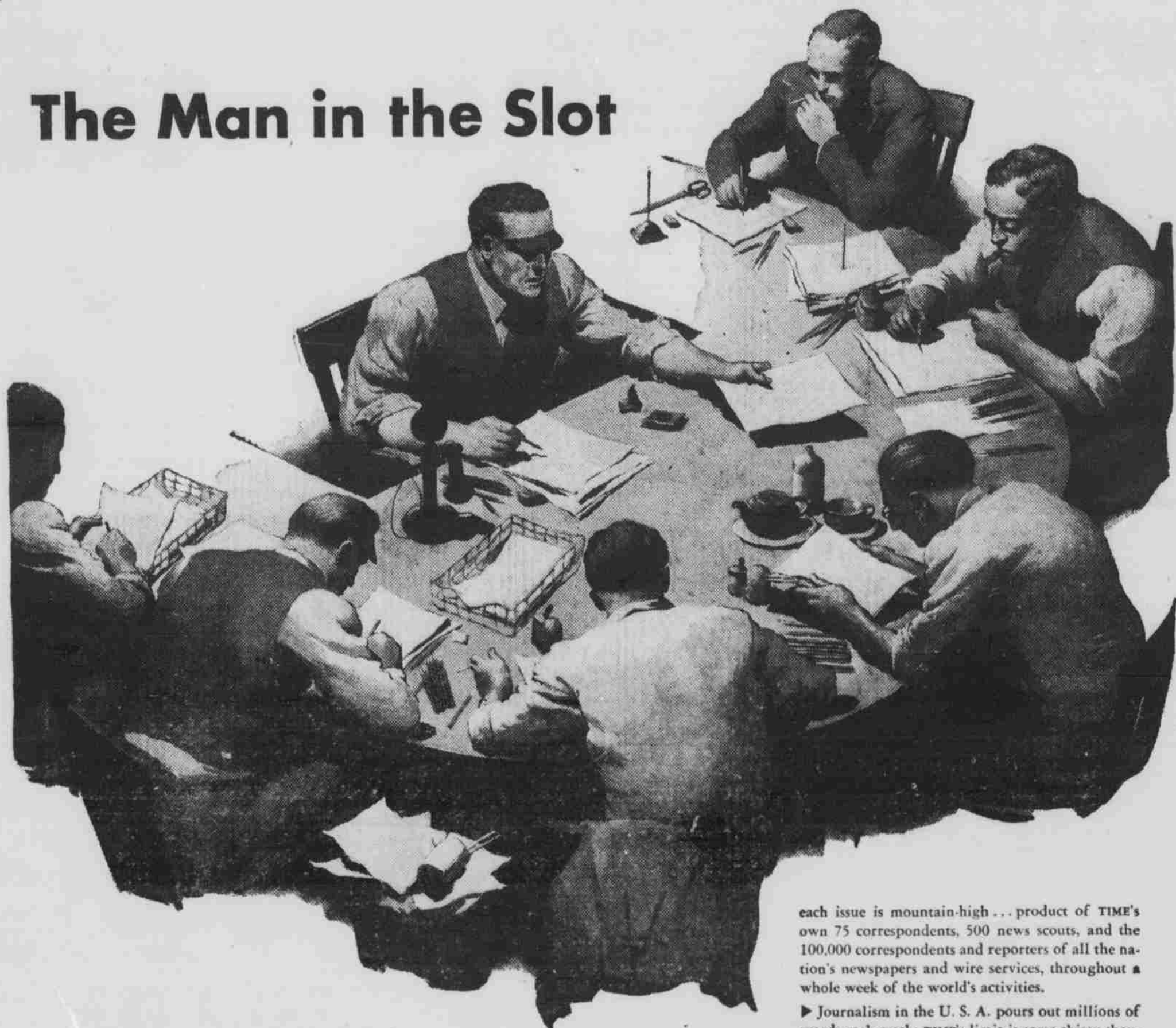


The Man in the Slot



NINETEEN MINUTES before a big city newspaper's first edition goes to press. Page by page, a story starts coming across the city editor's desk.

The city editor reaches for his phone, calls the make-up editor in the composing room. "How we doing?" he asks. "This City Hall story looks pretty hot."

"We're going to be tight. Keep it down," warns the make-up editor. "We can't squeeze the Washington story another inch."

"Okay," responds the city editor. He looks at the penciled layout for Page One, scribbles some figures in the upper corner of the sheet of copy, and with an expert twist sends it sailing onto the big horseshoe desk next to his own.

"We're tight, Mac," he calls to the man in the slot. "Cut it a third."

▶ Seventeen minutes now to the deadline... only ten for cutting, editing, headline-writing. For those vital ten minutes, the responsibility rests on the shoulders of the man in the slot... newspaper parlance for the head of the copy desk.

A dozen considerations flash their chain lightning patters across the slot man's mind. Tyler's story... Tyler the brilliant and touchy. He got it out of that certain municipal department which is giving off a faintly gamy odor. The boss will want it in all editions. This isn't the big break though, just another build-up to it. Damn good story... real stuff in every paragraph. Hard to cut. Needs a headline with sock. Who's to handle it? Ward's fooling around with that zoo story... Won't do, his cuts make Tyler sore. Colihan's a better bet.

"Colihan," says the man in the slot. One of the furious pencil-wielders around the rim of the horseshoe looks up. "Cut this a third and put a thirty-six head on it in time for the bulldog."

All this has used up fifteen seconds.

Colihan has nine and a half minutes to cut and edit and write a top headline and sub-headline. Every line of both headlines must count exactly so many characters and spaces, figuring *i* as a half and *m* and *w* one and a half characters.

Then the slot man will take just fifteen seconds more to review Colihan's work, change "banned" to "curbed," sniff the whole concoction for traces of libel, and shoot it to the news editor in the composing room.

It is a shorter story than Tyler's original, and a better one—keener of edge, swifter of impact, yet complete in every essential detail.

▶ The slot is not a glamorous job. It hasn't been discovered by Shubert Alley or the fiction magazines. To the cub reporter, eager for by-lines and self-expression, the whole copy desk looks like a backwater. It takes maturity—grasp of the whole art of news presentation—to appreciate the little miracles that a good copy desk passes.

▶ Among the men who write and edit The Weekly Newsmagazine, the man in the slot and the men on the rim are held in greater respect, perhaps, than in their own city rooms. For more than any other newspapermen in the business, TIME men write with the consciousness that they must cut, prune, hone, concentrate, and distill. The fight against the clock is not so desperate on a weekly, but the battle for each line of space is many times fiercer.

And the raw material for

each issue is mountain-high... product of TIME's own 75 correspondents, 500 news scouts, and the 100,000 correspondents and reporters of all the nation's newspapers and wire services, throughout a whole week of the world's activities.

▶ Journalism in the U. S. A. pours out millions of words each week; TIME's limit is some thirty thousand. And when every word must do the work of a dozen, it needs to be a better word, and more economically joined to its fellows. Nouns must paint landscapes, adjectives must do portraits, verbs must shoot straight.

Each story in TIME must be direct, keen, complete; each story must earn its place as an essential link in understanding the world's news of the week.

▶ TIME has developed the art of news condensation, as practiced by the slot men and rim men of the dailies, to a new high. For every issue of TIME is "tight"—its limit that irreducible minimum of news every intelligent man and woman must know. Which is one reason why TIME has won the genuine devotion of 700,000 busy families—with their ranks growing deeper every week.

This is one of a series of advertisements in which the Editors of TIME hope to give College Students a clearer picture of the world of news-gathering, news-writing, and news-reading—and the part TIME plays in helping you to grasp, measure, and use the history of your lifetime as you live the story of your life.

