

Guide to Press Corps

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Harvard Model
Congress Asia

INTRODUCTION

The Press in the Real World

The history of modern political journalism is that of what Zechariah Chafee, Jr. once called “a wild animal in our midst—restless, gigantic, always seeking new ways to use its strength.” Before World War II, newspapers served the two distinct roles of reporting facts unattainable by other means and expressing an opinion. Many papers were published with the stated mission to promote one cause or ideology, and catered only to like-minded thinkers. Given their openly **biased** viewpoints, it is not surprising that their reporting was as much an exercise in using facts to paint a particular picture of events as it was a vehicle for informing the public.

Thanks to pioneering work by reporters such as Edward R. Murrow, however, newspapers began to move away from this self-serving writing style to one that proposed simply to act as a vehicle for informing the public about the political events of the day. In these early days of modern political reporting, much of the focus of papers became simply relaying the news, not creating it. This philosophy, however, limited how deeply reporters could probe into the underbelly of politics, and report on the private lives and actions of politicians.

It would not be until reporter Bob Woodward actively uncovered the scandal behind Watergate, the scandal that led to President Nixon’s resignation that the modern political press would become the relentless investigative reporting machine we know today. A stark contrast can be seen between the pre-Nixon era, in which the private lives, political dealings, and economic entanglements of men like President Kennedy and President Johnson were considered inappropriate subjects on which to report, and the current era of scandal-happy reporting in which reporters delve into the personal and financial lives of politicians.

One needs to look no further than the Monica Lewinsky scandal and the White Water investigation to see the direction of modern journalism: what was formally un-publishable has now become front page news. The Whitewater and Lewinsky scandals dramatically influenced Bill Clinton’s presidency, yet only 50 years ago, no reporter would have probed deep enough to uncover them. In this sense, **the media** has taken a much more active role in determining the direction of politics, increasing its power and influence over the country. But make sure that your

Biased—clearly promoting a particular perspective.

The media—refers generally to the means through which people get information: television, newspapers, radio, etc.



information is accurate. With every Whitewater story that breaks is a **Jayson Blair scandal** that gets the press in trouble.

Instead of reporting on the political movement of the day, some critics of the media accuse newspapers of creating the news they report on, while others charge they do not go deep enough and leave uncovered stories that do not suit their agendas. It will be the job of the HMCA Press Corps to help your publications avoid both of these pitfalls.

Jayson Blair scandal—a reporter for the *New York Times*, the premier U.S. newspaper, who was discovered in 2003 to have fabricated evidence for and plagiarized many stories.

THE PRESS CORPS AT HMCA

Wielding the mighty power of the pen, HMCA reporters shape delegates' perceptions of conference events. The Press Corps gives reporters a chance not only to observe, but also to evaluate conference events in shrewd editorials and analyses which appear in our newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. We will explore the great responsibility that comes with this opportunity, studying and discussing the way the media can influence the news as well as reporting it.

In a three-day period, you will experience the energy and excitement of a **Washington** newsroom. Over the course of the conference, the technical details of reporting — gathering evidence, writing stories and developing sources — will become second nature. We will help you use the conference to develop your analytical and writing skills, and to tackle the complex issues of journalistic ethics. Your energy and dedication will produce their own rewards as your efforts culminate in the publication of each newspaper.

Washington—the capital of the U.S., where the government is located.

Members of the HMCA Press Corps team will function as members of a newspaper editorial board and as investigative reporters. The HMCA Press Corps will publish two papers, the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, which will both include **hard news** and opinion pages. These papers are modeled after real papers of the same names and will have different writing styles and editorial values. These differences will be explained to you at the conference.

Hard news—reporting that focuses specifically on government, politics, and foreign affairs.

The goal of your program staff is to help student members of the Press Corps produce these newspapers and frequent newsfeeds that will not only record events at HMC Asia, but also help you learn about the unique role of the media in the political arena. The information we gather will test our ability to objectively report, and the often immediate effect of stories on the actions of committees will demonstrate the subtle power wielded by the media. The *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* will therefore need to reflect not only your skills at thoroughly and accurately gathering information, but also a capacity to report fairly on all sides of an issue.



FOCUS OF THE PRESS

As a member of the Press you will focus on several different aspects of modern journalism. Remember that you have a dual role as an investigative reporter and a member of an editorial board. As a reporter your focus will be unique, given the wide variety of topics covered in the different committees. As a member of the editorial board, however, you share a focus on larger journalistic issues with other Press Corps members.

To give you an ideal of some of the different issues you might face as a reporter and as an editorial board member, we've included below some examples of beats, or reporting assignments, and a discussion of journalistic ethics, an issue which will undoubtedly come up in editorial board meetings.

SOME EXAMPLE BEATS

The House of Representatives and Senate

The two legislative branches of HMCA will attempt to craft legislation on topics that include: national ID cards, enemy combatants, wiretapping, CAFE standards, CO₂ regulation, human trafficking, immigration quotas, foreign takeovers, arms sales to Taiwan, border security, intelligence community reform, education reform, poverty reduction, and comprehensive immigration reform. Beginning with the first day of the conference, each committee will hold general debate, debate on working papers, debate on **bills**, and debate on **amendments** to the bills. At each stage of the discussion the legislators will take numerous votes and will caucus (congregate together either with their own party or with members of the opposing party) several times.

A caucus presents wonderful opportunities for a reporter. While the Senators and Representatives talk about the bills and try to come to consensus, you can interview key players in the debate. You can also seek out helpful sources who will let you know the inside scoop on the factions, alliances, and compromises behind debate. Such strategic friendships or alliances will help you greatly as a reporter.

Remember also that smart Senators and Representatives will realize that you, as a member of the Press can help them accomplish their own goals. They might seek an interview with you so that they can bring attention to a particular bill or issue. They might leak to you information which helps their position, or even information which hurts their opposition. You might be challenged to remain unbiased and neutral when working with seemingly friendly and helpful Senators and Representatives.

Bills—*before a law is passed by Congress and signed by the President it is called a bill. See the Guide to the Constitution.*

Amendment—*a formal proposal to change a bill.*



Legislative beat reporters will write articles when a bill passes or fails, and will contribute newswire updates when debate reaches important points. To cover the final vote on a bill, you must first find out several facts: what does the bill do? (Make sure to get a copy!) Did it pass or fail? What was the vote count? Were there any amendments? Who sponsored the bill?

Once you have answered these questions, ask members of both parties, and legislators that voted for and against the bill subjective questions: Which party (Republican or Democrat) pushed the legislation through? What problems will this bill solve? Are there any problems that this bill does not address? Why did each congressman vote for or against this bill? If a member of Congress voted against his or her party line, then ask why. Make sure you have interviewed at least three sources. It is best if they express different points of view — ideally both Republican and Democrat. If you have trouble understanding the legislation or cannot find delegates to interview, ask one of the committee chairs. They are a great resource at the conference and have spent a lot of time researching the issues at hand.

The following are some questions that should guide legislative reporters at HMCA:

- What are the **points of contention** on each issue?
- Are there points of contention that recur on different issues?
- Will the legislation affect only Americans or the citizens of foreign nations, as well?
- Have the legislators divided into factions? Are these factions along party lines? Have members of different parties formed alliances? (If so, interview these people.) Are there geographical, ethnic, socio-economic or religious divisions?
- How to recognize scandals: Are the speakers generally following a party line, or do they state uncharacteristic and controversial opinions? Are they speaking respectfully to and about each other? When covering a debate, listen to how speakers respond to each other, rather than just individual speeches.
- When you interview a senator or representative, make sure to find out why he or she holds particular views. You must record the name, party affiliation, terms served, state and, if a representative, their congressional district. If possible, ask the legislator for information on his or her constituents. Does this legislation serve the interests of their constituents?

Points of contention—
the parts of the issue upon which people disagree.

Presidential Cabinet

The Cabinet will be responsible for providing the presidential view on all of the issues that the House and Senate will debate. With the exception of the President himself, members of the Cabinet will provide



the greatest amount of insight into the inner workings of the **executive branch**. Each cabinet member will be designated an expert on specific issues, so go to these members first for interviews and insight. Debate in the cabinet will move much more quickly than in other committees, so be sure to stay on top of new developments. Also be sure to go and watch cabinet members as they testify before the House and Senate to see how the executive branch can affect legislation in Congress.

- How will the cabinet's decision affect legislation either in progress or already passed by the Congress?
- In which cases will the presidential **veto** be used?
- Was the cabinet **unanimous** in its decisions or were there divisions between key cabinet departments?
- How are these divisions paralleled by similar splits in the House or Senate?
- How are the President's political advisors attempting to **spin** his policy?
- What will the cabinet's decision mean for ordinary Americans? Will it directly affect foreign countries, and if so, how?

Executive branch—*the part of government that consists of the president, his cabinet, the NSC, and the federal bureaucracy.*

Veto—*when the president formally rejects a bill that has been passed by Congress. See the [Guide to the Constitution](#).*

Unanimous—*when everyone agrees on a certain issue.*

Spin—*when a person presents the facts in a way that supports his or her position.*

Judicial Branch

The Judicial Branch consists of both a District Court and the Supreme Court. Each part will try at least two cases during the conference. You may watch the court proceedings, but not the judges' deliberations, which are closed to the press. The courts will announce their decisions publicly. Listen carefully to the reasoning behind both the majority and **dissent**.

These opinions will reveal the main points of contention. Your job is to filter through the difficult legal language to find the meaning of the decisions. The most important thing to include in your articles is a concise explanation of the implications of a decision, particularly those decisions which affect issues being discussed by the House, the Senate, or the National Governors Association.

Some questions to keep in mind when reporting on the Judicial Branch:

- What will the decision mean for people in similar situations in the future?
- Were the arguments on either side particularly emotional?
- What methods did the judges use in interrogation? What were they trying to find out?
- Think of the courtroom dramas you have seen on television or in movies. What creates suspense in trials?

Dissent—*to formally disagree with a decision.*



National Governors Association

The National Governors Association will meet during the HMCA conference. Twenty five of the nations Governors will come to discuss different issues facing their states and the nation as a whole. The Governors divide along Democrat and Republican lines but often have views and agendas that are very different from their allies in congress. The NGA will pass its own policy proposals, as well as lobby congress and the President to promote favored policies. Reporters covering the NGA should focus on whether the governors are representing their states' interests or the platform of the national party.

- Are the governors acting in a partisan manner, or divided along geographic lines?
- What is the relationship between governors and their colleagues in Congress and Cabinet?
- How does the governors' approach to issues differ with that of the **federal** government's?

JOURNALISTIC ETHICS

Here is an example editorial board issue (and one which you should consider as you prepare to report at the conference):

Did the behavior of the White House Press Corps during the **Monica Lewinsky scandal** weaken the office of the President of the United States? Has the media's **acquiescence** to the Bush Administration's requests for voluntary censorship in the interests of security compromised journalism? Before you answer these questions, it is important to consider the ethical questions that journalists must ask themselves every day.

Four ethical questions will figure into your reporting at HMCA. The first, which is exemplified by the Lewinsky scandal, concerns the difference between public and private lives. Do public figures have fewer claims to privacy than average citizens? Did the American media have the right to fuel speculation about a president's sex life because he is at the helm of the nation? Even if you decide that journalists have that right — **tabloids** have been doing so for years — you need to decide the limits you feel comfortable placing on your own reporting.

The United Kingdom's Princess Diana died in a car crash in August 1997. As a woman who led most of her adult life under public scrutiny, she died while being pursued by photographers eager for a scoop. Most people now ask if the public's hunger for personal details about

Federal—*in this case, referring to the national government, in Washington, D.C. See the Guide to Federalism for more information.*

Monica Lewinsky—*during the 1990s, reporters demonstrated that President Clinton had sexual relations with Ms. Lewinsky, an aide, and lied about it*

Acquiescence—*giving consent to; approving of.*

Tabloids—*a paper that reports the news in a sensational and unsophisticated manner, often focusing on entertainment rather than hard news.*



the lives of public figures has become so ravenous as to be destructive. Is it ethical to publish everything the public wants to know?

The second question is how many sources you need before you can publish a story. When two young *Washington Post* reporters, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, uncovered evidence incriminating members of President Richard Nixon's staff in an attempt to cover-up illegal activities, they were told not to publish it. The information had been confirmed by "Deep Throat," a source in the President's administration. Woodward and Bernstein were confident that Deep Throat was "in a position to know," but the Post's editor Ben Bradlee made them get confirmation from another source before publishing the story that led to Nixon's resignation.

Good reporters face this confirmation problem frequently. The central issue is how many and what kinds of sources you need in order to make a news story printable. The answer depends on what type of story you are reporting. For an event you attend, such as a congressional debate, you need no source other than yourself. To report a quote from a public figure, you can take notes or use notes from another reliable reporter.

News of a controversial nature, however, should be confirmed by more than one source. For example, if you hear the National Security Council is planning to bomb a terrorist camp, you should definitely seek confirmation. Also consider the biases of your sources. Does your source have an agenda? Are different parties or political opponents spreading potentially damaging rumors? You should always make a source's background clear by listing party affiliation and position. If a source refuses to be identified, make sure there is a good reason.

If you are speaking with a source that refuses to be identified, you have several options. Explain to the source that he or she can go "off the record." Information you receive off the record can only be used to inform your other interviews and prompt sources to give you "on-the-record" information. You can use an off-the-record comment to confirm facts given by another source. Never reveal the source for information you received off the record. You can also conduct an interview "on background." You can publish information that you receive on background, but cannot attribute it to your source by name. You and the source will have to agree on a designation. HMCA Editors will accept such designations as "a Republican senator" or "a member of the NGA." We will not publish information provided by "a source in a position to know."

Common sense dictates that sources with a particular interest in an issue are not always reliable informants. Know a source's biases and weed out the best version of the truth between competing points of view. The more sources, the more sides, the better. Do not be afraid to provide



you editors with too much information. We will help you weave it into a meaningful story.

The third ethical issue, one that has come up at HMCA in the past, involves the conflict between state secrets and the public's right to information. According to the First Amendment of the US Constitution, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, *or of the press*; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." It applies to state and local statutes in addition to the federal government. The Supreme Court has generally favored with the press's right to publish information obtained legally. In 1971, for example, the President Nixon's Administration brought a suit against *The New York Times* to stop it from publishing the Pentagon Papers, a secret study about the war in Vietnam that revealed **deceptions** by the government and indicated it had prolonged the war. The government obtained a temporary restraining order on their publication, arguing that release of the documents would endanger national security. The Court ruled that the government does not have the right to halt publication, especially in this case when the material did not seem likely to jeopardize national security.

Thus, newspapers are left to decide whether or not to publish sensitive information. In some cases, they have voluntarily waited before publishing information about the military. Allied generals briefed reporters on the time and location of the **D-Day invasion** during World War II, but, on their honor, the editors waited until after the landing to announce it. Had a paper gone for the scoop, lives would have been lost and the paper would have lost the respect of the public and the government.

The final ethical issue is perhaps the most controversial aspect of reporting that finds itself at odds with the First Amendment. In law, defamation is the communication of a statement that makes a false claim, expressly stated or implied to be factual, that may harm the reputation of an individual, business, product, group, government or nation. Most jurisdictions allow legal actions, civil and/or criminal, to deter various kinds of defamation and retaliate against criticism. The common law origins of defamation lie in the torts of slander (harmful statement in speech) and libel (harmful statement in a fixed medium, especially writing but also a picture, sign, or electronic broadcast), each of which gives a common law right of action. Defamation law in the United States is much less **plaintiff**-friendly than its counterparts in European and the Commonwealth countries. This is because the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives strong protection to freedom of expression, which arose from the tradition of [dissent](#) in the [American Revolution](#).

D e c e p t i o n s —
*deceiving; obscuring
something through lies.*

D-Day invasion—
*World War II: in 1944,
when U.S., British, and
allied troops landed in
France to free it from
Nazi occupation.*

Plaintiff—*the person
who files a lawsuit.*



The Supreme Court holds that where a public official is defamed, the plaintiff has to prove not just that an untruthful statement was made, but also that it was made with “actual malice”—that is, with knowledge of falsity or with reckless disregard for the truth. The “actual malice” standard extends to public figures in general, and even to private figure plaintiffs seeking punitive or presumptive damages. Although the Supreme Court is more **tractable** to a defendant-friendly disposition, allegations of defamation decrease a reporter’s credibility and reliability, and if proven guilty of defamation, a reporter must face major legal consequences. Most importantly, a reporter is sacrificing his or her integrity while putting lives in jeopardy.

Tractable—*easily shaped; likely to take the position of.*

Ultimately, the ethical questions boil down to you and the reader. Would you rather write a front-page story or retain the reader’s respect? And would you feel comfortable were children to read your story at the breakfast table? Newspapers may be more widely read if they include illicit facts or sensationalism, but lives may be jeopardized by this information.

PRESS PROCEDURE

Practicing the Craft

Every member of the Press Corps will write both newswire briefs, which sum up current action in just a few sentences or less, and news articles which will provide more in depth coverage. Some may also write opinion pieces, where the discussion will move past the facts. All will conduct interviews. Over the course of the conference, we will discuss how to write thoughtful and interesting wire briefs, articles and opinions. Journalistic writing is different from most expository writing, and we will learn about the use of “ledes,” quotations, attributed facts, and the appropriate language for reporting. But we don’t want you to wait until the conference to start learning how to do these things. Below you’ll find instructions which will begin to teach you how to be an effective member of the HMCA Press Corps.

On Your Beat

Before the conference, you will receive a beat assignment. You can and should prepare for this beat before the conference. A beat is the term members of the media use to refer to the areas that a specific reporter covers; you’ve seen some examples in the sections above. Over the course of the conference, each reporter will write several articles about his or her beat. Much of your time at HMCA will be spent observing the committee which is the focus of your beat: recording **key** events within the committee, talking to key players about their plans and strategies, and studying any legislation passed by that body.

Key—*in this sense, important*



Once you are assigned to the Press Corps, your program facilitators will contact you to determine your beat assignment. Please examine different committee's briefings , available online at http://www.hmcasia.org/program_brief_updates.php so that you can let them know which committees and issues you'd like to work on. Also, most HMCA committees use a form of parliamentary procedure.

You can start preparing even before you receive your beat by reading the procedure section of the guide and familiarizing yourself with language of parliamentary procedure so that you can follow events in committee. You should know what it means to make a motion, yield time to the chair, or uses other parliamentary language. Once you have your beat, begin reading the briefings for that committee and research the topics they will be discussing. Remember that it is your job to understand all sides of these issues, so don't stop at the briefing. Do some research of your own. You must be prepared for insightful, informed reporting on your committee and its issues at HMC Asia.

When you first arrive in a committee that you are covering, take a seat quietly and observe the debate. Be respectful, but also be visible, you want other delegates to know that you are a member of the Press Corps. You should already have familiarized yourself with parliamentary procedure and your committee's issues, so as to be able to follow your committee.

Try to figure out what topic the delegates are discussing. Are they creating any documents? Try to obtain a copy. Your observations, interviews and official papers will provide the facts for stories. You will not have much time to perform library or internet research after you arrive at the conference. Prior research will be helpful. Start by reading the briefs for the programs and committees related to your beat assignment.

Reporters are free to ask anyone and everyone for information. As a reporter you can legally use any information a source provides, though it is generally nice to explain that to a source who may not have dealt with the media before. If you plan an extensive interview, please review the ground rules for on- and off-the-record information. Any information disseminated in a public setting can be published.

Personal Interviews

The delegates themselves, officials, and experts are crucial sources of information. As a journalist, your job includes more than simply reporting the facts. Try to report the insight or opinions of a person directly involved in a story. Members of Congress sometimes have more information than you realize.

Interviewing itself is pretty straightforward: ask questions and write down the answers. But that doesn't mean it is always easy. You



will have many opportunities to conduct interviews at the conference. Here are some strategies that will help you prepare:

Know your source. What position does he or she hold? If you are unsure of a person's name and title, ask before proceeding with the interview. Always review the subject's name, title, state or country, and party affiliation at the conclusion of the interview. If you forget to record this information, your editors will make you find the person and ask before publishing the article!

Think of questions before the interview. Always have a list of questions on hand and be prepared to ask any of them. But also listen to your source. If he or she says something you did not anticipate, follow up on the new information. Do you need to ask him or her to clarify a statement or be more specific? If the source describes an event, make sure to ask him or her to describe it step by step. Make sure that it is a logical sequence of events and ask the source to fill in any gaps; this is especially important for reporters covering crises. A good rule of thumb: if a source refuses to answer a question, ask why.

Have good interviewing manners. Avoid putting your sources on the defensive. Let them ramble if you have the time—often, people will say what they think is important even if you do not ask the right question. Sometimes sources like interviewers who just let them talk and will return to you when they have a scoop. Always thank a source after the interview. Tell the source what paper you expect the article to appear in (if you plan to use his or her quotes). It is a great way to build readership. But do not promise anything! The final publication decision is up to your editors.

Writing the Story

Once you have observed debate, gathered facts and conducted interviews, it is time to write your story. Although the content of your article is the most important part, it is the writing that will make readers decide to read it. Knowing a few basics about news writing will help you in the moments before the deadline when you pound the keyboard trying to translate your notes into an article. Here are some tips.

Avoid Flowery Language. The best way to describe newspaper writing is concise and to the point. Newspapers have space considerations, but also must consider their readership, who would rather find the facts quickly than be bogged down by prose.



Attribute Facts. Do not merely make a statement and try to pass it off as fact. You will need to give the source of your information if you want to maintain credibility. Make sure to cite sources for all information that is not **self-evident**. For example, rather than saying “Republicans will not support the bill,” say, “According to Senate Majority Whip, Trent Lott (R-MS), the Republicans will not support the bill.”

Self-evident—*clearly known to any reader.*

Quotes. One good way to back up your facts is through quotes. Predictions or comments by political analysts, politicians, lobbyists, and experts will make your article stronger and more readable. Make sure you attribute each quote.

Short Paragraphs. Articles written for a newspaper generally have very short paragraphs, two or three sentences on average. This makes the article easier to read. Each quote should start a new paragraph.

Punch the Lede. The best way to catch the reader’s attention is with an informative and interesting opening or “lede.” (The word derives from “lead,” but underwent a spelling change, presumably to avoid being mistaken for the word for a metallic element.) The lede should be at most one or two sentences and should state the facts simply: who, what, when, where, why and how. Your aim is to give the reader enough information to convey what the story is about, and at the same time, convince him or her to keep reading. The lede should convey action; it should tell the reader why the story is important. If a bill is passed, say so in the lede.

The Body of the Story

A good strategy for composing articles is to think how you would see them if you were reading a newspaper. Most people will read the first two or three paragraphs of articles, and then move on. Sometimes, they will read the whole thing but usually only if it pertains to them or their activities. So, show what is important about the article right away.

The standard newspaper article is written in what is known as the “inverted pyramid,” with the essential facts at the top, and decreasingly important “filler” paragraphs at the bottom. The reason for this is that it enables the editor to cut the final paragraphs, if need be, to fit the story in a specific space without losing important material. You should highlight two things in your article – the point and the draw.

The point is why you wrote the article in the first place. For example, the passage of major legislation, an important debate, a Supreme Court decision, an international crisis or a scandal could be the cause for



an article. The draw could possibly be the same as the point. It draws the reader's attention to your article and the point you are trying to make. For example, when a bill is the point, the draw might be the effect of that bill. The draw to a particular debate could be a major point of compromise or controversy that arose from it. The point and draw should be in your first paragraph.

By the second paragraph, the reader should know the facts of your story. This is essential information, such as the different sides of an issue, its supporters and detractors and its effects. Each of these should be briefly stated for the benefit of a reader who is skimming the paper.

The rest of your article can delve into the history and significance of your point. Try to explain how the point arose, who brought it to the forefront of a committee and why. If your draw makes a natural question (for example, what will be the effect of a new bill on climate change?) you should answer this question by the end of the article. In general, the more quotes and names you put in an article, the better. However, make sure you keep your facts straight. If you misquote someone, they may refuse to give another interview.

News wire briefs

In addition to publishing daily newspapers, the HMCA press corps will publish frequent news wire briefs designed to update HMCA participants on what their colleagues are doing. These news briefs will be very short, focusing simply on conveying the facts of the story. Once an hour (or so), reporters will be required to submit a brief update on what is happening in their beat. An example of a news wire update might be:

“The Senate Judiciary Committee has begun debate on a bill introduced Sen. John Kyl (R-AZ) that would double the amount of funding for education. Republicans and Democrats are sharply divided on this issue, though the President's Liaison to the Senate (a Cabinet member) has been encouraging senators to vote in favor of the bill. The committee is expecting to hear testimony from a teacher shortly.”

Opinion/Editorial Writing

Reporters must strive to be as objective as possible when writing news stories. This can be frustrating. We expect that after watching just one day of debate you will be itching to stand up and make a speech telling the delegates what they are doing is wrong!

As a reporter, you cannot do that. But you can come to Press Corps editorial meetings to air your frustrations. We will hold an editorial meeting each day. They will be about half an hour long. For the first fifteen minutes, we will discuss each committee's debates and what we think about them. Then there will be a more structured debate for the last fifteen minutes to decide on a staff editorial. These will express the



opinion of the paper (they run without a byline) on conference issues and events. We hope to point out errors of logic or overlooked facts in committee debate. If there is doomed legislation we can throw our muscle behind, we will. If a delegate or committee chair is out of line, we will censor him or her. The staff editorials will let your voice be heard, without alienating your sources or committee.

Each paper will include staff editorials written by editorial writers. The editorial writers will also write signed opinion articles. Editorial writers are given free reign in topic, form and style, but must interview and verify facts just like reporters. Editorial writers may not have a beat which assigns them to report, which will give them more time to focus on crafting opinions. Please let your program facilitators know if you are interested having an editorial beat.

Although editorials are based on opinion, they should contain facts and anecdotes. Mere opinion will not persuade a delegate to listen to us. Editorials should be instructive. People want to know why they should take a particular stance. Reporters, in the guise of an editorial, can tell them why.

CONCLUSION

The Press Corps will operate at the heart of HMC Asia. As a member of the Press you will report the happenings of the conference, but your reporting will do more than merely transmit information, it will help shape conference as it is going. Being a member of the Press Corps will require creativity and boldness, but we're sure that you will enjoy it.

If you have any questions about your role as a Press Corps member, remember that you can contact your program facilitators through the HMC Asia website at www.hmcasia.org.



