

**Media and Parliament in the Third Republic: A Study of
Newspaper Coverage of Parliament by the *Times of Zambia* and the
Post from January to November 2001**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for a
Master of Arts
Degree in Journalism and Media Studies**

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my children, Edem Kweku, Kojo Dela and Emma-Theresa Shana, and to my wife, Josephine Makasa.

To you, my children, the full significance of this work may be lost on you, but I want it to always remind you that you are never too old to learn. The road might be long and winding, the journey arduous, but for the traveller, the joy of the travel is in the destination. May you go all the way when your times. When you are old enough to understand what this means, I hope it will make sense to you.

To you, my dear wife, only you know the sacrifices we have had to make to get this far. Without your love, without your understanding, without your support, I could not have taken my work to this dimension. My name may appear on the title page but in all fairness, this thesis is as much your handiwork as it is mine.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Anti-Corruption Commission
ANC	African National Congress
AZ	Agenda for Zambia
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CASAT	Cable and Satellite Television
CSUZ	Civil Servants Union of Zambia
DAs	District Administrators
DBZ	Development Bank of Zambia
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FDD	Forum for Democracy and Development
FM	Frequency Modulation
HRC	Human Rights Commission
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LAZ	Law Association of Zambia
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
MMD	Movement for Multi-Party Democracy
MP	Member of Parliament
NAIS	National Agricultural Information Service
NP	National Party
PAZA	Press Association of Zambia
TBN	Trinity Broadcasting Network
UNIP	United National Independence Party
UNZA	University of Zambia
UNZASU	University of Zambia Students' Union
UPND	United Party for National Development
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UTH	University Teaching Hospital
VAT	Value Added Tax
ZAMCOM	Zambia Institute of Mass Communication

ZAMSIF	Zambia Social Investment Fund
ZANACO	Zambia National Commercial Bank
ZARD	Zambia Association for Research and Development
ZRA	Zambia Revenue Authority
ZCCM	Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines
ZCTU	Zambia Congress of Trade Unions
ZIMA	Zambia Independent Media Association
ZIPH	Zambia Integrated Health Project
ZIS	Zambia Information Services
ZNBC	Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation

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ABSTRACT

The press is credited with playing a central role in the consolidation of democracy by informing citizens, engaging them in the process of public decision making and governance and stimulating wide and inclusive debate on public matters. In emergent democracies like Zambia, the extent of the media's role as a public sphere, not to mention its impact, is not known.

The study set out to investigate the extent of the press' public sphere role, particularly how Zambian newspapers report Parliament and how such coverage informs public opinion. It found that though the press covers Parliament, the nature of coverage does not empower newspaper readers with the kind of context, background and interpretation they would otherwise need to engage in public discourses on matters that affect them from an informed perspective. In the main, the role of the press in informing citizens is not fully realised, not only because uninformative character of coverage, but partly because of low literacy levels and the limited reach of local newspapers.

It was against this background that the study recommended ways in which the Zambian press could re-focus its approach to parliamentary news coverage to make it more informational and more inclined towards playing a public sphere role, at least to the newspaper-reading public. Making parliamentary coverage an integrated newsroom function was the main recommendation. It provided the basis for suggesting a practical editorial option for the coverage of the legislature that accommodates the integration of context, background and interpretation into parliamentary news.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The objective of this study is to investigate how the Zambian press reports Parliament in the Third Republic and the extent to which they provide citizens with a broad range of information, interpretation and debate on national issues. The investigation should help show whether the nature of parliamentary coverage by two daily newspapers, the government-owned *Times of Zambia* and the privately-owned, *Post*, is such that it informs public opinion. The study is premised on the hypothesis that in a democracy, mass media inform citizens and help them engage in public discourses.

1.1 Research Agenda

Since 1991, Zambia has officially been a multi-party democracy. As is the case with many new democracies, with the transformation of the country's political culture came the belief that the media could contribute to the democratic process by encouraging wide and inclusive debate about issues of social and political importance and giving guidance on the interpretation of information given to citizens. And with Parliament generally held to be a representative assembly comprising elected officials (Laundry 1989:1), media coverage of its activities is regarded as being essential to public communication, defined as "public discussion about the allocation of public resources (revenues), official authority (who is given the power to make legal, legislative and executive decision) and official sanctions, what the state rewards or punishes"(McNair 1995:3).

In order to establish how the Zambian press reports Parliament in the Third Republic (the period marking the return to multi-party politics) the study will seek to answer the following questions: what news from Parliament does the press focus on? How is this news represented in the press? How does newspaper coverage of Parliament provide vital political communication and interpretation to citizens? In the context of this study, "press" refers to daily and weekly newspapers as well as periodical magazines.

The study will focus on the genre of news, or in terms of the categories of news, "hard news" and "continuing news"(Tuchman 1978:1). This is in acknowledgement of a very critical issue in media studies: how media content is produced and what factors play a part in its production. Thus any detailed analysis of news must also take into account the social context of news production and must acknowledge that news is socially constructed and that the process of news production affects the news product; ultimately, what passes as news is influenced by journalistic routines and norms as well as ideology (Tuchman 1978:1, Fishman 1980:37,Tuchman 1991:87, Fowler 1991: 11; van Dijk 1991:114,Schudson 1989:8-9, Schudson 2000:177)

1.2 Assumptions

Central to the whole study is the assumption that the "health of democracy" (Dahlgren 1995:2, McNair 1995:18) is dependent on media to inform citizens about what is happening around them, educate them on the meaning and significance of the facts, provide a platform for political discourse and to facilitate the formation of public opinion (Page 1996:2,Randall 1998:3, Curran 2000:127). They imply the existence of a "realm of social life where the exchange of information and views on questions of common concern (specifically those of political concern) can take place so that public opinion can be formed".

Scholars like Dahlgren (1995:7) and Curran (2000:127) say that the press does play a very significant role in informing public opinion and in stimulating public discourses on issues that affect citizens. In the context of Zambia, the private press was instrumental in the transformation of the country's political culture from one-partyism to multi-party politics.(Banda 2001:1)

The study assumes that in spite of disparity between the combined circulation of local newspapers and other periodicals published in English on the one hand and the seven official Zambian languages and low literacy levels on the other, the press is still a major source of information and a catalyst in public opinion formation. The Zambia Census on Population and Housing 2000 Report published by the Central Statistics Office puts the Zambian population at 10.2 million. The Zambia Human Rights Report 2000 estimates that 25 per cent of the population is illiterate. The 1999 Southern African Media Directory puts the combined circulation of local newspapers and periodicals published in English and the seven official Zambian languages at 300,000.

The study assumes that the existence of a "democratic" society explicated by McQuail (1997:43) as one which is pluralistic (where there is "institutionalised competition between parties and interests"), where there are elections, universal suffrage and representation and where there exists free-market conditions and freedom of speech. It also assumes that the mass media are located in the "public sphere", meaning that they deal with public matters for public purposes, "especially with issues on which public opinion can be expected to form" (McQuail 1997:11-12).

1.3 A brief political history of Zambia

On 24 October, 1964, the British colony known as Northern Rhodesia became the independent state of Zambia and Kenneth Kaunda its first president. At the time of independence, Zambia's political landscape was dominated by two political parties--Kaunda's United National Independence Party (UNIP) and the African National Congress (ANC) of Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula--even though the Constitution at the time provided for a pluralist political system .

Ethnicity was a major feature of Zambian politics then as it is now. It was a deciding factor in the 1969 elections and gave Kaunda the political excuse he needed to impose a one-party system on Zambia in the interests of national unity in 1972. (Southall 1996:473) The creation of the one-party state marked the end of the First Republic and the birth of the Second Republic. (Momba 1993:194, Baylies and Szeftel 1999:84, Roberts 1994:1014, Mwanakwatwe 1994:86).

The Second Republic lasted 19 years, with UNIP as the only political party and Kaunda at the helm of the party, government and the armed forces. During this period, the UNIP Central Committee was the supreme policy-making authority. The 120-member Parliament operated as one of UNIP's sub-committees; all MPs were vetted members of the Party. (Southall 1996:473;Momba 1993:195;Baylies and Szeftel 1999:83, Kasoma 2000:209) Under the one-party state, Kaunda was the sole presidential candidate. The system was such that the UNIP Party President, elected by the General Conference every five years, would automatically become the presidential candidate.

Towards the end of 1980, political dissent in Zambia increased considerably, following a deterioration in living conditions and a sharp rise in the cost of living, partly due to austerity measures undertaken as part of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Structural Adjustment Programme. (Ihonvbere 1996:60)

The IMF's programme included the phasing out subsidies on goods (such as the staple food, mealie meal) and services; elimination of the budget deficit, privatisation or the close down unprofitable parastatal companies and a reduction of inflation by 15 per cent (Bratton 1994:102, Sichone and Chikulo 1996:140). The next 10 years would see a number of strikes backed by the powerful Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), two food riots and three attempted coups (Baylies and Szeftel 1999:87-89).

By the beginning of 1990, calls for democratic reform had begun, though Kaunda was insistent that a return to a multi-party would accentuate ethnic divisions (Momba 1993:206, Baylies and Szeftel 1999:90, Chikulo and Sichone 1996:4). On 29 June, Kaunda announced that he would hold a referendum on 17 October on the adoption of multi-party politics. On 20 July 1990, a meeting of professionals, academicians, trade unionists, business people and civic leaders in Lusaka West spawned a new opposition grouping called the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD). The MMD immediately won widespread support. By this time, Kaunda and UNIP had become synonymous with Zambia's economic crisis, and in many people's minds, only a new government could end the stagnation (Chikulo and Sichone 1996:4).

The scheduled referendum never took place. Kaunda and his party succumbed to political pressure from the forces of multi-party politics. On 24 September 1990, the UNIP National Council--the party's supreme policy-making body--decided to return the country to a multi-party political system. On 17 December 1990, Kaunda signed an amendment bill allowing the creation of opposition political parties. By the 31 October elections, there were over 20 political parties (Chikulo and Sichone 1996:5).

Foreign observers who arrived in the country (one of whom was former US President Jimmy Carter) expressed concern that the elections would not be conducted fairly, on grounds that government-owned media and parastatal organisations continued to support UNIP in its electoral campaign, and that the state of emergency was still in force (Ihonvbere 1996:130).

Nevertheless, the MMD won the elections. Frederick Chiluba, a former trade union leader, received 75.79 per cent of the votes cast against Kaunda's 24.21 per cent. In the Parliamentary elections which were contested by 330 candidates representing six political parties, MMD scooped 125 out of 150 seats and UNIP 25. This marked the end of the Second Republic and the birth of the Third. All in all, Kaunda ruled Zambia for 27 years. In spite of the proliferation of political parties, Zambia is considered to be a de facto one-party state for two reasons: the 125 seats the MMD has in a 150 seat Parliament thereby becoming the dominant party, and the lack of a credible institution (Southall 1996:480,Chikulo 1996:39).

Chiluba and his MMD party have been in office for 10 years. Chiluba won his second five-year term in the 1996 Presidential and Parliamentary elections. The opposition UNIP boycotted the elections because of a constitutional clause the MMD stream-rolled through Parliament ahead of the elections to disqualify the UNIP candidate Kaunda from contesting the presidency (Banda 1997:40-41).

Early this year, some elements within the MMD moved a motion to amend the Republican Constitution to allow Chiluba to run for a third presidential term. But pressure from the Church and civil society and from among some dissident MMD front benchers prevented this from happening (Banda 2001:23-24). Since then, some members of the party have broken away from the MMD to form other parties.

1.4 The contemporary economic situation of Zambia

Copper is the mainstay of the Zambian economy, though lead, zinc, coal, cobalt and tobacco contribute to export earnings. By 1974, copper accounted for 90 per cent of the country's foreign currency earnings and 53 per cent of the national budget. Earnings from copper made it possible for the UNIP government to provide free education from primary to university as well as free medical services (Bratton 1994:104, Southall 1996:477).

In 1982, Kaunda amalgamated the two competing copper companies, Roan and Nchanga into the Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM), with government maintaining a 60 per cent controlling interest. But export earnings has been falling since then due to low world copper prices and declining production. The MMD Government has since broken down the state-run mining conglomerate that was ZCCM into various privatisation packages and sold individual mines to individual mining companies such as Anglo-American Plc, Cyprus Amax, Crew Development Corporation and Metorex (Global Mining Division 1999). By 1994, the Government had closed down loss-making industries and privatised almost 200 state enterprises as part of its programme to liberalise the economy in keeping with IMF/World Bank conditions (Ihonvbere 1996:59-60).

Maize is the national staple. However, 75 per cent of Zambia's food needs is imported. The Zambia Human Development Report 1999/2000 notes that only 16 per cent of the nine million cultivable land is regularly cropped. It also notes that the agricultural sector is dominated by small-scale farmers comprising about 600,000 farming households as compared to about 1,500 large scale farmers along the line of rail. Maize production has been declining steadily. It fell from 1,500 metric tonnes in 1993 to 650 metric tonnes in the 1998/99 season (Afronet 2000: 94). Large commercial farms have continued to dominate the production of cash crops like tobacco and cotton.

1.5 The Zambian social landscape

Zambia, a country with some 73 ethnic groups, is the most urbanised country in sub-Saharan Africa (Ihonvbere 1996:197). Out of a population of 10,285,631, 5,070,891 are male and 5,214,470 are female. The number of Zambians eligible to vote is 3,649,255; however, those with voters' cards actually stands at 1,760,094.

The census figures do not reflect what percentage of the population is made up of the white and Indian settler communities. The 2001 World Development Report places the national poverty line at 86 per cent of the population).

The 2001 World Development Report notes that 72.6 per cent of Zambians earn below US\$1 a day at 72.6 while 91.7 per cent earn below US\$2 per day. By 31 December 1999, the number of unemployed Zambians was 4,157,492; this figure, according to the Deputy Minister of Labour, Bates Namuyamba, represented almost 50 per cent of the country's population, the most affected being between the ages of 18 and 25 (Afronet 2000:69). The most affected were people between the ages of 18 and 25. The average gross monthly salary of civil servants is US\$45, though the cost of the monthly household food basket (excluding transport, housing, education, clothes and health fees) is estimated at US\$95. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Report 2000 notes that more than five million people in Zambia are malnourished. By 2000, there were 765,000 street children, according to a report submitted to Parliament last year by the Ministry of Community Development.

The Zambia Human Rights Report 2000 notes that 25 per cent of Zambians are illiterate. In April 2000, Oxfam reported that 665,000 children of school-going age (i.e. about one-third of the population in that age category) were not attending regular schooling.

The socio-economic and political situation in an environment where political opposition is weak has, according to Sichone (1999:94) and Ihonvbere (1996:181), the effect of stimulating civil society to a certain extent. In this regard, civil society refers to those who feel they are without access to the state, and includes even those who have raised issues of regional autonomy and cultural unity to create political space for themselves (Sichone 1996:95).

Among some of the prominent civic groups in Zambia influencing national politics are the Church, the Law Association of Zambia, the Zambia Association of Research and Development (ZARD), the National Women's Lobby Group and the University of Zambia Students' Union (UNZASU) which has, since the late 1960s been militant on national political social and economic issues. (Sichone 1996:116-118).

In November 1991, President Chiluba declared Zambia a Christian nation on the basis that the country is predominantly Christian. There are small Moslem, Sikh and Hindu communities, though these are largely dominated by Asian settlers. The Ba'hai Faith too has a presence in Zambia as do religious organisations like the Unification Church and Hare Krishna. In the absence of statistics, it is difficult to establish how the country is divided along religious lines.

1.6 The Zambian Parliament

The Zambian Parliament meets three times a year. The first meeting takes place from mid-January to the end of March. The second or mid-year meeting takes place between June and September and the third meeting takes place between October and December. Members of Parliament are elected for a five-year term. Most Bills are introduced by Ministers and are known as Government Bills. Though technically, individual parliamentarians may introduce Members' Bills, this rarely happens.

According to Article 62 of the Constitution of Zambia, "Parliament" is a composite body consisting of the President and the National Assembly. The President, through powers conferred on him by the Constitution, calls Parliament to meet, calls elections and gives approval (the Presidential Assent) to law. Otherwise, the President does not play an active role in parliamentary work. Following each general election, the President, who is also head of state, addresses Parliament to mark the beginning of a new session.

The opening speech outlines the policies government intends to pursue and the legislative measures it intends to introduce. Thereafter, the House debates the speech through the Motion of Thanks to the President's speech. It is the National Assembly, comprising 150 elected Members and eight Members nominated by the President, that carries out the functions of making laws (Acts of Parliament), approving proposals for taxation and public expenditure, and keeping the work of Government under scrutiny and review. Government policies formulated by the Executive Branch are subject to approval by the Legislature.¹ After the Budget is presented to Parliament, for example, the House debates and examines the expenditure and estimates for each ministry before passing the Appropriation Act.²

¹ This stipulation is outlined in Article 51 of the Republican Constitution which states that: "The Cabinet shall be accountable collectively to the National Assembly".

² The Appropriation Act is a law enacted every year authorising Government to spend money approved by the National Assembly.

To ensure that the Executive is accountable, National Assembly has in place a system of watchdog or investigative committees covering nearly every field of government administration. There are 10 such committees, namely: Public Accounts Committee, Committee on Government Assurances; Committee on Foreign Affairs; Committee on Agriculture, Lands and Co-operatives; Committee on Social Services; Committee on Delegated Legislation; Committee on Local Administration; Committee on Women, Youth and Child Development, and Committee of Education, Science and Technology.³

³ The 10 investigative Committees of Parliament are: Public Accounts, which examines the accounts of the republic based on the annual reports of the Auditor-General and ensures that public funds are used for the purposes for which they were voted by Parliament; Committee on Government Assurances, which scrutinises all assurances, promises and undertakings made by Cabinet Ministers and Deputy Ministers on the floor of the House; Committee on Foreign Affairs, which examines Zambia's foreign policy and scrutinises all treaties and agreements made by government; Committee on Agriculture, Lands and Co-operative, which monitors the implementation of government policies on agriculture, fisheries, land use and co-operatives; Committee on Social Services, which scrutinises government policies on the provision of social services in the country; Committee on Delegated Legislation, which examines all statutory instruments and subsidiary legislation and ensures that these are in line with existing laws, and once they are found to be compliant, these are published in the Government Gazette not more than 28 days after they were made; Committee on Local Administration, which deals with matters relating to administration of local councils; Committee on Women, Youth and Child Development, which scrutinises government policies on women, youth and children as well as the activities on statutory bodies involved in the same; Committee on Education, Science and Technology, which examines policy on education, science and technology.

In addition, the House constitutes select and adhoc committees from time to time to deal with specific issues such as the scrutiny of certain presidential appointments. Once the tasks before them are completed, these committees are dissolved.

1.7 The Media in Zambia

The media landscape in Zambia is relatively small compared to, for example Zimbabwe. . Except for one government-owned radio station which reaches all nine provinces of the country, practically all the media in Zambia is urban-based and urban-oriented, a symptom of the high urbanisation levels in the country. A government initiative to reach the rural public through its information department, Zambia Information Services (ZIS), resulted in the establishment of six local language newspapers shortly after independence in 1964. However, lack of funds has caused ZIS to halt the publication of vernacular newspapers (Banda 2001:12).

Djokotoe (2001:241, Banda 2001:14) provide the following inventory of the print media industry in Zambia.

Name of Newspaper/magazine	Ownership	Frequency	Circulation
Times of Zambia	Government	Daily	15,000
Zambia Daily Mail	Government	Daily	12,000
Post	Private	Daily	30,000
Monitor	Private/NGO	Weekly	5,000
Sunday Times	Government	Weekly	15,000
Sunday Mail	Government	Weekly	5,000
Today	Private	Weekly	3,000
National Mirror	Church	Weekly	5,000
Times Business	Government	Weekly	5,000
Financial Mail	Government	Weekly	4,000
Trendsetters	Private	Weekly	15,000
Icengelo	Church	Weekly	30,000
Zambian Farmer	Farmers' Union	Weekly	5,000

The 1999 Southern African Media Directory notes that aside from *The Post*, whose circulation is audited by the London-based Audit Bureau of Circulation, no other Zambian newspaper has its circulation independently audited. The above circulation figures therefore not been verified by an independent audit.

Radio is the most popular and most far-reaching medium in Zambia (Banda 2001:15). Until 1994, the government-owned Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) monopolised the airwaves with three radio channels: Radio One, a local languages channel, Radio Two, a General Service English Channel and Radio Four, an entertainment channel.

Today, a number of non-government radio stations have gained access to the national airwaves. Notable among these are Radio Phoenix, a private Lusaka-based commercial FM station which reaches the Central and Copperbelt Provinces, Radio Christian Voice, a private station which broadcasts in FM and short-wave, reaching Central and Southern Africa with Christian programming. The Catholic Church owns four radio stations around the country. A 1999 ZNBC/Channel Africa media survey estimated that 1.5 million households have radio sets and the estimated reach of radio as 6.5 million listeners nationwide.

ZNBC has a single-channel television station. Its competitors are two private pay stations, Multi-Choice Zambia Ltd. a subsidiary of Multi-Choice South Africa and Cable and Satellite Television (CASAT) which bring analogue and digital television to the more affluent. There is also Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), a Christian TV station affiliated to the TBN in the United States (Banda 2001:16). The 1999 ZNBC/Channel Africa media survey places television set ownership at 900,000 countrywide and the estimated reach of television at 5 million.

1.8 The Press and Parliament in Zambia

The importance of Parliament as an institution mandated to make laws, approve proposals for taxation and public expenditure and keep the work of Government under scrutiny and review cannot be over emphasized. In the interests of public communication as well as the public's right to know how they are governed, media coverage of Parliament is equally important and in the case of Zambia, this is manifested in sessional coverage by both the local print and electronic media, both private and government (though tape recorders and television cameras are not allowed in the House except during the ceremonial opening of Parliament every January). Traditionally, coverage of Parliament has been restricted to almost verbatim transcripts from the floor of the House, detailing who said what. Thus when Parliament is not in session, there is no coverage of its activities. There is no coverage of Parliamentary Committees, perhaps because journalists are not allowed to attend their meetings or have access to material deriving therefrom.

Relations between Parliament and the press in Zambia have been historically strained (Kasoma 1986:) Part of the reason is attributed to archaic media laws relating to Parliament and restricting media practice that date back to the colonial era and were enacted by the colonial government to "keep tight control over the aspirations and the growing independence movements of those times"(Chanda & Liswaniso 1999:i). One such law is the National Assembly Powers and Privileges Act (Chapter 17 of the Laws of Zambia). The Act proscribes offences considered to be in a contempt of Parliament. In terms of Section of the Act, it is an offence to "show disrespect in speech or manner towards the Speaker" and "to commit any other act of intentional disrespect with reference to the proceedings of the Assembly or of a committee of the Assembly or to any persons presiding at such proceedings".

Section Seven provides that "no stranger, journalists included, shall be entitled, as of right, to enter or remain within the precincts of the Assembly Chamber and the Speaker or any other officer authorised in that behalf by the Speaker may at any time order any stranger to leave the Chamber". Over the years, Parliament has accused newspapers of violating its privileges in the manner in which the press reports parliamentary proceedings and comments on these (Kasoma 1986:198). Editors, who in the eyes of Parliament have erred in the manner in which they published news from the National Assembly have been severely reprimanded before the House, threatened with stiff punishment, and forced to apologise (Kasoma 1986:198; Laundry 1989:130). In an editorial published on 28 January 1970, a *Times of Zambia* Editor-in-Chief, Dunstan Kamana described Parliament as "Zambia's most expensive rubber stamp" after Parliament passed a Constitutional Amendment Bill that had been initially thrown out. He was reprimanded. Another *Times* Editor-in-Chief, John Musukuma was scolded in the House for quoting from uncorrected transcripts of the daily parliamentary debates.⁴

⁴ In 1980, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Robinson Nabulyato, told the then Editor-in-Chief of the *Times*: "The House would have decided on a much stiffer punishment like sending you to prison or levying a heavy fine on you, since your paper is in the habit of committing these breaches" (Kasoma 1986:157). In February 1996, Nabulyato ruled that *Post* editors, Fred M'membe, Bright Mwape, and freelance columnist, Lucy Sichone, were guilty of contempt of parliament. The three had written articles commenting on criticism made in Parliament by a senior government minister on a High Court ruling that legislation requiring police permits to be granted to those wishing to hold public rallies and demonstrations was unconstitutional. The Speaker ordered their arrest and sentenced them to indefinite imprisonment. Lucy Sichone went into hiding but M'membe and Mwape spent 24 days in maximum security jails before the High Court ruled that they should be released as the circumstances under which they were arrested were unlawful. The court found them in contempt of Parliament under legislation dating back to British colonial rule and ordered them to appear before Parliament on 30 April 1996. On 9 March 1999, the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Simon Mwila, directed the Minister of Defence to take action against *The Post* for a report it published in its issue no. 1183 of the same day which said Zambia did not have the military capacity to defend itself against Angola in the event of an attack. The paper was placed before the table of the House by one Member, Christopher Chawinga who said *The Post* had "undressed" Zambia as a nation by comparing the defence capabilities of the two countries and put the lives of citizens at risk. By the end of the week, 12 *Post* reporters had been arrested and charged with espionage. (Djokotoe 2001:219-220). They were acquitted by the High Court last year. What these incidents reveal is an adversarial relationship between Parliament and the press in Zambia, with Parliament having the legal power to deal with the press forcefully.

In recent times, Parliament has made an attempt to review its relationship with the press. This is contained in a letter dated 13 December, 1999 from the Office of the Clerk of the National Assembly to the Zambia Institute of Mass Communication (ZAMCOM). In the letter, the National Assembly said it planned to facilitate more public attendance and media coverage of the Committee meetings and sitting of the House. To this effect, the letter added, a team had been constituted to work on the modalities for regular public attendance by the public and opportunities for the media coverage. ("Being one of the strategic institutions involved in media communication and the dissemination of information to the public, I am further directed to request for a meeting between the Task Team and your institution to brainstorm on how best to go forward in this proposed programme...").¹.

1.9 Thesis Outline

The thesis is made up of six chapters. The first chapter, entitled **Introduction**, presents the general background to the study as well as the rationale behind it. It provided a contemporary account of Zambian society as a contextual background to understanding the press and Parliament in Zambia.

The second chapter, entitled **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**, examined the general perspectives on media and democracy. It also examined the range of normative theory paradigms and wove these into the fabric of the study to define the place of the media in a democracy.

The third chapter, entitled **Media Coverage of Parliament: A Zambian Perspective.**, concerned itself with how the Zambian press reports Parliament. It also focused on reception analysis to show how Zambians use media. The chapter was based on the assumption that the media has effects on the public and that these effects can be apprehended through research and study.

¹ A copy of this letter has been attached as Appendix 1.

Research Methodology was the title of the fourth chapter. It described the research design used in the study and justified the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods used in the exercise. It also defined the range of raw data used, why it was chosen and how it was analysed and interpreted.

The fifth chapter, **Findings, Interpretation and Discussion**, presented the findings of the study in two parts. The first part was a qualitative account and analysis of data derived from a content analysis of newspaper coverage of Parliament during the period of study. The second part provided a textual analytical account of the coverage.

Conclusion and Recommendations was the sixth and final chapter. It provided a short description of the findings of the research and suggested some recommendations in the light of the findings.

1.10 Conclusion

The chapter provided an overview of the study as well as the general background to it. It outlined the objective of the study, the research issues and assumptions and an outline of the entire thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

2.0 Introduction

This chapter examines general perspectives on media and democracy, especially how the media's assumed informational and interpretative prerogative informs public opinion, encouraging wide and inclusive debate about issues of social and political importance. The discussion of media and democracy, besides providing a contextual backdrop for examining media coverage of Parliament and how this impacts on democracy or contributes to it, examines some of the paradoxes about the media's public sphere role.

A range of normative theory paradigms have been woven into the fabric of the discussion to help define the place of the media in established democracies as well as emergent ones like Zambia.

2.1 Media and Democracy: A General Perspective

Scholarly research into the area of media and democracy is quite broad. Much of the study in this area is on the presumed role the media plays in the functioning and consolidation of democracy, especially in established democracies of North America and Western Europe (Dahlgren 1995:2; Page 1996:2; McNair 1995:18; Keane 1991:2; Randall 1998:3; Curran 2000:127; McQuail 1994:1).

Sartori (1995:101) notes that the theory and practice of liberal democracy are a Western product rooted in Western history and culture. He argues that liberal democracy is composed of two distinct elements: “freeing the people”(liberal) and “empowering the people” (democracy). In this regard, Sartori (1995:102) espouses that Western democracy involves protecting the people from tyranny (“demo-protection”) and the implementation of popular rule (“demo-power”).¹

One of the dominant ideas that pervades scholarship in the area of media and democracy is that media are a democratic imperative because they counteract the principle of sovereignty of official state politics (Keane 1991:4). McQuail (2000) writes that the idea of the media as a democratic imperative is located within normative media theory, which postulates that the media contribute to the working of democratic society by, among other things:

maintaining a constant surveillance of events, ideas and persons active in public life, leading both to a flow of information to the public and exposing violations of the moral and social order; providing an independent and radical critique of the society and its institutions; encouraging and providing the means for access, expression and participation, by as many different actors and voices as is necessary of appropriate. (p.161).

¹ Sartori insists that he is using the concept “liberal” in its historical sense, not in the sense in which it is currently used in the United States as a synonym for “left”. He says historically, the creation of a free people was the “accomplishment of liberalism” (from Locke to Benjamin Constant) and that this element is singled out by the notions of constitutional democracy and/or liberal constitutionalism.

Scholars like Nordenstreng (2000:3) and Oreja et. al. (1998:9) argue that modern democratic societies cannot survive without widely available and accessible media which reflect the pluralistic nature of society, are not dominated by any one viewpoint or controlled by any one interest group and which exist to make available information necessary for citizens to make informed choices about their lives and their communities.

Coleman, Taylor and van de Donk (1999:365) argue that the successful functioning of any parliamentary democracy depends on "efficient, multi-directional flows of information for three main reasons: firstly, citizens need information before they can make "sensible choices" about who will represent them; secondly, they need information about their representatives so that politicians can be evaluated on the basis of their work record, and thirdly, elected representatives, citizens and civil society can collectively pass effective legislation, scrutinise executive functions and generally hold government accountable.

Dahlgren, for instance, (1995:2) notes that the "health of democracy" is inextricably linked to the "health of the systems of communication" — systems which have certain significant functions: surveillance and reporting of the socio-political environment, highlighting issues and developments likely to impinge on the welfare of citizens; agenda setting and identifying the key issues of the day; dialogue across a diverse range of views and mechanisms for holding public officials accountable in their exercise of power (McNair 1995:21, Blumler and Gurevitch 1995:97). Indeed McNair (1995) argues that in a democracy, the media also provide space for the expression of dissent, "without which the notion of democratic consensus would be meaningless". In essence, democracy runs on political communication which he defines as

public discussion about the allocation of public resources (revenues), official authority (who is given power to make legal, legislative and executive decision), and official sanctions (what the state rewards or punishes) (p.21)

2.2 Media, Democracy and the Public Sphere: Western Perspectives

Scholars like Sussman (1996:79), Page (1996:5) and McQuail (2000:157) state that citizen participation in politics is fundamental to democracy and that citizens require access to the political process in order to gain information and to play a participatory role in decision making. Murdock (1995:21) notes that the media in a democracy is implicated in the constitution of citizenship in very distinct ways. He argues that the only way people can exercise their full rights as citizens is if they have access to information, advice, analysis, interpretation and debate on areas that "involve public political choices". Page (1996:5) concurs, noting that democracy would be dysfunctional if citizens merely chose leaders at election time and then forgot entirely about politics until the next election. In short, a well-functioning democracy depends on media which facilitates public debate by "reconstituting private citizens as a public body in the form of public opinion" (Page 1996:5). A body so reconstituted, notes Curran (1996) becomes a public sphere, that is

a neutral zone where access to relevant information affecting the public good is widely available, where discussion is free of domination and where all those participating in public debate do so on an equal basis. (p.82).

Kuhn (1998:23-24) sees the public sphere as an "institutional framework and set of practices which encourage wide and inclusive debate about issues of social and political importance". McQuail (2000:157) theorises that the public sphere is a notional space which provides a more or less autonomous and open arena or forum for public debate and where "access to the space is free, and freedom of assembly, association and expression are guaranteed." With Schulz's (1997:65) model of a "media-constructed public sphere, the media have come to play a more central role in the workings of the political system in recent times because other fora of political interaction such as the political meeting have declined. He notes that television and the press are still the most important sources of information and ideas in a democracy "and still a largely shared experience for citizens, despite tendencies towards fragmentation of the audience". (p.66)

Admittedly, these notions of public sphere are significantly different from the original one conceived by German sociologist Jurgen Habermas. Habermas (1995:239) locates the development of the public sphere in 18th century Britain where the press had already begun its contemporary function of supplying not only information but also opinion, comment and criticism, facilitating debate among the emergent bourgeois and educated classes who met in coffee shops and debating societies to contribute their ideas to the fabric of bourgeois public opinion. For Habermas, when active participants in political life met, discussed, formed political projects and kept a check on government by way of informed and influential opinion, they constituted a public sphere (McQuail 2000:158).

The rejection of Habermas' idea of public sphere by media scholars stems from what Curran (2000:134) describes as "an archaic understanding of polity", one which "fails to recognise that people are represented primarily through political parties, interest groups and the myriad structures of civil society"—"the principal building blocks of contemporary liberal democracy". It is noteworthy that Habermas has since revisited his views on the public sphere. He now describes it as a "network for communicating information and points of view" that connects the private world of everyday experience to the political system" (Curran 1995:135). The revisitation of the concept of public sphere by the scholar who conceived it reflects the state of flux characterising the current state of media and democracy as well as the existing forms of political communication (McQuail 2000:159).

Scholars like Schudson (1998:107) and Glasser and Craft (1997:89), in response to what McQuail (2000:159) describes as "discontent of the contemporary public sphere" suggest that journalism will need to re-invent itself in order to enhance democracy. Glasser and Craft (1997:91) call for a shift away from a "journalism of information" to a "journalism of conversation", essentially because the public needs not only information but also the call for engagement invites discussion and debate.

Sussman (1996:83) acknowledges that such public engagement depends on citizens who are relative well-informed about...the policy debates taking place within political institutions and are able to access the quality of representation of legislation, in particular, to the inner chambers of the political process. Page (1996:2) admits that even if the public is capable of a “high level of rationality and good sense”, public opinion is bound to depend on the political information and ideas conveyed to it. Only then, he argues, can there be “high-level deliberation”—a phenomenon he defines as “reasoning and discussion about the merits of public policy”. (p.2).

A case in point. In Denmark, the decision about whether the country should join the common European currency, the euro, was thrown to the public in a referendum held in September 2000. According to those who campaigned for entry, a common currency makes good economic sense for the following reasons: it increases price transparency, cuts transaction costs and eliminates the risk premiums that borrowers must pay when they take out loans in Danish krone. The No-campaigners on the other hand argue that the country’s economy has been doing well without the euro and that Denmark could come under pressure to dismantle its welfare state if it joins.²

² Charles Wallace, in an article headlined “Decisive Danes” published in *Time* magazine (18 September 2000) notes that from 1982, the Danish krone had been fixed against the sturdy German mark, a link which had kept the economic humming steadily. On the basis of this kind of economic stability, economic growth was estimated at 2.3 per cent in 2000, with an unemployment rate of 5.6 per cent, which is well below the European average. There were fears that this might change once Denmark joined the euro. According to Morden Storgaard Jakobsen, a research executive at the Gallup organisation, the Opposition’s constant worrying about the Danish welfare state has split men and women over the euro. Fewer than 35 per cent of women support joining the euro whereas 50 per cent of men do.

The Danish experience illustrates the nature of informed dialogue within the political sphere and endorses Habermas' notion that

The political public sphere constitutes a space—a discursive, institutional, typographical space—where people in their roles as citizens have access to what can be metaphorically called societal dialogue which deal with questions of common concern.

More recent scholarship in the area of media and democracy acknowledges another form of public sphere which promises more participatory politics through new media, particularly the Internet. McQuail (2000:135) assesses the ideas of a “Virtual Congress”, an “electronic town meeting” and even “electronic democracy” conceived by scholars like Street (1997) and notes that although the new communications technology would solve problems of information and participation, the political status quo cannot change without other basic changes in society. Coleman, Taylor and van de Donk (1999:366) argue that one response to the “alleged crisis of political communication” alluded to by Blumler and Gurevitch (1995:97) is to examine the potential applications of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) to the political process.

They posit that

If the existence of efficient flows of information are as important for democracy as has been suggested, might not the immense development in the means of communicating information, based upon digital technologies, the convergence of computers and telecommunications (telematics) and the extraordinary development of Internet technology, have a profound effect upon the way that democracy occurs?³

³ Coleman, Taylor and van de Donk (1999:369) refer to some of the technological innovations that some legislative assemblies have harnessed. According to them, the Australian parliament, based on the Westminster model, is one of the most hi-tech legislatures in the world. The Scottish parliament has transcended the procedures of Westminster and is using ICTs to make legislators more efficient, transparent and accountable than those in older parliaments.

In spite of the differences in the idea media scholars have about public sphere, there seems to be agreement that on the whole, media must provide a basis for public discussion and for public engagement in matters of political and social concern.

Nordenstreng (1997:112) argues media roles in society would largely depend on the kind of normative theory paradigms used to define the relationship. He outlines the following normative paradigms and discusses their implications on media and democracy:

- liberal-pluralist paradigm, which is based on the old libertarian theory and its emphasis on the individual, on public interest and on how media accountability to society can be achieved through minimum self-regulation and minimum role for the state;
- social-responsibility paradigm, which favours communitarian over individualist political theory and which frames a social obligation for the media which go beyond self-interest of media owners;
- critical paradigm, which views the media as being located within existing social structures and power relations and being part of a prevailing hegemonic order;
- administrative paradigm, which has an information-technocratic bias and places a great premium on journalistic professionalism and objective journalism than on public involvement and engagement.

Nordenstreng's normative paradigms may be qualitatively different, but they are located in a notion of democracy described by Keane (1993:244) as "a system of procedural rules with pluralist implications"—a notion of democracy which promotes economic growth and "offers the security of property rights that is necessary for capitalist progress."⁴ Besides defining the media's role, the democratic procedures which Keane (1992:245) cites include:

...equal and universal adult suffrage in constituencies of various sizes; majority rule and guarantees of minority rights, which ensure that collective decisions are approved by a substantial number of those entitled to make them; the rule of law, constitutional guarantees of freedom of assembly and expression and other liberties, which help ensure that those expected to decide or to elect those who can choose among real alternatives; and various social policies (in fields such as health, education, child-care and basic income provision) which prevent market exchanges from becoming dominant and ensure that citizens can live as free equals and thereby enjoy their basic political and civil entitlements.

On the basis of these procedures, Keane (1993: 245) defines democracy as a

multi-layered political and social mosaic in which the political decision-makers at the local, regional, national and supranational levels are assigned the job of serving and codifying the *res publica*, while for their part, citizens living within civil society are obliged to exercise vigilance in preventing each other and their rulers from abusing their power and violating the spirit of the commonwealth.⁵

In operational terms, notes Keane (1992:245), a modern democracy requires both mechanisms of representation and the institutional division of state and civil society, that is

a pluralistic, self-organising (international) civil society which is co-ordinated and guaranteed by multi-layered (supranational) state institutions, which are in turn held permanently accountable to civil society by mechanisms—political parties, legislature and communications media—which keep open the channels between state and social institutions.

⁵ Keane (1988).

Held (1993:23) posits that the political and structural changes that took place in Central and Eastern Europe confirm the functionality of the model of democracy described by Keane because it is based on a tried and tested cluster of rules and institutions which include

elected government, free and fair elections in which every citizen's vote has an equal weight; a suffrage which embraces all citizens irrespective of distinctions of race, religion, class, sex and so on; freedom of conscience, information and expression on all public matters broadly defined; the right of all adults to oppose their government and stand for office; and associational autonomy – the right to form independent associations including social movements, interest groups and political parties.

The common denominator of democratic characteristics notwithstanding, scholars like Held (1993:14) admit that there is no such thing as a single institutionalised form of liberal democracy. In his view, contemporary democracies have crystallised into a number of different types “which makes any appeal to a liberal position vague at best”. Scholars like Miller (1993:74) Budge (1993:136) and Held (1993:15) note that within the history of democratic theory, there is disagreement about whether democracy should be some kind of popular power (a form of politics in which citizens are engaged in self-government and self-regulation) or an aid to decision-making (a means of conferring authority on those periodically voted into office). Held (1993:15) postulates that the ideological conflict about what democracy is or should be was largely responsible for the emergence of variants of it. He identifies three models: direct or participatory democracy, where citizens participate directly in decision making about public affairs because it is geopolitically feasible to do so; liberal or representative democracy, a system of government based on elected members who undertake to “represent the interests or views of citizens within the framework of the rule of law”; and a variant based on the one-party model.

2.2.1 Media, Democracy and the Public Sphere: African Perspectives

Whether Western theory is applicable for analysing media and democracy in Africa is a question that has preoccupied many scholars over the years. Zaffiro (1999), for example, notes that

Western-style media democracy demands much of African mass media intent on assuming roles in service of their respective political systems, including: (1) surveillance of developments, both positive and negative, which may affect citizens' welfare; (2) identifying key issues (agenda-setting); (3) offering accessible platforms for intelligible, illuminating advocacy by politicians and interests; (4) serving as a bridge for dialogues across a wide range of views by power-holders, aspirants and the citizenry; (5) holding public officials accountable for their exercise of power; (6) educating and motivating citizens about politics and participation; (7) maintaining independence and integrity. (p.2)

Ronning (1994:1) argues that expectations about the role of the African media in the democratic process became a major preoccupation for scholars in the early 1990s when many countries on the continent were catching the contagion of democratisation.⁶ He notes that the debate about the relationship between the media and the state and about the role of the independent press led, for instance, to the establishment of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) in August 1992 "to promote and defend press freedom and take appropriate steps where such freedoms are violated and to seek to remove obstacles and impediments to the free flow of information".

⁶ In 1990, citizens took to the streets of capital cities in 14 African countries to express discontent with economic hardships and political repression and to demand democratic reform. During the same period, at least 21 governments launched reform efforts to permit greater pluralism and competition within the polity. Bratton and van de Walle (1992:27) in a discussion of the above-mentioned process, acknowledge Richard Sklar's "prediction" of 1986 that a time would soon come when Africans would prefer "the unpredictable vicissitudes of democracy to the stifling abuse of development dictatorships".

Ronning(1994:1-3) argues that the collapse of one-party regimes (such as Kaunda's in Zambia) and the development of multi-party systems combined with a demand for more democratic structures, and a debate over "the basic principles of democracy will involve questions such as the demand for freedom of expression and the need for independent and critical media". He acknowledges a dilemma arising out of a critique of the African media: on the one hand, there is a school of thought that espouses that strong state control can be counteracted by introducing "market forces" and in this, they have been supported by strong international interests and trends; on the other hand,

governments who see their influence of the media threatened and fear that they will lose control over the flow of information have had the tendency to regard all forms of independent media...as mouthpieces for a political opposition.

Ansah (1991:12) identifies what he considers to be the three major crises facing the African media and making them ineffectual as institutions: the crisis of power, the crisis of ownership and the crisis of resources. African states and African media are structurally weak, and because of the weakness of African states, they tend to be suspicious of the media of being tools for sowing dissent and for stirring political opposition.

As a result, African states control their media using a variety of means which range from outright censorship to economic control. Ansah (1991:12) further argues that though the independent media in Africa could play a central role in mediating between views and opinions and generally sustaining the democratic process, the fact that African media are weak makes them largely ineffectual. They are weak because their reach is limited and because the market they reach is small. With low literacy levels and lack of education opportunities across the continent, the press especially, notes Ansah, cannot be a *tour de force*. These set of problems, coupled with underdeveloped infrastructure and distribution systems have tended to work against the African media. Ansah observes that where an independent press exists to counteract the dominance of government-controlled media, they are in the hands of the economic elite, and together with government, they maintain a monopoly on the flow of information.

Ironically, he suggests that in most African countries where there are few independent newspapers exist, it is government's responsibility "to provide people with as broad a range of views as possible to enable them reach rational conclusions and thus contribute to national development".

Pitts (2000:274) is sceptical of the kind of solution Ansah (1991) proposes. He argues it does not follow that because "a façade of Western democracy is in place" in several parts of Africa, a libertarian style of press will promote a marketplace of ideas. He bases his opinion on the notion that modern Africa has very little democratic tradition and that the heritage is predominantly an authoritarian political culture.

Pitts (2000:275) also notes that Africa has never provided a model for free and independent press. Instead, the press is normally controlled through a government information ministry or through a government-owned corporation. He argues that such control creates a closed environment for the media and that "even without restrictions, the press becomes an extension of national government".

Nyamnjoh (1999:3) adds that all over Africa, particularly in Cameroon, Mali, Niger, Cote d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Kenya the media have allowed themselves to be used as

mouthpieces for divisive forces, often reproducing calls to murder, destruction and hatred, and generally keeping everyone fearful of a Rwanda-type situation where Radio Mille Collines proved what the media can do to spur ethnic cleansing.

Berger (1999:3), on the other hand, argues that much as it is a dominant normative framework, liberal pluralism is too narrow to be a universal analytical framework. Furthermore, he contends that media and democracy are best placed in "very specific historico-cultural-intellectual context".

In this regard, Berger (1999) notes that though media and democracy denote definite institutions,

it is prudent to put aside the spontaneous institutional images of newspapers and journalists, and of polling booths and grand parliamentary buildings populated by political representatives...(p.1)

so that more attention could be focused on criteria are “more general and potentially more universally present in human societies”—criteria that are transferable and can be used as the basis for analysing the said concepts in diverse conditions. Sartori (1995:108-9) suggests that given the diversity in experiences between Western societies on the one hand and African and Asian societies on the other, it would help if African and Asian societies developed their own “models” of democracy based on their own political, cultural and historical experiences and on “the constitutional techniques for protecting citizens and controlling (limiting) the exercise of political power”.

Sartori bases his suggestion on the premise that creating a democracy “by imitation”(like trying to transplant the American model in, say, Zambia) is likely to be faced with a fundamental problem that has to do with a gap between what he calls “calendar time and historical time”. He explains his reasoning as follows:

Copying a political model is a synchronic process based on calendar time: we import today what exists today. But in terms of historical time, countries can be a thousand years apart. Historically, Afghanistan and millions of villages scattered across the underdeveloped areas today are about where most of Europe was in the Middle Ages. Thus the import business is not as easy as it is often made to appear...Even though calendar time today is the same in Washington as it is in Kabul, a transplant from the former to the latter is a huge leap.⁷

Nevertheless, there are scholars who believe that the media did indeed play a significant role in the current democratisation process in Africa. Nyamnjoh (1999:1-3) and Okigbo (2000:64) concede that the democratisation process brought with it multi-partyism as well as media pluralism; however, research on media and elections in Southern Africa suggest that the media have not performed this role properly.

⁷ Sartori discusses what he considers the preconditions of democracy extensively in an essay entitled “How Far Can Free Government Travel?” published in July 1995 in the *Journal of Democracy*.

Okigbo (2000:64) argues that the African media and civil society are “not contributing enough to speed up the inevitable inauguration of a new political climate founded on popular participation (and the other trappings of political democracy)”. In this regard, notes Berger (1999:3), this is because concepts of civil society and public sphere, in the particular forms taken over into Africa, reflect their origins in societies extremely different to most of those in Africa. He argues that firstly, the application of these concepts to Africa’s democratisation period has seldom included a focus on how they related to the continent’s media. Secondly, there is “no clear articulation defined between civil society and the public sphere in Africa.

In the main, scholars like Ansah (1991), Ronning (1994) and Okigbo (2000) posit that media and democracy in African contexts, not to mention the study of it, is plagued by crises. In the absence of a coherent theory to explain the peculiarities of media and democracy in Africa, scholars have consistently relied on liberal democratic theory to provide conceptual and theoretical benchmarks. Undoubtedly, these benchmarks influence how media and democracy in Africa is perceived and studied, irrespective of the fact that they are products of a specific Euro-centric historical, cultural, political, ideological, economic and social experience and are therefore too exclusive as an analytical framework. However, they do not mitigate the pervasiveness of strong state control and political absolutism in most of the countries on the African continent, the presence of private papers, vibrant civic organisations, legislative assemblies populated by popularly-elected representatives in widely-contested, free-and fair elections in these countries notwithstanding.

So contrary to what scholars like Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) and Dahlgren (1995) might assume, the health of democracy in Africa is not so much threatened by a crisis in public communication as by the interplay of different crises altogether, such as weak democratic institutions (like the media, Parliament, civil society, the public sphere) and weak democratic traditions. All in all, what Ansah (1991:12) describes as a crisis of power, a crisis of ownership and a crisis of resources in Africa conspire to influence, among other things, the sociology of news production and the outcome of editorial activities deriving from it.

Detailed analysis of media and democracy in Africa may be, in the words of Berger (1999:1) “patchy and lacking in theoretical foundation”. However, in the process of analysing and discussing theories which have been created by societies with rather different media conditions to Africa, scholars could gain some useful insights about the relationship between media and democracy on the continent.

2.3 The Role of Legislative Assemblies in a Democracy

Irrespective of what variant of democracy exists or what theory uses as a point of departure, Laundry (1989:31) notes that there is general agreement that a legislative assembly is a symbol of popular participation in government and decision making, however real or illusory the extent of the participation. As an institution, legislative assemblies are part of a wider package of political culture steeped in the principles of Western liberal democracy which “grew out of the bourgeois critique of autocracy in early modern Europe, beginning in the sixteenth century and culminating in the French Revolution of 1789, with its slogan of ‘Liberty, Equality and Fraternity’ (McNair 1995:17) For instance, according to the revised Instrument of Government and Riksdag Act of 1974 (the main element of the Swedish constitution), the Swedish legislative assembly (Riksdag) is “the principal representative of the people”.

Miles (1997:423) notes that

...the Riksdag’s power derives from its constituent status as the voice of the Swedish people and thus, levels of popular awareness and public support for the role of the legislature are critical to its operational effectiveness and constitutional influence.

Laundry (1989:1) acknowledges that in terms of structure, size and composition, legislative assemblies differ from country to country and from one political experience to another. Though he refers to legislative assemblies as Parliaments for conceptual convenience, Laundry insists that the term is usually associated with the British system of parliamentary government which has influenced the development of representative assemblies in many parts of the world whose main responsibilities are making laws, approving proposals for taxation and public expenditure and keeping the work of government under scrutiny and review.

Negrine (1999:24), in a study of three legislative assemblies--the British House of Commons, the French Assemblée Nationale and the German Bundestag—describes the peculiarities of each of these institutions and the roles they play within their respective political systems.⁸

⁸ The British Parliament is an example of a “speech” parliament (as contrasted with a “work” parliament) where great importance is attached to debate and discussion. It is adversarial and confrontational, with the governing party (the majority in the House) on one side of the chamber and the opposition on the other, no more so than during Prime Minister’s Question Time. This is an important occasion for both parties and for the media: when the prime minister scores points, the party in power is heartened, and when the opposition strikes a blow, the party’s morale rises. The role of such sessions is not so much to get hold of information and let others participate in parliamentary life but also to make political points. In France, by contrast, power is divided between the president and the prime minister, who leads the majority party in parliament, the Assemblée Nationale. Other differences such as, say that ministers need not be members of parliament or that committees play a significant part in the scrutiny of a government’s legislative programme, are important, and give the French parliament its particular role—the role according to John Frears (1990:32), of an institution that is “inadequate as an arena for political debate and as a check on the executive.” He adds: “The constitutional and procedural constraints can be summarised thus: complete executive supremacy in the legislative process, severely limited opportunities for general debates criticising the government, virtually no opportunities for scrutinising executive acts and making the executive give account of them.” Frears (1990:33). In the German Parliament (the Bundestag), power lies more with parliamentary groups within it than with individuals. Furthermore, a lot of work goes on in parliamentary committees, thereby altering the nature of plenary sessions. Plenary sessions are infrequent, numbering only about 60 a year (compared to about 170 in France and Britain) and MPs spend most of their time in party and committee meetings. Unlike their counterparts in the British and French parliament, German parliamentarians need permission from their groups to submit a question to the legislative assembly.

Under the British parliamentary system, the executive is constitutionally subject to parliamentary control; the Prime Minister and the entire cabinet are Members of Parliament and are answerable to the popularly-elected House. This also applies in some countries with constitutional presidencies like India, Malta and Trinidad and Tobago and those with executive presidencies like Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania (Laundry 1989:31).

In the United States, the system is somewhat different. Under the separation of powers engrained in the American Constitution, the President, the judiciary and Congress have well-defined powers designed to maintain a balance among them. The President can veto any bill which is sent by Congress for his assent, but Congress can override his veto by a two-thirds majority of both chambers (Laundry 1989:32). The courts, in turn, could strike down legislation if deemed unconstitutional. Many Parliaments consider informing citizens one of their main duties and they fulfill this by making verbatim reports of debates, evidence given before parliamentary committees and a whole range of other documents are published and made available to the public through their information and public relations offices (Laundry 1989:131). Miles (1997:423) notes that popular awareness of the activities of a country's legislature is a requisite for a healthy parliamentary democracy. He adds that in the specific case of the Swedish parliament, such a requisite is engrained in the national culture of freedom of information and public access to official parliamentary records and is meant to give people some insight into the activities of government institutions, particularly governance institutions like the Riksdag.

2.4 2.4 Media and Parliament

Considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to media and parliament, especially how media coverage of the legislature provides and interprets political information. Ideally, this coverage, besides providing vital political information, is meant to stimulate public debate on issues of social and political importance (Tunstall 1970:5, Schramm and Roberts 1972:640, Orren 1986:10, Blumler and Gurevitch 1995:97, Page 1996:2, Negrine 1999:326).

Keefer (1993) notes that

Logic dictates that if information-holding is a prerequisite for participation in the policymaking process and if the public must depend on news coverage for most issue-related information, then the public's ability to participate will depend largely on the extent and nature of news coverage of the issue in question. (p.412).

Ample evidence abounds to suggest that some media scholars and politicians alike are dissatisfied with media coverage of the legislature and the perceived effects of this on the public sphere. In 1993, a British Labor MP, Jack Straw published a report on the decline of parliamentary coverage in the local press. He noted that until 1988, parliamentary debates had received between 400 and 800 lines of daily coverage in the *Times*. By 1992, coverage had declined to fewer than 100 lines (Negrine 1999:327).

Shaw's report also contrasted the range of activities reported in the Hansard with the range of press coverage and concluded that the British press was not giving the public a holistic account of what was going on in Parliament, such as reported debates, intentions to introduce bills. In the main, the report drew public attention to just how much parliamentary activity went unreported in the British press. (Negrine 1998:1).⁹

⁹ One British MP recounted that his visitors to the House from Hong Kong took comfort in the debates in Parliament on the handover of their territory to China in 1997, but were dismayed nothing of the debates mentioned in the following day's newspapers. This is noted in Negrine's (1999) study of parliament and the media in Britain, France and Germany.

Negrine (1999:326) notes that Straw's report had one methodological flaw: it did not examine the processes and routines within Parliament which could either be changed or modified to encourage media interest. In other words, besides blaming the British press for being "the cause of Parliament's increasing invisibility", the report did little to establish causes of the decline in coverage.

Interestingly, two years before the Shaw report was published, *Times* Editor Simon Jenkins decided that his paper would no longer carry extracts from speeches on its parliamentary page because as far as he was concerned, apart from MPs, no-one else read them:

We are not there to provide a public service for a particular profession or, for that matter, for a particular chamber...Newspapers are about providing people with news. (Negrine 1999:323)

In the United States, media coverage of Congress—the American legislative assembly—was changing. Cook (1989:22) notes that this was the result of changing priorities in news coverage by the American media: what the "consumers" wanted differed from what journalists in the field thought they wanted. By the end of the 19th century, journalists reporting Congress were focusing more on the colour and excitement than on the details of policy disputes. Cook (1989:23) adds that the "intrusion" of television cameras resulted in media focus on personalities and on the conflict than on the substance of debates and the issues on the floor.

Other scholars raise different concerns about the news media's shortcomings in reporting Congressional decision making. Keefer (1993:412) notes that the timing of news coverage of public policy issues tends to hinder citizen participation in the policy-making process. Conway (1985) writes that

for mobilisation to occur, the media must convey (before a policy making decision) some idea of how the public can become involved and who should be contacted, and that this information is usually not provided. (p.76)

She adds that the nature of media coverage is such that people are not informed where and how they might act to influence policy decisions and legislation.

Blumler and Gurevitch (1995:1) describe the situation where the media does not provide people with the kind of information they need to participate in governance and decision making as a “crisis of civic and political communication”, with the media degenerating into “channels of personalities, dramatisation, witch-huntery, soap operatics and sundry trivialities”. Kuhn (1998) acknowledge the crisis Blumler and Gurevitch refer to in a study of the public service credentials of the media (press, radio and television and new communications technologies) in Fifth Republic France.

He notes that television in particular has fundamentally changed the process of political communication

personalising politics, reducing political discourse to “sound bite” exchanges and turning debate into an entertainment-driven spectacle. The French voter is taught by their communication advisers how to manipulate the media for their own partisan objectives. Meanwhile, journalists have neither the capacity, the willingness, nor the time to act as a reflective filter for public opinion. (p.23)

He argues, on the basis of news content and information value, falling newspaper circulation in spite of a significant increase in the population and the spread of formal education since 1945 that the French press is in “a poor condition to contribute to the media’s role as a public sphere”(Kuhn 1998:26). Negrine’s (1999:329) study notes that in the late 1960s, the French daily newspaper, *Le Monde*, devoted two pages to verbatim transcripts of parliamentary proceedings. By the 1980s, it had stopped. A similar trend was noted in Germany in the 19th century where parliamentary proceedings were carried by the press on a daily basis. By the 1990s, reports of the Bundestag (the German parliament) had been integrated in general political coverage (Negrine 1999:328-9)

.Lee (1997:426) notes the Swedish media have managed to facilitate public debate, with the press playing a significant role in this regard. It has been used by politicians to air proposed changes in government policy or as agenda-setting pieces, sometimes before taking the issues to parliament. The press, by acting as a link between individual parliamentarians and citizens, creates a mechanism for public debate.

Lee (1997:427) adds that the introduction of parliamentary television broadcasting system in 1995 funded through state coffers and transmitted free of charge to TV stations around the country has helped raise popular awareness about the issues of public concern. In his view, live transmissions of confrontational debates in parliament involving party leaders as well as the Question Time have had the effect of increasing public understanding of and public engagement with issues in the Riksdag.

The foregoing reveals that media coverage of legislative assemblies have been undergoing significant changes. There have been a number of studies to examine the nature of these changes and the rationale behind them. Tunstall (1970:5), for instance, traces the evolution of parliamentary coverage in the British press. His study reveals that the British media's coverage of Parliament evolved to make it more informative and more relevant to the needs of the British public. He notes that initially, coverage was restricted to verbatim transcripts of debates by the "Reporter of Debates" and was undertaken by teams of shorthand reporters.

However, such verbatim transcripts did not interest newspaper readers and was consequently discontinued. Reporters of Debate were replaced in the early 20th century by reporters who summarised the debates. These reporters were eventually replaced by "lobby correspondents" who specialised in reporting government policy, behind-the-scenes coverage of the executive and the legislature.

More recent studies of media coverage of parliament attempt to establish the reasons behind declining media interest in legislature as sources of news. Negrine (1994,1998, 1999), in a series of case studies of media coverage of the British, French and German legislative assemblies based on content analyses, argues that firstly, “the routines, practices and traditions of parliamentary institutions were not geared to the needs of the media”.

To support this observation, Negrine (1999) quotes the President of the Italian parliament:

There is only one recipe for eliminating the communication gap between parliament and the public...and that is to proceed more rapidly and resolutely in the direction of modulating the messages in such a way as to take into account the needs and peculiarities of the media system, of bearing in mind that reporters and press organs do not confine themselves to recording our words and deeds but act in accordance with criteria, priorities and patterns that we must not ignore. (p.326).

Secondly, Negrine (1999:350) notes, newspapers had become more and more “depoliticised” as a result of “commercialisation”, “visualisation” (i.e. use of graphics and other design elements to make newspapers more colourful and more aesthetically appealing to readers) and “tabloidisation” (i.e. reducing the prominence of politics on page one in preference of scandal and sensation) In the main, this “downgraded the importance of parliamentary coverage”, resulting in a decline in public appreciation of the contents of parliamentary pages, particularly the substance of debates (Negrine 1999:328-9). Thirdly, he argues that the fact that television has “offered a window on parliaments” by providing extracts from debates in news programmes and countless interviews with politicians has meant that newspapers have moved away from mainstream coverage and focus more on explanation and interpretation. Resultantly, the volume of newspaper coverage of parliament has dropped (Negrine 1999:350).

2.5 Media and the Sociology of News Production

Many journalists argue that journalism is all about pursuing the truth and reporting it. The professional ethos of journalism, or so notes Fowler (1991:1) is that journalists collect facts, report these objectively and the media present them fairly and without bias “in a language which is designed to be unambiguous, undistorting and agreeable to readers”. One of the exponents of this point of view is Fergal Keane, a former BBC foreign correspondent.

He said in a lecture broadcast on 20 October 1997 on BBC 1 that:

The art of the reporter should more than anything else be a celebration of the

truth... The reason millions of people watch and listen is because we place the interests of truth above everything else. Trust is our byword. That is an unalterable principle. It is our heritage and our mission, and I would rather sweep the streets of London than compromise on that. The fundamental obligation of the reporter is the truth.¹⁰

Allan (1999:48) acknowledges the “eloquence” of Keane’s words and admits that indeed most journalists believe this “democratic function” is contingent on the realisation of press freedom “as a principle safeguarded from any possible impediment associated with power and privilege”. He also acknowledges this view is steeped in liberal pluralism where through the unearthing of lies, deceit and scandal, the media provide a system of checks and balances to counteract power and privilege.

However, scholars like Tuchman (1978:3-5; 1991:84-86), Hall et.al (1978:53-55), Schudson (1989:9, 2000:176-177) and Franklin (1997:32) reject this line of reasoning, arguing that news, or what passes for it, is a social construction of reality and that ultimately, the process of news production affects the news product. In the main, they argue, news is shaped and influenced by a whole range of social, business and ideological norms. Hall et.al. (1978:53) put it more succinctly.

They write that news is “the end-product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories” and identify the following aspects of the social production of news: the bureaucratic organisation which produces the news in specific types of categories; the structure of news values which orders the selection and ranking of particular stories within these structures; and the process of identification and contextualisation of news through which the media assign social context to seemingly “random and chaotic events” and place them within particular frames of meanings familiar to media audiences.

Hall (1973, quoted in Watson 1998:124) perceives two levels of news value and argues that both constitute a “double articulation”. He describes the first level of news value as “formal”, the other as “ideological”. Formal news values belong to “the world and discourse of the newspaper, to newsmen, to a professional group, to the institutional apparatus of news-making”.

Ideological news values “belong to the realm of moral-political discourse” in society. Hall argues that this double articulation, this interplay of the formal and the ideological values of news “binds the inner discourse of the newspaper to the ideological universe of the society.”

So while journalists may argue that they merely report what is happening in the real world, Hall asserts that these events “enter the domain of ideology as soon as they become visible to the news-making process”.

¹⁰ Allan (1999:48-49)

This, Schudson (2000:177) notes, is how journalists “make” or “manufacture” the news, acting as “gate-keepers” and making subjective judgements about what should be published and what should be rejected. In this regard, he is cautious not to suggest that journalists “fabricate” the news. His analysis of the sociology of news and its effects on the eventual product is based on three perspectives, namely:

- the political economy of news, which relates the outcome of the news process to the structure of the state, the locus of power, the economy and the economic foundation of the news organisation.¹¹
- the social organisation of newswork, which tries to understand how the practice of journalism is constrained by occupational and organisational demands.¹²
- cultural approaches, which seek to establish relationships between “facts” in the news and culturally-based symbols. Schudson (2000:189) notes that a cultural account of news helps explain generalised images and stereotypes in the news media that “transcend structures of ownership or patterns of work relations.”¹³

McQuail (1994:163) points out that though liberal theory assumes that ownership can be effectively separated from control of editorial decisions, there is sufficient evidence to show that commercial imperatives, particularly the profit motive, does influence editorial content. In the main, as Altschull (1984:113) notes, “the contents of the media always reflect the interests of those who finance them”.

¹¹ In this, Schudson (2000) is abstracting from an idea espoused by Marx and Engels that: The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production...

¹² According to McNair (1998:9), the study of the concrete manifestations of journalism reveal typologies such as news reports and feature articles with distinct rhetorical styles which are occupationally founded and organisationally entrenched. Negrine (1994:123-4) writes that because news production is continuous and newspapers, radio and TV bulletins have to be produced every 24 hours, the process is “organised, routinised and freed from a haphazard supply of news”. He notes that to regularise the flow of news, journalists are placed in institutions (Parliament, the courts, police stations etc.) A related practice which also makes news predictable is the reliance of the news organisation on set events and the “diary” – a record of forthcoming events (e.g. political conferences, speeches by prominent people, press conferences).

¹³ By way of example, Schudson (2000:189-90) cites Hartmann and Husband’s analysis of British media coverage of racial conflict and how it portrayed foreigners in Britain in a negative and derogatory fashion.

2.6 Conclusion

Liberal democratic theory makes a strong case about the role the media play in the functioning of democracy—by informing public opinion and stimulating public debate. This case is based on the assumption that democracy works best when citizens are well informed, have equal rights to speak and participate in decision making and all public policy decisions are subjected to open debate. However, scholars like Giddens (1999:3) note that even though democracy is spreading all over the world, “in mature democracies which the rest of the world is supposed to be copying, there is widespread disillusionment with democratic procedures”, with the disillusionment being manifested as: low voter turn-out and lack of interest in parliamentary politics, especially among the younger generation. McChesney (1999:1-2) concedes to what he considers to be a major media/democracy paradox: on the one hand, breakthroughs in communication and information technologies providing a wide range of choices, on the other hand, a depoliticised citizenry with limited understanding of and scanty social and political affairs.

In the main, these issues and paradoxes raise questions about the link between the media and democracy and challenge conventional wisdom on the role the media plays in a democracy. They also raise questions about whether there can indeed be an appropriate theoretical and conceptual framework to discuss media and democracy in African contexts.

CHAPTER THREE

Media Coverage of Parliament: A Zambian Perspective

3.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss how the Zambian media, particularly the press, reports Parliament. In order to do so, it has been necessary to examine how the media reports other institutions and issues. The discussion has been located in reception analysis to show how people generally consume media. It has been based on the assumption that the media has effects on the public, and that these effects can be apprehended through research and study.

3.1 Studies of Media Effects in Zambia

Scholarship on media and democracy (or the effects of media on democracy) in Zambia is very scanty and is largely restricted to a few commissioned studies and monographs by media organisations like the Zambia Independent Media Organisation (ZIMA), the local chapter of MISA, the Press Association of Zambia (PAZA) and the Panos Institute of Policy Studies Southern Africa. The most recent include a Freedom Forum report entitled “The Media and Political Change in Africa: Zambia 2001” which examined the role of the media in elections, particularly the 2001 elections.

The other, a Panos Southern Africa monograph, was published in December 2001. It was the outcome of a series of three symposia organised by Panos and the Zambia Institute of Mass Communication (ZAMCOM) in April 2001 on the subject of reporting elections.¹

The closest media scholarship has come to media and Parliament in Zambia is a 1997 study of attitudes of Zambian Members of Parliament towards media and media regulation. The study sought to investigate quantitatively support for the press and press freedom among members of what Pitts (2000:269) describes “the newly democratised Zambian parliament”. Among other things, the study revealed that 49 per cent cited radio as their most important source of information, with the General Service of the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) being the most frequently named station. Newspapers were ranked as the most important source of information by 32.7 per cent of the respondents. Pitts (2000:289) reports that 55.4 per cent of the respondents viewed media self-regulation as a preferred option. Twenty five per cent selected Parliament as the source for media regulation. Interestingly, about 90 per cent of the elected 150 Members of Parliament belong to the ruling MMD. Pitts (2000:292) concludes that the MPs he interviewed are “concerned about accuracy and bias and about what the press might do to them or the government”. His study does not categorise the exact source of their concern. However, it does suggest that the Members of Parliament acknowledge the power of the press and its effects.

In spite of the limited evidence to show the pervasiveness of the media and their effects in Zambia, it is widely believed that they do influence people’s lives and impact on their behaviour significantly, though the extent of this is not known. This is manifested in how various organisations in the country use media to try to make an impact on their individual constituencies.

¹ The three symposia brought Members of Parliament and working journalists together to discuss media coverage of elections and to find ways of curbing allegations of biased reporting of candidates by both the government-owned media and the private media.

A 1996 Zambia Family Planning Services Project IEC Baseline Survey established that newspapers were the most efficient channel for communicating family planning information, with regular newspaper reading being 44 per cent among men and 25 per cent among women. The survey also revealed that of all the information channels, radio provided the greatest opportunity to reach a large and diverse audience. Among other things, it revealed that exposure to family planning information through radio in Zambia was mainly mediated by educational level: among all men and women, those with at least a secondary school education were more than twice as likely to recall hearing family planning information on radio.

From 1995 to 1997, a USAID Morehouse School of Medicine HIV/AIDS Media Intervention Project was initiated in Zambia to raise public awareness about the pandemic and the risks of unprotected sex as a way of getting people to change their sexual behaviour. The media intervention involved six training workshops per year for working journalists from all over the country at the end of which course participants would produce newspaper articles, radio and television programmes on HIV/AIDS which would be published and broadcast in the local media. The project made funding available to paying for airtime on national radio and TV to ensure that indeed the editorial outcomes of the training workshops found their way to the public. To measure the extent of the media intervention, a project officer was entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring the media to document the incidence of media coverage of HIV/AIDS in Zambia.

A 1998 report of the USAID Morehouse HIV/AIDS Media Intervention Project revealed that newspaper coverage of the pandemic and issues relating to it increased marginally following training workshops after which coverage dropped. The report further revealed that TV was the preferred medium of choice by most of the respondents when it came to HIV/AIDS news and information. However, the report did not establish whether coverage or indeed increased coverage of HIV/AIDS had any direct effects on the Zambia public or on their sexual behaviour.

A 2000 Zambia Institute of Mass Communication (ZAMCOM)/BBC Implementation Report for Zambia Social Investment Fund (ZAMSIF) Communication Strategy endorsed radio as the most accessible and most far-reaching medium for its national poverty alleviation campaign.² On the basis of field research conducted in four rural districts of Zambia (Mongu, Gwembe, Petauke and Chinsali), the report concluded that improved communication could help alleviate poverty.

One of the findings of the research was that the communities surveyed have a strong belief in information that comes out of radio. Because of the economic activity in most of these areas, which is predominantly farming, people tend to listen more to farmers' programmes. The report also revealed that they also listen to a lot of radio soap operas which cover different issues such as human rights.

Similar sentiments have been expressed in the 1997 Zambia Integrated Health Project (ZIHP) Report and seem to be indicative of governmental and non-governmental organisational approaches to Information, Education and Communication (IEC) in Zambia and the perceived media impact in achieving these.³ For instance, the National Agricultural Information Service (NAIS) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries is one agency that relies extensively on the media, particularly radio, to impact positively on the agricultural sector by providing agricultural extension advice to farmers in rural and peri-urban Zambia. To this end, NAIS has District Information Officers in most districts and Provincial Information Officers in the nine provincial capitals of the country.

From the foregoing, one can deduce that media effects are largely assumed by those who use them to inform, educate and to influence behaviour and are not backed by any empirical evidence.

Nevertheless, there are local media scholars who argue that the Zambian media are far reaching in their effects. Kasoma (1997:295), for example, credits the independent media in Zambia for playing “an enabling role” in bringing about multi-party politics and democracy in the country and for contributing towards the “realisation of multiparty politics and democratic governance”, though he does not specify how.

However, in his study of media coverage of the 1996 Presidential and Parliamentary elections, Banda (1997:24) disputes this. He notes that even in Britain and the US where the media are so widespread and political content in the press, radio and television is thrown into sharp relief, it is difficult to measure the “effects” of the mass media on voting behaviour. Banda (1997:24), appealing to Negrine (1994), suggests at least two ways in which media effects can be detected during elections. Firstly, voters can increase their knowledge of the parties in contention for political office and this may play a part in determining their choices during election time.

Secondly, when party loyalties are weak, the media may contribute to voters’ decisions about choices. This scenario applies, he notes, only where mass media reach and impact is “massive” enough to permeate almost all of an individual’s life. In his view, this is not the case in Zambia. His reasons:

First, the main media are concentrated along the line of rail, leaving the majority of potential voters informationally starved. Second, incomes are so low that not many can afford a newspaper everyday. (p.24)

³ ZIPH is a USAID-funded HIV/AIDS project.

He cites 1996 circulation figures to prove his point. Banda (1997:25) argues that with only about 92,000 out of the close to 10 million population reached by three dailies and three weeklies, a fundamental question is raised about the sort of “impact” or “effect” these media have on people’s voting behaviour. In his estimation, he believes it would seem that in Zambia, the mediation of newspaper bias and its resultant impact or effect could be explained in terms of a communication model that espouses the following tenets:

- political actors and institutions with immense power introduce their interpretations of political issues into the media;
- the media, already so close to the structures in which these political actors and institutions operate, inadvertently or otherwise, fall prey to this bias and transmit it to their audiences as the political reality of the day;

these same actors and institutions with immense power and with access to the informationally underprivileged voters in rural Zambia then serve as “opinion leaders” and reinforce this bias.

Banda (1997:26) argues that his model underlies the notion that although the media in Zambia are not so pervasive, political leaders may act as “mini media” and thus help to disseminate “mainstream media content during their election campaigns in areas that are not reached by these mainstream media”. He concedes that though his model is not supported by empirical data, it leans towards Lazarsfeld’s two-step theory which emphasizes that the media’s effects are transmitted through “opinion leaders” rather than through the media themselves. influentials.”



Other approaches, such as the “uses and gratification” theory and Gerbner’s “media cultivation” theory have tried to study media effects somewhat differently.

Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974:164), credited with the uses and gratification theory, conceive the audience as composed of “active and goal directed” people who use mass media as “a purposeful activity” not as a “pastime. In other words, they have needs that require gratification and they make deliberate decisions and choices about which media to use to satisfy what need. Thus, the housewife who switches on her television at a specific time to watch a soap opera to while away time is satisfying a need and has made a definite choice about how to do so. Like other people who use media, she has other alternatives for need gratification.

Gerbner (1992:133), on the other hand, premises his media cultivation theory on the notion that the media, particularly television, “cultivate” people’s consciousness and beliefs by subjecting them to what Newbold (1995:120) describes “a slow, cumulative effect, related to the intensity of his or her viewing over long stretches of exposure to the values and world representation of television”.

So the more viewers are exposed to violence on television, the more they become insensitive to it. In the long run, it shapes their consciousness about violence about violence in the world they live, whether this is real, imagined or simulated as entertainment.⁴ On the whole, as McQuail (1994:327) notes, “the entire study of mass communication is based on the premise that the media have significant effects, yet there is very little agreement on the nature and extent of the assumed effects”. In spite of the lack of agreement on their nature and extent, research into media effects continue. Some of the studies focus on the negative effects of media content manifested as violence, vulgarity of language and sexual behaviour, among others . Others are interested in measuring what Newbold (1995:118) describes as the “more benign, positive or even pro-social effects—whether these have to do with effects of the media on political behaviour, levels of information or education, or campaigns against smoking, drug abuse or AIDS”.

The specific interest of this research is the measurement of the content of news coverage of the *Zambian Parliament* to establish whether it has the democratic effect of: informing public opinion, encouraging wide and inclusive debate about issues of social and economic importance and giving guidance on the interpretation of information given to citizens. Similar studies have been done on media and Parliament. Notable among these are by Tunstall (1970) whose special interest was the Westminster lobby correspondents and how they evolved to respond to the stimulus of particular information demands by the British public. Negrine’s (1999) study of the British, French and German parliaments is another seminal study as is his 2000 study of the changing relationship between Parliament and the media.

⁴ Gerbner’s theory derives from 1970s media effects research and asserts that the more people see violence, the more they become insensitive and immune to it.

His analysis of newspaper coverage of legislative assemblies in the three countries provides some interesting insights as well as useful points of departure for similar research. Keefer's (1993) study of media coverage of Congressional policy making is another work in this area. Though it was beyond the scope of his study to investigate the possibility of a cause-and-effect relationship between the nature and extent of news coverage on the one hand and the outcome of Congressional policy issues on the other, Keefer (1993:422) does make the point that the American news media could improve their editorial product in ways that would enhance public knowledge of Congressional issues and facilitate citizen participation in the policy making process. He is of the view that currently, the news media hinders citizen participation instead of informing and facilitating it.

Illuminating as these studies are, they are significantly different from what pertains in Zambia. Thus a study of the situation in Zambia could provide a better understanding of the role of the media and the role of Parliament in a fledging democracy. From the point of view of this researcher, there is a case to be made about how the Zambian press covers Parliament. For instance, a random scan of newspaper coverage of Parliament will reveal that it does not go beyond routine transcripts of who said what on the floor of the House. The selection of what to report on a particular day depends on who says what in the House. The private press makes editorial capital from the remarks of Opposition parliamentarians. The government press focuses on what Ministers say. For example, on 10th August, 2000, the government-owned *Times of Zambia* reported on the front page that: "State Plans Opening Third University".

The report, which derived from a Ministerial statement in Parliament by the Education Minister, reads in part:

The University of Zambia (UNZA) has only admitted 7,000 school-leavers of the 21,000 applicants because of lack of places as Government intends to open another university next year.

Education Minister, Godfrey Miyanda, in a ministerial statement said 14,000 students were left in the cold.

Brigadier-General Miyanda told the House that there was an overwhelming response from school leavers and others but the institution has a capacity for 1,267 admissions each year could not cope.

General Miyanda said in order to address the critical problem of university education, the ministry had plans to turn the National College for Development and Management Studies or Nkrumah Teacher's College in Kabwe into a full university.⁵

The privately-owned daily, the *Post* of the same day did not report the Ministerial statement. Instead, it reported that--"State Proceedings Bill will bring disunity in MMD". The report reads in part:

The passing of the State Proceedings Amendment Bill will bring disunity in the ruling MMD party, charged Luena Independent Member of Parliament, Crispin Sibetta yesterday.⁶

Contributing to debate on a motion to adjourn Parliament sine die, Sibetta said he was going home a very sad man because of the House's passage of the Bill...

At this point, Roan MMD Member of Parliament and Parliamentary Chief Whip, Vernon Mwaanga, rose on a point of order, asking the Speaker if Sibetta was in order to debate the Bill which had even passed through all the stages in the House.

Sibetta was allowed to continue.

⁵ The Minister's announcement came in the wake of three forced closures of the University of Zambia in the year 2000, the last one being in September the same year, after violent clashes between students and riot police. The *Times* did not place the Minister's pronouncement in the context of government under-funding of the two local universities that has been the cause of many of the problems the institutions have been facing over the years, resulting in some faculties closing and many lecturers and researching leaving for better-paying jobs abroad.

⁶ Before the Bill was passed, lawyers could use a stay of execution to block the State from taking certain decisions, even if they could not file an injunction against the State.

He said government should next month desist from using police to stop opposition parties from holding rallies during by-election campaigns. Sibetta said the MMD's continued use of the police to stop the opposition parties was undemocratic because it was aimed at reducing the number of opposition members of Parliament in the House.

Solwezi West National Party Member-of Parliament, Ben Tetamashimba urged the government to publish the Bills in the press long before they are discussed in the House so that the electorates knew beforehand what their representatives would discuss so that they could contribute ideas.

When Parliament is not in session, there is no coverage of its activities, even though during that period, various Parliamentary Committees could be sitting. Though the fact that journalists are barred from such meetings may have a bearing on why there is no coverage of the issues they deal with or with the outcomes of those meetings, the lack of sustained coverage of Parliament is a harsh indictment of the local media industry. This could explain why the significance of Parliament as an institution with the mandate to make laws, approve proposals for taxation and public expenditure, and to keep the work of government under scrutiny and review seems lost on the large majority of people. These reasons make the issue at stake researchable.

3.3 Conclusion

The foregoing discussion shows that the media in Zambia has an impact on many sectors of the country, though the exact nature of that impact may not be known, perhaps because the study of effects does not seem to be engrained in the national scheme of things. A number of approaches to the study of media effects have been integrated into the discussion to provide a framework for analysis. They raised many questions and provided many answers which, in the course of this exercise, could help determine the effects of newspaper coverage of the Zambian Parliament.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Methodology

4.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework for investigating how the Zambian press reports Parliament in the Third Republic and the extent to which they provide citizens with a broad range of information, interpretation and debate on national issues. It describes the research design used in the study and justifies the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in the exercise. The chapter also outlines what has been chosen for raw data, why and how the data will be analysed and interpreted.

4.1 Research Procedure

This study combines two research methods: quantitative and qualitative. It assesses general newspaper content of parliamentary coverage in Zambia in two of the three national dailies over a 12-month month period using content analysis as the main research technique. Thereafter, the study evaluates these news reports using textual analytical instruments to identify what Caragee (1991:6) describes as the “dominant media frames or interpretative patterns” that define the nature of parliamentary discourse in the Zambian press. The textual analytical instruments used in the study were thematic structure and discourse schemata (van Dijk 1991:114-5, Deacon et.al.1991;68-69).

The two methods were chosen because they provide a practical methodological basis for finding out how the Zambian press reports Parliament and the extent to which it provides information, interpretation and debate on issues that affect citizens and should therefore concern them. In other words, the methods were chosen for their capacity to help the researcher answer the following questions:

- when Parliament is reported, what news does the press focus on?
- how is this news presented in the press?
- how does newspaper coverage of Parliament provide vital political communication and interpretation to citizens?

4.2 Sampling

The study was based on coverage in one government daily, the *Times of Zambia* and one private daily, the *Post*. The choice of newspapers for the study was determined by the nature of the media landscape in Zambia, where only three daily newspapers exist, two of which are government owned, the third being privately owned. The two government dailies are different only in name, presenting a government position and having an identical editorial stance, whereas the private daily presents an anti-government position (Banda 1997, 2001). To investigate press coverage of Parliament in Zambia and to be able to make inferences about it, it was imperative to study both types of papers, their editorial positions notwithstanding.

A period of nine months between January and December 2001 was originally chosen as the basis for the study. It was chosen to represent the extent of parliamentary activity as well as the extent of parliamentary coverage in the Zambian press.

As stated in Chapter One, the National Assembly of Zambia meets three times in a year. The first meeting takes place from mid-January to the end of March. The second meeting takes place between June and September, the third from October to December, which means that in reality, Parliament meets for nine months in a year. The period from January to March is characterised by a flurry of parliamentary activity and a traditional saturation of coverage because of the ceremonial opening of Parliament by the Republican President at the beginning of every year to mark the start of a new session and the mandatory two-week debate through the Motion of the President's Address. The presentation of the Budget at the end of January is followed by a week of debate and two months of parliamentary examination of the estimates of each government ministry.

These traditional activities, which take up almost the first three months of the year, are engrained in the procedures of the House and are reported extensively by the press and would therefore not represent routine coverage because, as Bell (1991:22) writes, the amount of political news depends on whether the governing bodies are in session or not, and that such events can skew the content of news for days or even weeks on end.

On account of the above reason, it was imperative to study newspaper coverage of Parliament during a period of time where Parliamentary activity was not driven or characterised by the customs and traditions of the House, and could therefore be said to typify the ordinary, day-to-day deliberations of the legislative assembly.

It therefore followed that if newspaper coverage of Parliament was going to be analysed to establish the extent to which they provide citizens with a broad range of information, interpretation and debate on national issues, then it was imperative to focus on a time when the press was not only reacting to flurry of activity that characterises the National Assembly in the first three months of the year but also dealing with the less ceremonial, routine, day-to-day deliberations of the House.

One day per month in the months that Parliament sits was chosen to represent the 2001 sitting of Parliament for the study. Thus a day per month was chosen from the months of January to November 2001. The fact that Parliament sits from Tuesday afternoon to Friday afternoon during the months that the legislative assembly is in session was a factor in the choice of dates in the month. Because of the days of sitting, newspaper reports about activities in Parliament normally run only from Wednesdays to Fridays in the private daily, the *Post*, which, during the year chosen for the study, did not have a Saturday edition to accommodate coverage on the Friday sittings of the House. Consequently, the *Post* did not publish accounts of the ceremonial opening of Parliament which, traditionally falls on the second Friday of January every year. Nor did it publish the Budget Speech which is traditionally presented to the House on the last Friday of January.

The government-owned *Times of Zambia*, on the other hand, does have a Saturday edition which publishes accounts of proceedings of the Friday sittings of the National Assembly, including the ceremonial opening of Parliament and the Budget Speech. Thus, for practical reasons of comparison of newspaper coverage in a government daily and a private daily, it was necessary to select dates where both the *Post* and the *Times* had editions which covered Parliament on the same day. In the main, a total of 10 newspapers representing one day of the month for five months for selected dates from 24 January to 1 November 2001 were analysed.

From the point of view of scholarship on sampling for content analysis, the sample chosen for the study may seem inadequate to provide a valid basis for drawing tangible conclusions on the state of newspaper coverage of Parliament in Zambia. Wimmer and Dominick (1991:164), for instance, argue that “the larger the sample the better” because “if too few dates are selected for analysis, the possibility of an unrepresentative sample is increased”. Deacon et.al. (1999:120) agree and note that “the more limited the time period is, the more susceptible it is to distortion by one-off, unforeseen events”.

However, studies have been conducted into media content where small samples have been used to great effect. For example, Banda (1997:7) undertook a study of media coverage of the 1996 Presidential and parliamentary elections in Zambia. His period of analysis was a month, covering the period between 19th October (when the President announced the election date) and 17th November (a day before the election). Bell (1989) undertook a study of news coverage of climate change published in the New Zealand press. His sample was six months. Jacobs (2000) undertook an analytical analysis of how the *Eastern Province Herald* reported farm killings in South Africa. Though he notes that sustained media focus on farm killings in the country dates back to 1994, he only chose to focus on one provincial newspaper’s coverage of the issue for one month (August) in 1998. He argued that due to time and resource constraints and due to the study’s “exclusive concern with depth rather than breadth”, the one-month period was adequate for his purposes. Similarly, the main focus of this research was not the quantitative incidence of newspaper coverage of the Zambian Parliament but the nature of coverage, particularly the extent to which reportage of the legislative assembly provides information, interpretation and debate on issues that affect citizens. For these reasons, the sample period of five days in five months (with a day each to represent a month) was adequate for the research.

4.3 Content Analysis

The study was based on the analysis of “hard news” and “continuing news” reports from the Zambian Parliament appearing in the *Times of Zambia* and the *Post* from January to December 2000. The typology or category of “hard news” and “continuing news” used in this study are derived from Tuchman (1978:47-49). She notes that “hard news” refers to “factual presentations of events and occurrences deemed newsworthy” (like a train accident, a bank hold-up and the presentation of legislative proposal before Congress) whereas “continuing news” refers to “a series of stories on the same subject based upon events occurring over a period of time” (such as a the process of passing a legislative bill).

It was imperative, as part of the study, to define parliamentary news in the context of Tuchman’s (1978) typology of hard and continuing news. In this regard, the study abstracted definitions of what constitutes parliamentary news from Negrine (1998:133). He notes that a “parliamentary news item” could be:

- an item which was located in a parliamentary institution, for example, a debate, or
- an item which involved a parliamentary actor in a parliamentary institution, for example, a ministerial statement, or
- an item which involved a parliamentary actor in a non-parliamentary location, for example, a minister making a speech in a public forum.¹

¹ Negrine (1999:21-22) insists on this distinction for the practical reason of coding so that straight parliamentary news items could be distinguished from ordinary political news items featuring Cabinet Ministers and other parliamentary actors in non-parliamentary locations.

In defining parliamentary news, Negrine (1999:21) acknowledges Franklin's (1995) earlier definition:

Any report predominantly appertaining to parliament or featuring an MP in any of her/his parliamentary roles, or any report where an MP is the major focus of the story in their capacity either as a member of a political party or as a private individual.

In the wider context of the objective of the study, it was imperative to also acknowledge Keefer's (1993:412-414) concept of parliamentary news (in this particular case, news from the US Congress). He identifies three distinct forms of empowering news, which he classifies as: policy information: information about the substance of an issue, including information defining and backgrounding the issue and information describing the competing proposals; political information: information "about the composition, strength and views of the competing forces and information about the likely effects of a policymaker's action on his or her career"; and operational information: "information about the locus, timing and procedures for issue-related decisions that need to be made by policymaking bodies".²

² Keefer(1993:413-4) argues that "any news coverage of an issue—even a one-paragraph newspaper article—provides at least some policy information to the reader. That is because the mere mention that an issue exists is policy information. A news item might contain detailed policy information such as the relative merits of the competing policy proposals or the potential effect of those proposals on the average citizen. News coverage could offer political information such as the identity of the government officials and private-sector organisations that are leading the competing forces –information that helps citizens form judgements on an issue".

As a research method, content analysis facilitated the investigation of the nature as well as the amount of newspaper coverage of Parliament in Zambia, the specific issues from the legislative assembly that found their way into publication and the relative importance the papers attached to them through the actual placement of the news reports in the media.

Newspaper coverage of Parliament was analysed based on the following categories:

- subject categories based on government ministries (given that some of the issues that are presented before the House are brought by cabinet ministers. Furthermore, most of the standing parliamentary committees are formed around the constituency of government ministries and their areas of operation); In this regard, subjects like agriculture, social welfare, defence and security, land and natural resources are suggested.
- Member of Parliament-constituency-related stories, where MPs make statements and contributions of relevance to their constituencies, using the forum of the House;
- Bills (that is, proposed laws tabled before Parliament for discussion and possible enactment);
- points of order (that is, official objection raised by Members of Parliament regarding what they consider to be an infringement of parliamentary procedures;)
- Non-Parliamentary matters finding themselves into Parliament (e.g. newspaper reports placed on the table of the House; submissions that fall outside the above categories.

The other categories used were based on “Information sources used in the stories”. In this case, the following sources were categorised:

- Front-Bencher (Minister): Government;
- Back-bencher (ruling party): Government
- Opposition
- Speaker of the House

The third category used was “Type of Knowledge/Information provided by sources and is derived from Ericson et.al (1991:204). These were categorised into: primary (factual information, asking “What happened?”), secondary (explanatory, asking “Why did it happen?”), tertiary (descriptive, asking “What was it likely to be involved in what happened?”), evaluative (moral, asking “Was what happened good or bad?”) and recommendations (asking, “What should be done about what happened?”)

The final category used to facilitate the content analysis was “Editorial importance given to stories”. In this regard, “importance” was determined by and graded according to where the story was placed in the newspaper and categorised as follows:

- top-front page placement/main headline story;
- second top-half placement/second main headline story
- lower-half front page placement
- inside pages.

The data was broken down per newspaper but was discussed comparatively on a day-by-day basis to show which issues and what stories made the headlines on the particular days chosen for analysis.

4.3 Textual Analysis

The application of textual analysis to the manifest content of newspaper coverage of the Zambian Parliament was meant to reveal the dominant media frames or interpretative patterns reporters employ to report what they consider to be the news. Gitlin (1980:7) defines “media frames” as “persistent patterns of cognition, interoperation and presentation, of selection, emphasis and exclusion by which symbol-handlers routinely organise discourse”. Caragee (1991:6) argues that conclusions about the ideological character of reporting be “grounded carefully in an examination of the meaning embedded in news stories”.

In appealing to the authority of linguistic analysis, the study sought to place the phenomenon of news as a social and ideological construction within the framework of general semiotic theory (Fowler 1991:37-41). The main intention was to “unpack the news” (Deacon et.al. 1991:162) using two inter-related linguistic concepts: thematic structure and discourse schemata (van Dijk 1991:114-115, Deacon et.al.1991:68-169).

The thematic structure made it possible to discern the central themes which run through the news reports from Parliament and how these were organised structurally. With news discourse, information is organised hierarchically in what Deacon et.al (1991:169) describe as “a functional order of narrative disclosure which is specific to its particular mode of story-telling” – the news genre. van Dijk (1991:114-115) calls this schema a “superstructure”. This structure is laid out along conventional news writing lines consisting of a headline, lead (together forming the summary of the story), main events, context, history (together forming the background category), verbal reactions and comments. He notes that with this kind of structure, the most important information is expressed first – “a top-down strategy which assigns a so-called relevance structure to the text”. Deacon et.al. (1991:169) add that such a structure entails

a patterned movement from the headline and lead paragraph through...statements by witnesses and commentators...ranked in an implicit order of priority, to further elaboration of detail and possible extrapolation and evaluation, often coming from key players and accredited sources.

Furthermore, they argue, news schemata are influenced by the

salience of particular news values in a particular type of story, as well as by journalist's rhetorical priorities of facticity and objectivity, rather than being determined by concern for chronological order.

In short, in studying the use of the inverted pyramid as a form of news construction, the sequencing of information and “news”, the use of sources and the positioning of content, it became evident how the local press frames news from Parliament.

The textual analysis employed in the study involved is largely derived from Deacon et.al. (1991:174) in their sample linguistic analysis of a news story. The first stage of the analysis concerned itself with the thematic structure of the news stories. This involved establishing how the news reports were organised structurally from introduction, through the body to the conclusion to contribute to their overall thematic development. In this regard, the focus was on how the events described, the sources and the quotations used were sequenced to frame the news narratives and to represent meaning and to mediate reality. Deacon et.al. (1991:177) note that the use of certain sources to “frame and contain other sources is a common device in the structuring of news narrative”.

In the particular case of Parliamentary coverage, newspaper focus tended to be on the debates on the floor of the House and so depending on the individual medium, attention moved from what Deacon et.al. (1991:177) describe as “anti-sources and pro-sources”. Through this form of analysis, it was possible to establish how “anti-sources” were used to frame “pro-sources” and vice versa and contribute to the development of a distinct theme.³ One of the ideological consequences of the use of sourcing in the framing process, notes Jacobs, (2000:56) is personalisation—the media obsession with persons at the expense of principles and issues. In the main, as van Dijk (1991:116) acknowledges, analysis of the linguistic and structural features of news should go beyond mere textual analysis and take into account the cognitive, social, cultural and historical contexts because ultimately, it these contexts that impose meaning on media content and give it its social character. Fowler (1991:4) expresses this viewpoint more explicitly:

News is a representation of the world in language: because language is a semiotic code, it imposes a structure of values, social and economic in origin, on whatever is represented; and so inevitably, news, like every discourse, constructively patterns that of which it speaks.

In appealing to this constructionist perspective, Fowler (1991:68) is acknowledging the relevance of Halliday's functional model to the examination of the connection between linguistic structures and social values. This model, Fowler notes, emphasizes the ideational and textual functions of language. The ideational function is concerned with how language is used to express content and to represent reality whereas the textual function has to do with the formal creation of discourse based on the representation of reality. On account of these theoretical considerations, the textual analysis sought to reveal how discourse from Parliament was constructed in the *Zambian press*.

4.4 Justification of Research Method

Some scholars like Wimmer and Dominick (1991:139) reject the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in research, arguing that because the two approaches "have a different approach to reality", they cannot be used in tandem. They note that reality, from the quantitative researcher's point of view, is objective, tangible and measurable. From the qualitative point of view, on the other hand, reality is very subjective and "exists only in reference to the observer". On account of this sharp ideological and epistemological difference, Wimmer and Dominick (1991:140) argue that combining quantitative and qualitative methods in a single research exercise would not only be methodologically flawed but would cast aspersions on the validity of data so collected.

However, there are scholars like Deacon (et. al. 1999:112-116) who believe in the advantages of "methodological eclecticism" and argue that the main benefit is that different methods are best suited to certain stages of the research process. For instance, as a research tool, content analysis is methodical because it makes it possible for the researcher to quantify the "salient and manifest" features of media content in order to make "broader inferences about the processes and politics of representation".

It has been used extensively across a wide range of media genres –from analysis of violence on television (e.g. Holsti 1969) to news and current affairs (e.g. Nassanga 1997; Pritchard and Hughes 1997). Quantification of data makes it possible to make mathematically precise comparisons over a period of time and provides a tangible basis for endorsing hypotheses and for objectifying conclusions drawn therefrom. Thus, for example, the 1976 British Royal Commission on the Press was able to establish that in the 1970s, parliamentary debates constituted three per cent of the news sections of the broadsheet press, while the category of home, political, social and economic news comprised 19 per cent. Using content analysis, Keefer (1993:414) was able to systematically examine the content, frequency and timing of news coverage of a sampling of Congressional policy issues.

By the end of his research, he was able to establish, among other things,:

- (1) how much news coverage of a policy issue in the US House of Representatives is provided in the period before a floor vote, and
- (2) how often the news media provide policy information about how a pending issue might affect average citizens.

Similarly, Caragee (1991:6-7) could conclude, on the basis of content analysis of the *New York Times*' coverage of the Green Party of Germany from 1979 to 1986, that the paper's coverage increased as the party's performance in state and local elections improved. He could categorically infer, from his findings, that the *Times* provided its most extensive coverage of the party in 1983 (a total of 47 stories prior to the election) when the Greens gained seats in the West German Parliament by securing 5.6 per cent of the national vote in the March election.

Caragee (1991:6), Wimmer and Dominick (1991:160) and Manning and Cullum-Swan (1994:463) concur that content analysis alone cannot serve as a basis for making conclusive statements about the effects of content on an audience or about media effects.⁴

He notes that in recent years, content studies have employed qualitative methods

in an effort to examine news texts as structured and interdependent wholes. These studies reflect both a renewed critique of traditional quantitative content analysis and an increased awareness of the need to employ methods that remain sensitive to the role of language in the construction of meaning within news stories.

Manning and Cullum-Swan (1994:464) admit that as a method, content analysis has been unable to “capture the context within which a written text has meaning”. They define “context” as “the immediate semantic environment, the literary tropes operating, and connections between the text and experience or knowledge”. These points of view about the shortcomings of content analysis as a holistic research method are endorsed by Negrine (1998,1999) who combines quantitative and qualitative methods in two separate studies of newspaper coverage of the British, German and French parliaments in 1986 and 1996. Drawing on content analyses of newspapers and television news (as well as interviews with journalists and politicians) from these two years, Negrine (1998, 1999) theorises on how and why media coverage of Parliament has been changing over the years. On the basis of the findings deriving from his combination of research approaches, he draws conclusions and makes certain statements about the status of democracy and citizenship vis-à-vis the media.

4.5 Limitations to the Study

A few methodological and practical problems affected the outcome of the study. The selection of the sample was based on the fact that traditionally, the National Assembly of Zambia meets three times in a year for a total of nine months. The first meeting normally takes place from mid-January to the end of March, the second, (or mid-year meeting) from June to September and the third from October to November. On the basis of this, one day in every month that Parliament sat was to be chosen as the basis of the study.

However, in the Year 2001, the year chosen for the study, Parliament met for three and a half months. After the House adjourned at the end of March, it did not re-convene until October. This was because 22 Members of Parliament from the ruling MMD, including nine Cabinet Ministers, were expelled from the party after the MMD National Convention for refusing to endorse the candidature of the Republican President for an unconstitutional third term. The MMD insisted that expulsion meant that the MPs lost their parliamentary seats. This led to the Members taking the matter to the High Court. Interestingly, by the time the court was ruling in their favour, it was October and time for the third meeting. By 27 November 2001, Parliament had been dissolved to pave for Presidential and parliamentary elections on 27 December. For this reason, it was only possible to focus on the period that Parliament sat, choosing one day in a month to represent the month. So, instead of a total of 18 newspapers, this study was based on 10 newspapers. Originally, the dates were to have been chosen at random. However, in the end, they were chosen more for their availability than for their randomness.

The political developments cited above may have had a bearing on the range of the study. Nevertheless, given that the focus of the study was not numbers, but on the nature of coverage, the events did not have any significant bearing on the outcome of the study.

4.6 Conclusion

In establishing how the Zambian press reports Parliament, it was imperative to, firstly, measure the extent of coverage quantitatively, and secondly, using qualitative tools, undertake a close reading on news reports to identify how language is used to organise discourse. Used individually, each method would have been inadequate in addressing the research question. Thus, much as content analysis made it possible to get a fair and accurate representation of news reports of Parliament in the Zambian press over the period of one month, as a method, it was not suited for dealing with the role of language in the construction of meaning in news reports. Textual analysis may have brought some depth to the study, but in terms of measuring the breadth of the coverage, it is inadequate. In the main, combining the two methods provided a practical methodological solution to the research problem.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings, Interpretation and Discussion

5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of a research into press coverage of Parliament as a source of news against the theoretical and conceptual background of media and democracy. Besides discussing the nature of parliamentary coverage in Zambia and the trends that characterise it, the chapter outlines how reportage can be enhanced to inform public opinion and give newspaper readers authoritative news and information about issues of national importance.

5.1 Content Analysis of Newspaper Reports from Parliament

The study investigated Zambian newspaper reportage of Parliament to establish the kind of news the press focuses on, how this news is represented and whether, in the main, such coverage provides citizens with vital political communication, interpretation and debate on national issues. It focused primarily on the news genre as the basis for analysis, examining hard news from Parliament appearing in the government-owned *Times of Zambia* and the privately-owned *Post* between January and December 2001. In the context of the study, the typology of news genre in question is derived from Tuchman (1978:47-49) who defines “hard news” as the “factual presentations of events and occurrences deemed newsworthy” (such as a train accident, a bank hold-up and the presentation of a legislative bill before Congress) and “continuing news” as “a series of stories on the same subject based upon events occurring over a period of time” (such as the process of passing a legislative bill).

It was also necessary for the study to recognise a more specific type of “hard news” and “continuing news” from Parliament—something Franklin (1995) describes as parliamentary news: “Any report predominantly appertaining to parliament or featuring an MP in any of her/his parliamentary roles, or any report where an MP is the major focus of the story in their capacity as a member of a political party or as a private individual.”

The classification of topics, issues or themes covered in the news reports chosen for analysis is a common point of departure for studies of media content (Hansen 1998:112). In the particular case of this study, the analysis of news was restricted to the following categories: subjects (i.e. based on government ministries of standing parliamentary committees such as agriculture, social welfare, defence and security, land and natural resources etc., constituency-related stories, bills, points of order), information sources used in stories (i.e. Government Minister, Back Bencher from ruling party, Opposition MP, Speaker of the House) and editorial importance given to stories (on the basis of story placement in the papers) The subject categories cited above were chosen in line with the study’s general area of investigation, and that is to establish whether press coverage of Parliament provides citizens with vital political communication, interpretation and debate on national issues. The information sources as well as story placement in individual newspapers used as categories in the content analysis illustrate how the process of news production affects the news product, making news, as Tuchman (1978:3), Schudson (1989:9) and Franklin (1997:32) argue, a social construction of reality. All these aspects are crucial to the study of news content and its informational and interpretative value for the newspaper-reading public. Analysing and quantifying the information sources quoted in the news reports as well as the placement of the reports in the newspapers illustrates how social power is expressed in news production and signifies the relative importance attached to stories. The following section describes the content of news reports from Parliament published in the *Times of Zambia* and the *Post* of selected dates from 24 January to 1 November 2001.

5.1 Newspaper Coverage of Parliament in the *Times of Zambia* and the *Post* during the period of study

5.2.1 *Times of Zambia* Coverage of Parliament from January to December 2001

Date	No. of stories	Information sources	Subject	Type of knowledge/information	Editorial importance
24 January 2001	1	Speaker Opposition MP Opposition MP Back-bencher (ruling party) Back-bencher (ruling party) Back-bencher (ruling party) Opposition MP	Ruling on Constitution Constitutional issue Constitutional issue Rural development Comment on President speech Finance (stabilisation of Kwacha) Finance (stabilisation of Kwacha)	Primary; Primary; Primary Recommendations Recommendations Recommendations Recommendations	Top-front Page (main headline story)

Date	No. of stories	Information sources	Subject	Type of knowledge/information	Editorial importance
24 January 2001	1	Opposition MP Opposition MP Back-bencher (ruling party) Back-bencher (ruling party)	Legislation (anti-money laundering) Refugees Natural resources: hunting concession Information (reintroduction of vernacular newspapers)	Recommendations Recommendations Recommendations Recommendations	
21 February 2001	1	Deputy Speaker Cabinet Minister (Health) Cabinet Minister (Works & Supply)	Point of order ruling Health (Arrival of drugs) Housing (Income realised from sale of govt. houses)	Primary Primary Primary	Lower-half front page

Date	No. of stories	Information sources	Subject	Type of knowledge/information	Editorial importance
21 February 2001	1	Speaker Opposition MP	Point of order ruling Health (Scrapping of medical fees)	Recommendation Recommendation	
8 March 2001	2	Story 1: Parliament Back-bencher (ruling party) Opposition MP Opposition MP Front-bencher (govt) Deputy Minister (Finance) Parliament	Judiciary (Judges' appointment) Judiciary (Judges' appointment) Judiciary (Comment on judges' appointment;) Judiciary (Comment on judges' appointment) Judiciary (Comment on judges' appointment) Bills (passed for third reading)	Primary Evaluative Evaluative Evaluative Primary Primary Primary	Second top-half Placement (second main headline story)

Date	No. of stories	Information sources	Subject	Type of knowledge/information	Editorial importance
8 March 2001	2	<p>Front-bencher (govt.) Deputy Minister (Agric)</p> <p>Story 2: Cabinet Minister (Central Province)</p> <p>Deputy Speaker</p> <p>Cabinet Minister (N/West Province)</p> <p>Cabinet Minister (Southern Province)</p> <p>Cabinet Minister (Southern Province)</p>	<p>Agriculture (animal disease control fund)</p> <p>Road rehabilitation</p> <p>Alcohol</p> <p>Defence & Security</p> <p>Agriculture (feeder roads)</p> <p>Infrastructure (road & bridge rehabilitation)</p>	<p>Secondary & Primary</p> <p>Primary</p> <p>Primary</p> <p>Primary</p> <p>Primary</p> <p>Primary</p> <p>Primary</p>	<p>Second top-half placement front page (second main headline story)</p>

Date	No. of stories	Information sources	Subject	Type of knowledge/information	Editorial importance
31 October 2001	1	Speaker Vice-President Vice-President Cabinet Minister (Education)	Information (commencement of live radio broadcasts of parliamentary debates) Bills Human rights Education	Primary Primary Secondary Primary & secondary	Lower-half front page
1 November 2001	1	Cabinet Minister (Legal Affairs) Cabinet Minister (Legal Affairs) Vice-President Opposition MP	Bill(re-intro: Money laundering bill) Health (AIDS) Bills (tabling for first reading) Point of order	Secondary Secondary Primary Recommendations	Top-front page (main headline story)

Date	No. of stories	Information sources	Subject	Type of knowledge/information	Editorial importance
1 November 2001	1	Speaker Cabinet Minister (Health)	Point of order Health (no. of deaths from cervical and breast cancer)	Secondary Secondary	Top-front page (main headline story)

5.2.2 Post Coverage of Parliament during the study period

Date	No. of stories	Type of Information Sources	Subject	Type of knowledge/information	Editorial importance
24 January 2001	1	Opposition MPs Vice-President Speaker	Non-Parliamentary matter (i.e. absence of First Lady at official opening of Parliament Point of order; Constitutional;	Evaluative; Primary: Primary	Top-front Page (i.e. main headline story)
21 February 2001	4	Story 1: Deputy Speaker Story 2: Speaker Opposition MP Cabinet Minister (Foreign Affairs)	Point of order (on need for govt. to investigate scandal) Point of order Point of order Point of order	Secondary Secondary Primary Primary	Lower-half front page Inside pages (page 3)

Date	No. of stories	Type of Information Sources	Subject	Type of knowledge/information	Editorial importance
		Story 3: Opposition MP	Health (HIV/AIDS)	Recommendation	Inside pages (page 3)
		Backbencher (ruling party)	Health (HIV/AIDS)	Recommendation	
		Story 4: Vice-President	Health (low morale of health workers; resignation by nurses for jobs in Australia)	Primary	
8 March 2001	4	Story 1: Deputy Speaker	Alcohol ("lubricant of civilisation")	Evaluative	Inside pages (page 4)
		Deputy Minister	Finance (2001 Budget)	Primary	Inside pages (page 4)
		Story 2: Parliament	Judiciary	Primary	
		Opposition MP	Judiciary	Recommendation	
		Opposition MP	Judiciary	Evaluative & Recommendation	

Date	No. of stories	Type of Information Sources	Subject	Type of knowledge/information	Editorial importance
		<p>Story 3: Cabinet Minister (Finance)</p> <p>Opposition MP</p> <p>Back-bencher (ruling party)</p> <p>Story 4: Opposition MP</p>	<p>Bill (Value Added Tax Amendment Bill)</p> <p>(Value Added Tax Amendment Bill)</p> <p>Value Added Tax</p> <p>Development (imbalances in resource distribution)</p>	<p>Primary</p> <p>Evaluative</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>Evaluative</p>	<p>Inside pages (page 5)</p> <p>Inside pages (page 5)</p>
31 October 2001	3	<p>Story 1: Opposition MP</p> <p>Story 2: Speaker</p> <p>Story 3: V/President</p> <p>Cabinet Minister (Legal Affairs)</p>	<p>Access denied to Parliament</p> <p>Information (live radio broadcasts of parliamentary debates)</p> <p>Human rights</p> <p>Judiciary</p>	<p>Primary</p> <p>Primary</p> <p>Secondary</p> <p>Secondary</p>	<p>Inside pages (page 3)</p>

Date	No. of stories	Type of Information Sources	Subject	Type of knowledge/information	Editorial importance
1 November 2001	4	<p>Story 1: Speaker</p> <p>Story 2: Deputy Minister (Health)</p> <p>Story 3: Minister (Legal Affairs)</p> <p>Story 4: Vice-President</p>	<p>Point of order (on non-discussion of committee reports)</p> <p>Health (no. of deaths from cervical and breast cancer)</p> <p>Bill (Money Laundering)</p> <p>Infrastructural development & introd. of bills</p>	<p>Secondary</p> <p>Primary</p> <p>Primary</p> <p>Primary</p>	<p>Inside pages (page 3)</p> <p>Inside pages (page 3)</p> <p>Inside pages (page 3)</p>

5.2.4 Table No. 3 Total no. of stories published in the *Times of Zambia* and the *Post* during the study period

	24 January 2001	21 February 2001	8 March 2001	31 October 2001	1 November 2001	Cumulative total	Percentage
<i>Times</i>	1	1	2	1	1	6	27.27
<i>Post</i>	1	4	4	3	1	16	72.73
Daily total	2	5	6	4	2	22	100

The above table shows that in the five days chosen to represent the five months of parliamentary sitting in the Year 2000, a total number of 22 news reports were published by the two newspapers. The *Times of Zambia* published six stories, which represents 27.27 per cent of the total; the *Post* published 16 stories, which translates as 72.73 per cent of the total. On the basis of these figures, it can be concluded that the *Post* devoted more editorial space to parliamentary news than the *Times of Zambia* during the study period.

5.2.5 Table 4 Information sources used in story (with Speaker or Deputy Speaker appearing as main sources) during the study period.

	24 January 2001	21 February 2001	8 March 2001	31 October 2001	1 November 2001	Cumulative total	Total no. of stories published by paper	% out of no. of stories published by paper
<i>Times</i>	1	1	0	1	0	3	6	50%
<i>Post</i>	0	2	1	1	1	5	16	31.25%

Table 4 shows that in the study, the *Times* carried three reports which featured the Speaker of the National Assembly (or his Deputy) whereas the *Post* carried four reports as the main source of information. This means that Speaker-driven accounted for 50 per cent of the total number of stories the *Times* published and 25 per cent of the total number of stories the *Post* published during the period of study.

5.2.6 Table 5 Information sources used in story (with government front-bencher appearing as main source of information)

	24 Janua- ry 2001	21 Februa- ry 2001	8 March 2001	31 October 2001	1 Novem- ber 2001	Cumula -tive total	Total no. of stories publish- ed by paper	% of no. of stories publish- ed by paper
<i>Times</i>	0	0	0	0	1	1	6	16.66%
<i>Post</i>	0	1	1	1	3	6	16	37.5%

During the study period, the *Times* published only one story which featured a government front-bencher as the main source of information whereas the *Post* published six. In percentage terms, the *Times*' story constitutes 16.66 per cent of its total coverage and 37.5 per cent of the *Post*'s coverage.

5.2.7 Table 6 Information sources used in story (with back-bencher from the ruling party) appearing as main sources during the study period.

	24 January 2001	21 February 2001	8 March 2001	31 October 2001	1 November 2001	Cumulative total	Total no. of stories published by paper	% of no. of stories published by paper
<i>Times</i>	0	0	1	0	0	1	6	16.66 %
<i>Post</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	0%

Table 6 shows that during the study period, only one story was published between the two newspapers where a back-bencher from the ruling party was the main source of information, representing 16.66 per cent of the total number of stories the paper published. The only story featuring a back-bencher from the ruling party was published by the *Times* on 8 March 2001.

5.2.8 Table 7 Information sources used in story (with Opposition members as the main sources) during the study period.

	24 January 2001	21 February 2001	8 March 2001	31 October 2001	1 November 2001	Cumulative total	Total no. of stories published by paper	% of total number of stories published by paper
<i>Times</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0%
<i>Post</i>	1	1	1	1	0	4	16	25%

Table 7 shows that the *Post* published a total number of five stories out of the total number of 16 where Opposition Members of Parliament featured as the main sources of information. In terms of percentages, this translates as 31.25 per cent of the total number of stories the *Post* published during the period of study.

The *Times* published no story during the study period where Opposition parliamentarians featured as main sources of news.

5.2.9 Table 8 Information sources used in story (with Parliament as a collective as the main sources) during the study period.

	24 January 2001	21 February 2001	8 March 2001	31 October 2001	1 November 2001	Cumulative total	Total no. of stories published by paper	% of total number of stories published by paper
<i>Times</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	16.66%
<i>Post</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	16	6.25%

The above table shows that during the study period, Parliament as a collective source of news featured once in both papers. The story which both papers carried on dealt with Parliament's ratification of the appointment of two prominent lawyers as Puisne judges. Though Parliament as a main source of news was not originally considered as one of categories for analysis, the fact that it did appear during the period of study meant that it had to be accommodated.

5.2.10 Table 9 Percentage of total number of information sources appearing as main sources used by both the *Times of Zambia* and the *Post* during the period of study.

	Speaker as main source	Govt. front-benched as main source	Back-benched (ruling party as main source)	Opposition members as main source	Parliament as main source	Total
<i>Times</i>	50%	16.66%	16.66%	0%	16.66%	100
<i>Post</i>	31.25%	37.5%	0%	25%	6.25%	100

5.2.10 Table 10 Subjects arising in Parliament as published by the *Times* and the *Post* during the period of study

	Subjects based on govt. ministries	MP-constituency related	Bills	Points of order	Others (eg. Debate of estimates of expenditure, constitutional issues etc.)	Non-parliamentary issues	Total no. of subjects appearing in each paper
<i>Times</i>	13 44.83 %	5 17.24%	4 13.79%	3 10.34%	4 13.79%	0 0%	29 100%
<i>Post</i>	7 25.93%	2 7.40%	7 25.93%	6 22.22%	3 11.1%	2 7.40%	27 100%

Table 10 shows that on the whole subjects based on the constituency of government ministries (eg. Legal Affairs, Finance, Agriculture, Lands and Natural Resources) constituted the largest majority of subjects reported by the press during the period of study. Of the 29 subjects that appeared in the *Times*, 13 of these were subjects relating to government ministries. This constituted 44.83 per cent of the total number of subjects appearing in the paper during the study period. Out of the 27 subjects that appeared in the *Post*, 25.93 per cent of these related to government ministries and their constituencies.

In the *Times*, MP-constituency-related issues constituted the second largest category of subjects published during the study period, making up 17.24 per cent of the total number of subjects reported by the paper. For the *Post*, MP-constituency related matters constituted 7.40 per cent whereas bills made up 25.93 per cent of subjects covered by the paper during the study period. Bills constituted 13.79 per cent of subjects reported by the *Times of Zambia* during the study period. Points of order constituted 22.22 per cent of the subjects covered by the *Post* and 10.34 per cent of subjects covered by the *Times*. Other issues (such as constitutional matters, debates of estimates of expenditure, Motion of Thanks to the President's Address and other subjects falling outside the stipulated categories) made up 13.79 per cent of the subjects that appeared in the *Times* and 7.40 per cent of subjects appearing in the *Post*. The *Times* did not devote any editorial space to non-parliamentary issues, though in the *Post*, during the study period, it made up 11.1 per cent of its focus on subjects

5.2.12 Table 11 Type of knowledge/information used in news reports from parliament by the *Times of Zambia* and the *Post* during the period of study.

	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Evaluative	Recommendations	Total no. of knowledge types published by each paper
<i>Times</i>	20 47.62 %	8 19.04%	0 0%	3 7.14%	11 26.19%	42 100%
<i>Post</i>	13 46.43%	5 17.86%	0 0%	5 17.86 %	5 17.86%	28 100%

Table 11 shows the distribution of the knowledge or information types appearing in each of the papers during the period of study. On the whole, primary knowledge formed the bulk of knowledge and information types appearing in both papers. In the *Times*, it was 47.62 per cent; in the *Post*, it made up 46.43 per cent. Numerically speaking, there was no significant different in the range of information types appearing in both papers as can be seen by the range of secondary knowledge published by both papers. In the *Times*, this was 19.04 per cent; in the *Post*, it was 17.86 per cent. Neither paper published any tertiary knowledge. However, evaluative knowledge made up 7.14 per cent of knowledge types appearing in the *Times* and 17.86 per cent of that appearing in the *Post*. Recommendations made up 26.19 per cent of knowledge types appearing in the *Times* and 17.86 per cent of knowledge appearing in the *Post*.

5.2.13 Table 12 Editorial importance attached to news from Parliament as published by the *Times of Zambia* and the *Post* in the study period

	Top-front page placement; main headline	Second top-front page placement; second main headline	Lower-half Front page	Inside pages	Total no. of stories published by each paper
<i>Times</i>	2 33.33 %	1 16.67%	3 50%	0 0%	6 100%
<i>Post</i>	1 6.25%	0 0%	1 6.25%	14 87.5%	16 100%

Table 12 shows the editorial importance each paper attached to news from Parliament based on where each paper placed stories deriving therefrom. From the table, it can be concluded that the *Times* attached greater importance to news from Parliament than the *Post*. All the six stories it published from Parliament during the study period appeared on Page One. Of these, 33.33 per cent were main headline stories, 16.67 per cent were second main headline stories; 50 per cent appeared on the lower-half front page. Not a single story from parliament was published in the inside pages during the study period. Of the 16 stories from Parliament the *Post* published during the study period, only two appeared on Page One; one appeared as the main headline story, constituting 6.25 per cent of its entire coverage from Parliament. The second story the *Post* published on Page One appeared on the lower-half front page, making up 6.25 per cent of its coverage. Fourteen out of the 16 stories the paper published appeared in the inside pages, constituting 87.5 per cent.

5.2.14 Discussion of the findings of the content analysis

The content analysis revealed that news from Parliament as reported by the *Times of Zambia* and the *Post* conforms to the description of a “parliamentary news item” by Negrine (1998:133) as

an item which was located in a parliamentary institution, for example a debate or an item which involved a parliamentary actor in a parliamentary institution, for example, a ministerial statement, or an item which involved a parliamentary actor in a non-parliamentary location...”

It showed that the news reports in question predominantly appertained to Parliament, were located in Parliament and dealt solely with the activities of parliamentary actors in their parliamentary roles, in this case, as primary sources of news. The study also revealed that whether newspapers are government owned or privately owned, coverage of Parliament focuses primarily on who said what when where and under what circumstances, suggesting a very close similarity in the way the two papers report parliamentary news items. Numerically speaking, the *Post* published more reports from Parliament than the *Times* during the study period. However, an assessment of the stories showed whereas the *Times* compressed several parliamentary actors talking about seemingly unrelated issues from the legislative assembly into single stories, the *Post* broke these down into separate stories.

The study also revealed that the predominant knowledge/information types favoured by both papers is primary, though the *Times of Zambia* and the *Post* showed an inclination towards publishing secondary, evaluative as well as recommendations made by Members of Parliament.

Conspicuously absent from the information types was tertiary knowledge – information of an expository and explanatory nature. On the basis of these findings, parliamentary coverage by the Zambian press can be said to be lacking in what Keefer (1993:412-414) describes as “empowering news” from the legislative assembly, that is:

policy information, information about the substance of an issue, including information defining and backgrounding the issue and information describing the competing proposals...and operational information, information about the locus, timing and procedures from issue-related decisions that need to be made by policymaking bodies.

On account of the absence of tertiary knowledge, it can be argued that the nature of newspaper coverage of Parliament is such that it does not provide readers with a broad range of information, interpretation and debate on national issues. In spite of the apparent superficiality of newspaper coverage of Parliament in Zambia, most of the stories published by both papers were based on the constituency of government ministries as brought before the House by Cabinet Ministers and the Vice-President in his capacity as leader of the House. It accounted for 44.83 per cent of the *Times*' coverage and 25.93 per cent of the *Post*'s. For the *Times*, MP-constituency-related subjects accounted for 17.24 per cent of the paper's coverage against 7.40 per cent in the *Post*. Speaker-driven stories, where the Speaker was making rulings on points of order also formed a significant part of the *Post*'s coverage of Parliament, accounting for 22.22 per cent of its coverage.

In terms of placement of stories, the *Times* attached greater importance to news from Parliament than the *Post*. This conclusion is based on the fact that 100 per cent of the stories it published during the study period appeared on Page One whereas 87.5 per cent of the *Post*'s stories appeared in the inside pages. Since no Opposition Members of Parliament were cited as main sources of news in the government-owned *Times of Zambia*, it can be argued that such an occurrence is unlikely. Similarly, since no back-benchers from the ruling party were cited as main sources of news and information in the *Post*, it could be concluded that the likelihood of such an occurrence is remote.

In the main, it can be said that the *Post* is more likely to cite Opposition MPs as a main source of news from Parliament than the *Times of Zambia*; in the same breath, the likelihood of back-benchers from the ruling party being cited as main sources of news in the *Times of Zambia* is greater than in the *Post*. It could also be said that in terms of occurrence, non-parliamentary items (such as the First Lady's non-attendance of the ceremonial opening of Parliament) are more likely to make headlines in the *Post* than in the *Times*.

On the basis of the items that get to make the headlines, it can be said that on the whole, newspaper coverage of Parliament is intrinsically linked to the procedures of the House – to rulings on points of order by the Speaker (and his Deputy), to submissions deriving from the constituency of government ministries as submitted by Cabinet Ministers as well as bills deriving from the said constituencies, to submissions made by MPs relating to their individual constituencies, to contributions made by Members on issues on the floor of the House. The nature of coverage, particular the focus on procedural matters or matters ingrained in the traditions of the House could explain why newspaper coverage of Parliament has been described as “episodic” (Djokotoe 2000), occurring only when Parliament is in session. In other words, when Parliament is not in formal session, there is no newspaper coverage. Interestingly, this has implications on the sociology of news production in the particular context of the Zambian press in the sense that it has a bearing on what journalists perceive news from Parliament to be and on how, in the words of Schudson (2000:177), journalists “make” news.

However, on the basis of the content analysis alone, it is not possible to tell whether the nature of newspaper coverage of Parliament is based on what Schudson (2000:177) describes as “the political economy of news, which relates the outcome of news processes to the structure of the state, the locus of power, the economy, the economic foundation of the news organisation” or on the “social organisation of newswork, which tries to understand how the practice of journalism is constrained by occupational and organisational demands.

Admittedly, the sample of which the content analysis is based may seem too small to provide a valid basis for drawing tangible and far-reaching conclusions on the state of newspaper coverage of Parliament in Zambia. As Wimmer and Dominick (1991:164) argue, “the larger the sample, the better” because “if too few dates are selected for analysis, the possibility of an unrepresentative sample is increased”. Deacon et.al (1999:120) agree with this view and note that “the more limited the time period is, the more susceptible it is to distortion by one-off unforeseen events”. However, the focus of this research was not the numerical incidence of newspaper coverage of Parliament but the nature of coverage, particularly the extent to which reportage of the legislature provides information, interpretation and debate on issues than affect citizens. Thus insofar as the content analysis helped quantify the salient and manifest features of newspaper content in order to provide a basis for making “broad inferences about the processes and politics of representation” (Deacon et.al.1999:112), the sample was adequate.

5.3 Textual Analysis of Parliamentary News in the *Times* and the *Post* during the study period

A textual analysis of newspaper coverage of Parliament during the period of study revealed some of the dominant media frames employed by the government-owned *Times of Zambia* and the privately-owned the *Post* in their representation of news from the legislature. Media frames, in the words of Gitlin (1980:7) are “persistent patterns of cognition, interoperation and presentation, of selection, emphasis and exclusion by which symbol-handlers routinely organise discourse”. Identifying and analysing these frames using two inter-related linguistic concepts, thematic structure and discourse schemata, made it possible to discern the central themes running through the news reports from Parliament and how these were organised structurally to represent reality.

In appealing to the authority of linguistic analysis, the study drew extensively on van Dijk’s (1991:114-115) idea of schema, a structural model of organisation he called the “superstructure” which laid news out along conventional newswriting lines, consisting of a headline, lead, main events, context, history, verbal reaction and comments from actors “ranked in an implicit order of priority”. In the process of expressing the most important information first, using the Inverted Pyramid, the *Times* and the *Post* assigned what van Dijk (1991:114) called a “relevance structure” to the texts. The main headline story in the *Times* on 24 January 2001 was: “Speaker curtails debate”. In the *Post*, the main headline story on the same day was: “Vera snubs Parliament...Confusion as programme is reprinted at the last minute”.

Thematically, both stories are unlinked, though interestingly, they both focus on events which reportedly occurred on the same day in Parliament.¹ The initiating topic around which the 21-paragraph Times report revolves was the reported curtailment by the Speaker of the National Assembly, Amusaa Mwanamwambwa, of the debate in Parliament on “the controversial call for President Chiluba to run for a third term of office”. The headline and the lead draws attention to the Speaker’s presumed power to cut short a debate on an issue the paper considered “controversial” in an assembly where freedom of expression is supposedly constitutionally guaranteed. The Subject-Verb-Object word order of the headline also draws attention to the Speaker as the main actor in this particular news item and emphasizes his power. Given the word order of the headline, it could be said that the Speaker is more important than the debate he reportedly curtailed. His reason for “curtailing debate on the “controversial” constitutional issue is contained in the second paragraph of the story, which reads: “Mr. Mwanamwambwa said the issue of the third term has not been presented before the House and it was therefore wrong for Members of Parliament (MPs) to bring it up in their debates.” The thematic structure of the story, which accommodates the initiating topic of the Speaker’s curtailment of the debate is linked linguistically to the discourse schemata of the story which organises information sequentially and hierarchically. In the particular case of this story, the legitimacy of the issue is hierarchically underplayed by the government-owned *Times of Zambia* in the sense that the initiators of the debate (if it can be called a debate, because there are no real opposing points of view²) are backgrounded while the curtailer of the debate is foregrounded through the main headline and the first two paragraphs of the story.

² According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s English Dictionary* (1981), a debate is a “formal discussion, especially at a public meeting or in Parliament; contest between two speakers or two groups of speakers. e.g. *After a long debate, the bill was passed by the House of Commons and sent to the House of Lords.*”

It is in the third paragraph that the *Times* makes reference to the MPs who initiated the debate. The paragraph specifies that the curtailment of the debate was actually a “ruling” the Speaker made when Independent Member for Luena, Crispin Sibetta said in his opening address that the President should have told MMD members that he would not stand again. However, the paragraph does not quote Sibetta directly, but paraphrases his words. It is followed by another paragraph which relies on a paraphrase of the Speaker’s words to inform the reader that the issue of the third term was a constitutional one and Dr. Chiluba did not raise the matter in his opening address and therefore should not be discussed. The fourth paragraph endorses the fifth with direct quotes from the Speaker and reads as follows: “Honourable members should restrict themselves to what was contained in the President’s opening address. So far as the chair is aware, the matter is not before the House.”

Thereafter the *Times* quotes, albeit indirectly, another Opposition MP, AZ Mongu Central’s Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika who reportedly “later tried to rekindle the debate, saying the President should champion the cause not to change the Constitution to stand again”. In the paragraph that follows, the Speaker is quoted indirectly as having “quenched the debate”. This is followed by another paragraph which quotes him directly as saying: “As I said earlier, you are supposed to limit your debate to the motion of thanks to the President’s speech.”

It could be said that the Speaker's firmness in curtailing debate is derived from what may be seen as a desire to stick to parliamentary procedure. Procedurally, the first two weeks after the ceremonial opening of Parliament are devoted to debating the President's Address through the Motion of Thanks to his address. On the other hand, it could be argued that the Speaker was using his position to clamp down on Opposition dissent on what seemed like a burning national issue.³ This conclusion is drawn from an item contained in the report which suggests that whereas as the Speaker is reported to have cut short Opposition references to the third term, he is not shown to be taking a similar position against a ruling party MP for Lumezi, Francis Kamanga who reportedly said in his contribution to the motion of thanks that government should ensure that development reached the rural areas *so that the desire by party members for the President to run for a third term could be realised* (own emphasis).

These occurrences illustrate a point that Deacon et.al. (1991:171) raises – that quotations from sources are “used strategically to provide collateral for the side taken by the paper in terms of narrative schema”. This, he says, is done in three ways:

1. through their sequencing;
2. through the greater number of sources quoted to defend the position the paper has taken, and
3. through the use of anti-sources to frame pro-sources (and vice versa).

Of the 21 paragraphs, nine of these are about the third term debate and the Speaker's curtailment of it. Out of these, six of these quote the Speaker, two quote Opposition MPs, and one quotes a ruling party MP. From the sequencing, the Speaker's position is the most important event of the day. Through the use of a greater number of sources to frame his position, the *Times* takes a side. Schematically, the report privileges three anti-debate statements right from the start to establish the discourse of the thematic structure.

The relegation of pro-debate sources to secondary positions endorses the position the government-owned *Times* has taken on the constitutional debate.⁴ The implication that emerges from this structure is that the Opposition MPs are ignorant about parliamentary procedure and as such their views should not be taken seriously. This is embedded in the continuous reference by the *Times* to the Speaker sticking to the rules by insisting that Members keep their debates within the terms of reference of the motion of thanks to the President's address. It is not until the 10th paragraph that the *Times* makes reference to a pro-source (MMD MP for Kantanshi,) Stephen Chilombo quoted as "moving the motion of thanks to the President's address". He is paraphrased as saying that government should introduce more measures to destabilise the Kwacha (the local currency).

The *Times* uses an Opposition MP to frame the President in a positive light. It paraphrased NP MP John Muasa as saying that it had to take the President to "put measures in place to arrest the fall of the Kwacha". However, the story does not specify the measures that the President put in place. The implication is that the measures have been effective and that the fall of the Kwacha has been arrested. No comparative figures are cited to show what the Kwacha was before the President's reported intervention and what its value became after the intervention. On account of the implication, the submission by Isoka East Independent MP, Robert Sichinga that the decline of the Kwacha had to do with the lack of legislation against money laundering does little to detract from the "fact" that the President (Dr. Chiluba) had done something to save the local currency from collapse. It also serves to detract from the opposition stance that he is power hungry and unscrupulous enough to want to manipulate the Constitution.

Thereafter, the report summarised submissions made by MPs on the floor of the House: Lukulu East Independent MP, Alexis Luhila urging government not to open another refugee camp in the area because the number of refugees outstripped the number of local people; MMD Mfuwe MP, Charity Mwansa stating that government should give hunting concessions to foreigners working in partnership with Zambians; MMD Vubwi MP, Alexander Miti stating that the need to relaunch vernacular newspapers and improve radio reception in rural areas for people to understand what government is doing. The last paragraph of a story written in the Inverted Pyramid, is the least significant. However, in this case, it is very significant because it relates to a further increase in the majority the ruling party has in the House. It noted that six new MPs took their seats in Parliament. All of them were from the ruling MMD. Of the six, three were nominated by the President; the others were elected in bye-elections. The increase in the number of ruling party MPs in the House is significant, especially when seen in the context of the third term debate and the fears that the Constitution could be amended to allow for the President to stand for a third term.

In the event that the matter of such a constitutional amendment arising in Parliament and had to be resolved through voting, the likelihood of a heavy MMD vote to change the Constitution to allow the President to stand for a third term would be great. Admittedly, this is not stated explicitly. However, it is suggested by the facts.

The headline in the *Post* of 24 January 2001, which reads: “Vera snubs invite to parliament...confusion as programme is reprinted at the last minute” is laden with implication. It implies that unnecessary costs were incurred reprinting programmes for the ceremonial opening. The lead paragraph states that the First Lady, Vera Chiluba “reportedly refused to accompany the President to the official opening of the fifth session of the eighth National assembly on Friday”.

The sources who “reported” her alleged refusal are, however, not named. They exist in the text merely as “sources”. Nevertheless, un-named sources making an unconfirmed statement (or rumour?) becomes the main thrust of the main story in the *Post*. There is an implicit suggestion that there is some friction between the President and his wife and that she is aggrieved about something which though undisclosed, is serious enough to cause her to refuse to fulfil her official duty and that is, accompany her husband to the ceremonial opening of Parliament. All in all, the story is very speculative, making an issue of Mrs. Chiluba’s “mysterious absence”.

The reason for the Opposition MPs’ reported “disappointment” is not stated, but by subtle implication, attention is drawn to the fact that the President and his wife have broken a time-honoured tradition. The story implies that the First Lady cannot even afford to be indisposed when an event as important as the ceremonial opening is taking place, whether or not her presence has a direct bearing on the event or its outcome. The choice of the word “snub” in the headline suggests that by refusing to attend, the First Lady disregarded the institution of Parliament and insulted the Members and the nation. No reference is made to the reaction (if any) of ruling MPs to the First Lady’s absence.

The second part of the headline states that there was “confusion” as programmes to the event were reprinted at the last minute. However, the story does not say who was confused by this development. The use of the word “mysterious” to qualify her absence suggests that the President or his House owe Parliament and the nation an explanation. It also implies that the President and State House are concealing the reasons for the First Lady’s absence and that the *Post* is raising the issue as a matter of public interest.

In terms of hierarchy, the *Post* treats her absence as the most important news of the day. The paper makes an issue of the “fact” that some of the programmes for the official opening said the First Lady would enter the Chamber of Parliament at 10.22 hours whereas other copies did not include the item. The “anomaly” was explained in the ninth paragraph where State House “sources” (again un-named) were quoted as saying: “She just changed her mind at the last minute because instructions to delete her name from the programme were issued very late around 1600 hours on Thursday (i.e, a day before the opening of Parliament)”, the source said. “It was at that time the people at Parliament started to reprint the programme”. The implication is that a private problem between the President and his wife had cost the taxpayer money in reprinting. This could explain why the paper devoted 10 out of 22 paragraphs to her absence.

The *Post* assigns an implicit order of priority to Opposition sources in the story, starting with Luena Independent MP, Crispin Sibetta, who is paraphrased as saying the Members were “delighted” to receive the President, though he was not accompanied by his wife. The fourth paragraph quotes him directly: “We were happy to see him here, Mr. Speaker.” At that point, another Opposition MP, MP for Solwezi Central, Ludwig Sondashi, asked: ‘Only him?’ Sibetta continued: ‘Yes, we were disappointed we didn’t see Vera when the programme indicated she would be there.’ According to the report, he was prevented from proceeding with his line of debate by interjecting MMD members who kept asking him what his problem was. The *Post* noted in the following paragraph: “It has been a custom for the First lady to accompany the President to open Parliament officially”.

In real terms, however, the programme of the ceremonial opening does not require the First Lady to say anything. Her only role is to accompany him and to sit as his right hand as he delivers his address. In the *Post* report, the headline as well as quotations from Opposition MPs are used to show the side the paper has taken. The *Post* seems to share the concerns raised by the Opposition MPs.

It does this through the narrative ordering and framing of selective quotation which, notes Deacon et.al. (1991) is “part of the characteristic rhetoric of news journalism in that it deflects attention away from the persuasive function of storytelling by creating the appearance of a factual account”. The quotations in the story, however, are unevenly weighted in such a way that the reader is textually cued about the paper’s position regarding the President and the third term debate. The *Post*, in quoting Sibetta, states that he was making his submission as part of the Motion of Thanks to the President’s Address. The paper paraphrases him as saying that he refused to be associated with the President’s speech because it was an “anti-climax” and did not address the real issues affecting the common man.

He is also paraphrased as saying that as the President prepared to leave office later that year, he should have categorised his successes and failures during his 10-year reign. Sibetta is thereafter quoted directly: “But he (the President) failed to utilise his opportunity. He should have taken the opportunity to silence his zealots who are camping here saying they will not move until the President agrees to the third term. It’s unconstitutional.” The *Post* reported that the Speaker stopped the debate saying: “And this matter is not yet before the House so the honourable member should do well to stay away from this issue which the President did not raise.” However, Sibetta still managed to launch a tirade against the ruling party and the President which the *Post* quoted directly: “Where are your management skills? The Kwacha is becoming eroded by the day. We now have the weakest currency in the region if not the world. That is why I can’t associate myself with that speech because it does not link up with the issues affecting the common man.”

Through the sequencing of quotes, through the use of sources to show that the paper had balanced contending points of view, the news discourse of the report camouflages the editorial commentary underlying it.

A case in point: by juxtaposing Sibetta's submission about the emptiness and lack of substance of the President's speech with his earlier statement that he (and other MPs) were "happy" to see the President, one could say that the *Post* was making editorial capital of the irony and the sarcasm in his words show what it felt about the President's continued reign. Hierarchically and structurally speaking, the last paragraph of a news report written in the Inverted Pyramid is the least important. However, in the case of the *Post* report, the last paragraph paraphrases an Opposition MP (Lusaka Central Independent MP, Dipak Patel) as saying thank God it was the last speech President Chiluba would be delivering before the House. The concluding reference to the President's last speech could be seen as a veiled reference to the letter of the Constitution which states that the President can only serve two five-year terms.

The implication embedded in the conclusion supports one of the core propositions of the thematic structure, and that is, a President whose wife "snubs" Parliament, shirks her official duties to the State and who has no qualms about wanting to stay in power, irrespective of constitutional stipulations, is a liability to the nation.

Interestingly, the *Post*, in quoting Sibetta, reported that the President should have "silenced his zealots". However, the voices of the zealots are not heard in the story except to raise points of order whether Sibetta is in order to debate the President and not his speech. The story suggests that the odds are stacked against the political Opposition in the House who, sadly appear to be the voices of reason and good judgement in a Parliament where the Speaker seems partisan, undemocratic by stifling debate and free expression. Whether Sibetta was merely politicking or being the voice of reason, the fact that the *Post* devotes eight out of the 22 paragraphs to his views suggests that the paper has aligned itself to his anti-government position. Two are devoted to another Opposition MP, AZ's Mongu Central MP, Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika who is quoted directly as saying: "Members should be allowed to debate freely. Four of the 22 paragraphs are devoted to the Speaker.

In all of them, he is ruling on points of order. In terms of source quantity and quality, the *Post* has favoured more Opposition voices in this report than pro-government voices. The use of pro-government forces have been used to frame the position of anti-government sources and ultimately the obvious anti-government position the *Post* has taken on the issue of the President and the third term debate.

The *Times* published one story from Parliament on 21 February 2001 and it appeared on the lower-half front page under the headline: "Cobalt saga:MPs cautioned". The main topic of the story is a ruling made by the Deputy Speaker of the House, Simon Mwila. In his ruling, he reportedly "cautioned" Members of Parliament against basing their debates on "speculation". The ruling was on a point of order concerning what the paper described as the "cobalt saga" raised by Mongu Central Agenda for Zambia MP, Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika. But the details of the "saga" (a word defined by the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English as "a detailed account of events happening over a long period of time") or the exact nature of the concern raised by the MP in question are not disclosed; nor is a detailed account provided to show that the cobalt issue is indeed a "saga". On the basis of the report, one cannot establish whether the MP's concerns were "speculative". However, the use of the word "saga" suggests that even the paper is well aware that the issue had gone on for a long time. The *Times*' report neither specifies nor clarifies the nature of the point of order. The paper paraphrases the Deputy Speaker who is reported to have "ordered the Office of the Vice-President to investigate reports about the alleged disappearance of the US\$150 million realised from copper sales. He reportedly added that he had no "machinery" to investigate the matter but asked MPs if they were voted into the House to become "investigating officers". Thereafter, he is quoted directly as saying: "You are not here to discuss speculations. You are here to discuss issues on which government should make decisions. If you are interested in the welfare of the people who voted you here, it is important that you refer such matters to relevant authorities for investigation".

The Deputy Speaker's statement suggests that MPs are not required to subject the activities of government to scrutiny and review, and that issues pertaining to national income (in this case, revenue accruing from the sale of cobalt) is directly related to the "welfare" of the electorate; nor should they be instrumental in the investigation of scandals involving public officials. Given the position he takes on the issue and the ruling he makes, why he asks the Office of the Vice-President to investigate the alleged disappearance of money is difficult to establish. All in all, the grounds on which the Deputy Speaker "cautioned" all MPs is vague.

Though the lead and other paragraphs suggest that he "cautioned" all MPs, his reported grievance only seems to be with one Opposition MP who raised the issue in the first place. No other voices are heard lending support to her stand however indirectly. The framing procedures used in the section of the story referred to show that as a source, the Deputy Speaker is used to undermine or discredit an issue that has been advanced by a member of the Opposition and to create the impression that it is not important enough to be a matter of national concern.

By referring to the Office of the Office of the Vice-President (a government institution), he suggests that the alleged "saga" can be objectively investigated by a government implicated in the disappearance of the said amount. Six of the 17 paragraphs are devoted to the cobalt "saga". All of them are devoted to the Deputy Speaker, though part of a paragraph refers to the fact that he was ruling on a point of order raised by Agenda for Zambia MP for Mongu Central. In the two paragraphs that follow, two government front-benchers, Health Minister, Enock Kavindele and Works and Supply Minister, Godden Mandandi make submissions regarding their respective ministries. The Health Minister reported that: a consignment of drugs worth US\$8 million would "soon" arrive in the country to "ease the drug shortage". The Works and Supply Minister reported that K17 billion had been raised from the sale of government houses, with 1,578 housing units paid for in full, the other 5,654 partly paid for. Both Ministers are paraphrased .

The Health Minister does not specify where the drugs would be coming from, how soon they would be arriving or whether the US\$8million would be adequate to end the reported drug shortage. The lack of detail in his submission suggests that the problem is not grave. As a framing procedure, the Cabinet Ministers are shown to be doing their duty, and that is, informing the nation of developments in their respective ministries. Three paragraphs are devoted to their submissions.

The six paragraphs that follow are based on a ruling on a point of order by the Speaker. The *Times* reported that “earlier”, the Speaker “ordered” four Opposition MPs who had pinned green ribbons “similar to the red anti-AIDS ribbons” to remove them. He is reported to have told them that the wearing of ribbons was not in compliance with parliamentary business. He is quoted directly: “I am confidently briefed that green stands for political opposition.” At that point of the story, the *Times* notes that the Speaker was ruling on a point of order raised by Mulobezi MMD MP, Michael Mabenga, who asked whether Solwezi West NP Member, Benny Tetamashimba was in order to wear a green ribbon in Parliament.

The *Times* attempts to show what seems to be the Speaker’s even-handedness in the story on the basis of another ruling he makes on another point of order . The paper reports that “similarly”, the Speaker “also” directed MMD Chief Whip, Vernon Mwaanga, to examine badges worn by Tourism Minister, William Harrington and any other MMD Member. The matter of the badges was reportedly raised by Luena Independent MP, Crispin Sibetta. The use of “similarly” and “also” suggests that the Speaker was being impartial by granting fair hearing to the grievances of the political Opposition. However, in his directive to the Chief Whip, the Speaker asked him to “examine” the badges. He did not “order” the ruling party MPs to remove the badges, whatever they stood for.

The Speaker's position on the green ribbons is interesting in the sense that the MPs are Opposition MPs and are recognised to be such by the House. This means that their wearing of symbols of political opposition is in line with their status in the House as Opposition parliamentarians. In the process of showing the Speaker as an impartial adjudicator, the *Times* inadvertently projects his bias in his dealings with political Opposition in the house.

The last of the three paragraphs of the story quote an Opposition MP, John Muasa, Member for Kasempa who reportedly called for a scrapping of medical fees, saying they were a "menace to society" and unaffordable". He also appealed for the resumption of television adverts promoting the use of condoms to prevent HIV/AIDS. The *Times* quotes him directly: "We need to promote the use of condoms in the fight against the AIDS scourge and other sexually transmitted disease. He was reportedly contributing to the estimates of expenditure for the Ministry of Health. Interestingly, the paper devotes a lot of space to an Opposition MP, suggesting that the government-owned *Times of Zambia* is fair in its accommodation of views from the political opposition. However, the nature of his submission is such that it does not rock the boat (unlike the concerns raised by Mongu Central MP's concerns about the cobalt "saga" and the disappearance of US\$150 million). No details about the actual estimates of expenditure are provided in the story, nor are any figures cited to that effect. His submission does not make any reference to the drug shortage the Health Minister referred to. The report, like the other reports that have been discussed are merely summarised accounts of who said what. All in all, the report is lacking in what Keefer (1993:414) describes as "empowering news". In terms of sequencing structure, source quantity and quality, the *Times* suggests that the most important issue to emerge from Parliament on 21 February was the Deputy Speaker's ruling that MPs should not base their debates on "speculation".

By using him as a dominant source, the paper drowns the concerns about the missing money. The paper's position about the "saga" is inconclusive. On 21 February 2001, the *Post* carried a story on the lower-half front page of Page One with the headline: "Deputy Speaker urges government to investigate cobalt scam". The paper takes a very different position from the one taken by the *Times* in its reportage of the same issue.

The *Post*'s position is reflected in the headline, which states that government ought to investigate the cobalt "scam" (a word defined by the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English as "clever and dishonest plan or course of action"). The thrust of the story is qualitatively different as can be seen from the lead paragraph which reports that: the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Simon Mwila yesterday directed the government to continue with investigations into the irregular sales of ZCCM cobalt. Attention is drawn to an ongoing investigation into what the paper describes as "irregular sales of ZCCM cobalt" in which government (represented in the parastatal ZCCM) is implicated. The *Post* does not provide any details about the "irregular sale", assuming that readers are well aware of the issues surrounding the case. In this regard, the report could be said to be lacking in context and background in so far as it describes the transactions as "irregular" but does not explain how. Like the *Times*, the *Post* acknowledges that the Deputy Speaker gave the directive when he made a ruling on a point of order raised by Agenda for Zambia MP for Mongu Central, Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika.

However, unlike in the *Times*' report, the *Post* makes known the nature of the MP's concerns. It reports, albeit through a paraphrase, that she wanted to know whether it was in order for government to keep overburdening Zambians through debts when they could not account for the missing US\$150 million from cobalt sales. The *Post* backs the paraphrase up with a direct quote which reads: "Is government in order to continue to put us in debt while they are making money disappear" Lewanika asked, amidst shouts of 'Hear! Hear!' from the Opposition."

In response, the Deputy Speaker said he would refer the matter to government because they had the "machinery" to investigate. According to the *Post*, he "advised" MPs with such cases to direct them to relevant authorities. (The *Times* had said he "cautioned" MPs not to "speculate".) He is quoted directly as saying: "I will throw it to the Office of the Vice-President to carry on with the investigations". Through the use of quotes, the paper uses the Deputy Speaker to frame the concerns raised by the Mongu Central MP to draw attention to an irregularity in which a government organisation has been implicated. In the *Post* report, the voices of the Opposition are heard as is the nature of the point of order they raise, creating the impression that the Opposition is not only holding government accountable for the disappearance of money, but making a just stand on behalf of Zambians who are reportedly "overburdened through debt". Through the use of "they" to refer to government, the MP draws a distinction by implication between "us" (the Opposition) and "them"(government). The report also suggests that in "overburdening Zambians" and "making money (in the form of national income) disappear". the government of the days is callous and dishonest. At the end of the six-paragraph story, this is the dominant image that appears. However, whether the paper believes the Office of the Vice-President can facilitate a thorough investigation is not stated, though from the direct quote of the Deputy Speaker who says he will "throw" it to the office in question, there is the suggestion that this might not be the case.

The choice of word “throw” seems too casual to suggest a formal directive to investigate an alleged irregularity. Perhaps this is the paper’s way of casting aspersions on the validity of the investigations and its expected outcome.

On the 21 February, the *Post* had three other reports from Parliament –all of which appeared on Page Three. The second main story on the page was headlined: “Speaker bans green ribbons”. According to the lead paragraph of a nine-paragraph report, the Speaker of the National Assembly “ordered” Opposition and Independent Members of Parliament to take off the green ribbons they were wearing because they implied political opposition. Like the *Times*’ report, the Speaker’s order came in the form of a ruling on a point of order raised by Mulobezi MMD MP, Michael Mabenga, who asked whether Solwezi West NP Member, Benny Tetamashimba was in order to wear a green ribbon in the House. The words the paper cites the Speaker as saying are slightly different from the direct quote appearing in the *Times*: “I have been briefed the symbol stands for political opposition. I direct the honourable member to take off the ribbon or anyone else wearing the symbol.”

Whereas the *Times* did not specify the nature of political opposition the green ribbon the Speaker referred to, the *Post* notes in the fourth paragraph that it symbolised “opposition to a third term for President Chiluba”. The report also identified the other Members in the House who were wearing green ribbons: Lusaka Central Independent Member, Dipak Patel, UPND Mbabala Member, Emmanuel Hachipuka. The paper thereafter reports that Luena Independent Member, Crispin Sibetta asked whether some MMD Members were in order to wear “certain badges in the House”. The Speaker reportedly ruled that MMD Chief Whip “examines” the meaning of the labels that were being worn by MMD MPs. The *Post* also reported another point of order raised by Foreign Affairs Minister, Keli Walubita that Sibetta continued to wear “a badge that had been banned in the House”.

However, the Deputy Speaker said he could not make a ruling on the point of order because he had just taken his position and was not aware of what had transpired before. The report ends with a direct quote from the Deputy Speaker: "I would have loved to make a ruling but as you can see, I have just taken my seat."

The second story on the lower-half of Page Three was headlined: "AIDS knows no Christian, warns Kasempa MP". The lead paragraph of the same story reads: "Government should promote the use of condoms because they have reduced the spread of sexually transmitted infections, Opposition MP, John Muasa said in Parliament yesterday. Contributing to estimates of expenditure for the Ministry of Health, he said government cannot ban condom adverts simply because Zambia was a Christian nation. The Member is thereafter quoted directly as saying: "I am puzzled that AIDS must be stopped because Zambia is a Christian nation. AIDS knows no Christian, it knows no Muslim, it knows no Hindu and it knows no pagan. Condoms have done a commendable job. The use of condoms has prevented not only HIV/AIDS but other sexually transmitted disease. I urge the Minister to continue advertising the use of condoms."

The fourth paragraph of the five-paragraph story notes that Kankoyo MMD MP, Irene Chisala urged government to consider channelling money raised from breweries' revenue towards the manufacture of cheaper HIV/AIDS drugs. She said cheap drugs could be manufactured locally because the raw materials were available. She said she feared tax incentives given to breweries would increase the spread of HIV/AIDS as people behaved recklessly under the influence of alcohol. The implication embedded in her statements is that cures are being developed for HIV/AIDS in Zambia only that these are not cheap; money from breweries could make HIV/AIDS drugs affordable. There is also the implication that the raw materials for these drugs have been identified and are available in the country. However, to date, there is no official record of the manufacture of HIV/AIDS drugs in Zambia or the acknowledgement of the availability of raw material for the same.

Though reference is made to Muasa contributing to a debate on estimates of expenditure for the Ministry of Health, there is no single mention of the amount of money earmarked for the said ministry. This makes it difficult to ascertain how submissions made by the MPs are “contributions” to a “debate” on estimates of expenditure. The emphasis on who said what and the lack of empowering information in the reports from Parliament seems to be characteristic of the paper’s reportage from Parliament.

This can be evidenced from the fourth report from Parliament published on Page Three of the *Post*. The four-paragraph report appeared on the lower-half of the page and was headlined “Low staff moral (sic) still haunts health ministry, says Kavindele”. The main topic, as noted in the lead is that the Ministry of Health is “still haunted by low staff moral (sic) due to poor working conditions, Health Minister reported to Parliament yesterday. According to the *Post*, he “disclosed” in Parliament that his Ministry last week lost a number of nurses to Australia. The paper calls his submission a “disclosure”; however, the Minister provides no figures about the exact number of nurses or what the particular allure of Australia is, the distance notwithstanding. The final paragraph of the story quotes him directly as saying: “Our financial problems have been worsened by the HIV/AIDS epidemic and high poverty levels”. Though it can be concluded that HIV/AIDS may have killed many nurses in recent times, it is difficult to establish from the Minister’s submission, how “high poverty levels have worsened the Ministry’s financial problems”.

Two stories from Parliament made the lower-half front page of the *Times of Zambia* on 8 March 2001. The first report, headlined “Parliament ratifies judges’ appointment” was a summarised compilation of the previous day’s events and revolved around the House’s endorsement of the appointment of two puisne judges, Anthony Nyangulu and Rapheal Okafor, following the adoption of the report of the parliamentary select committee mandated to scrutinise the appointment. The *Times* devoted 11 of the 18-paragraph story to the appointment and to what some Members had to say about it.

Six of these were devoted to the submission of the Chairman of the parliamentary select committee, Chikakula Banda. The paper noted that Mr. Banda was MMD Mkaika MP. The report suggests that the committee was very thorough in its scrutiny of the candidates, paraphrasing the Chairman as telling the House that it had “sought the guidance” of the Law Association of Zambia (LAZ) to ensure that the persons appointed to the bench had clean records. The paper quotes him directly endorsing the thoroughness of the committee in its work: “I ask you honourable Members to ratify the appointment of the two eminent lawyers. Before making recommendations to the House, ~~my (own emphasis) committee sought the expert advice of the police, the Anti-Corruption Committee and the Security Intelligence Agency to investigate them and no criminal or other dubious record was established~~”. The report suggests the submissions of the agencies tasked to investigate the two “eminent” lawyers should not be refuted because they are “expert” and therefore authoritative. By implication, the committee seems to be patting itself on the back for its presumed thoroughness in carrying out its functions. The paragraph that follows paraphrases Mr. Banda who submitted that the committee recommended the appointment of more women to the bench “in order to promote gender”.

The *Times* is shown to provide Opposition endorsement of the appointment by quoting UPND MP, Dr. Sipula Kabanje in two paragraphs, one paraphrasing him “supporting the ratification”, the other quoting him directly saying: “Judges are the guardians of the Constitution. In supporting this motion, I wish to urge the new judges to uphold and defend our Constitution. Democracy is meaningless without the rule of law.” All in all, three paragraphs are attributed to Dr. Kabanje, the third quoting him “urging” government to improve salaries and conditions of service of adjudicators in order to attract better qualified persons to serve on the bench. In terms of sequencing and source quality, the *Times*’ citation of Dr. Kabanje’s endorsement of the judges is important because of the underlying implication of who he is as a source.

The *Times* states that the Chairman of the parliamentary select committee is MMD Mkaika MP, but they do not state that the UPND's Dr. Sipula Kabanje is a lawyer with a doctorate in Constitutional Law. Nevertheless, his approval seems cardinal the cause of government's presumed transparency in its appointment of the two puisne judges.

As a source, Kabanje is followed by MMD MP (Rosemary Malama) who reportedly "appealed" to government to consider appointing women as judges and "urged fellow women" to compete for positions with men". Interestingly, the fact that the committee submitted that point in its recommendations further suggests the extent of its thoroughness. In terms of source sequence, she is followed by Finance and Economic Development Deputy Minister, Godfrey Simasiku who reportedly described the two judges as "professional". He is quoted directly giving one of the two judges, a Nigerian, a character reference: "I have known Mr. Okafor since he came to Zambia 27 years ago. He and Mr. Nyangulu are eminent lawyers with clean records". The paper suggests that because the source of the character reference is Minister, his seal of approval is authoritative and as such readers should take his word for it. Not a single Member is quoted casting doubts on the appointment, though Independent Luena MP, Crispin Sibetta reportedly "caused laughter in the House" when he "suggested" that the new judges "guide" the police to understand the Public Order Act. On the basis of the weightage of the paragraphs supporting the appointment, it can be concluded that Sibetta's "suggestion" is not to be taken seriously but to be regarded as a light-hearted aside, probably meant to provide comic relief in the House. In so doing, the *Times* underplays the seriousness of Sibetta's concerns about the Public Order Act. The paper does not provide any background to Opposition concerns about the said Act.

The 15th paragraph of the story notes that three bills on Income Tax, Customs and Excise and Value Added Tax (VAT) passed committee stage without amendment are coming up for third reading. The paper does not provide any background about the draft laws and what they are meant to do.

The 16th paragraph notes that government had “explained” that farmers in the Southern province were not “utilising” the K2billion disease control fund because they preferred hard cash and individual loans. The paper reports that government’s position was clarified by Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Deputy Minister, Enoch Chikamba who provided the “explanation” as an answer to the question from Chikakanta MP, Misheck Chiinda asking why farmers were shunning the fund. The Minister is reported to have added that farmers were afraid of losing their property if they failed to pay back. He also reportedly “disclosed” that over K289 million of the K2 billion had disbursed to 77 farmers groups in the province.

By foregrounding the government position, the *Times* suggests the ruling party has effective agricultural policies as well as funds in place to help farmers, but somehow farmers do not seem keen to take advantage of these opportunities. The “disclosure” in the last paragraph that 77 farmer groups (not individual farmers) had benefitted suggests that in spite of the reluctance of some farmers to “utilise” the disease control fund, government was still going ahead with its policy of making finance available to those who needed it. The dominant themes that seem to emerge from the 18-paragraph report is that there is consensus in the House over the issue of the judges’ appointment as well as three bills which would be coming up for third reading “without amendment”.

The initiating topic in the second *Times* story headlined “Kapiri-Kabwe-Chisamba road to chew K21 billion” also suggests that government is working hard to improve the lot of the country and its people. According to the lead, government has budgeted for K21 billion for the “rehabilitation” of the Kapiri-Kabwe-Chisamba road and work would commence “immediately” after the rainy season.

The submission is attributed to Central Province Minister, Cecil Holmes who said government was “concerned about the poor state of the stretch” and would start rehabilitation when the rains ended. He was reportedly speaking when he wound up debate on estimates of expenditure for his province. The *Times* devoted six of the 13 paragraphs to the Central Province Minister. The fourth and fifth paragraphs report him “advising” MPs to start assessing the food needs of their constituencies to enable government plan because it was “evident” that there would be hunger in the province. From the choice of word “advice”, the paper suggests that government decisions are driven by foresight and wisdom and represented in the House by leaders like Cecil Holmes. The paper notes at that point of the story that the Deputy Speaker “sent the House laughing” when he said that there was nothing wrong with beer as it had been defined as a “lubricant for civilisation”. The paper notes, in its sequence of events, that the seriousness of the House’s business was not undermined in any way by the light-heartedness of the Members. The suggestion that the barter provided some comic relief is suggested in the eight and ninth paragraphs. The eight paragraph notes that the Central Province Minister said he was “very happy” to sit next to Copperbelt Minister Mathew Mulanda and his Environment counterpart, Gibson Nkausu who were former brewers like himself. The *Times of Zambia* notes that the Deputy Speaker was “prompted” to make the comment after “running commentaries” from AP Mongu Central MP, saying that brewers were like drunkards. The choice of the word “prompted” suggests that the Deputy Speaker would not have volunteered his witty rejoinder about alcohol being the “lubricant of civilisation” but merely used it to deal with the seemingly trivial and disruptive “running commentaries” by an Opposition Member of Parliament.

The last four paragraphs quoted provincial Ministers informing the House about developments in their provinces: North-Western Province Minister David Kambilumbilu said there was need for government to send more “security men” to the province because there was a lot of insecurity along the borderline there. (It is not clear whether he meant “soldiers” or “intelligence officers”).

Perhaps his exclusion of women was an oversight; perhaps he was suggesting that given the gravity of the situation in his province, he does not expect women to be sent there.).Southern Province Minister Clement Chuumbwe said land clearing equipment from China had arrived in the province and work on feeder roads would start after the rains; Northern Province Minister Daniel Kapapa “assured” the House that government would start working on “several roads and bridges” in his area. He does not specify how soon work would start, how many roads and bridges would be worked on and how much it would cost. On the whole, the report is low on detail, context and background.

The *Post* published four stories from Parliament on 8 March. Two appeared on Page Four, the other two on Page Five. The main headline story on Page Four was headlined “Mwila explains beer to Lewanika”. In that report, the paper devotes 11 paragraphs to the Deputy Speaker’s rejoinder that “beer is the lubricant of civilisation” and the circumstances under which the statement was made. The ninth paragraph quotes the Central Province Minister who, “after a brief interruption” proceeded to “advise” the House that they should be visiting their constituencies to assess the needs of people so that government could be helped in planning development projects. The paragraph that follows paraphrases the North-Western Province Minister saying that the 2001 budget had earmarked “a lot of money for emoluments and departmental fundings but had no provisions for capital expenditure. He said his province “expects an improvement” in funding, suggesting that the North-Western Province gets a raw deal when it comes to budgetary allocations. Unlike the *Times*’ report which cited the Deputy Speaker’s rejoinder in two paragraphs in an 18-paragraph story and treated it as a light-hearted aside, the *Post* made it the most important report of the day from Parliament.

Both papers noted that the Central Province Minister “advised” the House. However, whereas the *Times* said he gave his counsel regarding food needs in individual constituencies in his province, the *Post* reported that his concern was with government planning for “development projects” in all constituencies.

It is difficult to know, on the basis of this variation in reportage, what the Minister actually said. In its report, the *Post* does not refer to the reported “insecurity” in borderline areas of the North-Western Province attributed to the provincial minister in the *Times*’ report, but instead cites the implied injustice in budgetary allocations the province suffers and how skewed the 2001 budget is in favour of emoluments at the expense of capital projects.

In spite of the qualitative differences in the two reports, both papers focused primarily on who said what in the House, giving little or attention to context and background of what was said, thus depriving readers of policy and operational information in the news.

Like the *Times*, the *Post* reported Parliament’s ratification of the appointment of the two puisne judges. However, the Chairman of the parliamentary select committee is not quoted at all in the eight-paragraph story (even though from the *Times* report, it is stated that he formally requested the House to ratify their appointment). Six of the eight paragraphs are devoted to two Opposition Members. In order of hierarchy and implied importance, the Independent Luena Member, Crispin Sibetta’s submission to the House is given greater prominence. He said the House is “looking to the two lawyers to “put their feet down” in enforcing the Public Order Act. He reportedly said the judges should tell the police that they were not in charge of issuing permits for people to hold public meetings or demonstrations; theirs was only to approve permits. The *Times* report does not explain the Public Order Act nor does it raise Opposition concerns about it.

The second Opposition Member quoted in the report on the ratification of the judges' appointment is the UPND's Dr. Sipula Kabanje. The submissions the *Post* attributes to him the *Times* ignores in its report of what he said with regard to his endorsement of the appointment of the judges. He reportedly "commended" government for "slightly" improving" the judges' conditions of service but "condemned" it for neglecting magistrates and state advocates.

He is quoted as saying that democracy could only be strengthened if "thuggery and violence" were prohibited, and that parliament should enact a law to prevent that. The paper does not state where Dr. Kabanje believes the source of the "thuggery and violence" is. Interestingly, his sentiments on this issue does not appear in the *Times* on the same day.

The third story the *Post* published on 8 March was the main headline story on Page Five. It was headlined "VAT Bill to link ZRA with banks". The initiating topic of the 11-paragraph story is that the VAT Amendment Bill will link the ZRA on a daily basis with banks that will be collecting the money from tax revenue. This information is attributed to Finance Minister, Katele Kalumba who reportedly presented the Bill which had already gone through the third reading to the House two days before. In his submission, the Minister is reported to have informed the House that ZRA would cease handling cash and would only deposit revenue through the Zambia National Commercial Bank (ZANACO) and Finance Bank. Interestingly, the Finance Minister is not quoted directly throughout the story. He is paraphrased as saying that the new measure is meant to reduce corruption and dangers and risks involved in handling large amounts of money by the ZRA.

Though the paper reported that Bill had already gone through third reading, an Opposition MP, Isoka East Independent Member, Robert Sichinga reportedly raises some concerns about it. The *Post* devotes three paragraphs to him denigrating the Bill. Mr. Sichinga is reported to have said that the use of banks meant that there should be some time allowed to remit the money to the Central Bank and that it was very likely that ZRA would not receive money on time. “There will be delays in remitting the money to ZRA, “ he is quoted directly as saying. The Minister reportedly said that measures would be put in place to address the concerns raised by Mr. Sichinga. However, the paper does not quote him specifying the exact nature of these measures, which suggests that the Minister could be hiding behind a curtain of vagueness to draw attention away from the operational problems that could affect the practicability of the Bill, once it is enacted. The paper devotes paragraphs eight, nine and ten to MMD Member for Mwembeshi, David Shimonde, whose main concern is that government should consider reducing VAT because it was “too high”. “If we can come down, it will help entrepreneurs and manufacturers”, he is quoted directly as saying. Mr. Shimonde reportedly told the House that Zambia had the highest tax in the region at 17.5 per cent.

However, the Finance Minister is reported in the last paragraph of the story refuting Shimonde’s claim, saying that Zambia had an average rate in the region. He does not, in the interests of comparison, cite what the regional average is. In the end, the paper does not help the reader know whether Zambia’s VAT is the highest in the region (as Shimonde said) or whether, according to the Finance Minister, it is average.

In terms of source quantity, the *Post* report devotes five paragraphs to the Finance Minister, five to the Independent Member for Isoka East and three to the MMD Mwembeshi Member. The framing procedures employed by the *Post* in the story uses the Independent Member undermine the rationale behind the new Value Added Tax Amendment Bill presented to the House by the Finance Minister. His main concern that “there will be delays in remitting the money to ZRA” is directly quoted whereas the Minister’s assurances and explanations are not.

Sichinga's use of the verb "will" suggests that he is certain about the impracticability of the proposed measure and knows what he is talking about. The *Post*, however, does not state that the Member could be drawing on specialist knowledge and experience as a chartered accountant. Perhaps this could be the paper's reason for seemingly acknowledging the certainty underlying his concerns. None of the five paragraphs which feature the Finance Minister is a direct quote.

The fourth story the *Post* published from Parliament on 8 March appeared on the top-half of Page Five under the headline "Widening gap between rich, poor worries Sikongo MP". The entire report was devoted to the maiden speech made in the House by Opposition UPND Member for Sikongo, Best Makumba. The lead paragraph paraphrases him as saying that it is very saddening in Zambia to note there are imbalances in the distribution of resources. He reportedly observed that most areas of the Western Province have continued to lag behind in infrastructural development because of lack of equitable distribution of resources. "It is high time we learnt to share resources equitably, no matter how limited they are", he was quoted directly as "advising". Mr. Makumba is reported to have singled out Kalabo as an area seriously lacking in development compared to other regions in the country and noted that the road from Mongu to Kalabo had been "on the drawing board for a long time".

The report concluded with the Member "expressing his concern" over the "widening gap between the rich and the poor in Zambia". Technically, the lead paragraph of a news report written in the Inverted Pyramid is the most important, proving the basis for the headline. However, in the case of this report, the headline is based on the last paragraph, technically the least important in a story cast in the Inverted Pyramid. In departing from journalistic orthodoxy to make the least important concluding paragraph the subject of the headline, the *Post* could be suggesting that it agrees with the point of view expressed by UPND's Sikongo MP that the gap between the rich and the poor in Zambia is widening. Factually, the story is low on detail.

The MP does not cite statistics and figures to prove the alleged imbalances in the distribution of resources nor does he refer to budgetary allocations over a period of time to support his claims. In spite of that, the *Post* elevates the story to a position of eminence on the top-half of Page Five. This gives a relevance structure to the report, making it more important than it really is. By giving such prominence to the maiden speech of an Opposition MP, the *Post* takes a side and makes a statement about his quality as a source of news. This could explain why, in spite of the lack of detail and supporting evidence in his submission, Best Makumba is projected as a Member who speaks for the voiceless and takes a stand against what he perceives to be institutional injustice in the allocation of resources.

“Parliamentary debates go on air” was the headline of the only news report from Parliament the *Times* published on 31 October 2001. It appeared on the lower-half front page. The story compressed a number of unrelated issues and submissions from the House into one story. The initiating topic around which the story revolves is the announcement by the Speaker of the National Assembly before the start of the day’s business about the commencement of live radio broadcasts of parliamentary debates on 92.6 FM in Lusaka. He reportedly told the House that government had “allowed” the National Assembly to immediately broadcast without doing any test transmissions.

The *Times* noted in the third paragraph of the 15-paragraph story that the National Assembly had recently acquired a transmitter for the live broadcasts of parliamentary debates with the intention of “being more open to the public”. The Speaker’s statement that the government had “allowed” the National Assembly to broadcast without doing any test transmissions suggests that government had bent the rules in order to do Parliament as well as the people of Lusaka a favour.

Thereafter the report noted that the Vice-President, Enoch Kavindele informed the House that after the oral Question and Answer session and the consideration of two bills, Parliament would adjourn sine die in two days' time. The paper also reported that the bills in question included one of tax-free processing zones and another intended to facilitate the "recapitalisation" of the Development Bank of Zambia (DBZ). Beyond this, the *Times* provided no details about the substance of the bills or about the context as well as the background that motivated them.

Why DBZ, a parastatal company, needed "recapitalisation" is not explained, which suggests a deliberate underplaying of the implied financial difficulties the bank is facing. The expected source of the funding for the reported "recapitalisation" is also not mentioned, as if to suggest that is unlikely to cost the taxpayer anything.

Similarly, by not specifying what a tax-free processing zone is, what difference it is expected to make and who the exemption from tax is likely to benefit, the *Times* deprives the reader of the empowering news Keefer (1993:412-414) describes as policy and operational information. Paragraphs seven to 13 record the oral Question and Answer session of the day. Interestingly, in reporting this aspect of the proceedings in the House, the *Times* starts with the answers from the government front-bencher to the questions Members ask. In this regard, the Vice-President informed the House that government had no immediate intention of granting the Human Rights Commission (HRC) quasi-judicial powers because it did not want the commission to rival the courts in adjudication. He reportedly said though the HRC was set up to be an investigative organ, government was studying recommendations to find ways on how it could assist the courts. The *Times* reported that the Vice-President said this is response to "a question" by MMD Mambilima Member, Patrick Kalifungwa.

The exact nature of the question is not specified. Similarly, the Education Minister, Reuben Musakabantu reportedly “explained” that all the eight schools constructed with Japanese funding were in Lusaka because it was the worst hit by the lack of school places. No other explanations are given. Thus one does not know what the ratio of pupils per available school places in Lusaka is compared to other areas. Instead, the paper reports the Education Minister informing the House that 208 lecturers left the University of Zambia between 1999 and 2000.

He reportedly told the House 80 per cent of lecturers who left did so because of poor salaries and conditions of service. In a bid to retain lecturers, the Minister reportedly said that government had sold them houses and increased their salaries.

Again, the *Times* noted that this was in response to “a question” from NP Member for Kasempa, John Muasa. Again, the question he asked is not specified. It is as though the *Times* is suggesting that the questions are not as important as the answers. Given that the answers in the oral Question and Answer session comes from government front-benchers, it can be assumed that in terms of source quality, the back-benchers who ask the questions deserve no more than a casual mention in the *Times*. A total of seven paragraphs were devoted to answers in a situation where the nature of the questions are not known; of these, three are devoted to the Vice-President, the other four to the Education Minister.

The noticeable trend in the paper’s coverage is the apparent lack of policy and operational information. The three remaining paragraphs note that five new MPs took their seats in the House after taking oath before the Speaker. Of the five, three were from the MMD, two from the FDD. There were no direct quotes in the entire story.

The *Post* published all its three stories from the House on 31 October 2001 on Page Three. The main story was not directly derived from deliberations from the floor of the House but from the precincts of the National Assembly. It was headlined “Guards block FDD MPs from entering Parliament”. The 16-paragraph report had only two sources, both of whom were FDD members. The lead reported that “several” members of Parliament who had not yet resigned their seats but were associated with the Opposition FDD were blocked from entering Parliament by National Assembly security officers. The report, which was largely based of the testimony of MMD Lumezi Member, Major Francis Kamanga (11 out of the 16 were devoted to what he said). He reportedly told the *Post* that he was sure the instruction to deny them entry had come from President Chiluba. He is reported to have said that he had resigned from the MMD and not from the National Assembly and that if the MMD had not communicated his resignation to the Speaker, that was not his problem. “It is the duty of MMD to inform the Speaker that I have resigned but they did not do so. My resignation is from the party and not from Parliament.

According to the report, Major Kamanga said he phoned the Speaker to find out why he was being barred from entering the Parliament building, but the Speaker refused to speak with him. He reportedly said that it was the Deputy Speaker who told him that the instructions were coming from higher authorities. “Obviously, the instructions were coming from the President”. Though the *Post* reported that “several” MPs were denied access, only three others were mentioned in the report: Mangango MP, Chrispin Shimuna, Livingstone MP, Edwin Hatembo and Chasefu MP, Dorothy Tembo, all from MMD. The paper further noted in the 13th paragraph that FDD board of trustees chairman Newton N’guni was found at the Parliament bar having a meal and reportedly said no one had the right to stop him from entering National Assembly because he was still a Member of Parliament. It noted that according to the list the National Assembly security officers were using to block Members, only 24 out of 38 belonging to the FDD had had their seats declared vacant by the Speaker and listed those MPs whose seats had not yet been declared vacant.

The paper did not provide policy information about what the law says about whether MPs who defect from the party on whose ticket they were elected still remain Members. The submissions of the Members themselves suggest that they are not aware of the stipulations in the law regarding the said issue. On account of this, it can be said that the report leaves readers in the dark about the law and whether or not National Assembly was justified in denying access to those Members who had shifted their political loyalties. The story suggests that the Members were victimised and treated unfairly, though this is not stated. The second story was headlined “National Assembly broadcasts debates”.

According to the lead paragraph, the National Assembly started test transmissions for the live coverage of debates. This detail is qualitatively different from the one contained in the *Times*' report. The Speaker reportedly told the House that Information and Broadcasting Minister, Vernon Mwaanga had granted the National Assembly “a waiver” to start test transmissions with immediate effect up to the end of the current sitting of Parliament.

On the basis of the comparison of the two reports, it could be said that there was inaccuracy in either one of them, though it is difficult to tell which of the reports was factually flawed. Like the *Times*' report, the *Post* report incorporated other developments which had no thematic relation with the initiating topic, such as: five new MPs taking their seats in the House; the observation of a minute of silence for two MPs who had died while the House had adjourned; the announcement by the leader of the House, the Vice-President that Parliament would adjourn sine die in two days' time after the oral Question and Answer session and the presentation of government bills.

The *Post*'s third report for the day was published on the lower-half of Page Three and was headlined “Govt. will not give HRC quasi-judicial powers, Kavindele tells Parliament”. In terms of content, the report is very similar to the one published by the *Times* on the same day. However, unlike the *Times*' report which said the answers were given in response to “a question”, the *Post*'s account noted the exact nature of the questions asked.

It noted, for the record, that Mambilima MMD Member, Patrick Kalifungwa asked the Vice-President whether the HRC would be granted quasi-judicial powers. The eight-paragraph report also quoted the Legal and Presidential Affairs Minister, Eric Silwamba who reportedly told the House that government was “committed” to the improvement of conditions of service for magistrates to reduce strikes, and that though these were improved five months ago, they would be continually be reviewed. As seems to be the trend in newspaper coverage of deliberation in the National Assembly, the paper does not provide details about the nature of the improvement of the condition of service for magistrates.

The Minister’s answer suggests that magistrates have gone on strike in the past to press for better conditions of service. Unlike the *Times*’ report, the *Post*’s account noted that the Minister was responding to a question from Mambilima MMD Member who wanted to know whether magistrates’ conditions of service would be improved.

The reports from both papers show that in terms of source sequence, the *Times* and the *Post* prefer to foreground the answers and to background the questions in their reportage of oral Question and Answer sessions in the House.

“Drug dealers to have it thick” was the main headline story in the *Times* on 1 November 2001. It was the only report from Parliament the paper carried on that day. According to the lead, the Prevention and Prohibition of Money Laundering Bill which seeks to strengthen the fight against dirty money, was reintroduced in Parliament in a few days from the date of the report. The second paragraph attributes this information to Legal and Presidential Affairs Minister, Eric Silwamba who said in Parliament that government intended to introduce stiffer penalties against drug dealers against drug dealers and their accomplices. The Minister reportedly said this in response to a question MMD Member for Mambilima, Patrick Kalifungwa who wanted to know whether there were any plans to review laws related to drug dealing in order to provide for stiffer penalties.

However, the headline as well as the lead paragraph suggests that money laundering in Zambia is only manifested in drug dealing. The word “stiffer”, a comparative, suggests that the existing penalties for drug-related offences are not stiff enough, though no details are provided about, for example, the length of time a person convicted of drug dealing could spend in prison.

The next four paragraphs of the 20-paragraph story provide background and context to the bill, incorporating a rare example of what Keefer (1993:412-414) describes as policy information. From those paragraphs, the reader is informed that:

1. it was originally called the Prevention of Money Laundering Bill and was tabled in the last session of Parliament;
2. it was withdrawn after some MPs objected to the wide-ranging powers the proposed law intended to give investigative organs;
3. it was originally drafted in 1998 to provide for the disclosure of information or suspicion of money laundering activities by supervisory authorities and regulatory institutions;
4. the bill would provide for the forfeiture of property convicted of money laundering;
5. when the bill was re-presented, it provided for the constitution of a Money Laundering Authority and a Money Laundering Investigations Unit.

The background details are not attributed to the Minister suggesting that they are woven into the fabric of the report by the *Times*. In paragraph 10, the Legal Affairs Minister reportedly told the House that government was considering the introduction of legislation to make the deliberate spreading of HIV/AIDS a criminal offence. His submission was, according to the *Times* yet another response to a question posed by Mambilima MMD Member. He reportedly said preliminary work was already under way following some presentations made to his Ministry. The Minister does not state from which quarters the presentations have been made and what the substance of these presentations are. However, the nature of Member’s question is not specified.

In the 11th paragraph, the paper reports the presentation to Parliament by the Vice-President of the following bills: the Income Tax Amendment Bill No. 2, the Customs and Excise Bill No.2, the Value Added Tax Amendment Bill No. 2 and the Development Bank of Zambia Bill. He reportedly informed the House that the said bills would be up for second reading and for debate.

The paper reported that the Vice-President also told the House that the Export processing Zones Bill would provide for the establishment of the Export Processing Authority Board as well as the introduction of the Export Processing Zone licensing and regulation. The *Times* also noted that that the bill would also provide for the granting of incentives to investors and business enterprises in export processing zones. This detail is not attributed to any particular source and suggests that it was provided by the reporter. In the 15th paragraph, the *Times* noted that NP Rufunsa member, Dr.Sam Chipungu questioned the decision to convene Parliament only to tackle questions and bills and not committee reports. The Member reportedly raised this as a point of order and asked whether it was right for the House not to consider committee reports during its eight months in recess. To that end, the Speaker reportedly said that though Dr. Chipungu's concerns were genuine, committee reports were too bulky to be considered and adopted before the proposed adjournment of Parliament the following day.

The paper reported in the last two paragraphs that the Deputy Health Minister, Rosemary Yikona informed the House that 161 female patients died from cervical cancer and another 24 from breast cancer between January and December 2000. In response to a question from NP Member for Kasempa, John Muasa (though the substance of the question is not specified), the Minister said government had stepped up educational campaigns and introduced radio therapy to address the problem.

The initiating topic of this news report is the impending re-submission of the Anti-Money Laundering Bill, though as seems characteristic of the *Times'* coverage, unrelated issues from Parliament get dove-tailed to the main story. From the lead, one can deduce that "drug dealing" is a major problem for the government and is the reason why government is shown to be dealing decisively with it. However, the report does not define the extent of the problem or how deeply entrenched it is. The entire story is based on paraphrases from the sources who are quoted.

The *Post* published four reports to the *Times'* one on 1 November 2001. However, in comparative terms, three of the issues they based their stories on were compressed into a single *Times* report. They were headlined:

"House ignores committee reports";

"185 women die from breast, cervical cancer";

"Money laundering bill returns to Parliament".

These three (plus a fourth report which was headlined "Govt. to spend K3.7bn on DAs) all appeared on Page Three. The first of the four stories ("House ignores committee reports") appeared on the upper-half of the page and comprised five paragraphs, all of which were attributed to the Speaker who reportedly responded to NP Member for Rufunsa, Dr. Chipungu's point of order on why the House was continuing with oral Question and Answer sessions at the expense of committee reports.

The Speaker reportedly said the reports could not be debated because "According to the programme presented by the leader of the House, there is no such provision". The second report ("185 women die from cervical cancer") appeared on the lower-half of Page Three. The six-paragraph report, all of which were attributed to the Deputy Minister of Health, Rosemary Yikona, noted that government was in the process of rehabilitating a laboratory at the University Teaching Hospital to treat the cases. She reportedly informed the House that government had: spent K186 million to eradicate rats and cockroaches at the hospital; UTH had bought a fleet of vehicles to collect garbage.

The third report (“Money laundering bill returns to Parliament”) was a two-paragraph report attributed to the Legal and Presidential Affairs Minister and noted that government would be presenting the deferred Money Laundering Bill to introduce stiffer penalties.

The fourth story of the day (“Govt. to spend K3.7bn on DAs”) was attributed to the Vice-President. He reportedly informed the House that DAs residences and offices were being rehabilitated. He also reportedly “disclosed” that K51 million had been spent on each DA. In the same report, the Vice-President also introduced the Export Processing Zones Bill, the Development Bank of Zambia Bill, the Income Tax, Customs and Excise and Value Added Tax Amendment Bills. All the four stories the *Post* published on 1 November were little more than announcements and were lacking in substance and policy information.

5.3.1 Discussion of the findings of the textual analysis

The textual analysis of news from Parliament as reported by the *Times of Zambia* and the *Post* during the study period revealed that both papers relied on a schema of news organisation which van Dijk (1991:114-115) calls a “superstructure” to organise news along conventional newswriting lines, consisting of a headline, lead paragraph, main events and verbal reactions from actors in the news. In so doing, both papers assigned relevance structures as well as levels of importance to the news they reported from Parliament. Furthermore, they employed media frames to represent news which were consistent with who owned the individual papers.

The analysis revealed that the government-owned *Times of Zambia* tended to structure its news in a manner that elevated pro-government sources and what they said in the House whereas the *Post* used established conventions of newswriting to accentuate anti-government sources and make them the most dominant actors in the news from Parliament.

To this end, both papers used quotations from sources to, in the words of Deacon et.al. (1991:171) to “provide collateral for the side taken by the paper in terms of narrative schema”. The *Times* and the *Post* did this by using a greater number of sources to frame and to defend the positions taken by their respective papers. On the one hand, the *Times* used more pro-government sources and the *Post* relied on more Opposition sources.

The frames of sequencing, source quality and quantity employed by both newspapers revealed that their news schemata was influenced, as Deacon et.al. (1991:169) posit, by what they perceived to be the “salience of particular news values in a particular type of story, as well as journalists’ rhetorical priorities of facticity and objectivity rather than being determined by chronological order”.

This is particularly noticeable in how both papers reported points of order and the rulings on them as well as on the Question and Answer sessions in the House. The ideological consequences of the use of sourcing in the framing process so described was consistent with what Jacobs’ (2000:56) idea of personalisation – the media obsession with persons and the expense of principles and issues. Thus irrespective of whether the news was reported by the government-owned *Times of Zambia* or the privately-owned *Post*, news coverage was characterised by a preoccupation with individuals. In the main, the *Times* highlighted pro-government sources and the *Post* highlighted Opposition sources –at the expense of the issues before the House.

This was accentuated by the conspicuous absence of “empowering news”, particularly the distinct categories Keefer (1993:412-414) identifies as “policy information”— “information about the substance of an issue, including information about the substance of an issue, including information defining and backgrounding the issue and information describing the competing proposals” and “operational information”, about the locus, timing and procedures for issue-related decisions that need to be made by policy-making bodies”. Primarily, the focus of news coverage from Parliament was on who said what when and where.

Analysis of the linguistic features of the news also revealed some interesting insights into the use of language, particularly the choice of words and how editorial commentary was subtly infused into news reportage. This was done mainly through implication, a device defined by van Dijk (1991:113) as a significant semantic notion in critical news analysis which has to do with information that is not explicitly expressed but left implicit". In essence, the two papers used words to suggest meaning.

For instance, the *Times* used word choice to denigrate the submissions of Opposition Members and to undermine the significance of their positions; the *Post* used the same devices to discredit and to cast aspersions on government and the MMD's competence as a government. In the main, newspaper coverage of Parliament reflected a sharp dichotomy between the government as represented by the government-owned *Times of Zambia* and the political Opposition as represented by the *Post*.

5.4 Conclusion

If the findings of the study are anything to go by, then newspaper coverage of Parliament in Zambia is too informationally deficient to provide newspaper readers with a broad range of information, interpretation and debate on national issues. Though in terms of its content, in terms of the actors and the location of story, news from Parliament as reported by the two papers can be said to meet the criteria of "parliamentary news items" as defined by Negrine (1998:133), it is lacking in the kind of information that is empowering.

This is because irrespective of whether government or private, the primary focus of press coverage is personalities, not issues or principles. On the basis of the criterion of content, newspaper coverage of Parliament cannot be said to have the capacity to inform public opinion significantly.

It is therefore doubtful whether, in the particular case of Zambia, newspapers can play a public sphere role, contributing to the democratic process by informing citizens and helping them engage in public discourses. In short, the press in Zambia presumed informational and interpretative prerogative within the context of media and democracy is noticeably.

It can therefore be concluded that Dahlgren's (1995:2) assumption that the "health of democracy" is dependent on media that play a public sphere role does not apply to the Zambian press. For the Zambian press to be relevant to the public information and public opinion forming process within the context of media and democracy, it has to undergo significant changes. Only then can there be what Kuhn (1996:26) describes as "high-level deliberation" by the newspaper-reading Zambian public – that is, "reasoning and discussion about the merits of public policy". In the main, the strong case liberal theory makes about the role media play in the functioning of democracy crumbles under the sheer weight of the findings of this study about the Zambian press.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion and Recommendations

6.0 Introduction

This chapter summarises the study and proposes some recommendations in the light of the findings of the research. It describes the nature of newspaper coverage of Parliament in Zambia against the background of media and democracy in order to discuss the extent to which the press fulfils a public sphere role. The chapter ends with suggestions on how press coverage of Parliament in Zambia can be transformed to provide empowering news and information to newspaper readers.

6.1 The Press and Parliament in Zambia: In Search of a Public Sphere

The study set out to investigate how the Zambian press reports Parliament in the Third Republic and the extent to which it provide citizens with a broad range of information, interpretation and debate on national issues. It sought to establish whether the nature of coverage by the government-owned *Times of Zambia* and the privately-owned *Post* was such that it informs public opinion. The study was based on the hypothesis that in a democracy, mass media inform citizens and help them engage in public discourses. The fact that Zambia has officially been a multi-party democracy since 1991 provided the justification for investigating whether the media do indeed contribute to the democratic process b encouraging wide and inclusive debate about issues of social and political importance and giving guidance on the interpretation of information given to citizens.

The study established that though the press in Zambia does inform citizens about what is happening in the legislature, it falls far short of educating them on the meaning and significance of the facts deriving therefrom. An assessment of newspaper coverage from Parliament revealed that it does not provide context, background and/or interpretation to the facts.

The study also showed that press coverage is confined to summarised transcripts of submissions made by parliamentary actors on the floor of the House, an account of bills were presented in Parliament by whom, points of order raised and the Speaker's ruling on them. In other words, press content lacks the kind of policy, political and operational information contrived to inform public opinion, empower citizens and encourage wide and inclusive debate about issues of social, economic and political importance. As Keefer (1993:412) argues, if information holding is a "prerequisite for participation in the policymaking process and if the public must depend on news coverage for most issue-related information, then the public's ability to participate will depend largely on the extent and nature of news coverage of the issue in question". On account of the informational deficiency of its content, the press in Zambia's public service role can be described as insignificant.

This is because the nature of coverage is such that it is not oriented towards issue-related information, but to personalities and to what they say and did on the floor of the House. The personalisation of coverage moved media attention away from the main functions and activities of Parliament. In the process of personalising coverage, the papers took sides, the government-owned *Times of Zambia* siding with the Speaker and with ruling party Members in the House, the *Post* with the Opposition.

The study also revealed how the government and private press, using conventional principles of newswriting, socially constructed news from Parliament, accentuating the bipolarity between the ruling party and the Opposition in the House, at the expense of empowering readers with issue-related policy, political and operational information.

This suggested that the political division between the ruling party and the Opposition in the House was of greater news value than Parliament's responsibility to make laws, approve proposals for taxation and public expenditure and to keep the work of government under scrutiny and review, evoking the observation by Blumler and Gurevitch (1995:1) that the failure of the media to stimulate public debate could be because they have abrogated their public function and lapsed "into channels of personalisation, dramatisation, witch-huntery, soap operatics and sundry trivialities".

The study revealed that newspaper coverage of Parliament in the private press does not differ qualitatively from coverage in the private press, contrary to Ansah's (1991:12) argument that the independent media in Africa play a central role in mediating between views and opinions and generally sustaining the democratic process. It can be said, though, that the *Post* exists to counter-act the dominance of the government-owned *Times of Zambia*. However, the fact that together, the *Times* and the *Post* control the flow of information from Parliament, making subjective judgements about what should be published and what should be rejected reflects how the political economy of news ultimately shapes what the public receives as news and information from the press.

The study also revealed that what Schudson (2000:189) calls the social organisation of newswork affects the character of news (i.e the media's reliance on set events and how they regularise and routinise the coverage of such events).

For instance, the reportage in the *Times* and the *Post* reflected a journalistic adherence to the institutional routines of Parliament—on debates, on bills submitted before the House, on points of order and rulings on these by the Speaker; in short on events which were directly located in Parliament and involved parliamentary actors within the precincts of the House. The lack of context, background and interpretation in the reports published by both the *Times* and the *Post* suggested that integration of such supplementary information into news from Parliament is not a characteristic feature of the editorial procedures of the two papers.

In spite of the superficiality of media coverage of an institution as important as Parliament, in spite of low newspaper circulation, research on media consumption and media effects in Zambia suggests a widespread belief in the power of newspapers to influence people's lives significantly, though the actual extent of this is not known. A 1996 Zambia Family Planning Services Project Baseline Survey for instance established that newspapers were the most effective channel for communicating family planning information. However, the findings of this study into newspaper coverage of Parliament suggests that the effects of the press in Zambia is over-exaggerated.

For the press to play a public sphere role in a democracy, it will need to "re-invent" itself, as Glasser and Craft (1997:91).. Only then can the public have a sound basis to engage with the news as citizens who, in the words of Sussman (1996:83) are "relatively well-informed about...the policy debates taking place within political institutions (like Parliament) and are able to access the quality of representation of legislation in particular..."

6.2 Recommendations for "Re-inventing" Newspaper Coverage of Parliament in Zambia

The "re-invention" of the Zambian press as a public sphere would need to start with an intervention in the social organisation of newswork that will make parliamentary reporting an integrated newsroom function based on team reporting. As things stand, coverage of Parliament is the sole responsibility of the reporters assigned to cover Parliament when it is in session; these merely provides summarised transcripts of what transpires in the National Assembly. An integrated approach to coverage would involve parliamentary correspondents and reporters, sub-editors and editors alike in: pre-coverage preparation; issue analysis and contextualisation; research; story development, and featurisation of parliamentary news to incorporate policy, political and operational information.

The approach being recommended is located in the trade-craft of newspaper journalism which makes the qualitative improvement of a report lacking in context and background a sub-editorial prerogative, one that requires newspaper sub-editors to supply the missing links in a story by making it less informationally deficient in order to make readers more aware of the issues embedded at the core of a story. It is also based on case studies and research into media coverage of the British, French, German and US legislative assemblies undertaken by Negrine (1998), Tunstall (1970) and Keefer (1993) which revealed that the press' decision to abandon news reports based on verbatim transcripts in favour of more detailed and in-depth coverage of the executive and the legislature. Tunstall (1970:85) notes that the British press overhauled its coverage of Parliament to make it more informative and more relevant to the needs of the British public.

Pre-coverage preparation would involve inducting the editorial team that would need to be put in place to cover Parliament comprehensively into: the structure of the National Assembly, the extent of its mandate and its working procedures; the process of legislation (from the gestation of the idea as well as the political processes that motivate legislation and policy making, through the drafting by parliamentary draftsmen in the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the mandatory three readings before it becomes law); the financial procedure as it pertains to how Parliament authorises government to spend national income), and how, through the 10 investigative committees of Parliament which cover every field of government administration, the legislature keeps the work of government under scrutiny and review.

Pre-coverage preparation would also involve finding out which issues and bills are before the House (as laid out in the Order Paper – i.e. the agenda for parliamentary business), the contents of the various committee reports that have submitted as well as the recommended actions Members have outlined and what is being done about their findings as well as their recommendations.

Such preparation would give a sense of purpose to coverage and give the editorial team a comprehensive idea of how Parliament works and what its mandate is.

Issue analysis and contextualisation would require the editorial team to go beyond the strictures of the House to analyse, interpret and contextualise the issues in Parliament with the view to giving readers a more detailed account of what is happening, why it is happening and what the implications of the outcomes of those happenings are likely to be in the short, medium and long term.

In the main, parliamentary correspondents would be required to report Parliament and to bring accounts of developments taking place therein; however, their work would be enhanced if sub-editors and editors used their time on the Desk to research supplementary information which could be woven into the fabric of news reports as interpretation and context. So, for instance, using this approach, a newspaper report of the annual Budget to Parliament by the Minister of Finance would go beyond a summarised transcript of the Budget Speech to investigate government priorities on expenditure as outlined therein and what the implications of the Budget would be on the various sectors as well as on ordinary people.

Similarly, a parliamentary correspondent may report that an Anti-Money Laundering Bill has been presented before the House. However, the announcement about the tabling of the bill in the House would not qualify as empowering information until other members of the editorial team who are not present in Parliament when the bill was tabled can use supplementary resources to find out: what difference the new piece of legislation will make once enacted, what developments have motivated it, how extensive money laundering is as a national concern, what form it takes and how offences deriving from the new legislation will be prosecuted, what arguments the supporters and detractors of the bill raise and why.

In the main, such an editorial strategy would also involve reporting, reviewing and analysing: legislation (i.e. the law itself): the process, the contents of the law, its relevance, its contradictions and its weaknesses; the socio-political and cultural context as well as the background of legislation; the impact of legislation, the interpretation of legislation (as effected by judiciary which, to all intents and purposes is coterminous with the legislature; one makes law, the other interprets and applies the law), people's views about the law, its interpretation and its impact, the enforcement as well as the lack of enforcement and the absence of legislation and its implications.

This editorial mechanism would enable newspapers to go beyond routine parliamentary coverage to help readers understand enough about the law and legislation and consequently, to be more involved in the process of legislation.

The fact that "ignorance of the law is not a defence" in courts of law is another justification for an approach to reporting that aims at empowering readers with information which has utilitarian value. More importantly, such an approach to news and information would move newspapers way from the culture of event-oriented, speech-driven journalism to one that is issue driven.

The news feature is recommended as an editorial option for reporting news from Parliament because it is more suited for explaining, contextualising and backgrounding news and information than the Inverted Pyramid. As a method of news presentation, the Inverted Pyramid confines journalists to the strictures of reportage. Though it is useful for briefly giving readers a sense of what has happened, where, where, why and to whom it has happened, it does not provide an editorial framework for interpreting information and for creating a broad-based context for the news to the understood in.

If the news feature is recommended as an editorial option for reporting Parliament comprehensively, it is because the featurising of issues makes discussion and debate possible and can ultimately provide citizens with a broad range of information and interpretation and, in the main, inform public opinion.

6.3 Conclusion.

The study set out to investigate, through content and textual analysis, how the Zambian press reports Parliament and the extent to which it provides citizens with a broad range of information, interpretation and debate on national issues. It was undertaken against the background of the fact that Zambia has officially been a multi-party democracy since 1991 and as in any democracy, the media is believed to play a public sphere role by informing citizens and helping them engage in public discourses.

Though the study revealed that the nature of newspaper coverage of Parliament is such that it does not provide citizens with a broad range of information and interpretation that can help them engage in public discourses, it has the capacity to do so, if the social organisation of newswork is transformed to make parliamentary reporting an integrated newsroom function driven by an editorial strategy that deliberately aims at informing public opinion. This way, the press in Zambia could begin to play a public sphere role in the country's fledgling democracy.

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