

# Editing the Papers of a Contemporary Governor

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WHEN one writes about or edits documents of recent vintage, pitfalls literally leap up to snare the unwary. It is fairly safe to work on records a century or so old, for after all, the participants and their associates are silenced by death and the passage of time. To edit the papers of a person still living, particularly if he or she is actively engaged in politics, poses interesting and at times trying problems to the editor.

Some of you may have heard the session at the April 1968 meeting of the Organization of American Historians in Dallas, when Walter Johnson of the University of Hawaii spoke on "Major Problems in Writing Recent History." The biographer of Adlai Stevenson and editor of the papers of Joseph Grew discussed problems he had encountered. For example, he had had innumerable difficulties resulting from his need for security-classified Federal records. The problem does not occur when working on papers of a person prominent at the State or local level, but there are basic editorial decisions to be made if the subject is alive or only recently deceased that are unnecessary if the subject has been in the grave for decades.

Since the term of Gov. Thomas Y. Bickett, World War I Governor of North Carolina, the State has published the edited papers of each outgoing Governor. The volumes are a valuable source of information on events occurring in North Carolina during each administration. As reference books, I know of no better source for quick location of material relating to Governors and their programs. Years ago, when the mass of documents was not so vast, letters and telegrams were included along with the official messages, proclamations, and executive orders. With the passage of time and with improved transportation facilities and communications networks, leaders have tended to increase their documentary output. Today's Governors cover many miles of territory and often address several audiences in a single day.

The first of the volumes that I edited was that for the administration of Gov. Terry Sanford,<sup>1</sup> so I am basing my paper on the experience gained there. Since that time I have completed the editorial work on the papers of Sanford's successor, Gov. Dan K. Moore,<sup>2</sup> and I have begun accumulating material for the administration of North Carolina's present

The author, Historical Publications Editor of the Department, read this paper on Oct. 1, 1968, at a session of the 32d annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists in Ottawa, Canada.

<sup>1</sup> 1961-65.

<sup>2</sup> 1965-69.

governor, Robert W. Scott. While the Moore book is being printed, preliminary work will be done on the Scott volume. It is helpful to begin the job before the incumbent leaves office; by having the Governor and his aides near at hand, the editor is able to clear up many questions with a minimum of difficulty. If one is unable to devote full time to the editing of the Governor's documentaries he must use the available time as wisely as possible; a telephone call to the appropriate gubernatorial aide can easily save hours of time required to search through newspapers or to seek information by other means after the Governor and his staff have left office.

The first matter facing the editor is the selection of what to include in the printed volume.

Former Governor Sanford is an energetic man who never seems to run out of steam; one of his aides feels confident that he has a superactive adrenalin gland! The number of speeches Sanford made—between 950 and 1,000 during his 4-year term—naturally resulted in great quantities of paper coming my way at editing time. There was prepared copy for over a third of these; others were delivered with only brief notes or extemporaneously. Sanford's record day occurred when within a period of 12 hours he spoke at 11 education rallies and a ground-breaking ceremony in several counties.

With the volume of material to be reviewed, the matter of selection becomes of prime significance to the editor. Which speeches are the truly significant, policymaking ones? Which others are best representative of a number given on a similar subject? Which of the less important addresses are valuable for some other reason? Which reflect to advantage on the administration, and which, if any, may have led to later controversy or dissension? These and other questions must be weighed if a fair and well-balanced selection is to be made.

It is impossible for one man to make hundreds of addresses during a period of 4 years and not be repetitious to some extent. Obviously, striking sentences will be remembered and their repeated use should not be reflected in the edited volume. A number of times Sanford used as an illustration the statement that Adam made to Eve as they left the Garden of Eden, "My dear, we are living in an age of transition." A conscientious editor would not want the speeches to include that particular illustration more than once or twice.

The elimination of unwanted repetition can lead to difficulty. At the dedication of a National Guard armory, the Governor had said:

The order of the day in America is peace—not war. The uniform of the day is the overall of the farmer or the Ivy League suit of the salesman or the dungarees of the factory worker—not battle dress of militarists. Our chow lines are at a civilian hot dog stand or a Dairy Queen—not at military messes. But let no dictator misinterpret this traditional love of peaceful pursuit. Civilian-soldiers have proved since 1776 that they will fight if fight they must!

The dictators in the Kremlin and the dictators in Peiping should take a long

hard look at the history of America before they start anything. The American eating peanuts at the ball park will sacrifice that bag of peanuts for a can of C-rations if he must. And the American civilian will exchange his golfing putter for an M-1 if it is necessary to do so to safeguard freedom here and elsewhere.

Just over 2 months later, speaking at a National Security Seminar at Fort Bragg, Sanford made a different address but included the two paragraphs above. Anyone who studied the speeches with any degree of care would notice these rather dramatically worded statements. I had originally planned to use only one of the addresses, but after the book was in galley Sanford had suggested that the other also be included. Because of this late inclusion, the similarity was not noticed until the book was in page proof. Something had to be done! I eliminated the repeated part from the second speech, using ellipses to show the omission, and included in brackets a note to the effect that at this point the Governor had discussed the preference Americans had for peace over war, adding that the statements were similar to those made in the earlier speech and citing the page numbers for the earlier speech.

This solved one problem but created another. By taking out four or five paragraphs, I was left with a blank space, which had to be filled—and the book was in page proof. Fortunately, the Governor had made a short address at the Daniels family reunion only 2 days before he spoke at the National Security Seminar. I had summarized the Daniels talk because of the importance of Josephus Daniels and his family in the history of North Carolina. By using the remarks entire, I successfully filled the blank space.

An editor must be as objective as possible; it would be easy to cause embarrassment to a man or his associates, not only by including repetitious material, but by including the not-so-well received addresses and those that are trite or boring (and there are certain to be some in this category), or by not including those of true significance. In other words, the editor has a great responsibility in selecting material to be published in the volume.

In choosing documents it is necessary to keep in mind the program goals of the man whose papers one is editing. Sanford campaigned on a platform of improved educational opportunities. In addition to raising the standards of public education and making tremendous efforts to hold teachers and attract new ones through increased salaries, Sanford recommended and won approval for a network of community colleges and technical institutes and industrial education centers, a school of the arts for unusually gifted students, and additional facilities for the retarded. The fact that education was his primary objective did not mean that he had no interest in health, welfare, conservation, cultural agencies, and other matters. To have eliminated all speeches except those on education would have presented a false picture; on the other hand, to have concentrated on programs other than education would also have given an

untrue slant. Balance has to be maintained; and the editor must keep in mind the objectives of the subject.

After material has been selected, an editor must remember that well-known facts and people of today will be forgotten tomorrow. For this reason I try to identify persons named by the Governor by complete documentation in footnotes, and also to incorporate information essential to an understanding of the address in headnotes. Of course, some speeches need no such introduction; others might make a great deal of sense today but little 20 years hence if nothing is included to give the remarks relevance to the Governor's program. References to widely publicized events need no elaboration to readers of today's newspaper; by the time the book is published, many will have forgotten the events leading to the remarks made by the Governor. Here again, however, selection is important. An editor needs to be truthful; but I do not think it is necessarily essential to incorporate information that would cause embarrassment to the Governor or to those politically allied with him. For example, during the Sanford administration, a sales tax on food was enacted after a recommendation by the Governor as a means of financing a program of increased support for education. The public reaction to the food tax was overwhelming, and headnotes were used to show this reaction. Excerpts were taken from letters, both pro and con, but material which was actually insulting, profane, and obscene was omitted. Letters revealing the baser elements of human nature did not have to be quoted in order to picture clearly the reaction to Sanfords' proposal and the resulting legislative enactment.

It is also necessary to remember that names familiar to newspaper readers of today will not be readily known 20 years from now. For this reason I feel that even persons who are well known should be identified in footnotes so that future users of the book will not be baffled when someone is mentioned by name in a speech. It is often easier to find information about someone who has been dead 75 years than it is to obtain information about a contemporary. If a man is listed in *Who's Who*, the problem is solved; if he is not listed in any of the current biographical dictionaries it might be hard to get the needed information. I have found it particularly difficult to determine whether a person is still living if he is no longer in the limelight and was not of sufficient prominence to be listed in such works as *Current Biography Yearbook* or the historical volumes in the *Who Was Who* series. Legislators fall into the twilight zone in most instances—what happened to John Doe who was prominent in the fifties but was defeated or who did not choose to run again? I recently began a card file of deaths; and as I notice obituaries in the daily paper, I note the death date if the person was of statewide importance.

It is also a problem to know what date to use as a cutoff. I remember one footnote in the Sanford volume in which a birthdate was given with a space left blank for the death date. After the note was written, the man

died. The publication date shown on the book was 1966, but publication delays occurred. It would not have been impossible to have added the death date of 1967, but should this have been done? Where do you draw the line? Obviously as long as people continue their productive lives, footnotes about them could be expanded—on, and on, and on, as time passes. An objective cutoff date has to be selected; and no matter how tempting the bit of information, it should be omitted if it occurs after the selected termination date.

I mentioned earlier the role of the person on whose papers an editor works. To what extent should the person's own opinions influence the editor's work? Does an editor let him make suggestions? If so, are they all accepted? I have known Terry Sanford for years, since the 1940's when we were on the staff of the Institute of Government in Chapel Hill at the same time. He offered to read the galleys, and I was happy to agree to his suggestion. I had earlier sent him a list of speeches that I tentatively planned to include and had asked for his comments. In two or three instances I had learned that his speaking schedule had been changed or for some reason he had not actually delivered a particular speech, so it was to my advantage to have him look over the list. In checking galleys, he would be able to answer a number of questions I had raised. One amusing note came back to me. In a speech on mental retardation, given in West Virginia, Sanford had said, "Most of us here today well remember some mentally retarded boy who was locked away, fed like a vegetable, and treated like an animal." Just how is one "fed like a vegetable"? I raised the question, and Sanford's reply was, "I said it; historians will have to live with it."

Governor Sanford was most cooperative throughout the venture, and it was helpful to have him look over galleys and later the page proof. He read the proof and returned it promptly. The only difficulty was his sudden inspiration to request inclusion of a speech or two not originally earmarked for the book, but the resulting difficulties were worked out.

I think that the final decision whether or not a particular letter or speech should be included is one for the editor to make rather than for his subject to dictate. As a practical matter, the subject should have confidence in the ability of his editor to do a creditable job—or else another editor should be selected. If the subject has no confidence in the editor or if the editor is unwilling to stand by his own decisions, where he feels a matter of principle is involved, the book will be of little value. Ideally, the two should be willing and able to work together to resolve any differences of opinion, but I feel that the editor's choices should be respected where there is disagreement. Fortunately, I have had the cooperation of all three Governors whose papers I have edited.

Not only is it necessary to work with your subject, but it often becomes expedient to work with his staff or former staff. Obscure bits of information, identification of people in photographs, cryptic remarks, and behind-the-scenes happenings can be explained by someone on the staff of

the Governor who is closely associated with him. If the staff aide with whom the editor works is one who gets on with the job, well and good; if he is a procrastinator, be prepared for frustrating and exasperating delays.

Speechwriters vary in their ability as do Governors and typists. An editor is faced with the problem of what he should correct. In the past, when spelling was less rigid than it is today, people expected inconsistencies in spelling; in fact, illiterate phrases and words sprinkled throughout flavor the document for the modern reader. But what about a misspelled word in an address of a recent Governor? What about a grammatically incorrect sentence? In my opinion this sort of thing should be corrected, just as an article for a professional journal is edited. After all, the typing and mimeographing were nearly always done by a clerk who could easily have made a typographical error; the speech was in all probability written by a member of the Governor's staff, and the Governor may well have corrected the grammar when he delivered the address. (At least we can hope he did.) I may be wrong, but I correct obvious mistakes.

Still another area in which the editor should exercise caution is in the selection of illustrations. Out of the thousands of pictures taken of a prominent person, there are certain to be a few that he would prefer not to be published. Governor Sanford and his family were photographed at the time he took office in January 1961 when his daughter was 12 and his son about 10. Another family picture was made 4 years later. The contrast was noticeable; in 4 years Betsy had changed in appearance from a sweet, appealing child to a typical teenager with long bangs hanging over her eyes; Terry, Jr., an innocent child with his dog in the earlier photograph, had a fairly long haircut and seemed obviously unhappy because of pressure put on him to be included in the family portrait. I really wanted to include both illustrations; the latter showed that even in the best of families children will follow the dictates of fads and fashions and that adolescence will take its toll. Governor Sanford preferred that the second picture not be included; I could not see that it was a matter of real significance, though it would have been of interest, and the picture was left out. On the other hand, a picture of the Governor and his son water skiing was included though Sanford expressed doubt about using it, for after all, it showed a roll of fat forming around his middle. I convinced him that it was no minor achievement to be able to water ski proficiently and that his well-rounded life was revealed through the use of this photograph. After all, many Governors could fish or play ball; how many could water ski? The picture is in the book. Most of the illustrations selected for inclusion were those relating to programs, visits of national leaders such as President Kennedy, and the like. The personal photographs were the only ones about which there was discussion, and there were no real conflicts even with those.

When the amount of material is vast, something has to be eliminated. Rather than having to decide whether to include a speech or leave it out,



groups of addresses were summarized, thereby giving an idea of their content, instead of merely listing the titles. Here again, summaries can be useful or devastating. The editor should conscientiously try to give a clear, succinct summary covering the main points of the address. No matter how hard one tries, I suppose, human nature creeps in and at times one's bias shows!

Each of the gubernatorial projects that I worked on included stacks of news releases, proclamations, statements, and executive orders; in the case of Governor Sanford, there were also transcriptions of news conferences. The latter were excellent examples of the quick wit and thinking of the man, and the decision was made to include at least one. Space limitations prevented the use of others.

All of us know that every cause wants to be proclaimed, and the eloquence exhibited in announcing "Cornbread Week" in the State—where cornbread was called "more than a food in North Carolina—it is almost a way of life"—or "Welcome Wagon Week," or the hundred and one other weeks, days, and months really stretch the imagination of the writers of the statements issued by the Governor's Office. Statements of this kind were included in a limited number in the Sanford book, along with others dealing with current situations in the State and nation, such as that issued on November 22, 1963, when Governor Sanford simply said, "The tragedy of the assassination of the President is overwhelming."

The volumes of Governor's papers, with the exception of the three volumes of the administration of Gov. Luther H. Hodges, were edited and distributed by the State Department of Archives and History. Governor Hodges filled an unexpired term as well as his own term. His gubernatorial papers were published in three volumes rather than one. Governor Sanford, before his term expired, expressed concern over the cost of the Hodges volumes and insisted on only one volume for his administration despite the mountain of records available. A primary factor is the matter of cost; the selection of documents is necessarily tied to the practical matter of money. Distribution of the volumes of Governors' papers is made without charge to a list of names submitted by the former Governor and thereafter to the public. Funds are provided by the Governor and Council of State from the Contingency and Emergency Fund. The incumbent does not vote funds for his own book; his successor does. The number of people on the Governor's list determines the number of copies to be printed. Of the Sanford volume 8,000 copies were printed at a cost of about \$18,000.

Working on the papers of a contemporary public official has its limitations; it also has its pleasures. An editor does not have to worry about finding enough documentary material, though he might feel concern about having too much; working on papers of a man from centuries past, one gets to recognize his subject's handwriting and through his letters feels as if he has a close friend from the past. But the fact remains that he does not have a flesh and blood acquaintance; he does not have the

reward of a word of thanks or a note of appreciation from his subject. Working on the papers of a living person, still active and productive, gives one a renewed appreciation of and understanding of his problems and his achievements. Knowing a person, listening to his opinions, discussing problems with him, and wondering whether your efforts will be of any value to him in his future career make editing the papers of a contemporary a fascinating and rewarding experience. I recommend the job to those of you who are wedded to the past and have never given the present a chance to prove its worth.

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