

A New York Times Coup

By Richard Harwood
Washington Post Staff Writer

The great and small men of Washington journalism were engulfed in gossip yesterday.

What was happening at The New York Times? Rumors of coups and

counter-coups circulated everywhere. There was talk of managerial crisis, of corporate bloodletting on a broad scale.

But when the fog lifted, it was apparent that with one exception nothing on The Times had changed. That ex-

ception was the departure of James Greenfield who, until 5 p.m. Wednesday, was scheduled to replace Tom Wicker as chief of the newspaper's prized Washington bureau.

One of Greenfield's jobs, before he went to the Times in June, 1967 was

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That Was Almost Fit to Print

Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs.

"My appointment," Greenfield said yesterday, "was decided a week ago. This one had to be unanimous, I know, and it was—Rosenthal, Daniel, Catledge, and 'Punch.' I wanted to make sure it was unanimous and it was—until 5 p.m. yesterday (Wednesday)." (Greenfield was referring to Assistant Managing Editor A. M. Rosenthal, Managing Editor E. Clifton Daniel, Executive Editor Turner Catledge and Publisher Arthur Ochs "Punch" Sulzberger.)

An hour later—after a two-minute conversation with Rosenthal—Greenfield had resigned, Wicker's status as chief of the Washington bureau had been confirmed, and reporters in The Times' news room in New York had returned to their desks.

There are various versions of what happened in the week that led up to Greenfield's departure from The Times at dusk Wednesday. But in all of them is the common theme of resistance by Wicker, Associate Editor James Reston and other Timesmen here to domination of the Washington bureau by "New York." To them, Greenfield was the symbol of this domination.

This is a struggle which, by all accounts, has been going on for years

and which produced a similar flareup in 1966 when it was proposed that Wicker give up his "administrative duties" to a New Yorker and devote full time to his column. His replacement then was to have been, it is said, Assistant Managing Editor Harrison Salisbury. Instead, Salisbury was later sent to North Vietnam where his work got him nominated for the Pulitzer Prize.

Greenfield came last June to The Times where, if things worked out, he was to get "an important job." He came to the paper from a vice presidency at Continental Airlines.

"It was on a 'you try us for six months and we'll try you for six months' basis," said Greenfield. "If we liked each other, it was understood I'd get an important job. I liked them a lot, and they liked me—until 5 p.m. Wednesday."

Greenfield's chief sponsors at The Times were Assistant Managing Editor Rosenthal and Managing Editor Daniel who, such students of The Times as Gay Talese have written, have long desired to bring the Washington bureau under their immediate control.

"There were obviously many internal discussions," Daniel said yesterday, "but I consider them an internal affair of The Times and I can't comment on them."

The announcement of Greenfield's appointment was to have been made either yesterday or today.

But Wicker and Reston were not ready to give up the fight. They flew to New York Wednesday and that afternoon conferred at great length with Sulzberger in his offices on the 14th floor of The Times building.

A popular story has it that Sulzberger was informed that Reston, Wicker and a passel of Washington reporters would quit if the Greenfield appointment went through. But Times officials deny that there were any threats of that kind.

Whatever transpired on the 14th floor, Sulzberger changed his mind and the word trickled down.

One member of the Times staff in New York said he got back to the city room from an assignment a little after 5 p.m. and found a huge gathering of reporters milling around.

"I thought," he said, "that maybe the President had been shot or that somebody had declared war on us. But it was just that bureau thing."

Greenfield got the word of Sulzberger's change of heart from Rosenthal. The Times' Washington bureau got it via telephone from New York, whereupon, according to one staffer, "there was a lot of cheering and people said, 'We've won.'"