exist in the mainstream would not apply.

The mainstream media have played an instrumental role in the weakening of unions and the labour movement more generally. The biases found in this study are by no means isolated. As previous research has found, there is a systematic pattern of bias against the working class in the mainstream media and this bias can be traced to a number of things. Most directly, it can be traced to the structures and ownership of mainstream media which have a vested interest in a weakened labour movement.

APPENDIX A

Each type of article broken down by theme. Percentages in the 'total' row at the bottom of the table represent the percentage of the total number of articles that type represents

Type	News	News %	Columns	Column %	Editorials	Editorial %	Total	Total %
Theme A	53	24.4%	41	73.2%	12	54.5%	106	35.9%
Theme B	181	83.4%	52	92.9%	17	77.3%	250	84.7%
Theme C	37	17.1%	43	76.8%	9	40.9%	89	30.2%
Theme D	42	19.4%	15	26.8%	2	9.1%	59	20.0%
Theme E	107	49.3%	6	10.7%	4	18.2%	117	39.7%
Theme F	92	42.4%	36	64.3%	14	63.6%	142	48.1%
Theme G	20	9.2%	19	33.9%	5	22.7%	44	14.9%
Theme H	29	13.4%	26	46.4%	4	18.2%	59	20.0%
Total	217	73.6%	56	19.0%	22	7.5%	295	100.0%

APPENDIX B

CUPE: Arbitration not a four-letter word

Sid Ryan. *The Windsor Star*. Windsor, Ont.: Jun 11, 2009. pg. A.8

There are times in life where the best thing to do is for everyone to take a step back.

Here in Windsor, this is one of those times.

After more than two months on the picket lines, municipal workers and the City of Windsor negotiators remain deadlocked at the bargaining table, to no one's benefit. Neither the city nor *CUPE* have been able to work out these differences, and residents are rightly fed up.

Clearly, the time has come to step back and allow a fresh set of eyes to look over the city's and *CUPE's* respective positions and point a way forward for both parties.

That is why *CUPE* has asked for an independent, third-party arbitrator to resolve the dispute. While this solution is never the ideal option, there are moments in labour relations where it is called for. In our view, this is one of those rare moments.

The reality is that collective bargaining results in a negotiated settlement over 90 per cent of the time. Labour and management work out their differences at the bargaining table with no disruption. Strikes and lockouts can occur, but they tend to be settled quickly, as prolonged disputes are rarely, if ever, in either side's best interests. In extremely rare cases, perhaps one in 100, the right thing to do is for the deadlocked parties to put their respective bargaining positions before an arbitrator.

And so we find ourselves here. Two elements of the city's bargaining position -- a two-tier benefit system for future workers and net zero, the notion that any gains workers make be offset by concessions elsewhere -- would each be considered *strike* issues individually. That the city put both forward in a single round of negotiations has proved disastrous. That it is happening in Windsor, the cradle of Canadian industrial unionism, is a sad symptom of a broader push to preserve an economic system that has failed workers miserably on a global scale.

Sadder still is the cynical use of this dispute to pit worker against worker, public sector against private sector, employed against unemployed. Depending on your vantage point, a divide and conquer strategy might garner a few more votes or sell a few extra newspapers, but it also conveniently avoids asking harder questions about how our economy got into this mess in the first place, and why workers, whether from Chrysler or the Corporation of the City of Windsor, ought to be the ones who pay the price for the mistakes of Big Business and their friends in government.

Perhaps there will be a time to ask those hard questions, but this is not the time for that discussion or to continue attacking working people. Right now, Windsor needs to get back to work. Now is the time for arbitration.

While not ideal, arbitration represents a way forward. It gets our members back to work immediately while the arbitrator reviews our respective positions and decides where, within those positions, a reasonable settlement exists. Contrary to what has been stated by Mayor Francis and echoed on the Star's editorial pages, arbitration does not inherently favour labour over management. Rather, it is a quasi-judicial process that relies on precedent, case law and most importantly, impartiality.

To suggest otherwise is to essentially suggest Canada's entire industrial relations system is tilted in favour of organized labour.

While this is a novel argument, any working man or woman who has ever found themselves on the receiving end of employer intimidation for signing a union card, had to endure watching others taking away their livelihoods while on *strike* or watch their work get outsourced to some far-off place to provide shareholders with a few extra pennies per share, would likely disagree with such a world view.

Despite the risk of having to accept a settlement unfavourable to its members, Locals 82 and 543 agree arbitration points us out of this impasse, a position wholeheartedly endorsed by *CUPE* Ontario and *CUPE* National.

Why? Because it's the right thing to do under these particular circumstances. The only obstacle left to our members returning to their jobs lies deep in City Hall.

There have been no negotiations now for two weeks, and none on the horizon. We can only speculate that the City of Windsor's bargaining committee has no mandate to negotiate with us.

As always, we remain available to resume negotiations at a moment's notice, but in the absence of negotiations, we are prepared to put our faith in the legal process.

Is it too much to ask for the City of Windsor to do the same?

Sid Ryan is Ontario president, Canadian Union of Public Employees (*CUPE*).

APPENDIX C

CUPE's jumbled message

Marty Beneteau. The *Windsor Star*. Windsor, Ont.: Jul 29, 2009. pg. A.6

In a bygone era, the discourse between strikers and the general public was achieved with a fire barrel and a car horn. Like a lighthouse alerting ship captains to a rocky shoreline, strikers lit the barrel, motorists tooted the horn.

These days, the barrel is banned and there's no guarantee a honk won't be accompanied by a one-gun digital salute.

Just ask *CUPE*, doomed to spend the next four years digging out the shrapnel from a backfired strategy of riling taxpayers to thwart the mayor.

City workers should be asking if the thousands the walkout cost them wasn't, in part, caused by their union's inability to communicate in the Internet era. If the arena of public opinion were a dance hall, *CUPE* showed up in a leisure suit while taxpayers traded their mirror balls for laptops.

The union's communications strategy was a jumble of mixed messages. One day the *strike* was about post-retirement benefits, the next it was money. They told members to cancel their newspaper subscriptions, then asked us to publish a Sid Ryan column (we did). They couldn't resist a post-settlement parting shot, issuing a full-page message Tuesday decrying "the mayor and council's attack on working families."

CUPE seemed surprised and overwhelmed by the public backlash, which found voice not only in the traditional opinion-shapers like our columnists and cartoonist, but in online portals where in a largely uncensored environment, taxpayer anger was ear-splitting.

The union response was to slam The Star, which Ryan in a speech to union members called "that rag of a newspaper." His assertion that "there's absolutely no impartiality whatsoever" failed to make the distinction between opinion writers and news reporters, people paid to check their points of view at the door. And in doing so he paddled his 1,800 members out on to an island.

A strategy of demonizing the mayor and shooting the messenger was dubious given the strength of the adversary: Eddie Francis is a media savvy, calculating, some argue Machiavellian mover of political chess pieces, with many influential people, including journalists, on his speed dial.

Are we supposed to not answer the phone? Doesn't Sid know our number?

While taxpayers were flooding our website with calls for outsourcing, union supporters were floating conspiracy theories. One held that on Francis's order, we were banning pro-*CUPE* posts.

That's laughable.

The reality is that any poster capable of keeping their thoughts marginally civil -- and keeping us from getting sued -- stands a good chance of getting published. Pro-*CUPE* posters were simply -- and vastly -- outnumbered. Same with our letters page. We struggled some days to find a numerical balance between pro and con.

One online commentator accused The Star of polarizing the community, saying, "Why do I bother, this will never be submitted! I need to move to Toronto where the media is non-biased." Think *CUPE* got a smoother ride in T.O.? Posters to the Globe and Mail, Toronto Star and CBC websites on the weekend were visceral in their attacks on the union.

Contrast *CUPE's* public persona with that of the CAW. The autoworkers just came through a gut-wrenching re-do of their collective agreements -- in GM's case, for a second time -- looking progressive and pragmatic.

Agree with them or not, the CAW has been led by a succession of master communicators beginning with Bob White. He may not have liked your opinion, but he respected your right to hold one. Always returned phone calls. Never made it personal.

Covering the GM *strike* which led to the CAW's formation, I recall jogging with White and Buzz Hargrove on the Toronto waterfront. Unlike *CUPE*, they ran with me, not from me. New president Ken Lewenza, while he may secretly regard us as the devil's spawn, treats my staff with civility.

Opinion makers who took a hard line against the city *strike* paid a price, from the scratching of a phallic symbol on Gord Henderson's car to the pasting of a lewd poster on cartoonist Mike Graston's windshield.

Speaking to The Star's Sonja Puzic, Local 543 president Jean Fox appeared at a loss to explain why *CUPE* couldn't get its message across.

"We tried being sympathetic to the public. It didn't work. We tried holding our ground. It didn't work. No matter what we did, we couldn't please everybody."

Next time, try learning the difference between news and opinion. Treat journalists with some respect. And burn the bell bottoms.

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