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# Politicians slam powerful press

By Bruce Gates

Give a politician the chance to voice his opinion on the press and he's likely to come up with some pretty candid responses. That's exactly what happened Monday night during an informal seminar at the Toronto Press Club.

The discussion, "Politicians and the Media: How they see each other", allowed the likes of NDP leader Edward Broadbent and Progressive Conservative MP Allan Lawrence to fire their barbs at the media instead of Prime Minister Trudeau.

And fire them they did.

"In Canada the level of analysis in the press is on a comic book level," Broadbent charged, adding that as a result "even Canadians who take politics seriously are not given good service by the media."

Broadbent said he did not think Canadian journalists by and large had a wide enough spectrum of education to provide incisive political com-



"WHY CAN'T YOU EVER PUBLISH ANY GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE ROMAN EMPIRE?"

mentary and cited other countries newspapers, like the New York Times as having much more incisive reporting and analysis.

Why have Canada's print media fallen into this rut? It could be the competition with television.

Explained political columnist Richard Gwyn of the Toronto Star: "The press today is trying to appeal to the generation that's been brought up on television."

It's a problem of content and lack of depth in the news stories most agree, and political cartoonist Andy Donato of the Toronto Sun added: "I think the press is getting too much like the electronic media."

But all agree that despite its shortcomings, the press is powerful. In response to a question from Excalibur, former premier John P. Roberts, who chaired the discussion, said: "I think the press has a very large influence on politicians."

But where does this influence lie? Secretary of State John Roberts said the letters to the editor pages and the headlines influence politicians more than editorials.

But chairman Roberts disagreed. Said he: "Most politicians are very sensitive to what appears in the editorial columns."

"We are powerful," Richard Gwyn of the Star agreed. "But we hate to admit that, and we react violently when people accuse us of it."

Roberts criticized the media for trivializing political news. "The press has moved into the entertainment business rather than printing information," he charged.

"They take things out of context and put them into new contexts" to heighten the entertainment value of politics.

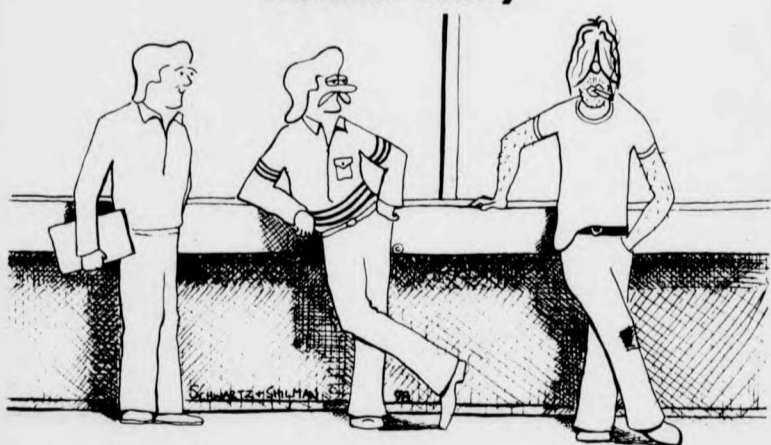
Added Broadbent, who drew the analogy of politicians as being performers on a political stage: "Essentially the function of a journalist is that of a good drama critic, and if I had to make a judgment, you're lousy drama critics. You talk about the form (i.e. the controversies and conflicts but you rarely talk about the substance (i.e. details of the issues)."

No doubt politicians and the media don't see eye to eye, but that's to be expected.

Said Roberts: "The media and politicians are inevitably in an adversary position. They always have been, always will be."

"It's inherent in the nature of the beast."

### Pinball Wally



"Lives in residence, no doubt"

## Deputy minister replies

cont'd from page 1

In a short reply to the association's letter, the Deputy Minister for the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, J.G. Parr, said, "...we are aware of the difficulties you so pointedly repeat in your letter - difficulties which, however, have not prevented us from processing 86% of the OSAP applications to date. To ignore this

record ... I believe, reveals your unfair bias."

However, according to Albright, "processing 86 per cent of the applications incorrectly does more damage than a lesser percentage correctly."

Over 50,000 Ontario university and college students receive some form of assistance from OSAP.