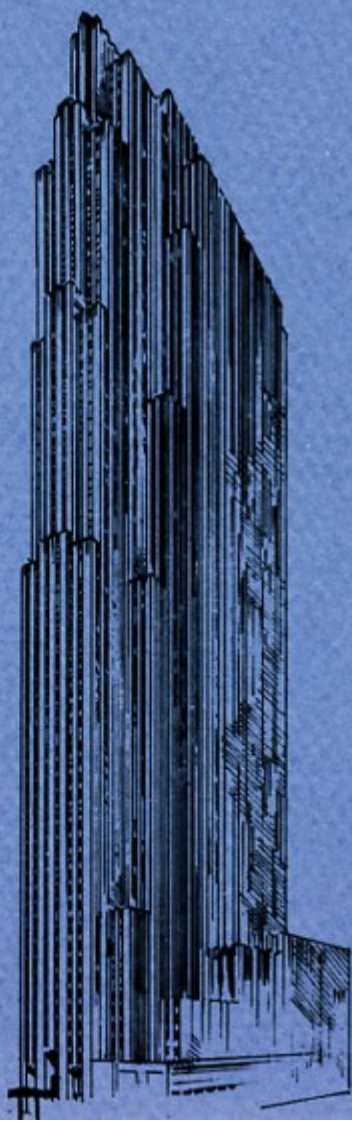


The Press and New York Politics

Manhattan Paper No. 1



Lord Macaulay said in 1828, "The gallery in Parliament in which the reporters sit has become the fourth estate of the realm." Likewise, New Yorkers tend to think of the city's press as an integral, albeit unofficial, component of the local political system. Expected to be vigilant against governmental malfeasance and corruption, reporters and editors take seriously their implicit role as critics of municipal politics and guardians of the public interest.

But under the scrutiny of New York's journalistic establishment, city politicians have engaged in precisely the sort of abuses of power and illegal activity which it has been the press's traditional duty to prevent or expose. With several notable exceptions, the press was too long unresponsive to the growing scandals. Why?

The Manhattan Institute convened a panel of eight distinguished political journalists to discuss city government and how the press fits—or should fit—into it. Chaired by Harvard University sociologist Nathan Glazer, the session developed into a searching critique of the relations among reporters, editors, and politicians in New York City.

The Press and New York Politics

A New York City Critical Issues Roundtable

Nathan Glazer

Chairman

Ken Auletta

Fred Dicker

Josh Friedman

Robert Laird

Jack Newfield

Michael Oreskes

Nicholas Pileggi

Roger Starr

The New York City Critical Issues Roundtables are funded by a grant from the Gannett Foundation.

© 1987 Manhattan Institute for Policy Research

Participants

Nathan Glazer (chairman) is Professor of Education and Sociology at Harvard University. His books include *Affirmative Discrimination*, *Ethnic Dilemmas*, and, with Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*.

Ken Auletta is a columnist for the *New York Daily News* and writes for *The New Yorker*. His books include *The Underclass*, *The Streets Were Paved With Gold*, and *Hard Feelings: Reporting on Poles, the Press, People, and the City*.

Fred Dicker is Albany Bureau Chief of the *New York Post*. He is a two-time winner (1982, 1987) of the Walter T. Brown Award for Distinguished Reporting, given by the alumni of the New York State Legislative Correspondents Association.

Josh Friedman is a writer for *New York Newsday*. He has received numerous journalism awards, including Pulitzer Prizes in 1980 and 1985.

Robert Laird serves on the Editorial Board of the *New York Daily News*. He was press secretary to Mayor John Lindsay and Governor Hugh Carey.

Jack Newfield is Senior Editor of the *Village Voice*.

Michael Oreskes is a political correspondent for *The New York Times*. Previously, he was City Hall bureau chief of the *New York Daily News* and Albany bureau chief of the *Times*. He is now chief correspondent covering the municipal corruption scandals.

Nicholas Pileggi is a contributing editor of *New York* magazine and author of several books, including *Wiseguy: Coming of Age in the Mob*. In 1986, he won the Peter Kihss Award for Excellence in Reporting on New York City Government, awarded by the Fund for the City of New York.

Roger Starr serves on the Editorial Board of *The New York Times*. A former New York City Housing Commissioner, he is the author of *Housing and the Money Market*, *America's Housing Challenge*, and *The Rise and Fall of New York City*.

The Press and New York Politics

A New York City Critical Issues Roundtable

Nathan Glazer, Harvard University—The London *Economist* recently ran an article entitled "Pall Over New York" which said, "Municipal corruption has always been endemic in New York." I'm wondering if they're right. Are our present troubles any worse than corruption in the past?

Jack Newfield, Village Voice—The current scandals are bigger than any other in the twentieth century in New York City. It's not just the city—in any jurisdiction dominated by one political party, there will be problems. Nassau County, long dominated by Joseph Margiotta and the Republicans, is similar to New York City where the Democrats have no serious competition in most elections. These investigations are bigger than the televised hearings by Senator Estes Kefauver which drove Mayor William O'Dwyer into exile. This is also much broader than the corruption of Jimmy Walker.

Three of the five New York City Democratic county leaders have been involved in scandals: Meade Esposito has been indicted; Stanley Friedman has been convicted; and Donald Manes committed suicide before he could be indicted. You also have city commissioners in a number of agencies involved. The county leaders have turned government agencies into "racketeering enterprises."

Roger Starr, *The New York Times*—Jack and I agree on only one thing: There have been scandals. I don't think they're as systemic as Jack would have one believe. I agree that the one-party system paved the way for these scandals. No one should be Mayor of New York for more than eight years.

The scandals we're hearing about, however, for the most part relate to activities in which the government was never involved before, such as granting cable television contracts.

Josh Friedman, *New York Newsday*—It's hard to say whether this is the biggest scandal in the twentieth century. What's different today is the ambition of the prosecutors. The type of discoveries that are being made, though, don't seem that much bigger than those of the past.

In terms of political drama, the scandal in the 1930s during Jimmy Walker's administration was bigger. It had similarities to the present situation: The governor, Franklin Roosevelt, was a presidential hopeful. There was a very ambitious federal prosecutor from Manhattan, Charles Tuttle, who wanted to become governor. There was a mayor, Jimmy Walker, who had won the largest plurality in the history of New York the year before the scandal broke.

Ken Auletta, *Daily News*—You have to define what you mean by "systemic" corruption. I don't think the practice of people stuffing envelopes of cash in their pockets is widespread.

The more serious problem is what is currently legal and considered to be permissible: city agencies doing business with Meade Esposito's insurance firm or state lawmakers drafting bills that affect the business of their law firms. Those issues are part of a systemic problem. If you talk to Stanley Friedman today, he still says, "I was just doing what everyone else was doing."

Jack Newfield—In the modern era, graft is very subtle and complicated. Anthony Ameruso purchased shares in a parking lot. Stanley Friedman purchased shares in Citisource. Bess Myerson gave a judge's daughter a city job.

The problem is systemic in that it is rooted in the Democratic political machine in this city. There are five political machines, just as there are five organized crime families. You have enormous power concentrated in a few hands: The Democratic Party machine

controls nominations to the Board of Estimate and the City Council; it controls the selection of candidates for the judiciary as well as for district attorneys. Donald Manes, in Queens, felt above the law because in a sense he was: He hadn't faced serious competition in an election in ten years. He controlled the nomination of the district attorney, and he controlled every judge in Queens.

Nathan Glazer—But isn't the machine weaker than it was?

Fred Dicker, *New York Post*—The scandals are occurring against the backdrop of the disintegration of the party system. There's less identification by voters with the Democratic Party than ever before. There has been a virtual abandonment of party structures.

The Bronx Democratic organization consists of 50 people in a borough of 1.2 million. This is a unique period, when the public at large does not care about the political system.

Michael Oreskes, *The New York Times*—The party isn't dead. What's happened is that politics has split into two levels. There's citywide politics in which television and the media play an enormously powerful role. Anyone who can come up with the money and can get on television can be a candidate, with or without the party. In this situation, the party is one of many forces, not *the* crucial force.

But the second level of politics is the day-to-day operation of the city, in which newspapers and television have no presence or significance at all. Here the party still exists. It still picks district leaders, assemblymen, state senators, and judges. That's the level at which most of the corruption is occurring.

Jack Newfield—Practically everybody involved in this scandal began as a reformer. Manes began as a reformer. Even Meade Esposito, the first time he ran, had the support of Eleanor Roosevelt.

Nathan Glazer—What about big business in New York? How does that interplay with corruption?

Nicholas Pileggi, *New York* magazine—The City of New York is basically a market. People are in it for whatever they can get. This applies to real estate people just as much as anyone else. They have to pay off all

sorts of workers' unions along the way to get things built.

Just look at something as simple as asphalt. In New York, there are something like half a dozen asphalt companies. They all contribute to the campaigns of the major Democratic Party officials. The city's rules and regulations for buying asphalt are fixed so that a new company could never enter the market. Gallo from New Jersey tried to come in. By law, asphalt has to arrive at a construction site at a certain temperature. The law doesn't allow auxiliary heaters at the sites. If Gallo wanted to bring asphalt in from New Jersey, it had to come through the tunnel. But asphalt isn't allowed in the tunnel! You have to send it across the bridge. No matter what Gallo tried to do to keep the price down, the regulations at the Municipal Building were set up to make sure the cartel of local asphalt people had control.

In New York City, there are two governments. There's City Hall where the Mayor and all the cameramen are, but the real government of New York is across the street in the Municipal Building. That 47-story monolith is where it's run. You may think all the people over there are civil servants, but the people who call the shots are party stalwarts.

Roger Starr—When I was Housing Commissioner, the mayor called me up one day and said, "You have to appoint Ruth Lerner to a position. I owe her a favor and you have to find a place for her." I detested it, but there was nothing illegal about it. I wanted to send her to Albany as my representative, but she wouldn't go. Instead, she ran the Mitchell-Lama program. She was fantastic, the best person I ever had in that job. So don't tell me about political appointments.

Nathan Glazer—Let's separate a few elements. There are indictable offenses, like bribery. Then there are regulations which are clearly designed to keep outsiders out. What do we do about these two strands of the problem?

Roger Starr—Everybody says that big campaign contributions contribute to corruption in real estate. I hate our electoral system and I hate the contributions, but you'd be very hard put to find any specific case in which somebody received a zoning variance or an extra favor as a result of a contribution. On the contrary, we had a case on the West Side regarding a major developer who made a very substantial contribution to the

Koch campaign. It actually resulted in his *not* getting the go-ahead on a city contract. The Mayor withdrew from the deal simply because it was known that such a contribution had been made.

Josh Friedman—I won't contest the specific point about zoning barriers, but to a great degree, housing in this city is regulated by the state legislature. The chairman of the Senate Housing Committee is always some guy from Buffalo who has nothing to do with New York City. He serves loyally for a couple of years at the request of the majority leader. The real estate industry dominates much of the housing legislation that comes out of his committee.

Ken Auletta—But just take a look at rent regulation in New York. It is very hard to make the case that the real estate interests have dominated. The tenants have won most of those battles.

Josh Friedman—They've won on rent control. But if you look at the legislation that affects profits such as tax abatements, the real estate interests have called the shots.

Nathan Glazer—Let me suggest a slightly different interpretation: Real estate developers make political contributions in order to grease through some of the approvals they need to build in New York. Aren't builders simply finding ways to keep their projects moving in a system with too many community groups, too many court cases, too many ways of stopping any construction whatsoever?

Josh Friedman—I don't see that regulatory process as pernicious. We have a big housing shortage for the moderate-income people who make the city go and a cancerous growth of huge office buildings. They're soaking up money that should be put into housing for the middle class and the poor.

Roger Starr—You're missing the point. Why does Sam LeFrak, who made his fortune building middle-class housing in Brooklyn, now build in Jersey City? It's because people like him cannot deal with the regulations here in New York City.

Nathan Glazer—Let's talk about the role of the press. Do you have the feeling that reporters have not been

interested in corruption, that good stories have lain fallow?

Ken Auletta—When you look back at the scandal that has unfolded in New York City, it is hard to argue that the press did a good job in initially ferreting it out. There are obvious exceptions, but by and large, the press was not on the job.

One reason is that we are a reactive business. At City Hall, the press corps sits in Room Nine like firemen waiting for a disaster rather than covering government in a systematic way. They wait for the Mayor or the Comptroller to hold a press conference or for the City Council members to come out with press releases. We need to change the way we cover government.

Michael Oreskes—Yes, but it's not reasonable to think reporters could have known about Geoffrey Lindenaucr passing envelopes of cash in a men's room. Only through dumb luck could we have discovered it. It is true, however, that over the last ten years, New York newspapers have bought into a certain culture in the city which tolerates the conflicts of interest that exist and aren't considered a story. Only Jack's esteemed *Village Voice* bothered to take that on.

What if the newspapers had taken a different attitude? They could have said, "This public official or party leader is playing both sides of the street, and that's a story." We might not have known that anything illegal was going on, but it would have changed the environment in which these things were occurring. It would have shaken up a lot of people doing business in a very cavalier fashion.

Jack Newfield—A sea change in the climate of the media occurred the night Donald Manes attempted suicide. Before then, most journalists had not been interested in aggressively exposing corruption or conflicts of interest. In 1983, the *Voice* did a series of stories about the proposed Grand Prix auto race in Queens. The sponsoring company was headed by a former Manes associate; Manes's friend Sid Davidoff was its lawyer; Michael Nussbaum, Manes's campaign manager, was a consultant to the company; and Manes pushed it through the city's decision-making process.

Environmentalists and neighborhood groups were against it. But no one else was interested in the story.

As soon as Donald Manes tried to commit suicide, everything changed. The media became aggressive and

have done a sensational job in making up for lost ground. No one could have known that Geoffrey Lindenaucr was taking bribes. But they could have known that the Parking Violations Bureau was part of the "Queens machine" and that Donald Manes was sleazy if they had studied the Grand Prix deal.

Nathan Glazer—What is to be done? Is it simply that the press must be more of a watchdog? Is it that we have to develop an overriding sense of the public interest? Should we be funding political campaigns through taxes? Should we get the city out of the business of handing out contracts?

Jack Newfield—The public doesn't understand why corruption is against the public interest. People in the outer boroughs don't know that the reason they don't have cable television to watch the Mets and the Yankees is that party bosses were trying to extort money from the franchise seekers. In the Bronx they don't understand that you can't get a regular taxi because Stanley Friedman represented the taxi industry and not his constituents.

Fred Dicker—The cab situation is like a lot of others in the city: union labor, getting an apartment. It's all a scam. New Yorkers are so used to seeing scams everywhere that when people in politics do it, the public doesn't get upset. There is no reform sense in New York politics, no sense of public service.

Nathan Glazer—What happened to all the reformers and critics of the one-party regime?

Fred Dicker—Reformers are wedded to ideologies that are inconsistent with what it takes to improve the city. As but one example, the commitment of the liberal Left to rent control is at variance with what's really at the heart of the housing problem in this city. But rather than grappling with that, they prefer supporting the Sandinista struggle in Nicaragua to reforming New York City.

Josh Friedman—I think we're underestimating the effect of the fiscal crisis. It was a complete breakdown of things as we knew them. Everyone thought we were going to be out of business. If I had gone into the city room of the *New York Post*, where I then worked, and said, "I've got a fantastic story about the Parking Violations Bureau," they would have laughed. Everyone

was down on the press during the fiscal crisis because we had been so busy with scandals that we hadn't seen that the bottom lines weren't matching. So everybody shifted into numbers.

Nicholas Pileggi—You lost the adversarial relationship between the journalistic community and City Hall.

Fred Dicker—The PVB scandal was itself a product of the fiscal crisis. In those days if you got a ticket you laughed and tore it up and the PVB had enormous collectibles on the books. Michael Lazar, who was at the Department of Transportation, thought up an interesting plan: privatizing collections.

Roger Starr—Revenues soared. If you had gone into City Hall and said, "They're doing it in an unfair way," Koch would have said, "What's the difference? The money's coming in."

I'm sure it wasn't Manes's idea to hold up these crooked contractors; this is not the kind of work that nice people do. But I think Lindenauer said to him, "You've got a great opportunity here and it won't cost the people of New York one cent. They'll get the revenue and we'll make the contractors pay us for allowing them to do this."

That could not have happened if somebody had understood that the primary function of the Parking Violations Bureau was to keep people from parking illegally, not to collect money for New York.

Robert Laird, *Daily News*—I'd like to go back to the point about the media's coverage of corruption in the city. There was intense coverage of city government during the Lindsay Administration. In 1967, *The New York Times* ran an ad picturing their entire staff assigned to cover city government. It looked like the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, it was so big. They had reporters on housing, police, fire, the whole range of municipal services.

Yet the focus was wrong. Reporters weren't watching the bottom line. The city was juggling the books and the press missed the story until the fiscal crisis hit. Then the focus changed, but there was a sense of being a "captive industry." The *News* or the *Times* couldn't leave. If the city didn't survive, they wouldn't either. So the refocusing on numbers came with a certain caution which led us (the *Voice*, again, is a notable exception) to not look at what was going on.

A few years ago, a reporter from a Brooklyn weekly stood up and asked the Mayor about a Parking Violations Bureau contract with a corporation in which Stanley Friedman served as a director. The Mayor insulted the reporter, and none of us in the mainstream press responded to that.

Like all the American press, we in New York tend to focus on personalities to the exclusion of more boring mechanical things like how the government really operates. Koch has hypnotized us through his personality, his ability to personalize quarrels. Public policy issues become insult fests with Donald Trump: The Mayor of New York calling somebody "piggy, piggy, piggy" and reducing conversation to the level of a third-grade schoolyard. There's something very wrong in not calling him on that, and not seeing beyond it to what's going on in government.

Fred Dicker—There's a vacuum of political talent. One reason Koch gets so much attention is that no one else is taken very seriously. That is the nature of the strong-mayor system, but it also points to the fact that it's a basically a no-talent political system, which is one reason the business and media power structures felt they had a stake in Koch—the alternative was worse. To some degree they still think that way: "There's nobody else out there."

Jack Newfield—I want to make a point about the *Voice's* coverage during the period. We only had three reporters, but it was not that hard to cover the city government because we had certain premises: that we should cover government and not the mayor's personality; and that the political machines were not dead, but rather controlled whole sections of the government. Those premises and a little aggressiveness made it relatively easy. On many stories, people came to us. The fact that Koch has not spoken to any reporter of the *Village Voice* for nine years is a tremendous plus. His vocal antagonism to the *Voice* gave us a virtual monopoly on whistleblowers; every secretary with a Xerox machine came to us.

Nathan Glazer—In Mayor Lindsay's time a lot of very prominent people moved into city government. Why doesn't New York City get good people now?

Jack Newfield—Success in electoral politics has almost nothing to do with being a good mayor. A lot of people who would make wonderful mayors are unelect-

able because they don't have the money or the appropriate personality. Robert Wagner, Jr. or Ruth Messinger might make good mayors, but I can't conceive of them getting elected with the requirements of television, hiring consultants, raising money, and presenting a certain image to the city.

We should start with public financing of elections or rigid limits on the amounts individuals or their spouses can contribute in a particular cycle. We should also make democracy a little easier. We have to improve ballot access. For years Richard Rubin knocked off every insurgent in Queens by going before a judge Donald Manes appointed; Rubin could always find a technicality to throw out nominating petitions.

Roger Starr—The press is somewhat responsible for better people not wanting to run for public office. A newspaper editorial recently said that every candidate should sign a statement listing not only his assets, but also his wife's assets. When I was appointed Housing Commissioner, I had to answer a questionnaire that asked whether my wife had a safe deposit box in her name. That question belonged back in the 1890s, when a woman couldn't open a safe deposit box without her husband's permission. How did I know? How could I possibly certify it? I answered: "Ask her."

Michael Oreskes—The problem right now is that we're driving out good people, yet not creating a real deterrent against bad people. If we were at least stopping the crooks, that would be one thing, but I don't think we are.

Ken Auletta—The truth is that we *do* have good people in government. But we get hoisted by our own petard here. We're saying the press should be more aggressive, but one side effect is that good people, career civil servants, feel ashamed to work for government. They feel we're always calling them crooks.

I spent a day with a management group that identifies the best managers in the various agencies. These tend to be career civil servants, in their late thirties, early forties, who have dedicated their lives to the City of New York. They don't come out of the political clubhouse system. They gave me an earful about, "All the press does is write about the negatives. What's the incentive to serve in government? We feel embarrassed to tell people we work for the government." That's a real problem.

Michael Oreskes—If we give the message that we just think the press needs to be “more aggressive,” we’ve made a mistake. It’s a lot more complicated than that. If covering the government means just searching out people to blame, we’ll basically dismantle the government. But if we look at how the government runs, then we may do a real service.

Nicholas Pileggi—Then you’ll be covering the Municipal Building instead of City Hall, because that’s where it works and that’s where the deals come down.

Robert Laird—The press is frequently very unfair to people working in the middle levels of government who are familiar with complicated issues. Reporters talk three hours to someone on a story that reflects a situation that’s been building for six months. Editors have to provide the time and the mechanisms for reporters to meet with people beneath the level of the flashy elected officials.

And we have to be very careful of any association with prosecutors. These guys are now going into the mating season; they are in full bloom. It’s not just Rudolph Giuliani. Even Queens DA Mario Merola, who acted like Rodney Dangerfield for years, is suddenly the guardian of the gates. I would be very vigilant against letting items into the papers based on leaks from materials gathered before an indictment is issued.

Josh Friedman—If you compare this with previous scandals, this is the stage at which, for instance, Thomas Dewey, who went on to be governor and two-time Republican presidential nominee, made his move—through the late Jim Haggerty, a reporter for the *Times*. The *Times* went on a campaign to clean up the Walker scandal and Dewey managed to manipulate it. He moved up by “owning” Haggerty’s space in the *Times*.

Nathan Glazer—If you show you’re a very distinguished reporter, then you become a columnist. But there’s something missing in the middle. Between those who report the news and those who write opinion columns, there needs to be more in-depth coverage on housing, parking, the Taxi & Limousine Commission, and so forth.

Michael Oreskes—The *Times* does not have one regular columnist writing about New York City, yet they could have more influence than virtually anyone else.

Nathan Glazer—So much state legislation affects the city. Maybe New York State government isn't covered enough.

Fred Dicker—There are 87 assemblymen and state senators from New York City and I daresay most New Yorkers don't even know who their state representative is. The city papers cannot cover them the way an upstate paper can. So often the legislators turn out to be creatures of the political machines.

But because of the scandals that have developed in New York City, we're now at an historic turning point in Albany. The legislature is under enormous pressure to approve fundamental reforms.

Ken Auletta—We have to ask basic questions about the way we do business. Mike Oreskes had a story in the paper today about Bronx politics and how it's changed. There was a quote from the Borough President, Stanley Simon, who said, in effect, "My vote on the Board of Estimate will be determined by what kind of trades I can make with other borough presidents and other members of the Board of Estimate to serve my borough." He's not going to be criticized for that; it's a perfectly normal thing. Yet one could look at that statement as extortion.

It's permissible for a borough president to say, "Hey, that may be a lousy project, but I'm not going to look into its merits. If you vote for me on expanding the shopping district in the Bronx, you've got my vote on your own project." Where does it stop?

Fred Dicker—When I covered the legislature in the early 1970s, the big donors were the United Federation of Teachers, the public unions, and the savings banks. They're minor-league players now compared to the real estate industry. Who knows who the next guy is?

Michael Oreskes—Now we have Wall Street. The only candidate they ever gave money to in large amounts in the past was Nelson Rockefeller. Now you find that Wall Street firms are among the two or three biggest givers in every campaign for every city and state office.

Nicholas Pileggi—City Comptroller Harrison Goldin gets a lot of that money because he controls a multi-billion dollar investment portfolio. Not that he allows it to go anywhere. You see, it's never *quid pro quo*; it's never simple.

A couple of years ago they decided to build hundreds

of group foster homes. Laws went through the state legislature. It was all approved. No one really knew what was happening except for a couple of politically connected law firms which helped the politicians write the legislation.

The legislation was no sooner passed than all of a sudden, all of those group homes were taken. A group run by the Meade Esposito people had 35 percent. If an outsider had wanted to build a group home, forget it: The order had been filled. The state paid for the homes at an absurd rate. They were paid off clear within six months. The construction companies were part of the clubhouse; the lawyers who put it together were clubhouse lawyers who also watch the polls on election day. It's this sort of broth that they all operate in. Can you indict all those people? It's the process. Jules Feiffer, the satirist, says we should legalize it. Legalize corruption in New York and then you'll have no problems.

Jack Newfield—I've always been depressed by the corruption in good liberal programs. I've written about nursing homes, corrupt day care leases, foster homes, and minority business enterprises. What we think are going to be humanitarian reforms become new areas where politicians can figure out a way to steal.

Nathan Glazer—This happens where you put government in business of any sort.

Fred Dicker—The public would be more willing to tolerate stealing if they saw results, if they saw another Jones Beach being built. Today, politicians can't even get the job done.

Nathan Glazer—Are there scandals yet to be exposed?

Fred Dicker—There are enormous scandals in Albany which result from the fact that major corporations regulated by the state shift their private legal business to firms of influential legislators. Right now you can't prove that; neither side has to disclose it.

Nathan Glazer—How do you get around the fact that some lawyers are better-connected than others?

Fred Dicker—It's perfectly legal and understandable. If I were seeking influence in Albany and could legally give my business to the firm of the assembly speaker or senate majority leader, I probably would. I say we should require full disclosure of who their clients are. I don't like full-time legislators.

Michael Oreskes—We're not living in an agrarian economy where farmers come in for two months a year and work in the fields the rest of the time. What is the argument against a full-time legislature?

Fred Dicker—Give them \$100,000 a year and you'll never get rid of them. I don't think a part-time legislature is the problem at all. I don't think lawyer-legislators are bad. I don't think lawyers *per se* are evil.

Ken Auletta—You mean to say, if I'm Warren Anderson and the insurance companies want to retain my law firm to represent them, and I pass major legislation which helps them, that's OK?

Fred Dicker—They are required by law to avoid conflicts of interest, and even the appearance of them. Now, in my judgment, a Warren Anderson couldn't legally take the case of the insurance company and argue it in court.

Ken Auletta—But he could take their business.

Fred Dicker—They do that now. This so-called ethics legislation being considered in Albany would bar a partner in a law firm from sharing the profits of that firm—that portion of the profits which comes from business regulated by the state. Can it really be done? I don't know, but that's what they're aiming at.

Nathan Glazer—What can be done?

Fred Dicker—I think we're in for even worse times, because of a lack of public participation in the system. The numbers show a declining voter identification in New York State with the political parties.

Jack Newfield—In terms of participation, a real problem is the miserable quality of so many black and Hispanic politicians, who don't want greater registration in their districts. They refuse to run voter registration drives because as participation increases, they are going to get thrown out.

Fred Dicker—In many cities, the business community plays a healthy role in keeping government honest and prosperous. You don't see an organized business voice here with any clout. That would be an important first step in turning the establishment around towards reform. □

Manhattan Papers

No. 1 **The Press and New York Politics**
A New York City Critical Issues Roundtable

Manhattan Papers are published by the Manhattan Institute
for Policy Research, 131 Spring Street, New York, NY 10012.
(212) 219-0773.

MANHATTAN INSTITUTE

Manhattan Institute For Policy Research
131 Spring Street, New York, New York, 10012
Telephone (212) 219-0773