# Journalism in the Early 20th Century

Rodrigo Zamith

University of Massachusetts Amherst

## Journalism in the early 20th century was marked by continuities from the 19th century

## Print Media in the Early 20th Century

- Number of English-language daily newspapers grew from 850 in 1880 to 1,970 in 1900
- Number of weekly newspapers tripled
- New magazines served different specialized information needs and audience wants
- Print journalism thus became more niche than ever before

## Muckraker Journalism

## McClure's Magazine

VOL. XX

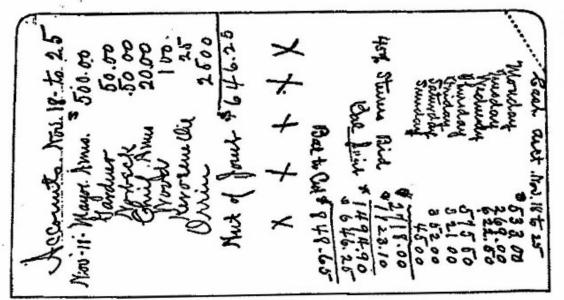
JANUARY, 1903

NO. 3

#### THE SHAME OF MINNEAPOLIS

The Rescue and Redemption of a City that was Sold Out

BY LINCOLN STEFFENS



FAC-SIMILE OF THE FIRST PAGE OF "THE BIG MITT LEDGER"

An account kept by a swindler of the dealings of his "Joint" with City Officials, showing first payments made to Mayor Ames, his brother, the Chief of Police and Detectives. This book figured in trials and newspaper reports of the exposure, but was "lost"; and its whereabouts was the mystery of the proceedings. This is the first glimpse that any one, except "Cheerful Charlie" Howard, who kept it, and members of the grand jury, has had of the book

people do not do it. Neither do the "gangs." victions and a name, Republican or Demo-

HENEVER anything extraordinary boss has normal control of more than half is done in American municipal poli- the voters. The other is that of the adroitly V tics, whether for good or forevil, you managed minority. The "good people" are can trace it almost invariably to one man. The herded into parties and stupefied with con-

## Muckraker Journalism



### The Professionalization of Journalism

- First journalism schools established in 1908
  - Began process of formally training journalists via shared education
  - Relatively few journalists were university-educated during the early 20th century
- "Objectivity" and "neutrality" did not become norms in U.S. journalism until 1920s
  - Driven mostly by commercial imperatives at first

## Journalism and Public Relations

- Public relations originated as a distinct practice in the early 20th century
  - Involved creating a new skillset for influencing intermediaries (e.g., journalists) to generate positive attention for clients (e.g., companies or celebrities)
- U.S. government quickly took note of PR and began using PR itself
  - By 1910, had press agents distributing handouts
  - Under President Wilson, began hosting governmental press conferences
  - Had established press relations offices by 1930s

## Key Takeaways

- Muckraking was an early form of investigative journalism that sought to call attention to social ills and corruption
- Contemporary cultural emphasis on neutrality and objectivity in U.S. journalism is a historically recent phenomenon
- Public relations became a distinct industry at the start of the 20th century