

Most information, and
so it is never



Most reporters begin in the district office of a local newspaper. There they well are put, as juniors, to do the rounds of police and fire stations, hospitals and town halls, looking for stories. These can seem boring chores. But the good reporter is always looking out for the significant fact that is going to make a news story. It may not be obvious to the people who are giving him information, and so it is never enough to ask ‘ anything interesting happening’? Ask to be given a run-down on what is happening, and then you decide whether there is anything interesting.

A local reporter should learn all he can about his district. He should know his way around it—every street, every square, every cafe. There is no way to learn a town better than by walking round it.

The reporter must know something of the town’s history, its principal industries, the ways it has changed in recent years, the planning proposals for the future. The churches and clergy are invaluable because they meet families at moments of greatest stress and even today, when religious observance is waning, often know their parishioners well. Junior reporters often have to cover the regular events in a town—the meetings of the Women’s Institute, the annual flower show. Never despise these. Reports of them help to sell local papers.

But beyond that, a casual conversation may often lead to some other human story; social events are where people meet each other exchange gossip, the sort of gossip that is news. Always be aware of change, and the prospect of change. The first news of a rehousing scheme may come in a formal statement from the Town Hall, couched in planning jargon and with an

architect's drawing of the supposed improvement. But behind that scheme there may be half a dozen poignant stories of old people who will have to leave the homes they have lived in all their lives, and whose predicament is of considerable human interest. Good shorthand is never wasted—particularly today, when so many press statements may be repeated on radio or television, and the newspaper reader knows whether what is printed in his morning paper is precisely accurate or not, because he has heard the public figure concerned making the statement on radio or TV the night before.