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It Didn't Fit to Print

Treating both publishers and union leaders with clinical impartiality, the editors of The New York Times two years ago turned over more than seventeen columns to the paper's labor expert, A.H. Raskin, for a sharply critical account of union-management fumbling during the New York City newspaper strike of 1962-63. Among other things, Raskin referred to the "icy disdain" and "imperiousness" of Amory H. Bradford, the Times vice president and chief negotiator for the city's publishers. For his uncompromising account, Raskin won no less than four awards, and not long after the piece, Bradford resigned from the Times.

Still fumbling, New York's newspapers and their unions narrowly managed to avert another strike this spring. The settlement, however, was needlessly high and dismally failed to resolve the critical issue of automation.

Again, the Times asked Raskin for a piece. But when he handed in his 8,000-word appraisal—enough to fill more than eight columns—it was spiked. "We had ordered a 'News Analysis' piece of not more than two columns," says Times managing editor Clifton Daniel. "In view of the fact that we covered the negotiations extensively and no strike took place, we didn't feel our readers needed such an exhaustive review." The 54-year-old Raskin, now assistant editor of the Times editorial page, disagrees. "Our readers got the facts after the 1962-63 strike," he says. "I felt they should have gotten them this time, too."

'Struggle': Some readers did get Raskin's retrospective last week. He shortened it by some 1,500 words and sold it to the Saturday Review, which billed it as the "inside report on a struggle for survival." "The publishers of New York's major newspapers and the ten unions with which they bargain," it began, "have just given another impressive object lesson in how not to conduct labor-management relations." Raskin supported this indictment with example upon example of bargaining ineptitude on the part of both the unions and management. At one point, the printers and the publishers could not even agree on the language for shelving the automation issue. "No convention of philologists," wrote Raskin, "could have carried the discussion into more arcane bypaths, and most of the arguing was done by the publishers among themselves." The publishers bickered constantly, wrote Raskin, over how much to concede to the unions and the Times "almost always [was] the target of most criticism for surrendering too readily."

But Raskin's most telling point was made by quoting the head of one union who told him: "The newspapers of New York ... know just what to do about Vietnam, or the balance of payments, or crime in the subways. The only problems they don't know how to solve are their own."