The Journalists

By
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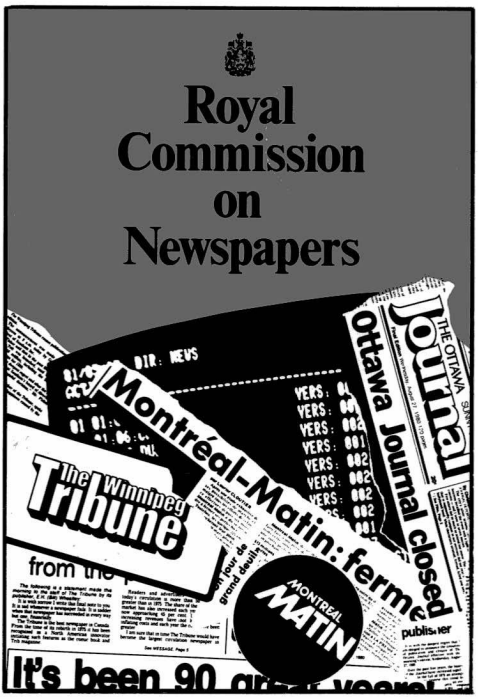

Research studies on the newspaper industry

Volume 2

The Journalists

Contents

Research publications of the Royal Commission on Newspapers

Volume 1 *Newspapers and their Readers,* by the Communications Research Center, with an introductory chapter by Leonard Kubas.

Volume 2 *The Journalists,* by Robert Fulford, Lysiane Gagnon, Florian Sauvageau, George Bain, Walter Stewart, Gérald LeBlanc, Dominique Clift, Tom Sloan, Pierre Ivan Laroche, and Jean Cloutier.

Volume 3 *Newspapers and the Law,* by Walter Tarnopolsky, Colin Wright, Gérald-A. Beaudoin, and Edith Cody-Rice.

Volume 4 *The Newspaper as a Business,* by Eugene Hallman, P.F. Oliphant and R.C. White, and Communications Research Center.

Volume 5 *Labor Relations in the Newspaper Industry,* by Gérard Hébert, and C.R.P. Fraser and Sharon Angel, Allan Patterson, John Kervin, Donald Swartz and Eugene Swimmer, Pierre-Paul Proulx, and James Thwaites.

Volume 6 *Canadian News Services,* by Carman Cumming, Mario Cardinal, and Peter Johansen.

Volume 7 *The Newspaper and Public Affairs,* by Frederick J. Fletcher, with contributions from David V.J. Bell, André Blais, Jean Crête, and William O. Gilsdorf.

Volume 8 *Newspapers and Computers: An Industry in Transition,* by Peter Desbarats, with the research assistance of Morrison W. Hewitt, Michael Tyler, Jean-Paul Lafrance, Ian Brown, Robert Collison, Tom Paskal, the Institute for Research on Public Policy, and Charles Dalfen.

Note: The numbering of the volumes reflects the order in which their subject matter is taken up in the Commission's Report.

Foreword

In this volume the Royal Commission on Newspapers has combined the studies on the practice and teaching of journalism which provided background material for its Report (in particular, Chapters 2, 6, 9, and 10). Written by professional journalists and communicators, these research studies do not necessarily represent the views of the Commission. The authors were encouraged to present their own viewpoints, as well as provide the Commission with information in their respective fields.

Because of the scope of the research projects and the specialized nature of some of the studies, a number of them had to be shortened for publication here; others, unfortunately, could not be included. Thus, two studies which the Commission found useful, on the professional development of journalists within the industry, by Pierre Sormany and Murray Goldblatt, are not included in this volume, being too specialized. They are, however, available in the Public Archives, along with the unedited version of the studies contained in this volume.

About the authors:

Robert Fulford, journalist and essayist for 30 years; editor and columnist of *Saturday Night* magazine since 1968; weekly columnist for the Toronto *Star* for eight years;

Lysiane Gagnon, journalist at *La Presse* since 1962; education columnist for the magazine *L'Actualité*; and former member of the executive board of the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec (FPJQ), and of the Québec Press Council;

Florian Sauvageau, a lawyer by training and journalist since 1962; former managing editor of the daily newspaper *Le Soleil*; contributor to Radio-Canada public affairs broadcasts; collaborator on the films "Feu l'objectivité" and "Derrière l'image"; co-author of the books *Droit et journalisme* et *Les journalistes*; now a journalism teacher at Université Laval;

George Bain, a reporter, columnist, and foreign correspondent with the *Globe and Mail*; later editorial page editor, foreign correspondent, and columnist with the Toronto *Star*; now a weekly columnist in the *Globe*; contributor to *Maclean's*, *Saturday Night*, *Canadian Forum*, *New York Times* Magazine and *Atlantic Insight*; freelancer for the CBC; now director of the School of Journalism at the University of King's College in Halifax;

Walter Stewart, journalist for 30 years, including nine at the Toronto *Telegram*, seven at the Toronto *Star*, and nine at *Maclean's* magazine; author of seven books, including *Paper Juggernaut* and *Canadian Newspapers: the Inside Story*, published in 1980; radio and television commentator; now editor of *Today* magazine;

Gérald LeBlanc, journalist for 15 years, especially at *Le Devoir* and *Montréal-Matin*; president of the FPJQ from 1978 to 1980; freelance journalist since the closing of *Montréal-Matin*;

Dominique Clift, journalist since 1955; at the *Globe and Mail* from 1960 to 1962, at *La Presse* from 1962 to 1965, at the Toronto *Star* from 1965 to 1970, the Montréal *Star* from 1970 to 1977, and finally at *Le Soleil* from 1977 to 1978; freelance journalist since that time; co-author of the book *Le fait anglais au Québec* (1979) and author of *Le déclin du nationalisme au Québec* (1981);

Tom Sloan, journalist and editorial writer for nearly 30 years, at the Welland *Tribune*, the *Globe and Mail*, the Montréal *Star*, the Montréal *Gazette*, and the TVA television network successively; director of the program of journalism and information at Université Laval from 1968 to 1970; teacher at the School of Journalism at Carleton University; author of *The Not So Quiet Revolution* (1964); associate at the Institut international de la communication;

Pierre-Ivan Laroche, formerly Canadian International Development Agency project officer on assignment in Tunisia; now principal secretary to the rector of Université de Montréal; associate at the Institut international de la communication;

Jean Cloutier, journalist at Radio-Canada and United Nations correspondent; assistant director of the Centre international d'enseignement supérieur du journalisme (Strasbourg); director of the Information Office and the Audiovisual Centre at the Université de Montréal; author of *L'ère d'EMEREC* (1977); director of the training program for African communicators since 1972; director of the Institut international de la communication since 1975.

Jean-Claude Labrecque was the co-ordinator of editorial research projects for the Commission; Dick MacDonald was co-ordinating editor of research publications; and Tim Creery, director of research, supervised publication of the Commission's research studies.

Introduction

As its title indicates, this volume is devoted to journalists, their state of mind and the conditions under which they are now practising their profession. The volume is divided into three parts, which correspond not only to three different aspects of the profession but also to three distinct periods: "Philosophical and moral foundations", or the heritage of the past; "Journalism day by day", or present pressures; and "Monitoring and training", or prospects for the future.

In the first part, Robert Fulford and Lysiane Gagnon attempt to bring out the intellectual and moral heritage underlying the practice of journalism in Canada. Fulford endeavors to show how the English-language press became devotedly attached to truth and freedom at a very early stage, how it attracted the mavericks and nonconformists responsible for its popularity, and how all English-language journalists, drawing their inspiration from British and American traditions, believe in the sacrosanct ideology of continual progress. Lysiane Gagnon concentrates on the situation of the French-language press in Canada, torn between the European and particularly French tradition of political diatribe and the American inclination for hard news. The nationalistic struggle of resistance in which French Canadians have been engaged accounts for the greater interest of the French-language press in politics as opposed to economics, for example, and its consequent greater susceptibility to the strong ideological influences of recent decades. It is not surprising that the idea of the media's social responsibility has been received more favorably in Québec than elsewhere.

In the second part, Florian Sauvageau sounds out the Québec press by means of a survey of no less than half the 480 journalists on French-language dailies, as well as in-depth interviews with representative people from the newspaper world, and analyses of recent writings on the practice of the profession. This study sheds a useful, and in many respects surprising, light on how French-language journalists view their role and what type of journalistic writing they would prefer to do. George Bain conducted a similar study in English-speaking parts of Canada, but used different means. He took coast-to-coast samples of the often cynical comments of journalists, their reactions to all the changes taking place in newsrooms, from marketing requirements to video display terminals. The demoralization he found was confirmed in separate studies conducted by Walter Stewart and Gérald LeBlanc to determine the effects of concentration in the newspaper business on English-speaking and French-speaking journalists respectively. Stewart's study is based on interviews with staff affected by the concentration of ownership in English Canada, checked against the views of management. LeBlanc's research focused on an informal history of the take-over of *Montréal-Matin* by Power Corporation and its subsequent demise, the rather painful entry of *Le Soleil* into the world of the "concentrated" press, and the failure of a new Quebecor daily in Abitibi.

The third part centres on important questions for the future of the profession. Dominique Clift traces the developments which favored the establishment of mechanisms for self-regulation of the press in some parts of Canada, in particular press councils and ombudsmen. He analyses the scope of arbitration and decisions to date by the various press councils, looks at the trends, and arrives at certain hypotheses for the future. Tom Sloan and Pierre Ivan Laroche then review the various journalism programs offered by universities and colleges in Canada, while Jean Cloutier outlines the strengths and shortcomings of these programs.

From this general survey, there emerges a feeling of malaise. The world of the press is clearly tormented with doubt and anxiety. Increasingly brought together under empires where the iron law of profitability holds sway, journalists everywhere are expressing the same concern. They are, perhaps more so than others, aware of the growing depersonalization in the ultratechnological age we are entering. The often unexplainable feeling of insecurity experienced by the "concentrated" journalists interviewed by Stewart comes not from ill-treatment — indeed, they are often better off in material respects within the chain — but from the feeling of having become part of a machine without a soul rigidly pursuing some goal of ultimate rationalization for which they may one day pay the price. And suddenly the work becomes less exciting, the dedication dies. There is a sense of having been demoted from journalist to wage-earning scribe.

At the same time, with the dawn of the information revolution, highlighted by videotex, print journalism is looking for a new image. Television communication, breaking victoriously into the market place, has not only pushed back the printed page but subjugated it. Showmanship is everything, and the spoken word a tool. Disco journalism has appeared, signalling the last phase of a profession which is losing its intellectual foundations. The strong, critical mind which, in the early days of the press, imposed opinion, acted as a watchdog for western freedom, is given less value as verbal inflation takes over. This is the overall problem ultimately illustrated in all the chapters of this volume: a sort of existential anguish; and the intuition, among the best journalists, that they may be manning the last ramparts of a civilization.

Mario Pelletier
Editor, Volume 2

I

Philosophical and moral foundations

1

"A sort of reckless courage"

by
Robert Fulford

The press of English-speaking Canada operates according to obscure and often conflicting principles. On the one hand, the press is a creature of the modern corporation, whose central thrust is toward rationalization and profit. On the other hand, the press inherits and attempts to maintain traditions of professionalism purchased with the blood and energy of journalists and printers over three centuries. On the one hand, the press honors and supports journalists of superb training and talent, men and women who would do credit to any profession. On the other hand, the press accommodates in its ranks, with apparent equanimity, the worst sort of incompetence and sloppiness, to the detriment not only of the profession but of the community as a whole. Hidden among these contradictions, is there some bedrock of morality on which journalism can rest, some guiding philosophy? Certainly the best journalists believe there is, and do their work accordingly. Nineteen years ago, Stuart Keate, a reporter who became publisher of the Victoria *Times* and later the Vancouver *Sun*, provided a summary of the goals many journalists set for themselves:

> Any publisher, editor, or reporter worth his salt recognizes that he has only one basic duty to perform: to dig for the truth; to write it in language people can understand; and to resist all impediments to its publication. That responsibility rests on his shoulders with all the weight of 300 years of the modern press, as we know it. . . .The extent to which we discharge it will determine our worth to the community and to the country.[1]

But those tasks, on which most journalists would agree (while many would expand the list), are not simple. Everyone in journalism, ideally, seeks to report "the truth", but few instinctively know what it is or know what truths should be reported and which should be emphasized over others. In the development of the press, a set of principles has evolved (though seldom articulated) by which journalists judge the facts and prepare them for public use. Another set of principles, even less often articulated, governs the judging of those facts and the personalities and institutions behind them — for journalists believe implicitly that it is their duty to judge as well as report.

Some of these principles touch the character and education of journalists themselves; others, perhaps more complex ones, govern the relationship of journalists to the companies they serve — companies which began in colonial days as tiny printshops and which now have blossomed, in many cases, into multinational corporations with interests not only in newspapers, but in television, radio, cable systems, mass market paperbacks and even such distant fields as oil or department stores. The principles become tangled, not only in matters involving newspaper ownership but in the journalist's own relationships (with his sources in public life, for instance, or with his own trade union). Still, the journalist in his sublime self-confidence believes that he routinely untangles them as he goes about his daily work.

In *Language, Logic and the Mass Media*, Donald R. Gordon — bringing to his subject not only the techniques of the political scientist but personal experience as a journalist for The Canadian Press and CBC news — states that the daily newspaper of our own time comes down to us carrying six distinct traditions: a tradition of free and private enterprise; a tradition of service; a tradition of opinion; a tradition of variety; a tradition of advertising; and a tradition of conservatism. Newspapers operate outside the web of government and inside the web of corporate capitalism. They see themselves as "serving" their readers, their communities, and their country. They see themselves as free to offer opinions, indeed obliged to do so. ("From their origins as impassioned promoters of causes, newspapers have inherited the habit and function of providing personal comment upon the individuals and issues of the day.") They see it as part of their function to provide a variety of news and other attractions, thus appealing to diverse constituencies of readers. They see advertising, over which they exercise little control, as not only a financial mainstay but part of their service to the public. And finally, consciously or unconsciously, they operate as a conservative force. ("Because of their relatively great age, their close association with the established authorities of business and the state, their own considerable investment in plant and equipment, and their long experience with the need for thought and moderation in making changes, the press frequently tends to view the agitations, whims and fancies of the moment with great care and sensible suspicion.")[2]

Working within these largely unstated assumptions and for the most part unexamined institutional structures, the journalists attempt, jointly and individually, to develop philosophies of action to govern their activities. There is little questioning of the corporations themselves, except in particular details. Journalists do not hesitate to suggest the restructuring (or even abolition) of other institutions, but they seldom look seriously at their own. In the modern newspaper of English Canada, real powers of staff selection, budget, and other matters flow downward from shareholders and their surrogates, the corporate managers — and few can imagine it otherwise. The experiments in staff control of editorial appointments and functions which have been a feature of some French (and some Québec) journalism in recent decades have stirred no noticeable response in English Canada; and union-owned newspapers have been failures. Journalists, for the most part, take their own institutions as they find them, and work within them. Structures of newspapers are seldom studied from the outside, as ordinary corporate structures are routinely studied by schools of management. In our journalism schools the training tends to be vocational; when it is not, it concentrates on inspiring the individual journalist rather than examining the system.

The journalist will cheerfully admit that his institution is imperfect and always will be so, agreeing perhaps with Alexis de Tocqueville that, "In order to enjoy the inestimable benefits that the liberty of the press ensures, it is necessary to submit to the inevitable evils that it creates;"[3] and agreeing even more firmly with Albert Camus' remark that "A free press can of course be good or bad, but, most certainly, without freedom it will never be anything but bad."[4] It is to the principles those quotations suggest that the journalist looks for his special legitimacy within contemporary society. Canada possesses in its constitutional background no legislation equivalent to the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States ("Congress shall make no law. . .abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press") but Canadian journalists function as if we did — and indeed the endless chain of British and Canadian precedents affirming press freedom supports them. Journalists tend to believe that, flawed though their work and their institutions may be, the work and the institutions are among the mainstays of freedom. Journalists believe that if they do *not* do their work of reporting and comment — and do it as freely as possible — an open society will not be possible. Wilfred Kesterton, an historian of the press in Canada, has called this "the libertarian press system":

> Under the libertarian press system, the system which prevails in Canada, the twin qualities desired for the media are freedom and responsibility. That truism envisages persons of the press doing their work freely, unhampered by government controls and regulatory bodies.[5]

This tradition mixes elements of our British and American heritages with styles of journalism developed in Canada since frontier days. It implies that journalists justify their freedom not only by fair-mindedness but by an uncynical regard for the welfare of the community and of mankind. It implicitly sets the press apart from more routine elements of the business community (whose activities are often subject to strict regulation) and bestows on the press not only certain legal benefits but the more important benefit of public trust. In this way the tradition has created, in the minds of journalists and in the minds of those who read the work of journalists, a Platonic ideal of a newspaper. This ideal can never be satisfied, but it can remain before us constantly, as a goal. When people complain of this or that newspaper, they are unconsciously referring to this ideal.

The ideal involves truth, completeness, and justice. The journalist at his best sees himself as a righter of wrongs, as someone who can sort out the acts of society and distinguish between those that are beneficial and those that are not. Consider the recent words of one well-regarded contemporary Canadian journalist (Walter Stewart) on another (Allan Fotheringham):

> Most of his peers have either surrendered to cynicism or become mouthpieces for established virtue. He believes, although he has to be pushed to admit it, in the essential decency of human beings, and in the political process he loves to lash. His impatience with roguery, bombast, and bullying comes from a conviction that things can be set right, and that he can help.[6]

In those words we can find two assumptions: one is that good journalism makes a difference; the other is the assumption of Progress. Insofar as Canadian journalists have an ideology, it is the ideology of Progress. If all newspaper editorials could be summed up in one phrase, that phrase would be something like: "We can do better

than this!" Northrop Frye paraphrases the idea of Progress as handed down to us by the thinkers of the Enlightenment and by the creators of the French and American revolutions: "Progress. . .assumes that the dynamic is better than the stable and unchanging." Yet Frye goes on to note:

> Some of the most horrible notions that have ever entered the human mind have been 'progressive' notions: massacring farmers to get a more efficient agricultural system, exterminating Jews to achieve a 'solution' of the 'Jewish question', letting a calculated number of people starve to regulate food prices. . . .Hence for most thoughtful people progress has lost most of its original sense of a favorable value-judgment and has become simply progression, toward a goal more likely to be a disaster than an improvement.[7]

Frye's view would not, for the most part, find enthusiastic adherents in the editorial rooms of English Canada. Newspapers endlessly report the disasters of the modern age, but they do not draw any philosophical lessons from them; it is hard to imagine how they could do so. Being a part of corporate capitalism (no matter what the opinions of individual journalists), newspapers must necessarily subscribe to the ideology of progress which is corporate capitalism's reigning religion. John Porter tells us, "An essential characteristic of ideology is that it is other-worldly. If values are not heaven-oriented they are oriented to the future, or to a non-existent state of worldly perfection."[8] Newspapers are future-oriented; they dwell not on the lessons of the past but on the possibilities of what is to come. Indeed, the Davey Committee, which reflected the attitudes of journalists even more than it reflected the dissatisfactions of senators, set this down with remarkable clarity as *the* method by which it judged the performance of a newspaper:

> The standard we choose to employ is pretty straightforward: *how successful is that newspaper...in preparing its audience for social change*?[9]

Some journalists might superficially disagree with the Committee's view of newspapers as social agencies readying their anxious, Future Shocked readers for the shattering events falling upon them; but in their underlying attitudes journalists are not far distant from the authors of the Report. The journalists' attitudes reflect both the business ethic of the owners and the liberal-progressive ethic favored by most journalists. These are mixed uneasily at times, but they are mixed nevertheless, and in the end mixed more or less to the satisfaction of everyone.

Forty-one years ago Carlton McNaught set down the terms by which the newspaper business was organized; they have not greatly changed since:

> Since newspaper publishing has become such a complex business, it is natural that a publisher should be first and foremost a businessman. There has come about a separation of the business and professional elements in newspaper production, with both business and editorial functions largely delegated by the publisher but with the latter giving his principal attention to the business side. One result is that the publisher often acquires a point of view which is that of the business groups in a community rather than of other and perhaps opposed groups; and this point of view is more likely than not to be reflected in his paper's treatment of news. The publisher usually belongs to the same clubs, moves in the same social circles, and breathes the same atmosphere as other businessmen.[10]

Against this obvious fact of control by a certain class — a governing elite which recruits from all other classes and assiduously trains its recruits in the ideology of business — journalists tend to set their own professional ideal of independence. Journalists try to see themselves as disinterested seekers of truth who will not be swayed by the opinions of those who, for the moment, own the newspapers. A journalist's sense of profession demands devotion to the facts and to his readers; only after those first claims are satisfied can the owners of his paper demand his loyalty.

Nevertheless, at the end of the day most newspapers emerge on the same political side — roughly, the side of business and of pro-business political parties. As the historian Paul Rutherford tells us, speaking of the media in Canada, "The media have preached the virtues of what, for the sake of brevity, can be called liberal capitalism. That, of course, took many forms, from the Victorian ethos of the colonial press, to the bourgeois democracy of the mass press, and eventually the affluent society of the multimedia."[11] The result is that certain unpopular streams of thought, while significant elsewhere in the community, make no noticeable appearance in the newspapers.

The New Democratic Party, for example, often receives a sixth, a fifth, or a quarter of the popular vote in provincial and federal elections; sometimes it does much better, and in three provinces it has formed governments. Yet it has no equivalent newspaper support. It is never supported with any consistency on the editorial pages of the daily newspapers and there are almost no daily newspaper columnists who can be readily identified as New Democrats (in the way that certain others, from time to time, may be identified as Liberals or Conservatives). If journalists were professionals in the way that certain others are professionals — setting professional standards for themselves and making professional appointments without undue obeisance to those who pay their salaries — the case might be quite different. The question of Marxism throws up similar doubts. Today, in all of Canadian daily journalism, there is not a single columnist or editorial writer whose work reflects Marxist ideology, even though a large part of the politics of the world (both in the Communist countries and elsewhere) rests on that ideology. It is commonplace to find a university department of political science or sociology staffed to a substantial degree by professors who bring a Marxist perspective to their teaching, as well as by liberals, conservatives, and so on. This is true even in Ontario, where the government has been Progressive Conservative during the entire lifetime of most of those professors. The professors would be astonished if this situation were even questioned: their profession established its intellectual independence some decades ago.

Not so with journalists. John Porter, secure in his academic professional credentials (and having the independence that goes with them), wrote in 1965: "There is, of course, nothing professional about the role of newspaper reporting. As a group reporters have no disciplined academic training in any particular sphere, although they seem prepared to write about anything." Porter did point out, however, the existence of a contrary ideal:

> The notion that 'independent' publishers and editors should have more power to determine the ideological direction of the press than owners is an element in the doctrine of the freedom of the press. Although the main element in this doctrine is the proposition that the press should be free from government censorship and regulation, there is, as well, the idea that newspapers should be free from the

> interests and pressures of those who happen to own them. For some the press is *ideally* [emphasis added] free when some public-spirited man of wealth or a corporation buys or builds a newspaper and hands over its operation to a 'professional' group of journalists who run the paper in the public interest, or at least their interpretation of the public interest. Owners supposedly do not interfere with this 'professional' role of publisher and editor. Built into this 'professional' role is the technical competence required to produce a newspaper, as well as great wisdom to make profound judgments in editorials. . . .[12]

The phrase "great wisdom" is, of course, used ironically: in common with many specialists, Porter saw the newspaper commentator as essentially frivolous, his views altogether lacking in the detailed research which is presumed to stand behind the judgments of university professors in their learned journals and their books. Within the profession itself, similar misgivings are often voiced. We have it from A.J. Liebling, greatest of all critics of the press, that, "There are three kinds of writers of news. . . .In inverse order of worldly consideration, they are: 1. The reporter, who writes what he sees. 2. The interpretive reporter, who writes what he sees and what he construes to be its meaning. 3. The expert, who writes what he construes to be the meaning of what he hasn't seen." Liebling went on to say that "the expert" can usually put on a more spectacular performance than the mere reporter or correspondent. "For example, a correspondent cannot cover a (war) front and the Pentagon simultaneously. An expert can, and from an office in New York, at that."[13]

Most newspapermen have read Liebling's satire, absorbed Porter's scorn, or experienced something very like them. Most have nodded in at least partial agreement. And yet most operate on the principle that it is possible to make the most severe judgments on their fellow men in a short time and with only a modest store of information. They offer no better explanation than that it is in the nature of their calling. George Grant tells us, "Moral philosophy is the attempt by reflection to make true judgments as to whether actions are right or wrong. The making of such judgments requires knowledge of the principles of right, and knowledge to apply those principles to our particular situation."[14] In this literal sense, all newspaper commentators — and to an extent reporters and deskmen, in their choice of what to emphasize — must function as moral philosophers in a casual and largely undisciplined way. They must make, in the course of their ordinary work, moral judgments and commitments of a kind which other professionals (setting aside judges and policemen) may have to face only occasionally, if ever.

In doing so, they call on several points of reference. A central point is community value: is this action (which is being judged or reported) of value to the community, or is it likely to do harm to the community? Another central point is fairness: am I, as a journalist, treating my subject and my reader with fairness — that is, am I exposing all the important aspects of the question and taking them fairly into account in making my judgment? Beyond that, the reporter and the deskman move into realms which touch on the literary and artistic. They judge news as a dramatist may judge action, on the grounds of its inherent human interest and its ability to move the audience.

An editorial writer faces most of these questions in a highly articulate way, and usually gives his answers and his reasons. A news editor or a reporter must confront them almost unconsciously — yet his decisions may be even more important than the

editorial writer's. The mere placing of a story about, say, a medical doctor's error will affect that doctor's career enormously; whether the news editor puts it on page one or page 27 will be more important to the doctor than anything said on the editorial page. So a distant branch of moral philosophy, or what passes for it, must work throughout the profession.

John W. Dafoe (1866-1944), editor of the Winnipeg *Free Press*, was the most important newspaperman of his time in English Canada. The historian Frank H. Underhill wrote in 1932: "For the past generation now it has been generally true that what the *Free Press* thinks today, Western Canada will think tomorrow and the intelligent part of Eastern Canada will think a few years hence."[15] Dafoe's views — western Liberal nationalist, agrarian, continentalist, internationalist, anti-imperialist — were the most influential in Western Canada for decades; their echoes may still be heard today. But it was Dafoe who set down for his generation the most accurate description of the journalist's frequently incompetent and yet persistent approach to the unknowable problems of the world. Dafoe was speaking at the University of Manitoba convocation in 1923:

> A journalist is hardly an authority upon anything — unless perhaps upon the appraisal of the drift of public opinion. [In even this, of course, he has, since Dafoe's time, been replaced by the pollster.] His writings on economics are likely to be greeted by your professors of economics with a polite snort. Eminent lawyers disagree with his constitutional pronouncements. Preachers do not subscribe to his theological views. Transportation experts regard his comments on freight rates as wholly uninformed; and the financial magnates consider his ventures into the mazes of finance as the triumph of reckless optimism over prudence. And yet in spite of all these limitations the journalist must go forward laying hands upon these and other mysteries with a sort of reckless courage; and unless he is to fail, he must, out of his half knowledge and his intuitions, and his sense of values and his knowledge of life, tell a story which may not be accurate but is still true and which does not altogether lack suggestive power.[16]

Dafoe thus presents journalists in Dafoe's own image: unspecialized, lacking in detailed knowledge, open to the scorn of genuine experts, yet earnest and dedicated, accepting of their limitations while seeking always to transcend them. This is an image, or a model, which most journalism schools would accept willingly — though some journalism teachers would advise a student also to become expert in at least one field. (The "trend toward specialization" has been part of journalism school cant for a generation, though it is hard, except in isolated instances, to see it actually at work in the daily press. One of the most successful newspapermen of recent years, John Fraser of the *Globe and Mail*, was taken off the drama beat and sent to Peking, where he made his first visit to a Communist society.) Dafoe's image might also appeal to most publishers and managing editors.

But journalism itself accommodates, and often exploits, an image entirely different — the raffish, highly independent, sometimes eccentric, not notably educated "personality" reporter. This man (sometimes now it is a woman) is an affront to all that journalism schools teach. Frequently, he is irresponsible and frequently his opinions are not closely tied to the facts. "Moral philosopher" is a tag that would hang uncomfortably around his neck. But readers tend to identify with him and love him, and editors, too — and publishers, while sometimes made uncomfortable by him, tol-

erate him with that special geniality we reserve for those who are helping to make us rich. There are scores of such reporters on Canadian newspapers, darting in and out of the business (often switching to television today), producing intense interest among readers and sometimes intense discomfort among those they write about. For modern Canada, the chief exemplar is Gordon Sinclair, who toured the world for the Toronto *Star* in the 1920s and 1930s. J.V. McAree, himself a distinguished columnist in Toronto for some five decades, described Sinclair in 1934:

> He is quite a young chap, and quite a rebel, for he refuses to be daunted by brass hats or stuffed shirts. He has, in fact, quite a reasonable idea of his own importance. If there is a pose about him it is that he is pretty hard-boiled. He describes himself as just a hobo who writes. He is not particularly regardful of the King's English or anybody's English. He will split an infinitive with the same willingness that he will split a bottle of scotch. At times he may be inaccurate, and those who, at times, are not inaccurate, can pick a quarrel with him. We beg to be excused. But he has brought the world of Asia and India to his readers in a way that it has not been brought before. The most important thing about him is that he is always himself.[17]

McAree's choice of words — "brass hats", "stuffed shirts", "hard-boiled", "hobo" — evokes an era now long gone; but the phenomenon he describes is very much a part of 1981 Canadian journalism. The ambitious and often socially aware journalist typically sees himself as a rebel pitting the resources of his own talent and training against a corporate world that is bland and uncaring about anything except profits. He sees journalism, sometimes, as a "game", in which the reporters are endlessly playing the publishers. In his irreverent style, which can be called a philosophy only by straining, he resists the uniformity which corporate managers might like to impose on the press. Moreover, he asserts the human dimension involved in the gathering and reporting of the news and the human dimension of the people whose activities are reported by the papers. He helps prevent the corporate newspaper of the 1980s from turning into a soulless fact-processing machine. His style is often said to have departed from modern newsrooms, banished by the conformity of journalism school graduates; but observers who say that are usually long outside the business themselves. Those who actually visit newsrooms regularly know that "the old-fashioned reporter" remains a good deal more than a memory.

Quite often this character type degenerates into what one Canadian publisher calls "a press club journalist" — someone whose insights, grievances, and *bons mots* are reserved for drinks with "the boys" at the press club and whose actual published work is distressingly routine. Sometimes, however, he or she develops into a star whose work may command a large audience and arouse the fears of those in power. In the present generation Allan Fotheringham is the most spectacular example of the type, the inheritor of Gordon Sinclair's insouciance if not his political beliefs.

The rebel reporter is one product of the tension which is at the heart of serious newspaper work: the tension between journalists and what they conceive of as the Establishment. Many journalists join the Establishment by vanishing into government agencies and private corporations (a few achieve eminence in those institutions), but journalists who remain on newspapers tend to rest their personal philosophy on the view that they are natural enemies of established power. It is their duty

(they believe, in their best moments) to question severely the alderman or the head of the public utility or the cabinet minister. These personages should not be allowed an easy life at the public's expense, and making them uncomfortable — forcing them to question their own decisions and explain them — is the journalist's self-chosen function.

This is now an assumption of journalists through the English-speaking world, but it was not always so. Not long ago, journalists tended to choose sides and then perform loyally on the sides they had chosen. The *Times* of London was, in the 19th century, the greatest journalistic enterprise of the world, but it was frequently so close to Her Majesty's Government that one historian has noted: "At times it was uncertain whether the *Times* was the voice of Government or Government policy a mere echo of *Times* views."[18] In English Canada, newspapers grew up as party organs; they were created for that purpose, and they were expected to reflect the views of the party that nourished them, whether that party was in office or not. It was not uncommon for a politician to use a newspaper as a launching pad for his career as well as for the propagation of his ideas.

In the 1820s William Lyon Mackenzie's *Colonial Advocate*, published at York (Toronto), attacked the Family Compact with such virulence that a number of young men connected with the Compact raided his printing press, broke up the forms, and deposited some of the type in Toronto Bay. It was this incident, and the subsequent legal action in which Mackenzie was awarded substantial damages, that made him a popular hero.[19] Twelve years later, when Mackenzie's rebellion was over and Chief Justice John Beverley Robinson was sentencing two of the rebels to death, Robinson paused to comment on newspapers such as the *Colonial Advocate*:

> It is one of the miserable consequences of the abuse of liberty, that a licentious press is permitted to poison the public mind with the most absurd and wicked misrepresentations, which the ill-disposed, without inquiry, receive and act upon as truths. . . .It is, to be sure, in the power of the laws to restrain this evil to a certain extent, or at least, they may attempt to do so; but such is the perverseness of a great portion of mankind, that whenever it is endeavored to exert this power, the attempt is felt, and resented, as an infringement upon liberty.[20]

Mackenzie's rebellion, as Robinson rightly saw, was not only a military rebellion; it was also a rebellion of public opinion, orchestrated by the rebel press. Six years after Robinson made those remarks, in 1844, George Brown founded the *Globe*, also in Toronto. The *Globe* was as partisan as some of the papers Robinson was complaining about, though less devoted to violent forms of political action. Under Brown the *Globe* earned, as one historian has summarized it, "a political influence in Upper Canada such as no other journal has ever possessed".[21] The *Globe*, though spectacularly successful, was not atypical in its biases; and the daily press of English Canada came into the modern era as, essentially, a party press. J.V. McAree has left us a memoir of the early days of 20th century journalism in Toronto:

> It is important to note here that 30 years ago [he is writing in the 1930s] partisanship was much fiercer in the newspaper world than it is today, or has been since the war. The *Mail and Empire* was then a ferociously Tory organ which never in any circumstances condemned

> a prominent Tory, and which only in extraordinary circumstances praised a Grit. It had only lately emerged from the condition of believing that all Grits were either fools or traitors, and had mellowed to the extent of suggesting that the Grits were merely asses, and that they were misled by other Grits who were traitors. This more tolerant view had been thrust on the editors by the facts of history, which showed that occasions rose now and then which induced former Grits to become Tories, and former Tories to become Grits. It happened, therefore, that the Grit who had left his party left also his party organ and became a reader of the *Mail and Empire*.[22]

But even in the 1930s, when McAree was writing, newspapers were expected to maintain fairly strict party loyalties, if not to express them quite so vigorously. Paul Rutherford tells us:

> A reader in 1930 could easily identify the Liberal sympathies of the Halifax *Chronicle*, the Toronto *Globe*, or the Victoria *Times*, and the Conservative bias of the Halifax *Herald*, the Toronto *Mail and Empire*, or the Victoria *Colonist*. The party press lived on, if more the associate than the servant of the party leader.[23]

As late as the 1950s, a Toronto reader could rely on the *Telegram* and the *Globe and Mail* to be Conservative, the *Star* to be Liberal.

By the early 1960s, all that was changing. Newspapers no longer called themselves Liberal or Conservative, whatever biases they might from time to time display. In 1962 Stuart Keate noted:

> . . .[P]olitical parties 100 years ago were up to their ears in newspaper control; the reader subscribed either to a Grit or Tory paper and was fed a steady diet of undiluted party propaganda. Today about 90 per cent of the dailies subscribing to The Canadian Press describe themselves as independent, with the result that the reader is afforded a cross-section of opinion which enables him to arrive at a much more balanced judgment.[24]

The most important change in the political character and philosophy of newspapers, then, has been the transformation of the party press into the "independent" press — independent, that is, of party affiliation. Various historical forces have produced this change. One is the ownership of newspapers; those which began as the expression of one man have typically been handed down first to his descendants (who may not have shared his politics, or had any politics at all) and then have fallen into the hands of public corporations which by their very nature avoid party labelling. Thus the political coloration given by ownership simply vanished, to be replaced by the desire to make money from the newspaper and the more generalized desire to be of public service, usually but not always in that order. And as the number of newspapers in each community shrank (for various economic reasons), there was an additional pressure on owners to avoid party labelling. The newspapers came to see themselves as serving all citizens, of whatever party or class, not just Grits or Tories.

At the same time, technological change was inexorably transforming the character of the news pages. The development of telegraphy (and later teletype services and teletypesetting services) to newspapers produced The Canadian Press in Canada as it produced The Associated Press in the United States. Each of these was a coalition of newspapers — "a national newsgathering agency", as CP has described itself. CP took in the news from its member newspapers, processed it, and then transmitted

it to all of them. The result could not exhibit partisan bias: one style had to fit all. Whatever the opinions of the individual CP editors (and reporters, as CP itself began to cover news), CP could not transmit material that offended the prejudices of its member newspapers. If this produced a certain blandness in the news columns, it also worked toward fairness. As it became pervasive in the 1930s, this approach helped make the distinction between unopinionated news columns and opinionated editorials (which CP for the most part did not provide, and in any case only on non-political subjects) both evident and real. If public life in Canada began to seem less heated and less viciously partisan, then the changes in ownership of newspapers and the changes in the technology of news distribution were probably root causes.

During the same period, the idea of "objectivity" and "objective journalism" began to make headway throughout the press of the English-speaking world. (Our most common usage of the word comes from the German *objektiv*, meaning treating a subject so as to exhibit the actual facts, not colored by the feelings or opinions of the writer.) We know that the idea of objectivity goes far back into the origins of science; and we have it from a writer in 1855, who praised *Robinson Crusoe* as "eminently objective", that the word was by then already "much-abused".[25] But as a goal of news presentation, objectivity belongs to the modern period, and particularly the period when the party press began to be seen increasingly as shabby and irrelevant. Journalists, by the 1930s, were beginning to be told that their reports should be "objective". In this they borrowed their attitudes from the hard sciences and from other endeavors which were attempting to raise themselves toward the level of dependable professionalism. Objectivity is the dominant idea in science; it is also "the dominant *ideal* that legitimates knowledge and authority in all contemporary professions".[26] Through the 1940s and afterward, a lack of objectivity in a publication — *Time* magazine was often cited as a spectacular example — was seen to be a grave flaw and "slanted" news (lacking objectivity in selection and emphasis) was seen to be professionally inferior.

In the 1960s, however, this attitude came under widespread attack, nowhere more than on the left wing of North American society. Increasingly, objectivity was seen as a sham and as a screen behind which hid unexamined assumptions. Objectivity was seen as a way of asserting certain traditional beliefs without necessarily admitting to them. Jack Newfield, a crusading reporter for the *Village Voice* in New York, articulated this radical view of objectivity:

> . . .[T]he men and women who control the technological giants of the mass media are not neutral, unbiased computers. They have a mind-set. They have definite life styles and political values, which are concealed under a rhetoric of objectivity. But those values are organically institutionalized by the *Times*, by AP, by CBS. . .into the corporate bureaucracies. Among these unspoken, but organic, values are belief in welfare capitalism, God, the West, Puritanism, the Law, family, property, the two-party system, and perhaps most crucially, in the notion that violence is only defensible when employed by the State. I can't think of any White House correspondent, or network television analyst, who doesn't share these values. And at the same time, who doesn't insist that he is totally objective.[27]

But in fact, by the 1970s, "objective" had disappeared from the rhetoric of journalism training, leaving in its place less ambitious words, such as "fair". Under the

onslaught of New Journalism (which began with a few writers in New York and then affected, in some way, every journal published on this continent), journalism slowly gave up its implicit claims to status as a branch of the sciences. "Objectivity" is now for the most part buried.

These changes in English Canada paralleled similar changes in the United States, where the press also lost its deep political coloration and where the great (often egomaniacal) press barons were replaced for the most part by public corporations or by individual owners who were more interested in balance sheets than in party politics. The press of English Canada in its structure is deeply influenced by developments elsewhere; there is in English Canada no distinctive style of news reporting, news gathering, or news publication. But if we have inherited most of our techniques from Britain and the United States, we have not necessarily inherited the beliefs, ambitions, and styles of work which developed as those techniques were refined in their places of origin. Two quite different ambitions of the press — extensive foreign correspondence in Britain and muckraking, or investigative journalism, in the United States — have failed to take root in Canada.

The foreign correspondent became part of a tradition in Britain with the rise of the Empire and the rise of the *Times* in the 19th century. At certain periods the *Times* correspondent grew so important that he became a public personage himself:

> For a generation it was the key of German policy to send ambassadors to capitals of Europe who could cope with the *Times* correspondent, usually a more formidable foe than the British Foreign Office.[28]

In the 20th century, British foreign correspondents have in general operated on a more humble level, but to this moment they constitute a formidably talented corps. Britain expects matter-of-factly that the news of the entire world will be reported to readers at home by British correspondents. In Canada, something close to the opposite holds true. Canadian journalism gives the appearance of believing that foreign news should in most cases be reported by foreigners. This of course is not a philosophic belief but the result of a pragmatic view that foreign news may be acquired more cheaply through The Associated Press and Reuters and the New York *Times* and other agencies than through the sending of highly paid Canadians to foreign cities. As the editor of the Montréal *Gazette* said in testimony before the Royal Commission:

> Now, obviously, it would be better if the *Gazette* maintained a network of its staff correspondents around the world. Clearly, that is impossible. These days it would cost upward of $100,000 a year to maintain a single correspondent abroad. And most editors, if they must choose between spending another $100,000 for one correspondent abroad, or using it to provide three extra reporters to cover City Hall, or the West Island, or Québec City, or Ottawa, will spend it, naturally, on local or regional coverage.[29]

This view has never been powerfully challenged in Canada, either by journalists or the public; it is so much a part of our journalism's way of life that it goes unquestioned and only the exception is noted. One result is that foreign news receives less prominence in our newspapers than might otherwise be the case. Both consciously and unconsciously, editors are governed to some extent by their budgets. Lacking a financial commitment to covering the capitals of the world, they tend to play down

the news that they acquire cheaply; the comparative colorlessness of wire service news works to the same end. The converse is also true — when a Canadian newspaper does have its own correspondent in a foreign capital (the *Globe and Mail* man in Peking, for instance), the news from that capital receives a disproportionate amount of space. When this happens we can imagine that if for some reason our newspaper owners decided to station abroad a few dozen distinguished foreign correspondents, our newspapers would be very different and our daily knowledge of the world might be transformed.

So, too, would the role of the press, and its interaction with government on issues of foreign policy. An historian of the American press, Bernard C. Cohen, tells us about the relationship between the officials of the State Department and the reporters who cover them:

> The official wants the press to serve his interpretation of the government's interests — to publish his version of reality where publication promises a good return, and to refrain from publication whenever the official has any doubts about the wisdom or propriety of disclosure, or even its convenience. . . .The press, from his vantage point, should be motivated at every step by the policymaker's sense of the national interest. But the journalist generally believes that the national interest, whatever it may be, is best served by maximum disclosure, by full freedom of information, and he wants to exercise his own judgment, to publish his own interpretation or version of the reality that he thinks is important or newsworthy. . . .[30]

Cohen sketched out this dichotomy in 1963, two years before serious escalation of the war in Indochina; but he described precisely the conflict between policymakers and press that was so marked a feature of American public life in the Johnson and Nixon administrations. In Canadian public life, no such interaction has been possible, at least since the years of the Second World War (when war correspondents extensively covered Canadian troops in action), for the reason that there are no foreign correspondents knowledgeable enough to challenge Canadian policymakers and in Ottawa — partly as a result of our journalists' meagre experience abroad — there are no fulltime specialists in foreign affairs.

In the same way, and possibly for the same reasons, muckraking — the term was first used, abusively, by Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 — has not become a significant part of our journalism. A generation of American journalists, of whom Lincoln Steffens and Ida Tarbell became the best known, developed a critical and investigative approach to politics and business; their work appeared in magazines such as *McClure's* and *Collier's* but also in such newspapers as the New York *World* and the Kansas City *Star*. In the 1970s, in the Watergate era, another generation of journalists revived the same approach, most notably in the Washington *Post* and the New York *Times*. In both periods there was some attempt to transfer these techniques to Canada, but the attempts were for the most part half-hearted and short-lived. Much of our journalism still consists of an acceptance of the facts as governments and other great institutions deliver them, with personal analysis and opinions sometimes added. The newspaper article that reaches far behind the press releases and the public utterance is still a rarity in Canada. Canada now has an independent Centre for Investigative Journalism, but the ambitions of its members are so far largely frustrated. As with foreign correspondence, one major reason is financial.

Investigative journalism costs much more than other forms of journalism; to investigate a "fact" costs much more than to report the fact as officially delivered in public, and the investigation may in the end lead nowhere. At the same time, newspaper editors sense a resistance on the part of the public to unpleasant facts, particularly about widely respected public institutions. Many editors believe that investigating the Royal Canadian Mounted Police during the 1970s won few admirers for those newspapers which endeavored to do so. Thus the editor considering the possibility of an investigation is confronted by the prospect of spending a great deal of money on something which will do him no good and may lose some respect for his newspaper. In most cases, perhaps understandably, he declines to invest much effort in this direction. In his own mind, and in the minds of his reporters, there may lurk the suspicion that for the public good newspapers *should* conduct searching investigations. But he senses little public demand in this direction.

The lack of ambitious foreign coverage and the lack of investigative reporting can be seen as both a function of history and a function of market demand. If history had left us newspapers which depended for legitimacy (and thus profit) on foreign coverage — newspapers such as the New York *Times* — then ambitious foreign coverage would be part of the pattern of our journalism in 1981. But history did not perform that service for us, and lacking a built-in necessity, our newspapers can see no reason for spending money that can otherwise go for profits or expansion. In the same way, if our newspapers had any reason to believe that market demand was such as to make a newspaper with ambitious foreign coverage (or effective investigative reporting) more successful than one without, then surely some newspaper or chain would step forward and meet that demand. But so far as we know, no such demand exists.

In those two parallel cases we can glimpse the outlines of the severely limited world of journalism. The environment in which journalists must function, and develop and exercise their own rough versions of moral philosophy, is the corporate world of centralization, rationalization, and minutely calculated expenditures. In this world, journalists are only marginally professional, yet they are also aware that in that margin exists not only their salvation but their reason for existence. Maintaining the margin requires, in Dafoe's words, a sort of reckless courage. At root this is the philosophy of our journalism.

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2

Journalism and ideologies in Québec

by
Lysiane Gagnon

For the majority of Western theorists, including Siebert, Peterson and Schramm,[1] the press around the world follows either the authoritarian model or the libertarian model, the latter having evolved in recent decades to include the notion of social responsibility.

The authoritarian model was universally accepted in the 16th and 17th centuries and is still in force in a very large part of the world, particularly in Communist countries. The authors of *Four Theories of the Press* define it as follows:

> Truth was conceived to be, not the product of the great mass of people, but of a few wise men who were in a position to guide and direct their fellows. . . .Only by special permission was private ownership of the press permitted, and this permission could be withdrawn any time the obligation to support the royal policies was considered to have been dishonored."[2]

The libertarian model took shape during the 18th and 19th centuries, first in England under the influence of Milton, Locke, and Mill, then in France under the influence of Lamennais and Benjamin Constant. These developments in the press, of course, paralleled social and political changes which challenged the concepts of absolute monarchy and the divine right of kings. In liberal ideology:

> . . .truth is no longer conceived of as the property of power. Rather, the right to search for truth is one of the inalienable natural rights of man. . . .The press is conceived of as a partner in the search for truth. . . .Therefore, it is imperative that the press be free from government control and influence. In order for truth to emerge, all ideas must get a fair hearing; there must be a 'free marketplace' of ideas and information. Minorities as well as majorities, the weak as well as the strong, must have access to the press.[3]

The notion of social responsibility was to arise as a result of the new technologies which, from the turn of the 20th century, transformed the character of the press and gave rise to the complex world of mass communications.

> It was no longer easy to enter in publishing business or to operate a newspaper or a radio station. As these units grew larger, their owner-

> ship and management came to involve huge amounts of money. . . .The press, as in the old authoritarian days, is falling into the hands of a powerful few. It is true that these new rulers of the press are not, for the most part, political rulers. As a matter of fact, they rigorously protect the press against government. But the very fact that control of the press is so limited puts a new and uneasy power into the hands of media owners and managers. No longer is it easy for the press to be a free marketplace of ideas.[4]

It was the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press in the United States[5] (in 1947) which laid the theoretical groundwork for the notion of social responsibility, although this new concept of the role of the press initially arose among newsmen, who had begun to include it in their codes of ethics. According to the Commission,. . . "protection against government is not now enough to guarantee that a man who has something to say shall have a chance to say it. The owners and managers of the press determine which persons, which facts, which versions of these facts, shall reach the public." Siebert, Peterson and Schramm comment:

> This uneasiness is the basis of the developing Social Responsibility theory: that the power and near monopoly position of the media impose on them an obligation to be socially responsible, to see that all sides are fairly presented and that the public has enough information to decide; and that if the media do not take on themselves such responsibility, it may be necessary for some other agency of the public to enforce it.[6]

The public's right to know

In Québec, in a developmental process similar to that described by the authors quoted above, the same lines of thought were pursued and the same questions raised. Thus, the notion of freedom of the press, widely accepted during the 1940s and 1950s, was to give way to the more complex and still very poorly defined concept of the public's right to know. The expression "freedom of the press" is, of course, ambiguous. If it is taken to mean that the content of the press should not be subject to any form of censorship and that every person is free to circulate his ideas in whatever way he wishes, subject only to legal restrictions governing libel, slander, and hate propaganda, then a consensus will be easy to find. Where the notion of "freedom of the press" has been questioned, in Québec as elsewhere in the Western world, is in connection with the modern characteristics of the mass media which, in fact if not in principle, prevent anyone without substantial financial means from launching a major publication and keeping it afloat. Needless to say, the daily press falls into this category; of all the print media, it is the most costly type of undertaking and the one which most requires a well-developed organization.

Unconditional supporters of liberal ideology believe that a newspaper's quality and survival depend on its ability to satisfy consumer needs in a setting of free competition, where the primary role of government is to maintain a stable framework within which individual forces may freely interact. This ideology, a legacy from the rationalists and the Age of Enlightenment, presupposes that the reader is a rational being who can distinguish for himself between truth and error.

Liberal ideology was to give rise to "objective" journalism (as opposed to the committed journalism of journals of opinion) and the distinction between genres

(editorials, news reports, feature articles, and so on), and eventually lead to legislation providing for access to government information. However, this search for truth, which now demands that governments at least project an image of openness and honesty, left virtually untouched precisely that sector which is the principal source of newspaper financing — the business world, which of course supports the press through advertising. Thus, while governments are increasingly obliged to reveal the hows and whys of their administration, the media have not required that business firms and consortiums do the same, though they sometimes have a greater influence over the destinies of modern societies than the political authorities do. The classical concept of social responsibility is content to criticize the press solely for its failure to live up to the duties and responsibilities attendant on the near monopoly position it enjoys. Thus, say the authors of *Four Theories of the Press*:

> . . .Social responsibility theory accepts the role of the press in servicing the political system, in enlightening the public, in safeguarding the liberties of the individual; but it represents the opinion that the press has been deficient in performing those tasks. It accepts the role of the press in servicing the economic system, but it would not have this task take precedence over such other functions as promoting the democratic processes or enlightening the public. It accepts the role of the press in furnishing entertainment, but with the proviso that the entertainment be "good" entertainment. It accepts the need for the press as an institution to remain financially self-supporting but if necessary it would exempt certain individual media from having to earn their way in the market place.[7]

In Québec, as in Great Britain, English Canada, and the Scandinavian countries, this ideology has given rise to press councils, organizations inspired by the principle of self-regulation, which are independent of the state but which make ample room for representatives of the public. Thus, it is considered that, contrary to the credo of liberal ideology, a publisher does not have the moral right to sell what he likes at his own risk and that, by joining a press council and possibly subscribing to a code of ethics, he accepts restrictions on his own freedoms.

Needless to say, phenomenal technological developments and soaring costs, leading to concentration and monopolies or near monopolies, have given particular impetus to this sudden awareness — which is perhaps only a prudent reaction on the part of newspaper owners and publishers, aimed at taking the sting out of public protests likely to bring about coercive legislation. Criticisms levelled at the media always increase in proportion to the size of the newspaper organization and its share of the market. In almost every case these criticisms are much the same as those listed in 1956 by the authors of *Four Theories of the Press*: owners use the media to defend their own commercial interests and propagate their own political views; big business has monopolized the news and communications media; censorship has been exercised in different ways and to varying degrees; the press has always resisted social change; the type of information produced is superficial and based on sensationalism; individuals' privacy has been invaded; and access to mass communications is difficult for anyone without the necessary financial means.[8]

These blanket criticisms are sometimes unjust. One must read the great practitioners of American journalism (Tom Wicker, David Halberstam, and so on)[9] to see the falseness of any view which does not take into account the enormous complexity

and the many checks and balances which characterize the great liberal daily press. Thus, it is false to claim that the press has always resisted social change: on the issue of desegregation, for example, the American press was as divided as American society itself; the same can be said of the Vietnam war, where dissident journalists and the opposition, in the minority for many years, interacted, reinforcing each other's arguments, until a majority of the people and most commentators and editorialists began increasingly to question American intervention in Vietnam. Objective news reports, showing American wounded and dead on television, weighed even more heavily in the balance.

This is one of the rare certainties that will emerge from this study: the daily press is, to a very great extent, the reflection of a society; it deserves neither absolute praise nor blanket condemnation and criticism without appeal. It can exert some small influence, but usually does so by revealing facts that confirm already existing doubts, concerns, or aspirations among a large part of its readership. Thus, the reason the Watergate scandal (as exposed by the Washington *Post* and other dailies) had so many repercussions was that a growing number of American citizens instinctively mistrusted Nixon in the climate of disenchantment prevailing as the Vietnam war came to an end. In Québec itself, when the press revealed a conflict of interest involving Premier Robert Bourassa's in-laws in 1976, it no doubt simply confirmed the impression many readers had that the administration was somehow corrupt.[10]

If the press does have any influence, it is more on a day-to-day basis, through the creation of images, prejudices, and ideological trends — but the media merely shape these out of that raw material about which, unfortunately, not enough has been written: the reader's own subjective impressions. (To give a reverse example, a large daily wishing to promote the replacement of buses by streetcars, the introduction of mandatory day care, or the election of a federal Conservative majority in Québec could publish as many headlines, front-page articles, and editorials on the subject as it liked, without success, owing to the lack of corresponding trends and aspirations among the population at large.) Any comments on the influence of the daily press on the people should always be tempered by the following factors: the limited extent to which daily newspapers have penetrated the potential market, the infinitely greater impact television and even radio have on the senses, and the much more decisive and formative influence of the family and the school system.

Over the years, the notion of social responsibility was to be refined, especially under the influence of collective-rights ideology, the right to information being considered as basic as the right to health, education, and so on. Depending on one's personal political ideology, the right to know is intended either to uphold and improve the liberal democratic system or to provide ammunition for combatting the forces in power.

It must be noted, however, that, while the classical concept of social responsibility essentially involves a desire to limit the abuses of an information system whose foundations remain unchallenged, the notion of the public's right to know remains rather hazy and, because of this, may be interpreted in many different ways.

Indeed, the issue is a thorny one after the generalities have been dealt with.[11] What is the public? Who has or should be given the authority to speak for the public or various segments of the public? It is readily admitted that the public should receive the most complete, accurate, and honest information possible, but in concrete

terms, where are the limits and by virtue of what principle should they be set? No newspaper will ever provide exhaustive information on every topic. Who should choose? The public, which would then be in the position of a customer "placing an order" for one thing or another? Pressure groups, which would compete for space and priority? Journalists, as professionals in the field of information, yet admittedly subjective? Newspaper owners? Those in charge of marketing? Should the reading public be given what it wants or what it needs? If we opt for the second hypothesis, who will decide what the public needs to read and according to what principle? If those who call for the formation of "information-consumers" associations are right, then why not admit that those who say circulation figures indicate the public's taste and choice are also right? Seen in this light, which would be the "best" newspapers — those with the widest readership or those with the most varied readership?

What about priorities? Should international news be given priority, on the basis of the absolute importance of the news item, or should local information, public service announcements and the like be given priority, on the basis of readers' immediate interests? Who should have access to the pages of a newspaper? Any individual or organization? According to what criteria?

If the public's right to know must be guaranteed, who or what organization should be responsible? A "consumers" association with quasi-judicial powers? A government board staffed by civil servants? A government or paragovernmental body? A multipartite organization financed by the public purse? How can we preserve the independence of the press and at the same time subject it to control by the political authorities or their modern-day counterpart, the bureaucracy?

Thus, the public's right to know, an appealing theory which is difficult to articulate in practice, has been served up in our time by countless chefs, each with his own seasoning, that is, his own definition and, in a word, his own interests. That is why the debate on this issue generally takes on a political tone.

The theory of the public's right to know has enjoyed considerable success in Québec, certainly more than it has in English Canada and, with even more reason, the United States. This may be a result of the following factors. The great liberal-capitalist press had barely had time to become established and develop its own traditions, after an unusually long period during which the non-commercial press of opinion predominated, when it found itself under attack in a rising tide of leftist opinion that not only criticized its deficiencies but challenged the very foundation of the information system. Thus, where critics of the American press, inspired by the theory of social responsibility, accuse it of not serving the economic and political system in a judicious manner, critics of the Québec press challenge the system itself, as part of their scathing political attack on federalism and capitalism. From this perspective, liberal ideology — the very foundation of the North American daily press — is seen as an arena without an umpire, where the strong crush the weak.

This concept of things is part of a specifically French Canadian tradition which favors collective rights over individual rights. Historically, this tradition arises from the conviction that only very strong institutions (first the Church, then the State) could protect an isolated minority in the midst of English-speaking America. Moreover, say Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm, the theory of social responsibility is "in closer harmony with a collectivist theory of society than with the individualistic theory from which the libertarian system sprang".[12] The report of the Commission on

Freedom of the Press[13] noted that this theory had nothing to do with totalitarianism since it in fact sought to make the media a bulwark against that very thing, but that a society could unwittingly head toward totalitarianism by placing too much confidence in government to regulate the press.

The theory of social responsibility and the public's right to know also differs from traditional liberal thought by implying a different opinion of the reader, who is no longer considered a rational being capable of separating the wheat from the chaff laid before him without distinction by the mass media; in the light of the behavioral sciences, the reader is analyzed as a creature easily manipulated and strictly conditioned by the various influences to which he is subjected. He must therefore be protected against his own instincts and conditioning by being given a multitude of viewpoints as well as very sound guarantees of honesty and accuracy. This view of the press, as a guide rather than a supermarket where everyone can help himself to what he likes, is, in some ways, reminiscent of the authoritarian ideology which long dominated the French Canadian press.

In Québec as elsewhere, concentration of the press was the factor that was to lead to widespread popularity of the theory of the public's right to know, as opposed to unregulated freedom of the press. The phenomenon of concentration began to become apparent at the very height of political and labor dissatisfaction, which may be said to have been much stronger in Québec than anywhere else in Canada. Hence, criticism of the press swung markedly to the left. The many dimensions of this will become clearer if we make a historical survey of the development of the press in Québec, remembering that while American ideology stresses the moral aspect of the press (the notion of social responsibility implying that business can and should assume certain obligations to society), Québec ideology tends to lend a more aggressive, political tone to the same basic principle. Thus, many critics of the Québec press analyze it using a Marxist frame of reference, where it is considered impossible to reconcile the interests of business with those of the public. The attempt at the consensus needed to make the liberal press work is thus threatened with failure from the very outset. Another factor to be borne in mind is the influence French models have had on Québec (government distribution agencies, newspapers with more readily identifiable political leanings, greater acceptance of government intervention, and so on).

From opinions to information

The daily press in Québec as we know it today very clearly developed under English influence. In the 18th century and for most of the 19th century, however, the French-language press in Québec preserved a style and direction inherited from France's journals of opinion, certain traces of which still give Québec's French-language dailies a particular flavor when compared with the English-language press.

In their study entitled *Aperçu du journalisme québécois d'expression française* (A Look at French-language Journalism in Québec),[14] Jean Hamelin and André Beaulieu note that, under the absolute monarchy of the French regime, freedom of expression was not a recognized principle. Even then, however, the English-language press had thrown off the yoke. It was in 1785, 15 years after the conquest by Britain, that French Canada's first newspaper was born: the Montréal *Gazette*, founded by Fleury Mesplet, a French printer who had spent some time in the United States. The

Québec *Gazette* was established in 1792. The government became involved immediately. Assistance was necessary because of communications difficulties and a limited readership. (Of the mere 100,000 settlers at the time, most were illiterate.) The two papers were thus also to function as official gazettes, publishing edicts, proclamations, dates of court hearings, and so on. The Québec *Gazette* explained that the publisher would insert anything forwarded to him provided it made no mention of religion, the government, or matters before the courts, except by express order of the government.

Hamelin and Beaulieu go on to say that in 1791 England granted Lower Canada a House of Assembly. Political life became more vigorous; factions emerged, parties were formed. The press in Québec underwent a transformation, becoming politicized, serving a cause, group, or party. The press of opinion and combative journalism were born.

Between 1805 and 1838, 104 newspapers were established and 85 went out of business. Three were bilingual, 60 English and 40 French. It was at this time that the differences that were to persist for more than a century first appeared: the English-language newspapers were established by businessmen (the Québec *Mercury*, the Montréal *Herald*) whereas the French-language newspapers were founded by politicians, who would often be better known as such than as journalists (*Le Canadien* in Québec City, *La Minerve* in Montréal).

The Montréal *Herald* was the first to publish a daily edition, but it was in *Le Canadien* that the case was made for freedom of the press. Pierre Bédard and François Blanchet demanded that the people be given, as in England, the right to express their particular ideas and views themselves, through freedom of the press. The governor, however, was not of the same mind and had the two journalist-politicians thrown in jail. The press was also virtually silenced during the rebellion of 1837-38. One newspaper of the day, *Le Populaire*, commented that freedom of the press had never really existed except for ultra-Tory newspapers; as for the liberal press, it was allowed to speak but was jailed as soon as it did, no matter how reasonable its opinions.

While French-language newspapers with liberal or pro-*patriote* sympathies were subject to political censorship, English-language newspapers, with closer ties to commerce and already dependent on advertising, were feeling pressure from businessmen. Thus, when the *Daily Advertiser* expressed liberal sentiments in 1838, advertising was withdrawn and the newspaper folded.

After the suppression of the rebellion and the passing of the Act of Union, the *patriote* press adopted the more moderate line of Cartier's Liberal-Conservative Party. Until 1867, the French-language press was to be engaged in bitter debate over the advantages and disadvantages of the federal system. Alongside this essentially political press, there developed an ultramontane press under the strict domination of the high-ranking clergy. As Hamelin and Beaulieu remark, Conservative newspapers were the only ones to fare well, owing to help from the Conservative Party, which was still in power. The rare opposition newspapers whose quality should have ensured their survival succumbed under the wrath of the clergy. The dominant ideology of the time demanded that a newspaper reflect the teaching of the Catholic Church in all its aspects. The few radical newspapers which saw the light of day from 1847 to 1876 (*L'Avenir*, *Le Pays*, *Le Défricheur*, *La Lanterne*, and Arthur

Buies' *Le Réveil*) fell one after another under blows dealt by ecclesiastical condemnation. Between the Conservative press, which was pampered by the government, and the radical press, which was mercilessly repressed, the Liberal press was, as Hamelin and Beaulieu say, at least able to eke out a living, as long as it dissociated itself from radical and anticlerical thought and professed the Catholic faith at every opportunity.

French Canada's first great journalists were, first and foremost, politicians and debaters. This was, of course, a result of the fact that politics was, from the outset, the one field above all others in which outstanding French Canadians could assert themselves, since industry and commerce had been monopolized by the English since the Conquest. This close relationship between the press and politics drew the following comment from an editorialist in *Le Pays* in 1855, and his words have a curiously contemporary ring to them:

> Here, a man assumes the management of a newspaper when he is still only an apprentice at the trade, and leaves the editor's chair when he has begun to attain mastery, thence to become a minister of the government, join the civil service or pursue some other career, without worrying whether the position he has left will be well filled. The French Canadian press does not keep any of its skillful senior journalists.

In 1827, New York City boasted 10 daily newspapers. In the years which followed, cheap newspapers, press agencies, illustrations, and so on made their appearance in France, Great Britain, and the United States. In 1842, the Montréal *Gazette* became a daily; in 1857, *Le Canadien* and *La Patrie* did the same; *La Minerve* followed suit in 1864. *La Presse*, which was founded in 1884 by Conservative Party dissidents, changed its style five years later and became Canada's first major modern-style newspaper, at the instance of the printer Trefflé Berthiaume. With the *Star* and *La Patrie*, *La Presse* was to lead the way in such areas as advertising, delivery, multiple editions, competition, and increased emphasis on news reporting, with accounts of events taking precedence over debate and commentary. In 1890 there were three daily editions of *La Presse*, the news was illustrated, and its reporters were on the lookout for scoops, inventing them if need be.

Unable to keep up with advances in technology, most of the major newspapers of the 1800s died off at the turn of the century. Politics continued to dominate the newspapers. At this point government patronage went to the Liberal press, since the Liberal party was in power in Ottawa from 1896 onward and in Québec as of the following year. *La Patrie* and *Le Canada* served the Liberals, *La Presse* did likewise, and *Le Soleil* was Laurier's official organ. Regional newspapers (Sherbrooke's *La Tribune*, for instance) followed the same line.

Only a few newspapers continued the French journalistic tradition and sought to form rather than to inform: the ultramontane *La Vérité*, or *L'Action sociale catholique*; *Le Devoir*, which tried to be independent without losing sight of Catholic and nationalist interests; Olivar Asselin's *Le Nationaliste*, the mouthpiece of the Ligue nationaliste; and Jules Fournier's *L'Action*, another newspaper with nationalist leanings, and so on.

Hamelin and Beaulieu note that from 1914 to 1964, Québec dailies, shaped by democracy and the capitalist economy, completed their transformation. Increased

advertising gave the press in Québec a political freedom it had never before known. Thanks to this new source of income, newspapers no longer needed government support.

In the previous century the reins of government had been in the hands of the Conservative Party. Until 1935, they were now to be held by the Liberal party. At the height of his power around 1930, Premier Taschereau had virtual control of the press. Senator Jacob Nicol, his right-hand man, headed a network which included *La Tribune*, *Le Soleil*, *Le Nouvelliste* and *L'Evénement*. Taschereau himself had free access to *Le Canada*, *La Presse*, and *La Patrie*, which belonged to *La Presse* after 1933. Only *Le Devoir* and *L'Action* escaped the Liberal stranglehold.

When chain stores began to advertise on a large scale, they gave newspaper owners the key to freedom. The depoliticization of the daily newspapers began in 1936 with the election of the Union Nationale. Duplessis gave printing contracts to the non-Liberal newspapers, *Le Devoir* and *L'Action catholique*. To prevent the UN from creating a press which would compete with his own, Nicol transformed his newspapers, which became "neutral but sympathetic" to the new government.

Popular newspapers came into being as a result of the rise and growth of an urban working class in the pre-war years. *Montréal-Matin*, originally published as *L'Illustration*, was the first to adopt this style. The tradition of the press of opinion was dying out; in the 1930s, only a few nationalist newspapers remained (Asselin's *L'Ordre*, *Le Gaulois*, Edouard Montpetit's *Le Libre-Penseur*, Duhamel and O'Leary's *L'Unité nationale*, Paul Bouchard's *La Nation*). The only non-nationalist committed newspapers were Jean-Charles Harvey's *Le Jour* and later, in the 1950s, Jacques Hébert's *Vrai*. The authors of the study quoted here note that *Le Devoir* was the only publication among the opinion press to promote both collective rights (for the French Canadian nation) and individual rights. (This newspaper's campaign against Duplessis comes to mind.) The last party newspaper, *Notre temps*, formerly the official organ of the Bloc populaire, disappeared in 1962, after *La Province* (the mouthpiece of Paul Gouin's Action Libérale-Nationale).

Montréal-Matin continued to be identified with the Union Nationale but its political leanings remained confined to its editorial page and political news was covered in much the same way as in other dailies, according to the standards of "objective" journalism. *Le Jour*, the only post-war daily newspaper completely identified with a political party (the Parti Québécois), was to go under two years after its inception in 1974. It is worth noting that many journalists who were sympathetic toward the PQ, then in opposition, refused to go to work for *Le Jour* because they felt the newspaper's absolute commitment conflicted with reporting standards. Numerous tensions also arose between *Le Jour*'s reporters, its shareholders (who were all active PQ supporters), and the management, led primarily by two party "stars", Jacques Parizeau and Yves Michaud.

Despite the disappearance of the press of opinion and its replacement by daily newspapers in the mainstream of North American journalism, Hamelin and Beaulieu noted in 1966 that French-speaking Québec's great journalists were far more often editorialists than reporters, which is perhaps a sign that the need to "form" rather than "inform" still dominated.

Another sign of the relative weakness of the French-language daily press is the fact that, based on figures for the 16 dailies[15] published in 1966, the total readership

in Québec of the French-language press (825,000) and the English-language press (366,000) did not reflect the respective positions of the two communities, the gap being strangely narrow in a province where 80 per cent of the population spoke French. Of course, this could be explained first and foremost by the fact that the English-speaking minority was far better educated and more inclined to seek information in newspapers.

Two languages, two journalisms

This historical survey places us in a better position to assess the differences which still exist between the English press and the French press in Canada.

As a general rule, the latter continued to be more closely tied to the world of politics — to such a point, indeed, that Jean Paré, editor of *L'Actualité*, goes so far as to accuse the French press of "chronicling the uses of power, whether in politics, unionism or finance". The press, he maintains, "seeks to influence rather than to reflect; there are too many people who *think* and not enough who have *seen*".

The fact is that national politics accounts for a large part of news coverage and that most journalists specializing in politics look at it from the point of view of constitutional questions, as opposed to the economy or energy matters, which the French-language daily press compartmentalizes and dissociates from politics. Over the past 10 years or so, the dailies have tried to make more room for other areas of coverage — the economy, finance, lifestyles and so on — but politics[16] continues to be the favored topic, not so much in terms of staff or budget as in terms of the space and the importance assigned to political news. Above all, and here we return to the dominant image in the minds of the public itself, political journalism is generally considered to be the most prestigious field. Although the news sections of daily newspapers handle politics according to current North American standards of objectivity, there is still a fair amount of movement back and forth between journalism and politics, as witness the fact that René Levesque and Claude Ryan, the premier of Québec and the leader of the opposition, are both former journalists.

Other characteristics which are a legacy of the French tradition are the predominance of analysis, as opposed to simple reporting of events; the tendency to treat matters conceptually rather than in terms of people and events; the very Cartesian need to rationalize, even in the field of labor relations, within the media, where collective agreements are veritable volumes setting out detailed operational procedures (which admittedly are not always observed in practice); the greater personalization of articles (a French-language daily has more bylines and editorials are always signed, even when they must reflect newspaper policy); and the priority given to theory: there are three French-language university programs in journalism in Québec, not to mention the courses taught at the CEGEP level — all for nine French-language dailies and a handful of periodicals and radio and television stations, most of which have virtually ceased to hire new staff.

As for having an open window on the world, the French-language press undoubtedly compares rather well with the English-language press. The *Globe and Mail* has a correspondent in London but not Paris. *La Presse* has a freelance correspondent in Paris but not in London. Both newspapers have a correspondent in Washington. As a general rule, French-language dailies give slightly more coverage to France than their English-language counterparts, just as English-language dailies

pay more attention to Great Britain. As for the rest of the world, newspapers in both languages use the same agencies as news sources and operate more or less along the same lines, except that the language barrier prevents French dailies from publishing syndicated columns from American newspapers. Thus more content must be produced locally, as is the case with Radio-Canada as opposed to the English network of the CBC. Québec newspapers cannot get material from France with the same ease that English Canadian editors use American newspapers as sources. The differences in context and mentality between the two continents are too great and union standards are far stronger in French-language dailies. On this point, we might note that all journalists working for Québec's nine French-language dailies are unionized and affiliated with the CNTU, the most radical central labor congress. Each union is completely autonomous but they all tend to influence one another, and Québec undoubtedly holds the record for reporters' strikes, which are generally quite long.

Another essential difference stems from the fact that the market is smaller, the possibilities of competition and the coverage area are considerably more limited, and reporters' opportunities to move around are drastically reduced. This is one factor, among others, which explains the desperate and sometimes almost suicidal element of union militancy in journalistic circles. The future seems to be a dead end, chances for promotion are rare, and young journalists become involved in internal power struggles at a very early stage. The journalists and managers of the major French-language dailies are, on the average, younger than those of the major English-language dailies. The high number of journalists in their 40s and 50s who leave the profession[17] is, in fact, one of the tragedies of the Québec press. There are serious management problems in the newsrooms, where men and women without sufficient experience are promoted to positions of responsibility and an atmosphere of confrontation exists. One other point is that this same militancy has forced the dailies to bind themselves by ethical codes of sorts: the so-called "professional" clauses added to collective agreements, which have enabled French-language dailies to observe standards of integrity and prevent conflicts of interest.[18]

Reactions to concentration

In Québec, the general public and journalists were taken by surprise by the phenomenon of concentration. For many years, daily newspapers had been controlled by families such as the Berthiaumes, in the case of *La Presse*, and the Gilberts, in the case of *Le Soleil*. The major tremors in the newspaper industry resulted from internal family squabbles dividing the owners. But with the acquisition of *La Presse* by Paul Desmarais, Power Corporation's takeover of the major regional dailies, and the purchase of *Le Soleil* by Jacques Francoeur, who already held several interests in the weekly-newspaper business, there was suddenly cause for concern.

When the trend first appeared, in the late 1960s, the newly founded Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec (FPJQ) was quick to express alarm. The same was not true of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN) — Confederation of National Trade Unions (CNTU). It was not totally displeased by the situation, since the creation of monopolies in the newspaper industry also meant possible strengthening of the union monopoly and even held out a promise of top-level negotiations between an employers' cartel and the Confederation. (Fortunately, this great dream of centralization never materialized.)

In 1969, the FPJQ called for the creation of a provincial board, to be responsible for issuing operating licences subject to very specific regulations on ownership, territory, solvency of the applicant, profitability of the venture, and public need. The board was also to be responsible for approving any transfer of ownership of a business under its jurisdiction, and could go so far as to establish standards — which were to be very broad — respecting content. Newspapers with circulations of less than 10,000 would not have come under the board's jurisdiction. The FPJQ also proposed the creation of a newsprint board and a public or mixed distribution agency.

A Public Service Board was eventually created, but its jurisdiction was limited to telecommunications and educational television (Radio-Québec). It was a great disappointment to those who supported the FPJQ's initial demands that the only time the board had occasion to deal with the news media — in the winter of 1980-81, when it was holding hearings for the renewal of Radio-Québec's licence — it acted in an interventionist, authoritarian fashion, unlike the CRTC. The ruling issued by the board basically reproduced the tenets of the Canadian Institute of Adult Education (CIAE), which will be discussed later. Radio-Québec is contesting the ruling in the courts. It should be pointed out that this was an abuse not of political but of bureaucratic power. The controllers — appointed for 10 years — are not answerable to the government and their decisions cannot be appealed.[19]

In 1972, a second submission by the FPJQ modified somewhat its initial position on the terms of reference of such a board, but suggested another type of legislative action which would completely transform the way in which newsrooms operate:

> The government must pass legislation to prevent owners from exercising absolute control over the news service provided by their businesses. . . .
>
> [There should be a] legal requirement that all news media set up a news management committee, with full responsibility for administering the news service (excluding editorials) provided by the enterprise (private or public) and absolute control over news policies. . . .We propose that this management committee be composed of six members: two appointed by the journalists, two appointed by the newspaper's board of directors, and two representing the general public, selected unanimously by the two journalists and two board members. . . .
>
> Naturally, we are aware that we are asking the government to play a major role in guaranteeing the public's right to know. We also realize that the press must remain free and independent of political influence. These two principles do not seem contradictory to us, to the extent that government intervention will take place in order to ensure the exercise of a fundamental right and will include precautions guaranteeing the independence of the press. . . .

The FPJQ believes it is possible to reconcile government intervention and freedom of expression. This is not the opinion of the French communications theorist Francis Balle:

> The contradiction is insurmountable. Either we allow the market free play, which frees government, the governed and professionals from having to specify the goals, objectives or attributes of what is offered to the customer, or the government attempts to guarantee quality information for everyone and must make choices which will not suit

everyone and will be contrary to individual freedom of expression and opinion.[20]

In fact, the only event to have had a real, though still rather minor, effect on the situation in terms of concentration and criticism of the press generally, was the founding of the Conseil de presse du Québec (CPQ) in 1973. A tripartite organization bringing together newspaper companies, journalists, and members of the public invited jointly by the first two groups, the CPQ, faced with constant financial problems, has until now simply commented on individual journalistic activities or editorial decisions, upon receipt of complaints. The CPQ is fairly controversial; it is viewed with suspicion by some employers, with hostility by some union leaders (who would prefer that the journalist members of the CPQ act as official spokesmen rather than as individuals), and is criticized by many for being overly cautious.

By contrast with the situation in English Canada, where newspaper closings have led to renewed debate, discussions in Québec on concentration seem to be less lively than before, probably because the wounds have not been reopened. Desmarais, for example, refrained from attempting to acquire *Le Soleil*, which he had apparently considered doing at one point. None of the regional newspapers owned by Power Corporation has closed down or tried to bring in columnists or contributors from elsewhere in the chain, which could have led to a reduction in the number of local journalists, prevented the creation of new jobs, and discouraged local journalistic initiative. There has been no suggestion of any serious attempt at political or financial intervention by the Power Corporation chain, the Francoeur empire, or the Péladeau empire. The only chain newspaper to have fallen in the last few years (*Montréal-Matin*) would undoubtedly have folded soon anyway, had it not been purchased and artifically maintained at great expense by *La Presse*. The long labor dispute which paralyzed the two newspapers in 1977-78 was the death blow.[21]

Many people feel that concentration, *at least for the moment*, has not had any particular effect on the content of newspapers — which, overall, are not really any better or any worse than before — and they find it difficult to see how other dailies could have started up and become established in a relatively small market, given the staggering costs of the news media today. At best, concentration made it possible to maintain newspapers which would otherwise have collapsed under the burden of inflation; at worst, it brought about marketing techniques which are not reprehensible in themselves but which unfortunately have not been counterbalanced by leadership at the management level in the newsrooms. This shortcoming is not related to the phenomenon of concentration, but to other sociological causes which are not relevant here.

Another source of disillusionment affecting the passionate convictions at the turn of the last decade was the failure of two co-operatives, *Québec-Presse* (a weekly financed by central labor bodies) and *Le Jour* (a PQ daily), which, each in its own way, wanted to prove that news free of financial empires would be better. This was not clear, not on a day-to-day basis anyway, and the two publications foundered, through lack of funds in the case of *Québec-Presse*, and as a result of internal conflicts in the case of *Le Jour*. Furthermore, these two newspapers were exposed, by their respective shareholders, to much greater political and ideological pressure than that indirectly brought to bear in the newsrooms of large privately-owned newspapers. Finally, extensive attempts at co-management at *Le Jour* were one of the main

factors in its downfall. This was just one of the elements which greatly tempered the idealism of journalists who witnessed these events and who, today, tend to seek the best guarantees of journalistic excellence elsewhere than in legislation or structural reform.

Criticism of the press

It is really on the press as a whole, and not merely on the phenomenon of concentration, that debate is focused at the present time, although it should be pointed out that only a very small minority of the population is involved: journalists' associations, academics specializing in communications, and groups of "users" or "consumers" in some outlying regions (there is not one association at all representative of the reading public in the Montréal region, or in Québec City). These groups of regional "consumers", who have become active because the outlying regions are very poorly served in terms of information, receive grants from the Québec Department of Commmunications.

There are remarkable similarities between the most articulate consumers' groups, the communications theorists (those from Université Laval in particular) and the government bureaucracy, where hundreds of information officers and communications specialists are at work. But then perhaps these similarities are not so remarkable after all: what these people are all saying is basically that the press is a *public service* and that, as such, it should be regulated by a public representative, that is, the government. There is an obvious convergence between the interests of the government (which would like to increase the scope of its power), academics at the university in Québec City, which by virtue of its location is most closely connected with the civil service (these academics would be called upon to play a role in a world where the press was more strictly regulated), and some groups of citizens poorly served by the free-market system.

These vague attempts to introduce control recur periodically, sometimes even in the form of draft bills, but have thus far always been blocked by the politicians; the PQ cabinet is divided on this question, but Premier Lévesque has the last word and he has always refused to legislate on the press.

The white paper on Québec cultural development policy[22] proposed subsidies for the regional and local press (through the intermediary of independent juries), and financial assistance from the government for the distribution of newspapers and periodicals in areas outside large urban centres. The white paper also suggested broadening the mandate of the Régie des services publics (Public Services Board), which would examine transactions affecting the media market. The following are excerpts from this document which illustrate the uncertain stand taken by the government:

> Another principle has recently been added to the traditional one of freedom of the press: that of the public's right to be informed. . . .[T]his right is set forth in Québec's Charter of human rights and freedoms. This is apparently a unique case: no other country has officially recognized this right.
>
> . . .By "the public's right to be informed" is meant, in some circles, a concept that has hitherto been protected chiefly in the United States by the Freedom of Information Act. . . .The right to information might also apply to documents and official reports of government

corporations, of non-governmental, non-profit bodies, perhaps even of privately-owned companies. . . .

Obviously the public's right to be informed covers a much wider and a much less well-defined area than this. To judge by what has been said and written on the subject, it would seem to mean that the citizen has a right to know what is happening in his society. At first glance this is unexceptionable. But what exactly does it involve? Information on the private lives of celebrities? It is difficult, to say the least, to give this principle a solid foundation and to delineate its application. As so often happens, an ideal whose practical implications had not been thoroughly examined was hastily enshrined as an abstract right.

If this principle means anything, it is not primarily a matter of legal pronouncements. It simply brings us back to the fundamental conditions of our democratic way of life.

. . .In short, the public's right to be informed stands less in need of government regulation than of a vast collective educational movement aimed at cultivating a taste for knowledge. In this undertaking the government would be only one agent among many. Its role is nonetheless important. . . .

First of all the State must recognize that mechanisms for self-regulation do exist. (Unions, professional federations, press councils.)

. . .By placing such emphasis on these mechanisms, we mean that any intervention by the government that does not give first place to these mechanisms would be both improper and ineffectual. The government is not the only guardian of the common welfare; it should not attempt to replace self-regulation but to support it. This is especially true of the Press Council. . . .

. . .As for concentration of ownership, it has been justly pointed out that preventive measures for the future will leave untouched the considerable degree of concentration already in existence; the cards have already been dealt, as it were. And what about the heavy hand of foreign ownership and foreign control on some of Québec's media?

These problems and questions cannot be dismissed out of hand. The news media have too often in the past been under the sway of political parties and even of governments; nowadays they run the risk of serving special interests and factions that are no less a threat to freedom of information.

The white paper goes on to quote an article by Jean-Claude Picard, journalist with *Le Devoir*:

> Newspaper owners and journalists no longer have the sole right to determine the rules of conduct of their business or their profession;. . .from now on, the public must have a say, through the medium of the government.

Picard also suggested that the government draw up a Press Act along the following lines:

> This act might establish a certain number of guidelines that would make it possible to define more completely the role of the media in our society, and consequently to determine for the first time the rights and responsibilities of those whose livelihood and profession it

> is to inform the public. Roles, rights and responsibilities are at the very heart of the present conflicts, and at the root of many of the difficulties this sector has experienced in recent years.

"As a working hypothesis," the white paper notes, "this deserves full consideration. But the debate aroused in the press by Picard's suggestions shows clearly that we are far from even a minimal agreement on the question."[23]

The government did not follow up on the recommendations of the white paper, even though the paper had the support of the Cabinet. Apparently, the only concrete proposal planned is a bill on access to government information.

In 1978, officials of the Department of Communications did prepare a draft bill intended to ensure the public's right to information which the minister at the time, Louis O'Neill, submitted to the Press Council for study. When news of this document was leaked to *Le Soleil*, Premier Lévesque, who was not aware of all the details, hastened to state in the National Assembly — the same day the article came out in *Le Soleil* — that his government had absolutely no intention of passing such legislation. O'Neill then claimed that it was only a draft prepared for internal use by civil servants.

This bill would have defined newspaper companies as "businesses of public interest" and made it a legal obligation for them to publish honest and complete information, so as to respect the public's right to know. The bill would also have granted journalists the right to absolute protection for their sources and to readers an absolute right to present their own views. In addition to these pious intentions, the bill would have established mechanisms designed to prevent concentration, in the spirit of proposals already put forward by the FPJQ and other agencies, and, in the tradition of discretionary legislation, given the executive regulatory powers over the means required to affect the public's right to information. The publication of this document caused a storm of protest among the news media, but this was quickly quelled by the Premier's vehement condemnations.

The ideas put forward by pressure groups such as the Canadian Institute for Adult Education[24] are, in theory at least, quite popular. Here is a particularly significant extract from the platform of CIAE demands formulated in November, 1979, which summarizes fairly well the thinking of one Québec left-wing group:

> We demand:
>
> 1. The right of expression and of access to the media for individuals and groups. . .
>
> 1.1 To this end, we demand that the media assign a sufficient number of journalists to cover matters of interest to the working classes, unions and all oppressed groups in all regions of Québec.
>
> 1.4 We demand that the Québec government prepare legislation requiring the media to respect the freedom of expression befitting a pluralist society. . .
>
> 2. The right to complete, varied and pluralist information. . .
>
> 2.1 We demand that public and private media be required by law to be accountable to the public, specifically by making available their policy on information and allocation of resources as well as their annual financial reports.

> 2.2. We demand that the media establish a balance between the various information sectors: political, social, cultural, community and so on.

The CIAE also "demands" a reduction in the amount of space reserved for advertising, an increase in the number of journalists assigned to the regions, an almost automatic right to access for any group or individual whose opinion is not in line with that of a newspaper, and so on. We must wonder just where many of these demands come from, since the CIAE never consulted groups representative of the readers of daily newspapers. There is also the question of how newspapers would be financed if the amount of space reserved for advertising were reduced. (Anyone more in touch with the realities of the newspaper business would have spoken rather of redistribution of space). How a newspaper could reconcile the obligation to create other jobs in the regions with the current need to send more reporters to cover international events is yet another question. (It should be pointed out that this insistence on regional coverage stems partly from the fact that this school of thought is concentrated in Québec City and the regions.) Finally, we must wonder how this unconditional right of access would work. Québec dailies are already quite careful to give their readers the right to respond, in the pages reserved specifically for that purpose. Are newspapers to become enormous notice boards where anyone can post anything he likes, without journalists being able to exercise their professional responsibility, which is to select from among any number of news items those that are to be published?)

In closing, let us consider the views of Florian Sauvageau, a Radio-Canada program host and Université Laval professor.

> . . .In the last century, government intervention in education was also opposed; people were against compulsory school attendance. "The reasons given for ruling out government initiative were the basic authority of the parent and the spectre of socialism." [Quoted from Jean de Bonville, *Jean-Baptiste Gagnepetit: les travailleurs montréalais à la fin du XIXe siècle.*] Ideological confrontations over social rights (in this case, the right to education) are by no means new, then. Today, educational spending accounts for a third of the Québec government's budget and very few people would find anything wrong with that.
>
> In the case of the press, government intervention might consist in creating conditions which would give the best possible guarantee of the citizen's right to information, regardless of such factors as his economic or geographical situation, as has been done with education and health care. Thus, it has been proposed that the government become involved in newspaper distribution, which would undoubtedly make it possible, as the FPJQ hopes, "for all citizens to have access to all news sources, regardless of where they live". However, this would not change anything in terms of the basic problem of information content, which is subject to the laws of the market. Denis Périer-Daville points out very aptly, on the subject of assistance to the press, that the "sacrosanct dogma of uniqueness of the press and neutrality in the provision of assistance finally gives all publications — including those intended for light reading and escapism — the benefit of funding from the public coffers". [Quoted from, *La Liberté de la presse n'est pas à vendre.*] By shipping all daily newspapers at government expense to the outlying regions, where citizens must pay

more for a newspaper that they sometimes receive late, the government will undoubtedly help increase the revenues of the Quebecor newspapers. What is the alternative, though, without adopting some arbitrary system?

The government could, without preventing the commercial press from supporting itself through normal market means, limit its assistance to newspapers which would agree to assume some social responsibility; this might encourage the emergence of a new category of daily newspapers. In France, there has been talk of a general interest press which would be obliged to meet certain criteria, such as "devoting a given percentage of the publication to political, economic, social and cultural information for the public".

This proposal would undoubtedly make it possible for small and specialized groups to have access to what the larger media — which obey the law of numbers — cannot provide. The suggestion is not without interest, but it also raises certain questions:

a) How much would be the operation cost, and would it be feasible in a climate of economic restraint on the part of government? The Québec government, which already spends $12 to $13 million a year advertising its services, often in the best big business style, could use funds from this budgetary item to implement a policy of assistance to the press. (The total budget of a newspaper like *Le Devoir*, for example, is $5 million, which gives an idea of the amount of assistance that might be expected from the government.)

b) What consequences would the creation of new government-assisted media and a possible reduction in government advertising have for the financial health of existing media? Could *Le Devoir*, for example, survive in competition with another newspaper set up with public assistance? When *Le Jour* was in operation, we saw how difficult it was for two similar newspapers to coexist in Québec; if *Le Jour* had survived, both would have barely struggled along.

c) Finally, it will be asked, should the government support newspapers which are of interest to only a few readers? This is where the question of *social profitability* comes in.

. . .Along the same lines, traditional concerns aside, why couldn't there be consideration of the creation of a government newspaper, whose constitution would guarantee its management the same independence and latitude in terms of freedom from political influence which, in spite of everything, news managers at Radio-Canada enjoy? A Crown corporation, free from private enterprise's concern for profit, could give its employees the resources to engage in producing news content which the management already knows will not attract a larger audience. Why should government participation be limited to the audio-visual media? The speaker of the National Assembly, Clément Richard, has already spoken of launching a newspaper devoted to parliamentary activities. Such an initiative could serve as the basis for a larger undertaking, for a publication financed by the government but free from partisan intervention, which would help guarantee the citizen's right to information on public affairs.[25]

Sauvageau proposed the creation of a commission of inquiry on the news media, "which would essentially be entrusted with clarifying the responsibility of government in the information field".

Many respected newspapermen are against these proposals. For example, Marcel Pépin, chief editorial writer for *Le Soleil*, writing on the subject of government intervention has expressed the view that the existing system of checks and balances in journalism may prove more useful in improving the press, the quality of which basically reflects, first and foremost, the degree of competence and integrity of its craftsmen and management. Jean Paré, editor of *L'Actualité*, considers that any comparison between the school system and the news media is misleading, because "school is obligatory but reading newspapers is not. Education is supply without demand but a newspaper can only respond to a demand, or revert to the press's authoritarian beginnings".

It is possible that one source of misunderstanding between supporters of the liberal press and their most virulent critics lies in the latter's tendency to draw their inspiration from research done in the Third World (UNESCO and so on) rather than from experiments conducted in countries comparable to our own. Thus, the proposals, favoring ideology to the detriment of a reality everyone can easily measure, may never be acted on, as long as the obvious similarities linking the Québec press to the whole press of North America are not taken into account.

It would be too simple to dismiss both the advocates of the liberal press (where the laws of the market would apply without reservation) and those who see the press as a public service which should be closely monitored. Among French-speaking intellectuals in Québec, there is a fair degree of consensus lying somewhere between the two extremes. Most would look favorably on the creation of a government distribution system and the establishment of mechanisms intended to prevent the negative effects of concentration, even though it is generally felt that government powers in this area should be carefully circumscribed and limited. It is true that in such matters, it is all a question of degree: most people feel that the press should see, and conduct, itself as a public service. Many people, however, intensely dislike the idea of special status — in relation to the business world as a whole — being defined and laid down in legislation. The same spirit guides journalists in their collective choices, since they have always preferred the system of counterweights and balance of power introduced by union action in business, to the rigid, codified system of professional corporations.

Generally speaking, there is also agreement on the following principles: freedom of the press, as an extension of basic freedom of opinion and expression, is both the source and the product of a democracy, but freedom to publish is illusory in this day and age. This is true not only for financial reasons, but also because the establishment of newspapers has less to do, today, with expression than with communication and information. Newspapers are no longer founded to serve as a vehicle for the opinions of their publishers, as was the case when intellectuals with a cause, and politicians, published their own propaganda sheets. Modern publishers do not write, and they entrust the management of editorial content to news specialists to whom they normally delegate complete authority. The opinion of the publisher or owner is reflected only through intermediaries in the editorial pages and in some decisions — management selection, budgetary priorities, and so on.

There is no question, either, of freedom of expression for journalists, who do not have and do not claim the right to say what they want in their newspaper. Their role is to describe *what is* (or, more specifically, what they see), and if need be explain it, analyze it, and so on, since raw news is provided with unmatched speed by the electronic media. The freedom they should have is thus in the transmission of information and not in personal expression. Consequently, it cannot be said, either, that daily newspapers should provide full and automatic access to all shades of opinion; society is too complex and too diversified for a daily newspaper to be able to take into account all its smallest facets. A daily newspaper should attempt as far as possible, at least occasionally or through investigative articles, to report on matters involving all minorities and marginal groups, but as a general rule on a day-to-day basis it is restricted to reporting only major trends and events of interest or concern to the greatest number. This is why we speak of "mass" media. The solution to these problems lies in the proliferation of alternative publications: ecological newspapers, militant left-wing newspapers, community newspapers, and so on. This is the type of newspaper for which some assistance from the government — in terms of distribution especially, or paper supply — could be invaluable.

References

1. Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm, *Four Theories of the Press*, University of Illinois Press, 1956.
2. *Ibid.* p. 2.
3. *Ibid.* p. 3.
4. *Ibid.* p. 4.
5. Commission on the Freedom of the Press, *A Free and Responsible Press*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1947. Cited by Siebert, p. 4.
6. Siebert *et al.* p. 5.
7. *Ibid.* p. 74.
8. *Ibid.* p. 78.
9. Notably, David Halberstam, *The Powers that be*, Knopf, 1979, and Tom Wicker, *On the Press*, New York, Viking Press, 1978.
10. Conversely, a similar scandal concerning the Parti Québécois government in 1981 had no effect whatsoever, since the party in power enjoyed a high degree of credibility among the public at large.
11. As an example, here are two ways in which the public's right to know has been defined:

    > Information should be unrestricted, honest, truthful and complete in every way, for the good of the public rather than in the interests of the constituent parts (*parties constituantes*). — From the 1977 report of the Québec Press Council.
    >
    > The parties recognize that freedom of the press is not the exclusive privilege of the press but proceeds from the basic right of every individual to have free and full access to the facts in any matter which concerns him or her directly or indirectly. It also proceeds from the individual's right to express and publish

his or her opinion concerning these matters, and to hear and read the opinions of others. In order that these basic rights may be protected, it is essential that the press be free to seek news without obstruction or interference from anyone whomsoever and be free to publish and comment on this news. . . .Information given should be in accordance with the facts and not of such character as to deceive the public. It should be accurate and complete, that is to say, it should be in accordance with the facts but should also include as many as possible of the essential elements of these facts. It should be independent of advertising. Errors committed in good faith are not deserving of censure. — Collective agreement between *La Presse* and the Syndicat des travailleurs de l'information de *La Presse*, CNTU, p. 38.

12. Siebert *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 82.
13. *A Free and Responsible Press*, *op. cit.*
14. *Recherches sociographiques*, Vol. 7, no. 3, (Sept.-Dec. 1966), p. 305-348. All quotations in this section are taken from this study by Hamelin and Beaulieu, except for those concerning events after 1966.
15. The authors included *Lè Droit* and *L'Evangéline* among French-language Québec dailies. Since then, five dailies have ceased publication: *Métro-Express*, *L'Événement*, and *L'Action* in Québec City, *Montréal-Matin* and the *Star* in Montréal.
16. This refers to provincial and federal politics. Municipal politics, especially in Montréal, is one of the areas traditionally neglected by the French-language press.
17. Most have entered such more lucrative sectors as the public service, public relations or marketing, or other information fields besides the daily press.
18. For further information on topics discussed in this chapter, see *Les journalistes*, a collective work edited by Florian Sauvageau, Gilles Lesage, and Jean de Bonville, Montréal, Editions Québec-Amérique, 1980, pp. 17-126 and 205-290.
19. The board's ruling was made public in March, 1981.
20. Francis Balle, *Institutions et publics des moyens d'information*, Paris, Montchrestien, 1973.
21. It should be pointed out that the demands of the *Le Devoir* journalists, during their two-month strike in 1981, were more radical as far as professional conditions are concerned than those put forward during other strikes in the "concentrated" press.
22. Government of Québec, *A Cultural Development Policy for Québec*, Editeur officiel du Québec, 1978.
23. *Ibid.*
24. The Canadian Institute of Adult Education was formed by union groups and citizens' committees.
25. *Les journalistes*, *op. cit.*, pp. 337-340.

II
Journalism day by day

3

French-speaking journalists on journalism

by
Florian Sauvageau

"Sports journalism's real strength lies in the fact that we deal with the human, emotional side of the activity. If we did the same in other areas such as politics, we would make the news more interesting to read." The star reporter of *La Presse*'s sports section, Réjean Tremblay, continues: "When Parizeau brings down his budget, it's all settled, ready to go, and they are satisfied just reporting on it. If, as in sports, the story were given a personal slant — if they wrote about his doings in connection with the budget, as for example what time he went to bed the night before, what time he got up in the morning, why he wore a particular suit, the articles on the budget would make more interesting reading."[1]

In 1977, *Le Soleil*'s Jean St-Hilaire had this to say about sports journalism: "We have to get rid of the anecdotes, trite quotes, and exaggerated images, and get into the socio-political reality of sport. We must learn to assess events in terms of the effects they have on the life of society in general."[2] More interested in amateur sport, St-Hilaire is overshadowed as he plies his trade by the reporters assigned to the Expos, Nordiques, and Canadiens.

We could have no better illustration than these quotations of two of the main approaches to the craft that characterize French-speaking journalists and are considered in this report, which is based on:

1. Interviews with 25 journalists (including six non-union junior executives and three unionized junior executives) with the following spread: *Journal de Montréal* and *Journal de Québec* (six), *Le Nouvelliste* (five), *La Presse* (four), *Le Droit* (four), *Le Soleil* (three), and *Le Devoir* (three);
2. A survey carried out with assistance from Simon Langlois, head of the sociology department, Université Laval, and covering half the 480 journalists working for Québec's nine daily newspapers; (see Appendix of this volume);
3. A summary list of Québec journalists' writings on their craft from 1970 on.

The inquiry was undertaken to find out how journalists perceive their role and what type of journalism they want to practise. The numerous strikes French-language newspapers have been experiencing in recent years, together with the debates

over the management of newsrooms have prompted me to devote a few pages (the second part) to management, after describing first the context in which the journalists' reactions must be seen.

The changing newspaper business

In 1977, *Le Soleil*'s journalists went on strike to stop, they said, the "commercialization" of their paper, which would divert it from its mission to inform. Today, those at *La Presse* are reassured by the presence of a marketing expert at the helm. His initial efforts have had good effects on circulation, thus finally alleviating the paranoia of the journalists, fed by rumors of a shut-down and fear of another strike that would add to the company's problems. The debate is no longer in black and white between journalists and bosses — "champions of the newspaper as a social good" against "businessmen who have abdicated their responsibility to inform" — but among the journalists themselves, with varying concepts of how to practise the craft coming into conflict.

The economic context has changed. Newspaper closings are giving pause. Jobs are getting rare in the press as elsewhere. Hiring occurs only to replace people leaving, and departures are not frequent. Everyone wants to keep what he has. Journalists are more sensitive to the companies' economic problems. The social climate is not the same as it was. In the United States, the "Me" Generation has long since replaced the group activity of the 1960s. In Québec, the "social" talk of recent years concerning information (the right to get it, the responsibility of the media,) is not so popular with journalists nowadays; their own organization, the Fédération nationale des communications (FNC) — National Communications Federation — no longer has the influence it once had.

The younger ones, for instance, who according to the survey are glad to take the employer's marketing needs into consideration, refer to their elders as nostalgic for a time when "the journalist was somebody".[3] The older ones are sad that they have not seen for some years "the same commitment, the same sense of mission" they once knew.[4] We have come a long way indeed from the shining years of the Quiet Revolution when press and government bowed — as Pierre Godin has recounted so well in his history of *La Presse* — to the same ideology, the ideology of social progress.[5] Those are years moreover, which should be examined, as Dominique Clift does, with the perspective of time: "Identification with social progress was so great that a large proportion of the Parliamentary Press Gallery in Québec City became almost an adjunct of the party in power."[6]

The issue of journalists' identifying with the party in power in Québec City may still arise today, but in a very different way, if only because of the change that has occurred in the newspaper business. Gradually, the news function is being replaced by the business and marketing functions. People now talk not in terms of news but of product. In charge of *La Presse* today we find, not Jean-Louis Gagnon (1958-61) or Gérard Pelletier (1961-65), but Roger Landry, a marketing specialist. The success of the Quebecor papers is what has changed it all: the informative dailies hit by the repercussions of this success (*Le Soleil*, *La Presse*, *Le Quotidien*) are trying to adapt one or another of the elements in the Péladeau formula: tabloid size, sports, miscellaneous news, a "catchy" layout. First and foremost, however, the formula is an atti-

tude that aims to interest, to please. "Our journalists," the saying goes at Quebecor, "write to be read, rather than to reread themselves the next day." And it is also the cohesiveness of the company, with a basis of shared objectives for management and journalists. At Quebecor, over 60 per cent of those responding to the survey stated that they could fulfil their role completely in the context of their jobs; at the other newspapers, only 30 per cent of the journalists interviewed gave this response.

Moreover, with the survey results we can assess the significance of the atmosphere of moodiness or sluggishness that emerged in our meetings at the various newspapers. A moodiness that must not be overstated, as 73.8 per cent of respondents still felt they could play their role or fulfil their function (completely or adequately) as they saw it. Let us refer instead to a lack of enthusiasm, attributed by some to the changes in their companies, to the fact that "the news is only there to 'gift-wrap' the advertising",[7] and by others to doubts about the future, or the lengthy strikes most papers have experienced, their after-effects emerging in lassitude and passiveness that dampen the creativity so essential to quality journalism.

The newspapers have become businesses first and foremost, and the journalists "news workers". In this connection, two statements: "The family business has disappeared, to be replaced by administrative structures. Since management was changing, the unions have changed course. On both sides, negotiations have taken place through people from outside" (Power Corp. and the FNC).[8] "The unions have had to use businessmen's language, put their demands on the same level as those of the industrial unions. The unions have had to change over these last 10 years because the employers are different."[9]

Professor Léon Dion defined the labor-relations problem in the newspapers well in his long articles published after the strikes of 1977-78 at *La Presse* and *Le Soleil*. "For industrial workers, it is appropriate to establish working conditions that are as binding as possible on the employers, since the work to be carried out is often dangerous, fairly unfulfilling, and routine. When it comes to journalists. . .the point should rather be to protect and stimulate the free expression of individual motivation, feeling for the work and sense of initiative. . . .There could be no set figure to establish in advance the number of hours needed to discharge satisfactorily the professional responsibility that journalists assume, or to maintain an adequate level of professional skill."[10]

The professor may be idealizing the journalist's function a little; the actual work (formal assignments, press conferences, press releases) is still often "routine" and "fairly unfulfilling". Nevertheless, there is no shortage of examples of problems created in the world of journalism by the rigid application of certain clauses in collective agreements signed in these past few years, modelled on "industrial" agreements and quite normal in themselves:

- Preference for union members when there is a job to fill, whereas more capable candidates can sometimes be found elsewhere. (In the same way, International Labor Office studies have shown that the seniority criterion could be incompatible with the requirements of creativity, "since placing value on many years of service in certain duties can have the effect of reducing capacity for innovating and adjusting to necessary change".)[11]
- Difficulty in transferring journalists or changing job descriptions: thus, a regional paper was unable to replace a cartoonist who had died, with a jour-

nalist who specialized in consumer economics, and was forced to hire another cartoonist against its will, since the job was provided for in the collective agreement.

- Interruption of coverage of certain events by management, to avoid paying overtime: this could prompt the union, at *La Presse*, to have a new clause put into the collective agreement under which coverage of important events could not be denied on the grounds of overtime alone.

Writers, Jacques Dumais has written, "are turning into bureaucrats with their rigid timetables that put them outside the flow of real life and encourage them to collect the news from their chairs instead of getting out to experience it with its performers."[12]

Many journalists admit, however, that the company has been used all too often as the scapegoat for their own lack of effort, aggressiveness, and thoroughness, and for their own bureaucratic tendencies. Some of them make no bones about it. "The journalistic class of today," according to Guy Lamarche, "is essentially bourgeois, both in incomes, and in lifestyle."[13] Jean-Claude Picard is almost as blunt: "We have done a lot of demanding and agitating over these past few years, generally tending to blame our employers, and more recently the alleged excesses of our union organizations, for the keenly felt loss of quality in the media as a whole. It might be time for us to start thinking about our own inadequacies, and in particular our increasingly strong inclination to give preference to material that is easy, soothing, superficial. It might be time, quite simply, to begin thinking again."[14]

Differing views of the journalist's role

As we can see, support for entertainment-journalism is not unanimous. There are a number of holdouts against gimmickry, spurious revelation, and irrelevant "color", against the disco journalism "that does not allow an understanding of the event's impact on the life of society".[15] Furthermore, the survey clearly shows the lack of homogeneity in Québec's journalistic circles.[16] Journalists are far from all being those radicals trying to control the news, as depicted a few years ago with some help from the pronouncements of the most militant of them. There are some, of course, who still turn for inspiration to the theses of the news as a driving force, and journalism as a tool for development, seeing themselves as agents of change and keeping up the rhetoric of the 1960s and 1970s. However, a good number are content simply to report the remarks of the dignitaries they meet, or to get the news out as quickly as possible (journalists working for regional papers and older writers are examples of this).

Yet it is clearly not through news content as defined and produced in our part of the world that the press is going to fulfil its mission to inform. The news system leads straight to uniformity of news, through the use in all media of the same sources, the same editorial tricks of the trade, and the same journalistic practices, without any need for concentration of ownership. "The industry is rotting under the weight of stereotypes."[17] "Almost 65 per cent of Québec journalists interviewed in connection with a study on news sources look to their colleagues for a work model, attempt to define the news in terms of the competition, or copy their professional conduct from their rivals. Aping and backbiting are the inevitable results."[18] Competition itself

encourages uniformity. They go to the same press conferences, they report the predictable, because of their competitors. "If I don't go, the others will."[19] They realize that they are playing the manipulators' game to a T, and that they are all too often nothing but messenger boys, but they cannot do otherwise.

"Everyone is after power: every kind of power — official, opposition, union, economic, ideological,"[20] said Jean Paré in December 1980 as he accepted the Olivar Asselin prize for journalism. The dependence is as great as it was in the days when Duplessis dictated to journalists, it is simply subtler. "Our news repertoire is limited by the structures of society. On municipal affairs, for example, our sources are the municipal council and the citizens' groups. Who is going to talk about architecture, the historic buildings in town, etc."[21] For others, the future lies in investigative journalism. "We must have reporters who winkle the information out, collect the significant facts, establish contacts that enable them to understand better. . . .Between the official press and disco journalism (the scandal sheets), people want to understand the source and results of problems and what is at issue."[22]

Here, the survey allows us to measure the influence of education on the journalist's perception of his role. The less educated show a stronger preference for those objectives that more or less limit the journalist to a passive role in the transmission of information (do it quickly, report accurately what is said). The more educated ones, on the contrary, call for analysis and investigation, which are tied to a more active, more "interventionist" approach to journalism.

Much is said about investigative journalism, however, and little is done. It is a long way from talk to reality. A reporter on a big paper turned down a six-month leave which would have allowed him to do an investigation in his own field. "I have to twist arms," explains a managing editor, "to fill one weekly in-depth page. The journalists panic. They are used to announcements, to official releases; they lack initiative and independence. They say that they want to do aggressive journalism, but don't do it. In the same way, the spirit of challenge to the establishment is there, but finds no expression in their work. They speak against the elites, but publish their releases verbatim."

To this, some journalists reply that they are not given the resources to carry out this in-depth work. "There are no dynamic journalists without dynamic leadership, and leadership is nonexistent."[23] In this case, management is satisfied with nothing more than daily news: "Without competition, on *Le Nouvelliste* there is no need to do more." There, it is enough "to be covered, rewriting Telbec if necessary. There is no time to be more thorough." "The trend is to putting out a rag. Go for the basics and forget the rest!"[24] Nicole Beaulieu wrote in 1977 on this subject: "I barely exaggerate when I say that in the majority of newsrooms, a journalist who is a Jack of all trades, quick and without depth, will be preferred over the careful, perfectionist type, whose rate of production will be a bit slower. The idea of profitability, of efficiency, is very much in fashion; the notion of excellence is rarely put into practice. This makes the newsroom a very poor intellectual stimulus for its members."[25]

Hiring is done, some say, with no regard for background, or else by eliminating the "trouble-makers", who are often the most dynamic elements of an editorial staff. Newcomers receive no guidance at all, as indicated by the total lack of coaching in most newsrooms, where the young try vainly to get criticism from their superiors. "I did as I thought best, they let me go ahead. . . .It would be stimulating to get com-

ments from editorial management"[26] which is frequently criticized as inadequate. To which some disenchanted editors retort that they are not about to begin teaching journalists to do follow-up and research.

A thorn in the flesh: editorial management

The champions of a more active, analytical, investigative journalism are the ones who level the most serious charges against managements who "perpetuate traditions". The others, more conservative and seemingly more numerous, "relatively satisfied with their working conditions, work at their craft according to their employers' wishes, without asking too many questions".[27] Some managers, too, freely admit that there is a problem with management: "We think about today more than tomorrow; we wonder who ought to cover what rather than what kind of paper we should be producing."[28] "What papers often lack is managing editors, people who try to bridge the gap between the journalists' messianic fervor and tiresome financial details."[29] "Trapped between high-handed bosses and an often erratic news staff, clowning around one moment, apathetic the next", managers no longer know whether they represent the editorial staff to the company, or the company to the staff.[30]

Journalists at *La Presse* fondly remember the halcyon years (1972-73) when the give and take between editorial staff and management, was complete, when associate publisher Jean Sisto had obtained editorial independence, and when the informative role was supreme. "When Sisto became a member of the managing board," explains one union leader, "he stopped being editor in chief, stopped working for the public first." A newspaper, however, is also a business.

Many people nowadays do not want management jobs where occupants have often been victims of labor disputes, the daily grind leaves no time to *think* about news, and they are prevented from practising journalism by being turned into managers without the tools to do the job. Jean Paré, however, suggests courses in administration, market analysis, and distribution for journalists destined to fill management jobs. He points out, "If we leave the marketing of our newspapers to marketing experts, we will have marketing papers. If we leave their finances to financiers, we will have financial papers."[31] "What we lack," says another, "is a generation of publishers." They do not, moreover, necessarily have to be journalists. A good manager who is aware of the newspaper's informational goals could manage its editorial side better than a first-rate journalist with no sense of management (unless an assistant manager works with the journalist-publisher). But as a general rule, journalists prefer to be managed by other journalists, even if they band together later to condemn their administrative shortcomings. "Editorial management," concludes one journalist, "is a specialization still to be invented."[32] A union leader confides, on the other hand: "It is not a question of looking for managers. . .the functions of management and news must be clearly defined. . . .Unions are going to be militant as long as management is geared to profits."[33] For hard-line journalists, the business function has virtually no importance whatever. For some owners, it is now everything. Once again, we face the dilemma underlying every crisis in Québec journalism for the past few years: how to reconcile the mission to inform with private ownership, and thus the concern with profit, of the newspaper business.

Gérald Godin, editor of the now defunct *Québec-Presse* (1969-74), remarked in 1974: "To assure freedom of information, journalists have to wage war for control of the newsroom." The goal of FNC president Laval Leborgne, according to the January 1981 issue of *Le "30"* "is a 'self-management of the spirit', within a legal and moral framework of subjection to a particular employer". He may have been considering the model of the associations of editorial staff (sociétés de rédacteurs) that had a big following in France some years ago, and made it possible, as their promoters said, to bring together the "suppliers of ideas" and the "suppliers of capital" in the management of the newspaper business. This approach, the survey shows, still attracts a 60 per cent majority of Québec journalists.

Québec journalists have already been fighting for 20 years for more power over news content. At *La Presse*, first in 1958 (the first in a long series of labor disputes that shook the foundations of a number of papers) and then in 1964, when the battle focused on journalists' freedom of expression, owners and journalists did not agree on how political news was to be dealt with. Journalists became more critical of the Quiet Revolution, which they found was running out of steam. Then, at *Le Soleil*, journalists rebelled in October 1964, after the Queen's visit to Québec City, against "political" orders (for example, forbidding publication of "any statement by separatist leaders. . ., nationalist movements. . ., or any person preaching violence".)[34] The issues were still political. But this was no longer the case in 1977-78 (at the time of the 10-month dispute) when *Le Soleil*'s journalists attacked news marketing practices. Unfortunately, certain corporatist tendencies, such as forbidding editors to write, and limiting outside contributors, overshadowed the more positive elements in their demands. Finally, at *Le Devoir*, journalists went on strike in the spring of 1981 for two months, especially to ensure a better division of powers in the news committee, which has existed since the 1975 strike and allows journalists to take part in defining and implementing the paper's editorial policies. An editorial committee of this kind, a consultative body, had been created at *Le Soleil* in the 1960s but abandoned in 1978. The majority on *Le Devoir*'s council are union members, but it is only consultative as well; the union demanded more power. They also wanted, as *La Presse*'s journalists have already demanded in vain, some kind of veto in the choice of editors. Finally, the union asked to be granted the right to lodge grievances over news policy that exists elsewhere, for example at *Le Soleil* since the 1960s.

"We are being asked," explained *Le Devoir*'s publisher, Jean-Louis Roy, in his annual report, "to give contractual confirmation to policies that have pushed newspaper companies into bankruptcy. You will understand that we could not agree to such demands."[35] This is an obvious reference to the experiments of *Québec-Presse* and *Le Jour* (1974-76), in which the journalists (in the latter case through an association of editorial staff) controlled the newspaper's content. Jean-Louis Roy was reacting no differently from his predecessor, Claude Ryan, who wrote on the subject of the association of editorial staff in August, 1976, at the time of *Le Jour*'s disappearance: "By the very nature of the hundreds of decisions that have to be made every day, and of the constantly conflicting forces through which it must make its way every day, a newspaper, even more than other businesses, needs strong central management and decision-making systems that are flexible, practical, and efficient."[36] At *Le Monde*, moreover (one of the few papers where the association of editorial staff approach survives in France) it should be noted that the management does manage, and that there is also, as *Le Jour* would have needed, in Ryan's

opinion, in order to apply the formula successfully, "a very strong dose of experience, competence, and professional conscience". And, he might have added, a basic consensus between the management and its journalists regarding the paper to be produced. For this reason, it is not too hard to imagine an association of editorial staff for Quebecor (according to an executive at *Le Journal de Québec*, the journalists, even if they had complete power, would not put out a paper that was different from that now conceived by management). The idea would not work as well at *La Presse*, for instance, where the journalists do not even agree among themselves — quite the opposite — on the style of journalism to be followed.

By way of personal conclusion . . .

At *La Presse*, however, the issue at stake in the coming bargaining session will be neither associations of editorial staff, nor veto power over management appointments, nor even professional clauses in general, but simply "bread and butter". Labor disputes over professional clauses seem to have worn out the journalists, who now have other worries: at *Le Soleil* and *La Presse*, 62 per cent of survey respondents felt that in 1981 collective bargaining should concentrate on material gains. "The major concern is job security."[37] In the Quebecor group, on the other hand, the emphasis is on professional guarantees (83 per cent). At *Le Journal de Montréal*, for example, there has never been a strike; the journalists are the best paid in the business, so their money requirements need not be as large, and more importance is given to quality of editorial content: they want more staff, more space for news, a minimum of news policy directives, and administrative structure in the newsroom. But there is no wish to alter the paper's "vocation": the association of editorial staff has fewer followers here than elsewhere (though still favored by 50 per cent) and "union militancy" is nonexistent. The professional guarantees being considered by Quebecor's journalists are thus not the same as those sought for the last few years by their colleagues on the large dailies. In short, the strike at *Le Devoir* could well be the last gasp of a vanishing generation of journalists: those demanding more say in news policy.

A lull on the labor-relations front, however, would not spell the end of the problems affecting the Québec press. It would not breathe enthusiasm into the newsroom. Nor would it bring back the many talented journalists who have left the daily press in recent years, some drawn elsewhere by better salaries, still others because they could no longer practise their craft as they understood it in papers looking for ways to combat the success of the popular press. Or because it seemed to them that the rules of the marketplace did not allow quality to survive. This remains, in my opinion, to be proven. "The caretaker," as they say, "expects things to be explained to him simply."[38] But you have to be able to interest the reader as well. Our papers are too often repetitious and boring. The future of the informative press may lie in the marriage of original content (analysis, investigation) with a kind of writing that leaves room for imagination, narrative interest, and style. It could be a "new journalism" that goes beyond the limited range of revelation of secrets and scandals.

No doubt government financial support could encourage a bolder approach in some journalists and aid the creation of such an attempt at better quality, even if only 16 per cent of the 64 per cent of survey respondents who agree with government involvement in the news business wanted this to take the form of subsidies to newspa-

pers. This is the old spectre of government control of news. Elsewhere, in Sweden for example, the state helps newspapers without any injury to freedom of the press. But such a move also requires us to define the status of newspapers and at the same time ponder — outside the context of labor disputes — the role of journalistic information in a democratic society. It is because this basic discussion has never taken place that the Québec media have been in a state of crisis for more than 15 years.

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4

English-speaking journalists on journalism

by
George Bain

This is a condensed version of a detailed study by Bain based on extensive interviewing of anglophone journalists throughout the country. The original study has been cut to avoid overlapping with the Commission's report and other studies on specific issues, such as Walter Stewart's chapter five in this volume, and Peter Desbarats' volume eight, on newspapers and the new technology (Newspapers and Computers: an Industry in Transition), in the Commission's series of research publications.

Shop-talk is endemic

Skin a hard-boiled journalist and you find a thwarted idealist.

— Russell Green

It is a characteristic of newspaper people to be intensely preoccupied with what they do. The first action of any four reporters or copy-editors suddenly landed on the moon would be to form a press club. Shop-talk is endemic. Nowadays, it reflects a certain malaise, vague feelings of discomfort and uneasiness, not so much about the future of the newspaper — most believe that, in one form or another, it will be with us for a good long time — but about its quality. If the quality of the product that is put out is in the hands of the publishers of the country, as ultimately it must be, then the working journalist, hard-boiled or not, *is* a thwarted idealist. Most reporters are conscious of the fact that there is a good deal of distrust of the press, arising not just from questions about the accuracy of what is published, but its depth. What is being said in the newsrooms is that newspapers need to set themselves more challenging tasks — that they must dig deeper, inquire behind and below the surface of events, take on the outwardly difficult subjects that really matter and write them so that they are intelligible to people, look for the extra insights which give the news meaning, accept a responsibility to find and report what people need to know rather than to seek the lowest common denominator as divined by market surveys; in short, that they become better.

In newsrooms everywhere it always has been said that newspapers would be better if managements more often could elevate their interest in the news to a level

somewhat closer to their interest in bookkeeping. There always has been a certain amount of truth in the criticism — hardly ever have there been enough people, well enough trained and well enough paid, given enough time, to do what is required — and it has not become perceptibly less true even though newspapers have become stronger economic units as more monopolies have been created. Still, in the newsrooms themselves, whatever the grumblings, there scarcely have been demands for an upgrading of quality which could be described as a clamor. Standards, for instance, are not a subject which has greatly preoccupied The Newspaper Guild either in bargaining or as a study. Consequently, while the news companies which put out newspapers must in the end accept responsibility for what they put out, perhaps there also is room for improvement elsewhere.

A recent book, *The Washington Reporters*, by Stephen Hess, a senior fellow of the Brookings Institution, examines how the large Washington press corps works. Some of what he says could be lifted and applied exactly to Canadian newspaper people and newspapers in general. As for instance: "Dissatisfaction with the emphasis on hard news/breaking news (in other words, the today events) is fashionable in the press corps. There are those who talk of longing to write in-depth stories if only their editors were more enlightened." That exactly parallels what is said by very many Canadian reporters, who cover all sorts of beats, political and non-political. In Washington, Hess found that to a large degree the people of the press corps decided their own assignments, day by day, and his conclusion was that if they were entirely free of home-office pressure to do the breaking story — the press conference, the anouncement, the bill introduced that day — they would not much change what they do or how they do it. There is an easy rationalization of an unwillingness to undertake the hard story: "It's too complicated/obscure/boring; no one would be interested in that." Including, for an unfortunate start, very often the reporter and his editor.

What kind of paper?

. . .(A) newspaper, faced with the market as it stands. . . has two ways to go. One is to the interpretative, explanatory sort of reporting which requires immense amounts of knowledge, requires high-priced people, requires time. . . .The other (is) to go the pizazz way. . .to hell with all the explanations; if you couldn't understand it, forget it. . . .

— Jack McArthur, columnist on economics and business, Toronto *Star*.

Faced with a "What would you do if. . .?" sort of question, newsroom people unsurprisingly come up with a lot of different answers. McArthur is in no doubt about which way *he* thinks the newspaper should go; he thinks newspapers generally have been lagging behind their readers, who are ready for more substantial fare than they have been getting. He thinks that there is among a very large number of people in the country "more understanding and a greater interest in the more complex things of the day than there is among a lot of newspaper people". This isn't because newspaper people aren't quick, and clever, and bright, but because the business is unable to shake itself sufficiently free of the idea that news is two-alarm fires, axe murders, and streetcar derailments.

While McArthur's view of things is widely endorsed by reporters and copy-editors across the country, it is significant that in hardly any conversations about what the newspaper should be, including his own, does the Toronto *Sun* fail to be mentioned. The *Sun* is prospering, against every early expectation, in the toughest newspaper market in the country, Toronto, and it has thrown off satellite *Suns* in Edmonton and Calgary, where two Southam newspapers, the *Journal* and the *Herald*, were as solidly entrenched as could be.

In-depth reporting, background, interpretation, analysis, the thoughtful exposition of the meanings of events, all the things most reporters and deskers cite as the essentials of their ideal newspaper, are not the *Sun*'s stock-in-trade; it aims at being easy to read and digest, provocative, and cheeky. But, while it gets few nominations from newsroom people as their ideal newspaper, the newspaper they would put out if. . .they *do* mention it. It epitomizes the other side of the dichotomy referred to by McArthur — the up-market way, and the down.

Even so, this is mainly a big-city argument. In the smaller cities of the country — not the towns and villages, but the smaller cities — the question about what the newspaper should be takes another turn. It is whether the local paper (nowadays expressed everywhere in the singular) should try to compete with television, the news magazines, and the big city newspapers which stray into its territory, or should concentrate on doing what it can do best — cover the local news. That isn't to say there is an indifference to more background, more explanation, the things most metropolitan reporters and copy-editors profess to find desirable, but that the digging and explaining should relate to things close at hand. There is some feeling that there is already too much international and national news, which comes in ready-made from the wire agencies, and that managements tend to fill up on it, not out of any conviction, but because it is cheaper than hiring reporters.

In the end, though, in much of the conversation it comes down to the question posed to herself by Ruth Beairsto, reporter for the Charlottetown *Guardian*, in talking about priorities and whether newspapers should set their sights on any sort of distribution of international, national, regional, or local news:

> I don't think so as long as. . .the editors on the local papers have their priorities straight. . . .Say, for instance, some big thing happens in city council — the mayor resigns over a great big scandal — and at the same time. . .say the Soviets are moving into Poland. . . .You must sort out your priorities. Which is of the most immediate interest to the readers as far as toplining (headlining) it; to which one would you give the most play. . .? I'd give the most play to the mayor, I think.

In Toronto, Jack McArthur's interest is not so much on the geographical focus of newspaper reporting as on the sort of reporting that is done. He believes that newspapers in general have a long way to go in reporting externally difficult subjects to the broad public in "an understandable, reasonably entertaining way" — something he says the two newspapers he has most recently worked on, the Toronto *Star* and the *Financial Post*, have believed in.

"In many ways," he says, "the public is ahead of the newspapers." He also says: "Daily newspapers still tend to live a little bit in the past. . ." in that they have not left behind what he calls "the ambulance-chasing type of thing". Naturally, his own

prime interest is in economic affairs, although he believes the same failure to explain sufficiently is true also of reporting on politics and government. He says:

> . . .[I]n the last 20 years, the public has — and I think this is the key — secured for itself a great deal more discretionary income than it had before. . . .Its income has gone up a great deal. *Discretionary* income has gone up much more than that and (people) have to find homes for this money. They are fully aware in an era of inflation that it just isn't enough to put it away in a chequing-savings account because it loses value to inflation. So they have become vitally interested in term deposits, mortgage investments, RRSPs, and the newspapers have been too slow keeping up with this sort of interest. And I think, beyond that, beyond business and economic subjects. . .(people) are quite generally interested in the *state* of the economy because they can now link it more clearly in their minds with their jobs, and their incomes. . . .The same with what's going on in politics. . . .

He believes the daily press has inherent strengths to exploit in doing more explanatory reporting — one, that it can do it with greater immediacy than the periodicals; and, two, that this is something television and radio are not capable of doing well at all. He goes on:

> So there is a real advantage to newspapers in terms of their survival and their usefulness to do that sort of interpretative, background sort of stuff. But the forces that prevent them from doing so are, in part, because, as I say, they live a bit in the past in terms of feeling that we have to have this bit of news, whether or not anybody knows what the hell it's about, because someone else has it, or might have it, and that eats up the time of the people who might be expected to do these interpretative sorts of things. . . .Also the fact that a lot of newspaper people have been trained in that sort of spot news reporting and they don't necessarily feel very confident, or have the background, educational or otherwise, to do anything different.

If newspapers are going to concentrate more on examining in-depth subjects that require a lot of probing and a lot of thought, as very many newsroom people said in these interviews they thought was the way of the future, newspaper managements will need to accept much higher editorial costs. More reporters will be needed, because such assignments take time. More highly-qualified reporters will be needed, which will mean in part that newspapers must do something about the extraordinary wastage of experienced people they now accept. And probably more backup will have to be supplied writers engaged in prolonged researches. Whether or not newspaper managements see this sort of more intensive reporting — and the costs involved — in the same light as very many of their reporters and copy-editors evidently do, is an open question.

There is some cynicism among reporters about the willingness of newspaper managements to invest money in news-gathering, such as expressed by the reporter on a Western daily who said that too often they were willing only to assign reporters to stories that would turn out predictably — meetings and the like, from which there would be a sure return in publishable copy. They were not willing to invest in exploratory assignments and long-term projects; consequently, readers got "a cursory view of the news".

Was this reporter suggesting that newspapers, which after all are businesses, could be indifferent to profit? Not at all, he insisted, but: "If profit precludes newspapers from digging, there is a definite problem with the system of running newspapers. . . ."

The McArthur criticism that newspapers as a whole do not seek to explain enough finds another reflection in this observation by Clyde Graham, of the Regina *Leader-Post*:

> I think most newspaper editors, when they get on a kind of pride kick, when they're trying to show that their newspaper is a really great newspaper, what they do is to send out their reporters to dig up a few scandals. It's sort of the Watergate syndrome. They feel that's investigative reporting. I don't think it really is. I think the important job that is not being done is in explaining very ordinary stories in a very competent and thorough way and making things relevant to the public.

It is by no means an isolated view that newspapers have an ingrained failing to reach for the flashier and easier story before the more substantial and difficult one, and that they do not always make the best use (for their readers) of the resources they have. The effort to cover everything — or everything, that is, on the surface — so dissipates resources as to leave more important things inadequately covered or not covered at all.

Edward Greenspon, also at the *Leader-Post*, says:

> With all the information that's being thrown at us now, we have to be more selective than we are being. . . .And so you discriminate. We're all discriminating now. But you have to draw the line a little bit higher and allocate some of the resources going for the lower priority items. . .and put them into developing some. . .things in more depth. Because, I suppose, if you have radio and television. . .newspapers have to offer something different, and. . .what they can offer is some kind of expertise of perspective and the time to look into something thoroughly.

In Edmonton, *Journal* columnist Don Braid says: "In my view, we (newspapers generally) do not provide the readers on a day-to-day basis with the amount of background they need to understand." He, too, feels that newspapers ("I wonder if the sort of omnibus newspaper that we try to put out isn't a dead duck anyway") have to be more selective and put more into the stories that really matter.

Richard Gwyn, whose Ottawa column is syndicated by the Toronto *Star*, says:

> I believe there is a considerable demand for analysis. If we can do *anything* as journalists, we can kind of simplify, or popularize, or vulgarize, complexity; we can translate complexity into terms that people can relate to and understand. . . . A lot of people don't want to read day-by-day stories about the Iraq-Iran war because it all means nothing after a while. But you do want somebody to stand back and put it into a context — this is the result of their fighting, and they're going to run out of arms by such-and-such a day and. . . .I believe there *is* a demand for analysis.

And Geoffrey Stevens, now national editor of the *Globe and Mail*:

> You don't have to write down to people; you don't have to reduce complex issues to the most simplistic possible level in order to sell newspapers. There is an increasingly well-educated, intelligent, and

> affluent readership out there and they will pay the price for a premium product, which will tell them what they want to know — even more than they want to know on some subjects. . . .There is a public education function (for newspapers) and you *do* have to do the hard stories. . . .If you think it is important, even if you don't like writing about it, you should be writing about it and see if readership develops. . . .

The feeling that newspapers can and should be doing better is very prevalent among newsroom people; moreover, the things they think need to be done to make newspapers better are remarkably the same. Douglas Sagi, who has been a reporter and magazine writer and is now assistant city editor at the Vancouver *Sun*, is one who has taken a thoughtful look at the present state of the newspaper in Canada.

"They are just not interesting enough," he says. "I don't think they attract enough readers, and I would really like to get at this problem of why people aren't reading them. Every newspaper seems to be static. . . .They are not growing with the population. The kids aren't reading them. . . ."

In part, he thinks, people aren't reading newspapers because there isn't as much good writing in them. The sports pages are not as well written as they were. There aren't as many good columnists as there were. There aren't as many people putting them out who have a real fondness for the language. And, as far as content is concerned, there may not have been enough effort to make the Thing stories and the Idea stories as readable as People stories.

"Despite the fact that newspaper publishers and editors are running around trying to solve the newspaper problem," he says, "they don't really know what the problem is. For a long time, many Canadian newspapers could print anything and make fortunes with it. They cannot do that now. I think Thomson may find that out in time in places like Moose Jaw and so on — I'm hoping he finds it out — that he's going to have to improve the quality of his product in order to survive. . . .You have to make people read it, and it has to be interesting before they will read it. . . .It, too, can't be this big, heavy thing, that becomes at the end of the week a problem to dispose of. You've got 45 pounds of garbage to get rid of. And you say, instead, 'I don't read the damn thing, anyway, and I'm not going to take it any more.'"

He agrees with the view that newspapers have underestimated the reader's willingness to accept more difficult subjects and at greater depth. He cites the *Globe and Mail* Report on Business as a successful venture which started out with the idea of appealing to intelligent people — in this case, primarily businessmen — on an intelligent level. The Toronto *Sun* is an example of a newspaper that has been successful in appealing to an audience that wants its news short and lively. The fallacy of the metropolitan newspaper that seeks to span these audiences, and all others, is that it is providing something for everyone. "It doesn't provide something for everybody," Sagi says. "It is looking for a common denominator, and there isn't one."

The hometown paper

I think that when people get up in the morning they should be excited about seeing their morning newspaper more....They should say, 'I wonder what that goddamn Times-Colonist *has for us this morning.'*

— Stephen Hume, reporter,
the Victoria *Times-Colonist*.

Whether or not with that gladsome cry, what Victorians greet in the morning is a conservatively made up newspaper running 40 to 64 pages most days on a seven-day publishing schedule. (Victoria had a Sunday newspaper before the supposedly pushful publishers of Toronto ever had the gleam in their eye.)

The *Times-Colonist* carries a high proportion of provincial, national, and international news, almost all of which comes from the wire services; a number of newsroom people would like to see not just more local news, but better local news. Stephen Hume is one.

Along with creating an air of anticipation, a good newspaper, according to his criteria, should make people say to one another: "Hey, did you read that story in the paper about such-and-such?" To get that sort of attention, he thinks, a newspaper "must have good reporters, it has to have reporters who want to get out and dig for a story". They should get behind the news in government, business, the arts, and, he says, "not *make* it exciting, because it is already exciting", but make the news tell more that people will want to know.

He thinks there should be enough national and international news to keep people in touch with what is going on in their country and the world, but he feels that a lot of what comes over the wires is recycled. Local news, he says, can be very exciting — the clear implication being that a good deal of what is fed into the computer direct from the agencies (most often, Canadian Press in Toronto) isn't.

"People, people in this part of the country, anyway," he says, "are very much interested in learning about what's happening in their community. Much of the time, I'm afraid, they couldn't give a damn about what's happening in Ottawa." Does that mean that Ottawa can be ignored? Not really. But people *do* get a lot about what's going on in Ottawa from other sources — the CBC, for instance.

Victoria, with 70,000-plus population, is not a small community, but neither is it a major metropolitan centre. Undoubtedly, being an island city, a tendency to think in terms of the community is reinforced. In any event, several newsroom people, interviewed at random, showed a strong feeling about local coverage, which illustrates the second split in the thinking of reporters and copy-editors about the way newspapers should be going — one, the up-market/down-market view of things, and the other which says the newspaper's greatest strength, and especially that of the medium-to-small newspaper, is local coverage.

It is not a split that is difficult to understand. The large metropolitan centre, like Toronto or Montréal, is not a cohesive community. It comprises various communities, which it is the present wisdom to say no newspaper can appeal to equally. The newspaper, therefore, must define its audience. Is it going to try to identify, expose, and explain the great issues of the day for a thoughtful body of readers, or give a quick review of yesterday's events, with perhaps a dash of titillation, to people who want something to pass the time on the subway? In smaller centres, where there is a definable community, the argument tends to turn more on whether the newspaper does better to cultivate the events and issues of the community — which it can be reasonably sure Knowlton Nash won't be covering on the CBC National that night — or even try to offer a scientifically balanced diet, so many grams of Poland to match so many grams of the new municipal redevelopment program?

It would be hard for any serious journalist to make an argument against balance in the news. Yet, there are circumstances in which the newspaper with the greater

local coverage may be the more dedicated and responsible newspaper. Again the reason is simple. Local reporting creates an absolute demand for live, on-the-premises reporters and copy-editors, ideas generated within the building in which the newspaper is published, planning, knowledge of the community, and a willingness to commit time to assignments — which also means more cost. A heavy reliance on wire-service copy to fill the paper demands none of these. Even in chains, newspapers that can be classed as medium to small in Canada have negligible, if any, national coverage of their own, and no staff bureaus abroad. One of the first acts of the Thomson organization when it absorbed the FP group was to close down the still relatively new, and ambitious, FP news services, which would have given the Thomson papers across the country the output of domestic and foreign bureaus of their own to draw on. Instead, they remain as they were, the major clients of the national news-gathering co-operative, Canadian Press, which lays down a fairly good, basic domestic service, which scarcely needs to be edited, and a foreign service which CP itself derives mainly from other (and non-Canadian) newsgathering services. In such circumstances, a heavy daily run of foreign and national news *may* reflect dedication on the part of the newspaper or chain to bringing its readers the great issues at play in the world or the nation; it may, on the other hand, reflect only a passionate interest in economy.

Paul Minvielle, reporter at the Victoria *Times-Colonist*, says:

> The only advantage we have here over other media is that we could do a good job locally. . . .Yes, I definitely would emphasize the local over the provincial, the provincial over the national, and the national over the international. What's happening with the amount of space newspapers are devoting to events in El Salvador is that our people are not reading it. . . .

Whether they are or aren't, this is not an uncommon view. What it boils down to is the idea that some long-running, military, political, economic issues, which grow by minute daily increments, may be dealt with more intelligibly for readers by means of what are called in the trade "situationers" — pieces done at intervals which bring a perspective to events and are concerned more with analyzing trends than in recording the day-to-day. While not uncommon, this is a view which crops up less frequently in the newsrooms of the few big city newspapers which might conceivably send a staff-correspondent to an El Salvador or an Iraq-Iran war and where a broader view is taken of the newspaper's mandate.

Alec Merriman, a *Colonist* veteran, writer of a widely-read fishing column, says that a paper should be choosey about the international stories it uses; he himself believes that the strength of the paper in his own community is in community news, and that it is a strength it can exploit successfully over other media.

"We've got lots more to cover than the radio has," he says. "The fleeting moment you hear it, you want to know more about it. You hear the name of somebody, you can't quite pick it up, you want to grab the paper to find out." Also, he feels that, given the cohesiveness of the smaller city, there are stories to be done in some depth about what "your little groups in the community are doing; you don't have to have a group that has 10,000 members for it to be a story". That sort of thing may not mean anything in the large city; in the small it will.

At the other end of the country, the Halifax papers — *Chronicle-Herald* in the morning, *Mail-Star* in the afternoon, both published by the same local owners —

are intensely regional and local. The morning paper is aimed at a province-wide audience; the afternoon paper at the Halifax-Darmouth metropolitan area. Peter Duffy, who came to the *Chronicle-Herald* as a reporter, having been editor and publisher, and editor, of *Fort McMurray Today*, wonders if the more secure newspapers these days are not "the weeklies", which, he says, in some cases are poor in layout, poor in the quality of their writing "but. . .have the hearts and minds of the readers".

What are they doing that brings that about?

> Maybe they're still doing what the big papers used to do. But the big papers have gone awry. Gone chasing off in all directions, trying to appeal to everybody. Maybe they've tried to identify too many sections of the market to appeal to. . .so they've gone for all these sections. . . .People are maybe picking out only one section of the paper to read — sports. . .or the leisure section, or homebuilding. . . .Maybe by trying to appeal to certain sections of the market, we're going to lose the whole market. . . .

Duffy's views are heavily colored by the experience of his six years at Fort McMurray and his 16 years in all on small papers in Penticton, Prince George, and Peace River. This is what it taught him:

> Especially in a small community, and Fort McMurray was about 12,000 when I went there and almost 30,000 when I left. . .my big city ideas had to be. . .tempered with quiet news, the news I used to laugh at. On a metropolitan daily, like the Edmonton *Journal*, we never used to bother with the social notes and the church page and the little things. We were all gung-ho for the big stuff. And I found that in the smaller city, while the gung-ho stuff was important, we got the most feedback from the small stuff. . . .I had to break a lot of ideas that had grown up inside my head. . . .

Halifax at 117,000 population — about 180,000 with Dartmouth — is not Fort McMurray, Penticton, or Peace River. But Duffy's belief in the newspaper's getting close to the community as a community and not as something composed of separable sections like an orange, is evident.

In Saint John, N.B. (population 90,000), Bruce Peters, reporter and frequent acting city-editor at the *Telegraph-Journal*, thinks of the news the paper does as local and provincial; although it carries a good deal of national and international news, when he refers to that, he says, "I think the CP (Canadian Press) does a pretty good job." And in company with what would seem to be every reporter and copy-editor in every newsroom in the country, he thinks the newspaper needs more people to do more. "We cover all the meetings and that sort of thing," he says, "but we don't get out there and do the interpretive reporting, more features; we can't do very much on the universities — I suppose we should — because we don't have somebody to devote to them full time."

He also laments the fact that provincial coverage tends to be spotty because of the difficulty of getting and keeping stringer correspondents; the newspaper has people in Fredericton, Newcastle, Bathurst, Campbellton, and a part-time correspondent in Moncton; but did not at the time of these interviews have anyone in Edmunston or St. Stephen. In a province that is 35 per cent French, the newspaper has one reporter who speaks some French but is not bilingual. (Indefensible as this may be, the failure of newspapers sufficiently to take stock of the fact that Canada is a country of two official languages is not confined to the Saint John newspaper. One of the

strongest criticisms of newspapers made in all these interviews was by Jeffrey Simpson, then the *Globe and Mail*'s main reporter on constitutional and political affairs in Ottawa, now London correspondent; it was of the apparent indifference of managements to the importance of reporters assigned to Ottawa being able to function in both languages. The fact that so few are so able, he said, meant that in Ottawa, correspondents frequently had to take second-hand — sometimes from prime ministerial and other aides — what was being said, and that in the reporting of Québec politics, meanings often were misinterpreted if not missed altogether.)

Given the chance to order things his own way, what would Bruce Peters in Saint John like to see more of in the newspapers?

"More interpretive reporting, for one thing." He says there are people on staff now who could do this, but they are doing other things. "What happens is that when people get so far along they become deskmen, so we lose our best writers. And then we get in more young reporters who, I suppose, are the more gung-ho type. . . ."

Which makes a circle: Young reporters, keen for action, are part of the reason why newspapers are as oriented as they are to action reporting, and the fact that the newspapers are so oriented to action reporting is part of the reason why there are only young reporters.

What becomes of the over-40s?

The only reporters we have in this place who are not management and are in their 40s are the kinds of reporters you don't expect too much of. . . .They are there because they haven't gone someplace else.

— Reporter, discussing the question:
what becomes of old reporters?

It is a question almost impossible to overlook for anyone who visits the newsrooms of the country. Canadian newspapers suffer extraordinary wastage. The larger and more affluent the newspaper, the greater the number of over-40 reporters it is likely to have. The reason is simple: these are the newspapers which give news people more room to grow because at least some of the time they do more ambitious things. They also pay better. But even in those newspapers, the general reporter of 50 or 60 who is not a specialist of some sort, not a columnist, is a rare bird. In smaller dailies, and not just in the very small, most of the reporters, and, in some cases, *all* the reporters, are in their 20s and 30s.

"You don't have many older reporters," says Bruce Peters, of the Saint John *Telegraph-Journal*, of the phenomenon of the vanishing older reporter. "I suppose we have one, our court reporter; he's in his 40s. He's the oldest one we have."

Perhaps, as is said to be the case with prize fighters, so it is with reporters—the legs are the first to go. Some reporters always come off the street and ascend, or gravitate, depending on one's point of view, to the rim, where they become copy-editors. Copy-editors consequently tend to be somewhat older, but, even there, on the desk, it is evident that the newspaper business puts no great premium on experience.

"There is something wrong with this business that it doesn't encourage people to stay in it," says Ingeborg Boyens, who in two-and-a-half years at the Winnipeg *Free Press* has been a reporter at the Manitoba Legislature and now does special assignments.

> It's like a kind of transition period. You spend a few years of your life here and then on to PR (public relations) or something else, or to television; television is drawing a lot of reporters from this business. . . .
>
> I think there is a problem with the emphasis on being a generalist. We have this thing here called 'beat-changes' and it happens all the time. You spend a year on the beat and then you get moved to something you have no interest in, perhaps, or no expertise in. The point, of course, is to keep your work fresh, but you never get beyond that stage, either. All you end up doing is writing the stories the guy before you wrote last year. Experience counts for nothing.

Douglas Sagi, at the Vancouver *Sun*, does not say that experience counts for nothing, but otherwise he says the same thing — and that he has not got the answer:

> I don't know. This is something I've thought about because I'm an older reporter who gave it up just two years ago after thinking that I never would, because I enjoyed reporting. But there came a time when I was just sitting down simply reporting the same story over and over again. Now this doesn't necessarily have to be. You need an intelligent editor, which I have decided to become, to look after that particular kind of situation so that you can get the mileage that's left in the reporter after he's 40 years old. . . .

Sagi cites two things that are being done at the *Sun* to bring reporters more into the centre of things — first, the creation of regular story conferences (borrowed, Sagi says, from the magazine industry which he himself has worked in) to seek ideas from reporters rather than having all the ideas come down from the top; and the extension of the same beat system that Boyens in Winnipeg finds so little merit in. Sagi says:

> I learned journalism as a beat reporter and I found the stories that were there instead of being assigned them. So we have established — Vaughn Palmer, the city editor, has established — more beats than this newspaper has had for a long time. . . .We're tending to eliminate the general reporter to a large extent. . . .We're looking for story ideas. A city editor can't devise everything. . . .

The relationship between the beat system and the lengthening of the time before the reporter becomes bored and drifts off is drawn indirectly by city editor Palmer: "I am a firm believer in the expert system. I believe in beats very strongly. . . .There are a great number of them (at the *Sun*). . . . There is no substitute for expertise. The only way a reporter can be well-informed on a subject is to spend a great deal of time on it. . . ."

And there, in those two viewpoints from Winnipeg and Vancouver, is one of the great unresolved conflicts of newsroom philosophy — reporters should be switched around at frequent intervals and not kept on the police, courts, city hall, community affairs, health, science, environment, or other beat, until they become stale; reporters should be left on beats so that their expertise can go on developing to the extent they are willing and capable of having it. Still, the fact remains that the newsrooms of the country are peopled mainly by reporters and copy-editors in their 20s and 30s and that this is widely recognized to indicate something — or some *things* — lacking.

Young people come to newspapers, usually nowadays from the schools of journalism, with fresh new Bachelor of Journalism degrees, in part attracted by the sup-

posed glamor and excitement of the reporter's life, in part with the notion of improving the world by making people more aware of what is going on around them, but still ready to chase fire engines while they learn the ropes. And too often they find that, beyond the sirens, lie only obits, the nightly police checks, Rotary Club luncheons, coroners' juries, interviews with authors of forgettable books, and the annual conventions of the Good Roads Association.

The common response among journalists to questions about the evident failure of newspapers to provide satisfying full careers for writing journalists, as distinct from persons in the management stream, is that they do not sufficiently value experience and expertise. Too often, newspapers do not value it enough to pay to keep it when it is in the process of being lured elsewhere — and it happens in the best of newspapers.

In the past year, the *Globe and Mail* lost two Ottawa correspondents, Wayne Cheveldayoff, its writer on economics, and Jeffrey Carruthers, its writer on energy. Both were among the best in their fields. Both moved — Cheveldayoff to the Bank of Canada; Carruthers, to Energy, Mines and Resources — at least in part for more money. But there is more to the phenomenon than just money, although that is not a negligible factor. There is also the matter of whether newspapers offer good people enough to get their teeth into after the first flush of enthusiasm for chasing fires and interviewing the mayor has worn off. If a large part of what the newspaper does is to report events at the level of fires, accidents, and the biggest pumpkin at the fall fair, it need not put a premium on expertise.

It would be surprising if people in any line of work thought they were being paid as well as they should, and most newsroom people do not think they are, although salaries in what once was a notoriously ill-paid field have improved greatly in the past 25 years. But, most often newsroom people relate the salaries being paid to what they think are the needs of newspapers for better-equipped people. John Sullivan, at 28, thinks he may be third or fourth in seniority on the news staff of the Winnipeg *Free Press*. He says: "I think that in Canada the answer (to the question about the dispersal of older news people) is that the profession is not paid as well as it should be if (newspapers) want to attract very, very specialized people. . . .For instance, I don't think there's a single lawyer or person with legal training on any newspaper in Canada with perhaps the exception of the *Globe and Mail*. Now that's atrocious; how can they expect to get specialized people unless they're willing to pay?" (The *Globe and Mail* is not quite alone, but the exceptions are few enough.)

Still another, Peter Murray, of the Victoria *Times-Colonist*, thinks that what the *writing* journalist does is not sufficiently valued by newspapers.

> It is illustrated on this paper by the fact that desk people, doing just routine jobs on the rim, get paid more on the scale than a senior reporter. Now this is absurd. This is getting values turned around. In other words, the emphasis is on production — how are we going to fill this paper? And it's the guys on the rim, taking things from the computer, that fill the paper. But your best reporter should be your highest-paid staff member. He should be worth maybe more than the managing editor, more than the city editor, if he's a really good writer. . . .

Newspaper managements, and more particularly the methods, or lack of them, of selecting and training people for executive positions, are not highly regarded by

that minority of newsroom people who have thought about and will comment on the subject. Management training programs are virtually non-existent, either on a forward basis to prepare people for executive positions, or to equip them once chosen. One effect of this is that newspapers, although they frequently vow to themselves to break the tyranny of the day-to-day and delve deeper into the meaning of events, rarely do so, or, if they do, never for long. Stephen Hess, in *The Washington Reporters*, says — and the comment is no less true of Canada — that:

> No other major enterprise does so little planning; reporters and editors (who are merely ex-reporters) think in terms of the day book. Advance planning is only for major recurring events (such as elections) and anniversaries of cataclysmic happenings (presidential assassinations or stock market crashes)....

Another consequence of haphazard selection and non-existent training of management personnel is bad staff relations; a senior writer on a major city newspaper says that problems arise because people in supervisory positions lack such elementary knowledge of management practice as not to criticise the work of subordinates to other subordinates.

It is also a symptom of the lack of method in newspapers that, despite a broad awareness of the need for more specialization, reporters almost never are detached to be sent to study. The Southam Fellowships provide opportunities for a number of journalists to spend an academic year as they elect at Massey College, University of Toronto, and the Canadian Bar Association provides three scholarships a year which enable reporters covering legal affairs to broaden their knowledge of the law and the judicial system at Queen's University and Université Laval. So far as individual newspapers are concerned, paid sabbaticals for study are virtually unknown.

The spur of competition

It's become so much fatter you can't even find the garbage now.

—Geoffrey Stevens, the *Globe and Mail*, on the Ottawa *Citizen* since the demise of the rival Ottawa *Journal*.

Stevens, associate editor and Ottawa columnist of the *Globe and Mail* for eight years until he became national editor in Toronto in early 1981, believes that competition stimulates newspapers to be better:

> I think it's essential. When you lose competition there is no incentive to improve quality or to maintain the existing level of quality....Why worry about having the best possible coverage on a subject on a given day?

Why not, though? Surely producing the best possible newspaper on a given day is like playing golf? In golf, competition or no competition, the player's prime aim is always to improve his own best scores. Stevens replies:

> Because it costs money. Why spend money that you don't need to spend to do, say, a 10 or a 15 per cent better job when the reader, because he has no choice, will accept a 90 or 85 per cent job?

Stevens' view of competition is the view most widely held in the newsrooms of the country. Self-interest, if nothing else, almost ensures it: more newspapers mean more newspaper jobs, which mean more opportunities for newspaper people, which usually means more money. Curiously, only a very few reporters and copy-editors

covered in these interviews advanced the frequently-used argument for newspaper competition that it provides the community with more than one view on issues. But in small newspapers and large, very many newsroom people said that competition was a spur to the newspaper to tackle the difficult story, because to let it slide might be to risk being shown up by the opposition; that it kept the newspaper alert for the follow-ups that frequently are needed to make the news understandable; that it kept newspapers from becoming flabby and unenterprising and, instead, aggressive to find out and report what was going on that was vital to their readers' interests.

Karen Hornby of the Charlottetown *Guardian*, a Thomson newspaper, said:

> I think it is extremely important. There are three dailies on the island and a couple of weeklies, and I think every newspaper on the island is very important. If the *Journal-Pioneer*, or the *Guardian*, or the *Patriot*, was the only newspaper. . .then I think it would very quickly (become) like a government that was in power for 40 years and didn't care what it did or said. . .because it couldn't be ousted. . . .

Competition on the island is scarcely cut-throat; the *Guardian* and the *Patriot* are both owned by Thomson and are published, morning and afternoon, with very largely the same staff; the third newspaper, the *Journal-Pioneer*, a member of the Stirling group, tags along, a long way behind. Toronto, on the other hand, home to the country's largest circulation daily, the *Star*, the rejuvenated *Globe and Mail*, and the succesful *Sun*, is the most highly-competitive newspaper market in North America, possibly excepting only New York, where the *Daily News* and the *Post* are in what seems to be a struggle to the death.

In Toronto, Val Sears, of the *Star*, says of competition as an influence:

> Absolutely essential, from several standpoints. From a reporter's standpoint, I just can't conceive of working on a newspaper that was non-competitive. It lowers the whole tone, the level of reporting, removes the fun. From the standpoint of the consumer, obviously the cliches that we keep each other honest (apply).

In Edmonton, a rare city in which there is now newspaper competition where there was none for many years, columnist Don Braid of the *Journal* says of competition:

> I would not say it's essential. . .but I would say it's very good. I don't think many people in Edmonton wouldn't say the *Journal* is better now than it was before the *Sun* appeared. People still have lots of complaints about the *Journal*, they say it's become too sensational, but we are much more conscious now of getting stories out sooner and better. . . .

Whether or not it is because more and more Canadian journalists have never known anything but non-competitive newspapering, a surprising number doubt the conventional wisdom that competition is essential to high quality. They will say that, on balance, competition is a good influence, but that there sometimes is another side that ought not to be overlooked. Or simply that it is over-rated, as an influence for good at all. One such is Peter Murray, of the Victoria *Times-Colonist*, now one newspaper, but two as recently as 1980 when the Thomson organization acquired the *Times* and the *Colonist* from FP Newspapers and made them into one. He says:

> I don't think it (competition) need be terribly important. I think people, if they are treated right, will have enough pride in themselves. The problem with competition is the rush to be first. There's no

> advantage in that. We can't be first any more because of radio and televison; it's better to be slower and more thoughtful. . . .The only competition really is in excellence and I am not sure in a (competitive) daily newspaper it really works that way; it becomes a circulation war, which is fought on another level than that of excellence. I think there is enough competition from the news magazines, radio and television. Certainly in a town like this there is not a need for two competing newspapers. . . .
>
> More important than competition is that every newspaper should be community-owned and operated. . . .It should be owned in the community, rooted in the community. . .because it is more answerable (that way). . . .If the man that owned the newspaper was in the community, then he could make his decisions on the basis of factors that are important to the community. . . .

The newspaper which is owned at a distance — which in the Canadian context means in Toronto — is, in Murray's opinion, a branch plant.

Michael Prentice, at the Ottawa *Citizen*, thinks that two newspapers in head-on competition in the same city are better than one, but he also thinks for at least two reasons that the importance of such competition can be exaggerated. One is that there is always "tremendous competition" within any good newspaper, reporters "competing for the story, competing for rewards, financial or otherwise; the editors competing among *them*selves and for the same kinds of rewards. . . ."

The other reason is that "a newspaper is never a true monopoly". This is an argument more frequently used by newspaper managements than by the people in the newsroom; essentially it is that newspapers have competition in their own communities from radio and television, and usually — certainly in the case of Ottawa — have competition from newspapers which come in from outside. The *Globe and Mail*, says Prentice, may not be competition in Ottawa for the *Citizen* on the business side, because it makes scarcely a dent in the advertising market, but it is competition on the journalistic side. In other words, if the *Citizen* misses a local story, it may be embarrassed in front of its own readers to find the story appearing in the *Globe and Mail*.

The main benefit of two newspapers in head-on competition in the community, he says, is that it increases by 100 per cent the likelihood of a story of interest to the community being done well, or done at all. The merit of two newspapers bringing two viewpoints to bear on issues, he rates less highly: "I tend to think that's not so important. There are always lots of editorial voices within one newspaper."

The view that competition has its detrimental side is stated by various persons in various ways. Here are examples:

- Sometimes it produces only superficial differences — even (in) papers writing the story in the opposite way only to write it in the opposite way. Reporters will be told to get a new angle. Very often, the only way to go is to go in the opposite direction.
- I guess I have two opinions on (competition). In some cases it can be detrimental. It can lead to an emphasis on sensationalism and triviality, in trying to outdo one another. But in another sense it is good because it forces news organisations to extend themselves.
- I look on a city like Toronto, which is highly competitive and wonder if some of the newspapers and radio stations, for the sake of beating out their compe-

tition, over-react, or distort, or sensationalize, just so they can say, 'Ha, ha; we beat the *Globe and Mail* on that one.'

- I worked for the (Toronto) *Star* in the days of the *Telegram* and I've been driven crazy matching stories. . . .You'd start out in the morning with one version of a story and the Tely would come out with a different version and you'd match that. Three editions later you would be back where you started. You could actually pick up the carbon (of the first version) and say, 'Is this what you want for this edition?' and they'd say, 'Yes, why didn't you write it that way in the first place?' So you see, competing newspapers don't necessarily inspire better journalism.

The sensible final word on that aspect of competition can be left to Judith Kellock, of the Saint John *Telegraph-Journal*, who defined a good newspaper as one which has "a coherent vision of the news, and a sense of values", and who says that a newspaper should not try to please everybody, but must set, and adhere to, its own standards.

Does competition do anything, then, that is an influence toward good journalism?

> I think it helps to get your story out if you think you've got to beat the next guy to it.

But could it have another side — that it might cause newspapers to sensationalize?

> If they have no basic integrity, of course it will. . . .You have to start with that sense of values.

But even where newspapers ostensibly compete in Canada, how much real competition is there? It is a thought-provoking question raised by Jeffrey Simpson:

> In the States, the whole ethos of journalism is fiercely competitive. Perhaps I am reflecting the northeast on that, but in Washington, the (New York) *Times* comes in there, the Los Angeles *Times* comes in there, the Baltimore *Sun*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and they compete like hell with each other — and with *Time* and *Newsweek*. There are three networks competing there, and so on. For some reason, even in Ottawa, where there are lots of papers around, there isn't really that driving sense of competition that there is in the United States. So, strictly from a *news* point of view, I don't think there is competition. . . .
>
> Our papers who cover Ottawa — the (Toronto) *Star* is covering Ottawa for Toronto, the (Vancouver) *Sun* for Vancouver, the (Halifax) *Chronicle-Herald* for Halifax, so you get all kinds of what you might call bilateral stories. In other words, they cover Ottawa in a regional way. The *major* national stories they will cover, but all the rest have to have some kind of regional angle to them. And that diminishes competition, because the Toronto paper isn't interested in the British Columbia story, and the Halifax paper in the Toronto (story). . . .

But if there are not very many cities left in which there is more than one newspaper, and if not all the ostensibly competing newspapers seriously compete, and if what competition there is sometimes produces undesirable side-effects, there never-

theless is not much evident enthusiasm among the reporters and copy-editors of the country for any sort of competition that might be created by artificial insemination.

One who mentions favorably an idea aired several times to the Royal Commission on Newspapers, the creation of a print equivalent of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, is Lasha Morningstar of the Edmonton *Journal*. She would like to see "a truly national newspaper, funded by a remote source" — remote, in this sense, meaning at arm's length from government — which would provide readers across the country with a solid budget of national and international news. But others treat the idea with extreme reserve. Ed Schiller, editorial writer at the Toronto *Star*, accepts that competition is important, but worries about how competition is to be obtained if it does not occur naturally:

> How you guarantee having two or three competing newspapers is a very ticklish (question) because, intervening to ensure it, you are basically controlling; you have that contradiction. I don't think a democratic society can long last when the media are either controlled or long distant. . .

Max Wickens, a copy-editor at the Hamilton *Spectator* and a former CBC newsman, responds succinctly to the suggestion that a print equivalent of the CBC might remedy the lack of newspaper competition in most Canadian towns and cities:

> Having worked for the CBC myself, I think all you would do is exchange one handicapped situation for another and you'd wind up with a lot of supervising editors running around worrying about whether they were being phoned by MPs, or whether or not CBC corporate management was going to be upset by this or that. You wouldn't be any farther ahead.

The idea of some sort of publicly-funded newspaper, which would provide competition wherever none now exists, raises another question among some news people: if the publicly-owned one caused the closing of the other, would anything much have been gained, and would something perhaps have been lost, in the swap?

Toward a new journalism

You are no more in the business of selling newspapers than Black & Decker is in the business of selling power drills. Black & Decker is selling holes. You are selling information. If somebody figures out a better way to make holes, Black & Decker is out of business. And if somebody figures out a better way of packaging information than a newspaper, so are you.

— Vaughn Palmer, city editor, Vancouver *Sun* recalling a speaker at an editors' convention in Chicago.

That story says two things. One is that newspaper people are aware, more even than they were when television came along 30 years ago, that their industry is vulnerable in the face of various prospective better ways that electronics research is tossing up. The second is that they don't think the better way that is going to make newspapers redundant is in sight yet.

This sort of mixture of confidence and uncertainty is fairly general in the newsrooms. Vaughn Palmer is 28. Every year he gets from Pacific Press, his employers, a statement that says his retirement will commence in the year 2017, in June. He says:

> There is something about the optimism of that statement that really comforts me. . .Pacific Press is going to be there and is going to have a party for me.

But even if Pacific Press isn't there, or isn't there publishing the ink-on-paper newspaper we know today, Palmer is confident that what he does will continue to be in demand. This is a common theme in the newsrooms of the country: whether or not the *form* changes, there will still be a need for journalists. Vaughn Palmer puts it this way:

> I figure my skills are in packaging information and delivering it, in selecting, and it's always going to be a skill that's in demand. I like newspapers, but I don't see that there's going to be no future for my profession, which is that of packaging and conveying information, (whatever happens).
>
> I think there is going to be something that is ink-on-paper around for the indefinite future because that is an extremely convenient way to get information. . . .I don't think the newspaper of the size we're producing now is going to be around for a lot longer, in other words, a gigantic thing supported by gigantic amounts of printed advertising is *not* the way of the future. I think that advertising is something that is much more readily adapted to. . .computer screens and computerized delivery services — classified (advertising) for example. . . .It's so much easier that way. So, I think the newspaper of the future will probably be bought solely for editorial content. . .

Two thoughts about the future direction of newspapers crop up repeatedly among newsroom people. One is that the newspaper is bound to lose at least its classified advertising to the home screen, on which the viewer will simply call up all the listings of jobs available, investment opportunities offered, or antiques for sale. Almost inescapably, this will have at least three effects: the newspaper will become a lighter, handier package, since classifieds nowadays are responsible for a considerable amount of its bulk; it will become more expensive, because classified provide a substantial part of present revenues; and its quality will improve because customers, paying more, will demand more.

The second prevalent thought is wrapped up in the word "specialization", which is everywhere. Among newsroom people, the two most talked-about newspapers in the country are the *Globe and Mail* and the Toronto *Sun* (and its satellite Suns in Edmonton and Calgary). These are considered to epitomize a trend to seeking out clearly defined audiences — the *Globe and Mail*, the readers nationwide who are interested in business and economic issues, national politics, and the world scene; the Toronto *Sun*, readers who want a quick skim of the news, briefly written and in a lively style, with lots of columns, strongly-worded editorials on simple themes, good sports coverage, and generous dollops of what has given the tabloids in London's Fleet Street the generic name of "tit-and-bum" newspapers.

What is implied is that the mass circulation newspaper, which seeks to appeal to readers right across the board, is the newspaper that is vulnerable. And, in fact, the Toronto *Star*, the outstanding example of the genre in Canada, while still the largest

circulation newspaper in the country, is static in weekday sales in a market in which both its competitors have been growing. The idea that mass appeal may not be possible any more is shared by some people at the prototypical *Star* — as for instance, Ottawa columnist Richard Gwyn:

> . . .The attempt to be a mass circulation newspaper is doomed. The Toronto *Star*. . .operates on the smorgasbord technique; every reader will find something. The result of that, I think, is threefold. Many of these somethings are not enough to satisfy the readers. Secondly, (there is) a general untidiness and visual unappeal of the newspaper. . . .It looks ugly because we try to sell everything to everybody on every page, which I think is very exhausting for the reader. . . .Lastly, there is the problem of identification with the *Star*, which may only be another way of saying, 'Do we have enough of everything to appeal to the people who are only interested in this and that. . . .'

The young city editor of the Vancouver *Sun*, Vaughn Palmer, thinks that with the disappearance of classified advertising to the computer screen, there will be a smaller, handier newspaper for which the price per copy in the upper right hand corner of page one will cover, or more nearly cover, the cost of production. But what will cause people to pay it?

"The demand for news," he says. But he goes on:

> I think that the only hope for the industry is a considerably greater degree of flexibility. I think that newspaper buyers will buy an information service. . . .(The reader) may take the 'A' service, which is a summary of international news, provincial news, federal news, with a 'B' service, which has a set of entertainment features, or a 'C' service which has a stock market roundup, or a 'D' service, which has a sports roundup. I really think that in future the ordering of a newspaper to your home is going to be a much more selective thing. . . .We (journalists) may work for something that may be called an information service, which puts out a whole different series of information services. . . .I think a newspaper plant may put out 15 or 16 different kinds of information services. . .and people can take very different ones. . . .

These could be electronic or on paper, daily or weekly, and in various flavors — hard news, analytical and interpretive, financial and economic, entertainment, and sports — which could be taken straight, or mixed. In other words, the reader would order the newspaper to his taste; the computer would record the subscriber's wishes and see that the right ingredients got to the right reader. Nor is this at all visionary; the means of doing it exist. But while opinions in the newsrooms of the country tend to be generally optimistic (if with some uncertainty about the form of the future newspaper), they cover a considerable spectrum, as just these two demonstrate.

In talking about the future of newspapers, reporters and copy-editors time and again come back to the same things which they think of as the incomparable strengths of newspapers against any form of electronic communication, whether television now, or the new wonders, such as Telidon, which already are well up over the horizon. Newspapers are portable ("You can't take your teletext system, or whatever, on a bus"); the newspaper provides a relatively permanent record, which can be looked back on in 10 minutes to recheck a fact, or in 10 years; it has the

capacity to tell people the difficult story — about a national budget, for example, or the details of a prolonged negotiation — in both a more comprehensive and comprehensible way; equally, it has the capacity to go back to documents of all kinds, difficult to present on radio or television, to give another dimension to the news, usually referred to as background; the newspaper, essentially a news medium, distinct from television, essentially an entertainment medium, has more space for news and can both report more things and provide greater detail; it is available to be consumed when the reader wants it and does not demand that the consumer be in front of a set at a fixed time; and it allows people simply to stray upon items of news of which they had no previous inkling.

This last represents an important difference between the newspaper and the coming information systems which will allow the client to call up news on a screen — assuming the client already knows, or suspects, that some new development has occurred in Ottawa, or Afghanistan, which may be worth knowing more about.

Whether done up smorgasbord-style as now or designed to be ordered by the reader to suit his interests; whether bulky and cheap or leaner and more costly, because of the disappearance of some advertising to the home-screen; published daily or weekly, and presented altogether on paper, as now, or altogether on the screen, as some of them think will happen, one thing most newsroom people are confident about: they, or others like them, will still be somewhere in the process, sorting out the vast daily flow. Tom Goldstein, reporter at the Winnipeg *Free Press*, is one such, although he is not sure what sort of medium he will be working in:

> Maybe we won't have ink on paper as such. I don't think we're going to see television news as exclusively an announcer and pictures. I think what we're going to do is we're going to have words on the screen. Somebody's going to have to produce that.

5
The only side of the street

by
Walter Stewart

The following case-histories were undertaken to study the effects on journalism when a newspaper's position changes: from competitive to monopolistic, from independent to chain, or, by way of brief contrast, from monopolistic to competitive. Removal of competition is covered in the cases of the Victoria Times-Colonist, *the Winnipeg* Free Press, *the Ottawa* Citizen, *and the Montréal* Gazette. *Absorption of an independent by a chain occurred in the cases of the Simcoe* Reformer *and the Sault Ste Marie* Star. *In the case of the Edmonton* Journal, *a competitor recently appeared.*

Nearly all the persons from whom information was obtained are still working at the newspapers on which they were invited to comment. Often, the hope was to elicit information from persons who, while reluctant to appear at public hearings of the Royal Commission, had insights to offer on their own personal situations. It was often necessary to provide an assurance of confidentiality; but where complaints were raised against newspaper managements, these have been, insofar as possible without breaching confidence, laid before managements for comment. The research was carried out from November, 1980, to March, 1981.

1. The Victoria *Times-Colonist*

This is the successor to two of British Columbia's oldest papers, the *Times* and the *Colonist*, which were jointly published, although with separate editorial staffs, by the Victoria *Press*. Both papers were part of the FP Publications chain, and were among the eight papers of that chain acquired by Thomson Newspapers in January, 1980.

While still under FP ownership, some coverage in both papers was uniform — for example, church news, book reviews, court coverage, travel pages, and the TV supplement were common to both papers. However, they retained differing editorial stances — although the difference was not always easy to detect — and separate coverage of municipal, regional and provincial news.

The *Colonist* is considered by most journalists to have been a slightly superior newspaper. It published a separate Island page, and most observers consider it to have been more carefully edited. It had a higher circulation, normally over 45,000

daily to the *Time*'s less than 40,000. The combined editorial staffs of the two papers normally hovered around 71 or 72, and each paper had 13 general reporters on staff.

On September 1, 1980, the two papers were merged by Thomson as the *Times-Colonist*, and 61 employees were laid off, including 29 editorial workers. Although the merger came as no surprise to the journalists — rumors of such a move had been current for months, and most of those interviewed indicated that they thought a merger was "inevitable", whether they agreed with it or not — most were offended by the manner in which it was announced, by way of a notice on the bulletin board.

A senior editorial staffer comments: "I went out to lunch and then to an interview, came back around 3:30 and said, "What's up? A guy said, 'Not much, but they just merged the papers.' So help me. . .there was a note on the board and I was out of a job. I'll never forget the shock of the brutal way they did it."

The new paper took on more of the coloration of the *Times* than of the *Colonist*, a fact which has led to some continuing bitterness for former *Colonist* staffers.

The *Colonist* publisher and managing editor both retired and *Times* publisher Colin McCullough and managing editor G.R. Bell took charge of the merged paper. The type, headline type, and makeup characteristics of the *Times* generally were followed, as well. The *Colonist* — as befitted a paper originally started by Amor de Cosmos — tended towards more colorful makeup. The fact that the name became *Times-Colonist* rather than *Colonist-Times* was also seen as a sign that *Colonist* journalists were in an inferior position.

One of them comments: "We always felt ours was the better paper. Hell, anyone could see it was. We jumped on stories faster, we edited harder, we weren't so. . .careless about typos, we tried different makeup tricks. But what came out? The pure blah of the *Times*."

Times-Colonist publisher Colin McCullough does not accept that his paper is "blah", and says that the reason the name *Times-Colonist* was used was that "It just sounded better, that's all." He said he also preferred the *Times*' type and makeup.

Both papers had serious morale problems in the year leading up to the merger, which are difficult to separate from the even more serious problems that exist today. Tight budget control already had led to cutbacks so severe that *Colonist* legislative reporter Jim Hume was refused permission to cover the NDP provincial convention in Vancouver, although he had covered the Social Credit convention for his paper. He went on his own, paid his expenses, and filed to radio stations to cover his costs. "Then I filed to the paper", he says. "I didn't feel good about it, but I couldn't not go."

In addition, there were some constraints placed on the merged paper that had nothing to do with policy matters, although they have had a serious bearing on the editorial budget of the merged paper.

A senior company official explains: "The ITU had a contract that turned out to be better than the Guild's. We had 97 pressmen in the merged operation, and laid off 24; we were still left with more than we need. Then there was this arbitration (in which an arbitrator ruled that 20 of the 24 must be rehired). With some attrition, we now have 85, and if one of these guys is off sick or goes on holidays, we have to hire someone else to come in and stand around for him. The Guild has no provision to protect like that. So the Guild gets it in the neck."

In effect, the difference in contracts means that when a compositor goes on holidays, he is replaced, even if he is not needed, while journalists are not replaced.

The situation since the merger

The morale on the *Times-Colonist* is appalling, at least in the editorial sector.

"We don't stay because we like it," a senior deskman says. "We stay because we have no choice. Where. . .else are you going to go for a job — Ottawa? Winnipeg?"

Another noted, "The old rag (he worked for the *Colonist*) was not the world's greatest, but I never felt ashamed before. Now, every time I pick up my own paper, I feel ashamed."

Part of the problem has to do with the rivalry between the two papers, which has been carried over into the merged staff, and may dissipate with time. A senior reporter explains: "There is something about working for a morning paper that brings a staff together. You are part of a different world, working different hours, and you become a club. We were a club at the *Colonist*, and we hung together. We still do, and that breeds resentment, but there is not much we can do about it."

Another part of the problem has to do with the staff perception of the managing editor, G.R. Bell, who is universally known as "the Gerbel", and who — his staff claims — makes little or no attempt to communicate with them. (Bell said almost as much in his testimony before the Commission; he cited the many problems he had to deal with as the reason.)

These background irritants make it hard to sort out how much of today's unhappiness can be traced directly to the merged condition of the papers, but it is evident that journalists on the *Times-Colonist* feel — correctly or not — that the new newspaper is greatly inferior to either of the older ones, and that their own work is harder to carry out.

At the time of my visit to Victoria, there were 51 editorial employees on the *Times-Colonist*, a loss of 21 jobs, and there were 12 general reporters, a loss of 14.

Two effects flowed from these losses. In the first place, because of the Guild contract, employees were laid off in reverse order of seniority, resulting in a staff that is creaky with age, compared to that of most newspapers. "Our youngest staffer is about 34," says a copy-desk man. "That's not exactly senile, but it means we don't have a hell of a lot of ginger, either."

The other effect — common to every one of these case histories — was to shake the confidence of those who remain in jobs.

"There is a pervasive timidity here," complains one *Times-Colonist* staffer of long experience. "Hell, I've become timid. It's not something you can put your finger on directly. I don't say to myself, 'Hey, lay off, you could get fired.' But you do lay off; you don't push for better treatment of your stuff, you don't question assignments. . . because you don't want to rock the boat when you see how cold the water is for the guys already overboard."

This theme was repeated, in varying words, by journalists in every city visited, just as it appeared in testimony before the Commission. How this natural fear is reflected on various papers depends in large measure on the attitudes of individual editors, as we will see when we come to look at the Winnipeg *Free Press*.

However, there is strong evidence that the single most important impact on journalists in cases of lessened competition is the chilling sight of shrinking job

opportunities. Journalists like to say, in public, that the greatest loss the community faces is the loss of disparate voices, and that view doubtless is sincere. In private, however, what they tend to emphasize is their own personal situations. They feel threatened. Here is the voice of one *Times-Colonist* staffer who has held both management and staff positions:

"Newspapermen are a quarrelsome bunch. The job invites it, the personalities involved invite it. So a newsroom is often a noisy place; there's a lot of screaming and yelling, some of it serious, some of it not so. . . .You bear that in mind, whether you're giving out assignments or going on them. If you couldn't sort out the battles, the best people could always go across the street. When there is only one side of the street, it's different."

The budget constraints that were felt before the merger have continued, and although the combined newspaper has a circulation close to that of the two separate papers — it now is running about 79,000 daily — no new editorial staff has been added, nor are there any plans to add to the staff.

Publisher Colin McCullough explains that he hopes to make improvements "once things get turned around", but he believes there is sufficient staff — 52 editorial employees — to do the job. "I asked the managing editor what he needed, and we went with that," he says.

The staff, on the other hand, think they are badly overstretched, and that they cannot function effectively as a result. Many of their complaints were laid before the Commission during its Victoria visit, and will not be repeated here. In addition, one staffer complains, "after a while, you get telling yourself, 'Why should I bust my ass?' If they want to drop coverage of the Saanich police board, because it might cost overtime, well, okay, forget it. You begin to give up."

One incident raised before the Commission in Victoria has some illuminating sidelights. The Victoria Newspaper Guild complained that Oak Bay Municipal Council was left uncovered because Pat Dufour, the regular beat reporter, was on holidays, and no replacement was assigned. The council complained and a news story was run in the paper on Dec. 24, 1980, in which the managing editor blamed the failure on "some internal communications failure on our part and some very bad judgment and lack of care."

In this statement, the staff members complain, the managing editor was deflecting the blame onto the city desk, whereas one reporter familiar with the situation maintains: "It is a matter of paper policy not to cover with a replacement, to save money. Reporters covering regional councils are regularly told not to cover morning council committee meetings where that will mean overtime, which means that, even if the evening meeting is covered, you don't know what's going on."

This matter was raised with the publisher, who said that "some mistakes have been made", and that where a reporter is on holidays and coverage is required, the city editor, if he has no staff available, should call the managing editor for permission to bring someone in on overtime.

Some of the drumroll of complaints about municipal council coverage laid before the Commission were planted by journalists themselves, in talks with council members. They reflect a morale problem, as much as the outcome of a merger.

Similarly, complaints about the dropping of the Island page, laid before the Commission, reflect a general sense of unease as much as the journalists' concern

that the *Colonist*'s former readers now are being deprived. The journalists believe the Island coverage has been cut to help the circulation of the Thomson-owned Nanaimo paper, but publisher McCullough argues that it is merely a question of "making the best use of the resources available."

The point will continue to be debated, but what is clear is that, as a result of the merger, coverage of local councils has been cut, coverage up-Island has been cut, and the merged paper is concentrating more on the city of Victoria. That may be a proper course of action. Its effect on the journalists involved, however, is to make them feel that they are no longer functioning as they should.

One comment: "When the *Colonist* was out there, we were always conscious of the fact that we could be beaten on a story. If you didn't turn up somewhere, and the *Colonist* did, the *Times* was going to be beaten. You could always make the argument with the desk, 'Well, they're going to be there'. It worked like magic. Not now. So the reader suffers."

The merged paper has two editions, and staffers complain — as they did before the Commission — that these have been moved back, in fact, if not in theory, to save money by minimizing printing costs.

One deskman comments: "While the Commission was here, things were great, for about two weeks. There was more room, more pages were opened, deadlines were eased back, and we began to feel as if we were working for a daily newspaper again. But that was for public relations purposes only. Normally, we can open the afternoon paper to replate for a maximum of 13 pages, but if we send out more than five, we get told off. What that tells us is that this paper is not concerned with staying on top of the news."

Despite the bitter complaints, both public and private, made against the Thomson interests, no journalist cited any cases of stories killed because they might affect those interests, or for fear of offending advertisers.

Neither of the original papers performed much investigative reporting, and, although there is a concern that budget restrictions will make this even rarer — "You go out to do a story and you're told to stay at a cheap motel, and to do a travel story while you're there," according to one senior reporter — reading the paper does not show any appreciable change in this area. In fact, the *Times-Colonist* broke a story about chemical-waste dumping at Port Alberni, and publisher McCullough says, "We're looking for a lot more like that one."

McCullough is obviously distressed by the degree of antipathy that exists on his staff. As a former journalist, he says he has every sympathy with reporters who want to be given the opportunity to do the job, but he believes that, "This is a much better paper than either of its predecessors," and he hopes that morale will improve as time passes. He recognizes that there are some severe problems, but he says: "As far as I'm concerned, working for Thomson has been an improvement over FP. These people really know the business. With a couple of exceptions, the FP people really didn't. The Thomson bunch are newspaper operators and they understand circulation and advertising, which FP did not. To me the main difference is this: if I'm talking to (former FP president George) Currie, he doesn't know what I'm talking about. If I talk to Thomson, they not only know what I'm talking about, they say, 'What you need to solve that problem is this.' I may not agree, but at least they know what they're doing."

The journalists believe that budgets will be squeezed further, and that they will be subjected to the kind of harrassment reported in some Thomson operations. McCullough says that his 1981 budget was determined exactly as that in 1980. He links the current tightness to the fact that the paper is not yet making an adequate profit (although he did not give any figures), and he expects that an improvement will come as the profit picture improves, which seems inevitable, given the paper's position in the market and the drop in staff.

Budget considerations are, as always, crucial. The *Times-Colonist*, with 15 editorial workers more than the *Colonist* had (51 versus 36) is producing seven days a week (where its predecessors produced six) in two editions which are supposed to be markedly different (but seldom are). Such a staff is bound to be stretched thin, and that is why material appearing in the Monday edition of the paper (which is really no more than a replate of the Sunday edition) has sometimes been produced on Friday, or even Thursday. Quite often, there is only one reporter available on Sunday, except for sports coverage. (By chance, the merged sports department contains four senior reporters, the beneficiaries of the seniority rule on severance, and this is one area of the newspaper that the journalists feel has improved.)

The effect of these restrictions, from the journalists' point of view, is one of great frustration. They feel that the public is being cheated, because coverage is dated, and that they are not doing their job.

One complaint: "You are told when you are doing a story for the Friday paper that it must be one that can be updated for Saturday. Otherwise, they aren't interested. What kind of way is that to judge a story?"

Another complaint: "You bust your ass to get to a phone with a breaking story, and you're well in time for the deadline, but you're told to forget about it — the page was sent in ahead of time. Call back in about four days."

The journalists didn't know there was a travel budget until the Commission was told of it, and the amount — 30 to 40 days — does not seem excessive. One staffer of long experience comments: "We need three more reporters, we need later deadlines, we need a travel budget that is meaningful, and most of all, we need a sense that somebody up there cares about the paper, which we sure as hell don't have."

This last, and crucial, point may have less to do with the merger directly than with the personalities involved. The Newspaper Guild's contract comes up for renewal in the fall of 1981 and, one prominent Guild member reports, "We're saving already for the strike."

If a strike were to come, it may have much more to do with the kind of frustration felt by the staff than with money issues. Publisher McCullough notes, "Nobody can win if we get into a strike situation." He says he doesn't know what the attitude of Thomson Newspapers will be in the event of trouble.

Summary

Two groups of journalists have been marked directly by the merger of the *Times-Colonist*. The first is the group that lost jobs. Many of them went on to other positions that worked out well. Barbara McLintock, senior editorial writer, now is legislative reporter for the Vancouver *Province* and says, "It's a real joy to be working somewhere where people actually get excited about what you're doing." Others have gone into public relations, or into other lines of work. A handful are working part-

time or are unemployed. In essence, these people are no different than the victims of takeovers and layoffs in any part of industry.

The other group are those left at the merged paper, and they are — with a few exceptions — uneasy and unhappy. They believe they are being deprived of the resources to do a good job, they believe the absence of competition has made the paper slack, and they believe worse is to come.

They do not complain of the slanting of stories, dropping of assignments, or killing of stories because of the merger. They do complain that stories are being missed, but not as a matter of policy.

It is obvious that at least some of their concerns are either exaggerated or anticipatory. It is obvious, too, that communication between senior management and the journalists is poor, and that these strained relationships color life at the paper.

Some sign of the degree of this feeling may be obtained by quoting parts of a long report prepared for me by a senior staffer who — ironically enough — is regarded by management as one of a small group of solid, loyal employees:

"On the day of the merger, the former city editor, Leslie Drew, didn't know she was to be laid off, after eight years, until a friend from the newsroom phoned her at home and warned her of the layoff slip which she would find on her desk. She gained the admiration of the staff by coming in, reading her notice, and then promptly walking out. She subsequently sued the company for wrongful dismissal and gained an out-of-court settlement.

". . . (I) read the evidence given to the Commission by Colin McCullough about things improving. I remember when he first took over as the *Times* publisher. He had each department sit down with him in the boardroom and raised everyone's enthusiasm with a very 'gung ho' talk about improvements he wanted to make (although he was vague about them) and how he wanted to raise the quality. Eventually these meetings became a joke, as it was obvious that he wasn't going to achieve much.

". . . What he has allowed to happen since the merger makes me doubtful whether things will improve.

". . . With the appalling record of staff relations in the short time since the merger, no wonder there is the bitterness to which Gordon Bell referred in the Commission hearings. The local management has destroyed employees' morale, enthusiasm, and goodwill. I think most are professional enough to do as good a job as possible within the new boundaries, but the atmosphere in the *Times-Colonist* is very depressing and I can't see any chance of it improving.

". . . (I) cannot give any judgment on whether the merger was necessary, although I doubt it. If the merger had been necessary, management should have sat down with the employees in an effort to make it work.

"We could have produced a new newspaper which people would have been proud to work for and which would have been a credit to Victoria. There is a lot of talent and dedication at Victoria Press. It is a tragedy that the company hasn't had the wisdom to tap it."

2. The Winnipeg *Free Press*

The Winnipeg *Free Press* was the beneficiary of Southam's decision to close the rival *Tribune* on August 27, 1980. In the closure, 270 *Tribune* employees lost their jobs, including 74 journalists.

The papers had been involved in a long, bitter, and expensive battle, which began in 1975, when the *Tribune* underwent a massive facelift, and attempted to usurp the No. 1 position in the Winnipeg market which had been the *Free Press*' for decades. At first, the *Free Press* failed to respond to the challenge, which included new makeup, free classified ads, and extensive advertising. By the spring of 1979, *Tribune* circulation was up to 106,000 from 70,000; the *Free Press* was at 146,000, up 11,000 over the four years, but its lead was obviously shrinking. In the spring of 1979, the *Free Press* was redesigned, and, just as importantly, a new managing editor, Murray Burt, was hired.

Burt, former city editor of the Toronto *Globe and Mail*, stepped up news coverage and investigative reporting. A helicopter was hired — at $1,000 a day — to cover spring floods; $3,000 was spent testing hamburger from local supermarkets, in a story that brought a federal investigation of meat marketing practices.

"This joint really came alive", is the way one long-term *Free Press* staffer put it.

When Thomson bought the *Free Press* as part of its purchase of FP Publications in January, 1980, there were no immediate changes visible to the staff, and, despite a certain amount of apprehension, morale remained high. When FP News Service moved a strong story out of Ottawa in which Robert Bertrand, director of investigations and research for the federal combines branch, had harsh things to say about the Thomson purchase of the FP chain — it was described as "wrong, bad and dangerous" — the *Free Press* gave the story prominent play, on the very day when three Thomson executives were in Winnipeg to visit the paper.

So, the collapse of the *Tribune*, while it upset many *Free Press* journalists, did not have the demoralizing effect that might have occurred on a newspaper where spirits were low, or the senior management was regarded as timid.

"Our first reaction", says a staffer, "was, frankly, unbridled joy. We had been hammering away at each other for so long, we saw it as a terrific victory. There had been a rumor going around that maybe the papers were going to be merged. There was even one version that had the *Free Press* being scrapped. I didn't believe that; we were pulling ahead in circulation again, and the Trib was standing still. Just the same, you were nervous, so when it was the Trib that got the axe, I remember I said to my wife, 'Hot damn.' Pretty stupid, when you think about it."

A reaction has set in, with some reporters expressing concern that the *Free Press* is bound to be "Thomsonized", as one of them puts it. "We aren't hurting yet, but it's only a matter of time."

As at the *Colonist*, some expense-cutting moves took place at the *Free Press* after the Thomson takeover, but before the *Tribune* collapse, which may have colored subsequent events. An attempt to curb newsprint waste in line with practices on other Thomson papers led to a decree cutting the number of papers delivered into the newsroom. This led to a brief but bizarre period in which *Free Press* reporters had to go downstairs to a newstand to get a copy of their own paper. The move was apparently instituted to set an example — the papers would be cut back, and later restored, as a signal of how important it was to curb waste, but the idea backfired and was hastily rescinded. A complaint that too much toilet paper was being used in the women's washroom was also put out, and as hastily withdrawn.

The effect of the Thomson reputation is such that minor matters of this sort were taken to be harbingers of worse to come, and, after the collapse of the Win-

nipeg *Tribune*, some journalists began looking for signs that the *Free Press* was about to be emasculated, while others adopted a wait-and-see attitude.

To some extent, this is still the case.

The situation after the collapse

Tribune journalists who lost their jobs were better served than those in a similar plight on the Ottawa *Journal* or the Victoria papers in one sense, because the Southam organization made real efforts to have them placed on other Southam papers. Some were absorbed by the Montréal *Gazette*, others by the Calgary *Herald* and Vancouver *Sun*. By the same token, the Winnipeg *Free Press* took the position that it should try to hire from the Ottawa *Journal*, and leave the placing of Trib reporters and editors to the Southam group. In the end, six former Trib journalists were taken on at the *Free Press*. In a few cases, journalists who had been lured away from the *Free Press* to work for the *Tribune* found themselves stranded; one man, a photographer for 30 years with the *Free Press*, lost his job within weeks of joining the Southam paper, and is still out of work. Not surprisingly, people in this fix are quite bitter. One commented: "When I left the *Free Press*, I was told there would always be a place for me if I wanted to come back. Like hell there was."

Some journalists, offered jobs in other cities, found that they could not afford to take them because, ironically, of Winnipeg's real estate slump. One explained: "I had the offer of a job in Vancouver, and I was going to jump at it. Then I went out and looked at the housing market. I couldn't get a half, even a quarter of the price of a decent Vancouver house for what I was going to take in by selling in Winnipeg. And the rents out there are phenomenal. I wanted the job, but I couldn't afford to take it."

As elsewhere, many of those who couldn't find work in journalism went to public relations or government jobs. Few of them went willingly. "I am doing a job I hate," one former reporter commented. "All my life as a journalist, I have had nothing but contempt for people who cop out into PR. Now I'm doing it. I'm making good money, but I sure don't feel good about myself."

But for some, the change led to a different, and more cynical, view of journalism. One of the best-known bylines on the *Tribune*, now working for the federal government, noted: "The collapse of the Trib opened my eyes. I had had this idealistic view of what journalism was all about, and I certainly thought it superior to the sort of thing I'm doing now. But, just about everybody I know that was affected by the Trib closing says 'I will never feel the same about journalism again. Suddenly you realize it is run just like any other business. You are just another cog in a soap factory. You are diminished."

So, as always, the clearest victims of the collapse were those who either were unable to find work, unable to afford to take the preferred jobs in their own craft, or for personal reasons ("I'm sure I could have got a job elsewhere," a deskman noted, "but I don't want to live anywhere else.") went out of journalism.

For the 109 editorial employees of the Winnipeg *Free Press*, the situation is very much more complex, and less clear.

Some feel that their own working conditions have changed very little. Others feel threatened, ill at ease, and bitter. A few feel that, in fact, their lives and working conditions have improved (although they have the grace to feel guilty about admit-

ting this) and still others feel that it will be a year or more before the reality of their new situation becomes clear.

Here are some sample views in each category:

"As far as I'm concerned," says a junior reporter, "the only thing that happened after the Trib went down was that they brought in a television set and stuck it in the newsroom. We used to worry about being beaten by the Trib. Now we worry about being beaten on a major story by television. Assignments are the same, copy handling is the same; there is the same amount of time, no more and no less, to do stories. I just can't see that there is a difference."

A far different view comes from a senior reporter: "The biggest impact on journalists is that they are intimidated. If you lose the job here, there is no place else to go. The fewer the outlets available for journalists, the more self-censorship increases because people feel threatened. . . .Morale is low, not because we are being badly treated, but because you are afraid to talk back. You can be harassed over little things. We're running a readers' poll now, for example, to make the reader feel more a part of the paper. It's expensive and it is the phoniest thing you ever saw. It isn't a genuine poll, because the reader has to fill in a questionnaire. By definition, you only get responses from people riding a particular hobby horse. I've objected to this thing from the start, but I'm not going to say so. I'm being a good boy."

One reporter who feels that conditions have improved says: "I really shouldn't say this, but for me, life is better since the Trib died. I work my beat in a much more useful way now. Before, you were always worrying about the other guy. You would be at a meeting where not a lot happened, and you would see the Trib guy dash for a phone at the end. You'd say to yourself, 'What the hell is he so excited about?' So you'd wind up filing a story, just to cover your ass, not because it was really worth putting in the paper. All that is gone. Now you do the stories that matter, and you have a little time to think about what should be covered, and what can be left out. Sure, the Winnipeg *Sun* is out there, somewhere, but nobody really cares about the *Sun*, and radio and TV don't count, not really. So I'm ambivalent. I know I should be unhappy as hell because there isn't somebody out there making me keep on my toes, but, frankly, I think it's my job to keep on my toes, but not to hoke up stories to meet the competition. I'm better off."

Finally, the view of a department head, whose mixed feelings reflect a widely-held view:

"I can't point to any one thing that makes me nervous, but I've got to admit I'm nervous. My own opinion is that we're going to be Thomsonized, but it hasn't happened yet. I got the budget I asked for — or, at least, I didn't get what I asked for, but I did get what I expected to get — and I think my section is doing a pretty good job. No worse, really, than it was before the Trib folded. Murray Burt has been very supportive; I can't complain about that. But, what is going to happen later? Everybody's treading very carefully, if you ask me, because the Royal Commission is still on the job. When that's over and the Report comes down, my guess is you'll see a hell of a change around here. The crunch will come in next year's budget, not this year's.

"Already, I can see one bad sign. I used to have control over my budget, in the sense that I got a printout every month, telling me where I stood on the budget. So, you could fool with it. As you got toward the end of the year, if there was still money

available, you could mount a special project. Say you built in 10 days of travel for someone in the U.S. or in Europe, and that fell through. Well, you would have maybe $2,000 or $3,000 to play around with. You could shave a little here and there, and put together a package for a major takeout. All that is gone. Now, the control all seems to have shifted down to the Thomson boys in Toronto. You don't know whether there is any money left over, and you have to put in for every single thing you want to do. No way can you build up a surplus to take on a special new project you hadn't worked into the original budget.

"The other thing is that we just have a general sense of unease. We all know about Thomson, and the way they operate. The fact that we haven't been clobbered yet just means to some people that we still have it coming. Murray (Burt) keeps smiling and saying everything is going alright, but the more he smiles, the more nervous I get. It's just a gut feeling."

In terms of journalistic practice, the *Free Press* has not drawn back; if anything, it is more aggressive than before. The younger reporters on the city side are particularly proud of a series the newspaper broke on illegal towing operations in the city. Some towing operators working for the police traffic department would, on occasion, break into parked cars to unlock the steering wheel; some also billed the motorist for services, such as the use of a dolly, that were never performed. A *Free Press* team was able to document, and photograph, numerous violations of city bylaws, and the series brought an immediate change in the law.

"I didn't really have a lot to do with that one," says a young reporter, "but it sure made me feel good. It showed that we were willing to spend the time and effort to go out and correct an abuse."

The paper also broke a story about three Winnipeg judges whose names had been found in the address book of a local bookmaker. The story presented a number of legal complications, and a certain amount of danger in the form of libel writs, but, one deskman who worked on it says: "There was no flinching. We had a couple of holes in the original version, and the lawyer was brought in. He took the position from the first that his job was to show us how we could run the story, not why we shouldn't. And we ran it."

Recently, the *Free Press* has assigned three aggressive young reporters with some background in investigative journalism to coverage of the legislature in what is likely going to be an election year.

Curiously, the *Free Press* is given credit for staying with investigative reporting only by part of the journalistic staff. One reporter who has himself done a number of investigative pieces claims: "It's mostly show. Sure, we go after tow-truck operators, but have you seen anything going after the Hudson's Bay Company?" He adds: "There is far too much emphasis on cutting corners on ordinary reporting. If I am working on something, I never tell the desk the truth about where I am on it. If I let them know I had it wrapped up except for a few more checks, they would want to run it, and the checks would never get done. You open yourself to danger doing it that way. There is a feeling that about half a day is all you need to do any story, because everybody is measuring results, counting productivity, and you just can't do the best work that way."

The fact that the paper faces a problem of its own self-image emerged in a curious incident involving the Speaker of the Legislature. A number of reporters cited

the case as showing that the paper had lost its sense of dedication once the Winnipeg *Tribune* was removed from the market. One told it this way: "An MLA was involved in a criminal case that made him ineligible to sit in the House. Then we got a tip that he was going to take his seat anyway, so we got a photog up there, and got a picture of the guy in the legislature. Somebody spotted the photographer, and raised hell on the floor of the House, so the Speaker threatened the paper with dire consequences, and we chickened out and wouldn't run the picture. Even though there was TV in the House, we wouldn't run our shot. Instead, we ran a picture off the TV screen."

The elements of that story are accurate, but much is left out. In fact, the day before the incident, a meeting took place between the Speaker and senior management of the *Free Press*, because of complaints on both sides that no proper rules existed for House coverage. In theory, no pictures could be run from the Legislature without the prior permission of the Speaker, but, in fact, some had been. As a result of that meeting, a memo was circulated to department heads saying that, until the matter was finally resolved, no pictures would be taken without the Speaker's permission. Not every editor had received or read the memo, apparently, when the offending pictures were taken. Because the photographer was spotted, an uproar ensued, and the Speaker was ordered to demand production of the film, prints, and camera, which he did. After a long and heated discussion with managing editor Murray Burt, the Speaker settled for a set of prints, and the *Free Press* agreed not to run the picture. To mark its protest, the newspaper then ran a picture from the TV set, pointing out the anomaly that a television picture was acceptable, but not one in print. Arrangements currently are under way to regularize the taking of pictures in the Legislature.

In short, the newspaper's stand was anything but pusillanimous, and yet, because of the sense of unease that is felt in some quarters of the place, the story has gone into *Free Press* legend as a sign of the paper's carelessness or lack of courage.

For his own part, managing editor Burt says: "I really can't point to anything that says we are worse than we were before. There has been no pressure whatever to be weak or to back off from doing stories. We got the budget we asked for, and the cuts that were made were made here, not in Toronto. I would be foolish to say there isn't a certain amount of nervousness about what might happen, and I hated to see the Trib fold for the same reason that you hate to see any newspaper fold, but I can't say we are suffering because of it. If we come under pressure, well, we'll see what happens, but right now I can honestly say I think we are as good, maybe better, than we were before."

Despite a huge increase in circulation, from about 142,000 to 196,000, the news staff has increased only modestly, to 109 journalists from 103. But, Burt maintains: "We have the resources to do the job; we aren't skimping. In fact, we have a couple of major projects in mind and the money to carry them out."

Some of the paper's department heads are not so sanguine. One complains: "We are using far more freelance stuff than I like to use, because it's cheap. In effect, we're getting people to work for us without having to hire them, because there are so many guys out there with no job and no chance of a job." Another complains: "We're getting a little chintzy. I lost a senior staffer and could only replace her with a junior, because the money wasn't there. It's not a big thing, but when you think of all the money we're going to make in this market, it really cheeses you to see that you are trying to squeeze the last dime out of the budget."

Finally, this comment from a senior staffer: "At the moment, we're okay. We're not okay because of Thomson, but because Murray Burt and (publisher Don) Nicol have been able to keep Thomson out of here. But I wouldn't count on what's going to happen if Burt leaves. I feel like the drunk who falls out the 40th floor window of a hotel and, as he passes the 10th floor he says, 'Well, so far, so good.'"

3. The Ottawa *Citizen*

In recent years, the Southam-owned *Citizen* has emerged as the dominant English-language newspaper in Ottawa. Modern typography, aggressive salesmanship, and the pursuit of "soft journalism" paid off in increased circulation. A daily section called Tempo, a Friday supplement called TGIF — for Thank God It's Friday — and an emphasis on warm, happy, upbeat stories reflected an attempt, as an in-house memo put it, "to give the *Citizen* some attractive bait to dangle in front of the large group of non-readers, from high-schoolers to young adults" who got their normal entertainment from other media. Another memo setting forth a story idea for TGIF ordered, "A sentimental look at love on campus from grade school to university", and went on to ask, "Do kids still trade pins? Do they still go to the drive-ins for love-ins, etc?"

Seeking out non-readers and throwing journalists on the trail of teeny-boppers are not high on the list of priorities for many reporters, but the *Citizen*'s approach — combined with lethargy by the Ottawa *Journal*, which was slow to react to its shrinking market-share — undoubtedly paid off. A new printing plant on the outskirts of the city — while the *Journal* kept to an old, hot-lead process downtown — allowed the paper to present more and better color, and a cleaner, more attractive look.

The morning tabloid, *Ottawa Today*, jumped into the market, but faded in seven months; the *Journal*, finally aware that it was in mortal danger, moved to morning publication and went through its own renewal process, under a new executive editor, Jim Rennie, who hired more columnists, spent more money on hard news reporting, and staged a modest comeback until, on August 27, 1980, the newspaper was abruptly shut down.

As always, the heavy losers were the journalists turned loose by the *Journal* — 96 of them. At first, no attempt was made to find places for them by the Thomson organization, and by the time a modest job-placement program was set up, with the aid of Canada Manpower, the market was swamped. At this writing, more than 30 of the original 96 still are without jobs of any kind, and, as elsewhere, the jobs obtained in many cases are far from satisfactory to former journalists. One of them, a man with wide experience and a first-rate reputation, described his plight this way:

"I work for the government, for one of the federal departments. It's my first real encounter with bureaucracy from the inside and I must say it's revealing. I get called in because somebody wants to reply to an editorial in some newspaper somewhere lamming the hell out of us; but it usually turns out that the editorial appeared four-and-a-half months ago. I say, 'If you don't reply at once, for God's sake, forget it.' But nobody has nerve enough to tell whoever ordered up the reply that he's wrong, so I spend an afternoon drafting a letter for the minister's signature.

"And here's the point. That's all there is left for me. There are no new jobs in journalism and I've been through most of the old ones. This is the future. Finis. I've

been in this business for more than 20 years. I've held key jobs on some of the best — and a few of the not-so-best — newspapers in the country. I know my trade and I thought I was pretty good at it. Now I'm writing letters for a minister that will never even leave his office, and I'm grateful — grateful, goddamit — for the job."

Another journalist, who estimates she makes "about $200 in a good week" as a freelance, said: "Look, after what I've been through the last few months, if they offered me a job at the *Citizen*, I'd jump at it. And when I got it, I'd kiss ass, keep my mouth shut, do whatever had to be done to hold onto it. I never thought I'd feel this way, but I do. The *Citizen* is the only game in town, and you can bet that its reporters won't be making many waves."

The situation since the collapse

The trends that led the *Citizen* to dominance have apparently been vindicated by events, and it is hardly surprising that an emphasis on soft news, human interest stories, and upbeat items continues as a staple of *Citizen* reporting. One of the newspaper's best-known journalists puts it this way: "We don't have time to dig into stories about how the consumer is getting ripped off, but we'll send a team up to do a big take-out on strippers operating in the Ottawa Valley. That's our idea of real reporting."

This kind of disgruntlement is widespread on the *Citizen* news staff, but it should be noted that the complaint of emphasizing trivia, and soft news in general, existed before the collapse of the *Journal*, and indeed is common in the newsroom of the Toronto *Star*, which does face other competition. It is therefore hard to say how much of the present unhappiness among *Citizen* staffers, and the approach of the newspaper, can be traced directly to the collapse of the *Journal*.

On the other hand, a number of staffers — particularly those with responsibilities for "beat" coverage — contend that (as with the Winnipeg *Free Press*) their personal working conditions are better. Here is the summation of one of them: "If I have a story that needs some development, I take the time to develop it. I don't have to rush into print because somebody from the *Journal* may be working on the same thing. . . .I used to file, oh, up to a half-dozen stories a day, not because there were that many worth doing on my beat, but just to keep my ass covered in case the opposition had something I didn't.

"I have to ask myself, is the reader being short-changed because I'm not filing so many stories? And the answer — I hope it's an honest one — is, no, I don't think so. I'm doing fewer stories, but I'm doing them better. For a person on a beat, I think the change has to be seen as mostly good."

Citizen management regards itself as in competition — with the *Globe and Mail*, with other media, with the Montréal *Gazette* — but most of the working journalists feel that there is a difference between market competition and news competition. Here's how one of them puts it: "Sure, they worry about the *Gazette* or the *Globe* selling too many copies in the morning. But the reaction to that is not to put the emphasis on good reporting, it is to back up the deadlines and hype the copy. We used to be a daytime paper; now, for market reasons, we're putting out two versions, one for the morning, and the other about noon. The whole paper is prepared overnight, including page one, and the final edition is really just a makeover. That means you can't stay on top of things the way we used to. In the old days we put out a

whole paper between 7 a.m. and noon; now, Jesus Christ would have to land on Confederation Square to get the story in past about ll a.m. And if Moses came up the canal at the same time, only one story would get in."

Another staffer, who has held management posts, says: "When competition is removed from the street, two things happen to you. The first is that you get careless. If you blow a story, if you get it wrong, there is no one around to get it right and set the record straight. The second thing is that you get very worried about the power you wield, and you draw back. The clearest thing that has happened at the *Citizen*, as far as the working staff is concerned, is that we have lost our nerve.

"I'll give you an example. A while back, our city hall reporter broke a story about Andy Haydon, the regional chairman. She had found out that Haydon had ordered the finance commissioner to start paying for Haydon's benefits — life insurance, OHIP, that sort of thing. It wasn't anything crooked, but it sure as hell seemed high-handed. We ran the story, and an editorial was prepared, hammering the hell out of Haydon. Then the editorial was lifted. When it finally was run, a couple of mealy-mouth paragraphs had been stuck onto the end, to say that Haydon was a good and honest fellow, yaketty-yak, and nobody was saying he had done anything wrong, and. . .we even endorsed him for re-election as regional chairman in the editorial."

Citizen editor Russell Mills denies that there has been any loss of nerve on the paper's part, but he says: "It's true that this thing about being the only paper in town is raised all the time, and it's true that it bothers us. Hell, every time somebody phones in with a story idea and we turn it down, he says, 'Well, you're getting pretty arrogant, now that you're the only paper in town.' "

On the Haydon story, Mills says: "It is true that we pulled the editorial, and tacked a couple of paragraphs on the end. . . .Haydon called me up after the story appeared, and I invited him to come out and explain what had happened. We pulled the editorial until that could be done. It turned out to be in large part a personality clash on the council, and with the staff. . . .When we put the editorial in, we did criticize Haydon for the way he handled it, but we put in we didn't think he was dishonest because we don't. . . .

"If the *Journal* had been around, we might have handled it differently, but our coverage would have been less complete."

Mills contends: "As far as I'm concerned, we are a better paper today than we were before, precisely because we have the time to look at these things in a broader context."

In another incident, the *Citizen* had prepared a story about sexual harassment on Parliament Hill, and one of those who worked on the story says: "We had it pretty well nailed down, but we chickened out. We apparently had some legal advice, and these days, whenever the lawyer says something might be the least bit tricky, we pull back. If the *Journal* had been around, we'd have gone with it; hell, we'd have hit it with everything we had, but because there was no *Journal*, the attitude was, 'Why take a chance?' We buried it. You remember a while back when there was that story about a homosexual ring, and we leapt on the thing with both feet. So did the *Journal*. Not any more."

Again, Mills contends that, while such a story might be handled differently in the presence of competition, "I really believe our approach today is more

responsible." He says — and his view is supported by one of the senior editors who worked on the story — that the *Citizen* drew back because, "We felt we couldn't print the story without revealing our principal source, and we weren't willing to do that. We had some qualms about some of the information, too, so we took what I consider to be a responsible position."

In yet another case, a political reporter claims: "We had a story locked up about a Kanata doctor who had his licence suspended because of his involvement with a patient. But we would only go with the information that was presented to the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons, so we would be covered by privilege. We put the thing back in the paper, and we wrote it so that you could hardly make out what the hell it was all about. If the *Journal* had been working on that story, we would certainly have given it the full treatment, and to hell with the lawyers."

Again, Mills agrees: "If the *Journal* had been around, we might have played that story on page one. We did play it on page three, which is hardly burying it. It is true that the story was written in a kind of wooden way, and based on the material that would be privileged. But that's common sense, surely; the point is that we carried the story, and we carried a full account. What we didn't do was to sensationalize it, and I don't regard that as a disadvantage."

Citizen reporters do not point to any instances where stories were left out or distorted because of Southam interests. However, one national reporter says: "Any story that involves Telidon (a computer database system in which Southam has an interest through its involvement in Infomart, the main marketer for Telidon) gets a big play in the paper. What doesn't get such a big play is the fact that we have a stake in it." Telidon has received extensive coverage in newspapers outside the Southam chain; and Southam papers, including the *Citizen*, do normally explain as part of their coverage that Southam Inc. and Torstar Corp. are partners in a joint venture to market the system.

The nub of journalist complaints at the *Citizen*, besides the familiar plaint that the paper tends to emphasize soft news (one reporter claims, "I can get on page one any day of the week; all I need is a cat up a tree or a grandmother who found her long-lost sister") is the suggestion that the paper responds too readily to the argument that it must tread softly because it now has so much influence.

In a way, editor Mills acknowledges the validity of this argument. "It is the one thing we hear day and night", he says. "Every time we decide to do something, or not do something, it is thrown up in our face that we have a stranglehold on the market. Well, certainly you want to be responsible in a position like that. But I don't feel we have pulled our punches in any way. It's just that you think of things differently. . . .

"The night before last, I had a call at home because we were working on a story about a group of Canadian computer firms getting together to compete against the imports. The head of the company phoned me and said he understood we were going to run the story the next day. He said that if we did, it would be bad for his firm. He said 'Please don't run the story'. He made the point everybody makes that what we said was key because there was no other paper in town. Well, I thought about that quite a bit, but it seemed to me that what really worried him was that he'd laid on a whole PR program for the launching, and we were going to anounce it before that.

So I phoned him back and said I was sorry, but we were going to run the story the next day. And we did."

At the *Citizen*, there is a clear division between general reporters, who say they are not pushing as hard as they used to for stories, and their superiors. One reporter says: "We go through the motions, but we don't jump on things the way we did. I'm working on a story right now that I have held out of the paper for three days, frankly because I think I can get a better play if I turn it in for Saturday use. And I know nobody else is going to get it. Hell, the way it's going now, you can frame a story that will get in and, in fact, one of the major problems is that these guys seem to think you should be producing formula stuff for page one every day. . . .I got called in the other day and told 'How come you haven't been on page one recently?' The obvious answer, 'I haven't been doing stories that rate it because of the material' won't do, Apparently, you're supposed to hype the material."

Citizen senior editors deny both that the stories are hyped or formularized for page one treatment, or that reporters are laying back. Murdoch Davis, the city editor, says: "Well, if anybody is laying back, they'd better not let me catch them at it. As far as I'm concerned, we are pushing as hard as we can."

Davis agrees that there is pressure on the paper because of its solo position, but contends: "Some of it is just plain silly. I had a phone call the other day from an MP because someone in his office had gathered up the tinfoil from a whole bunch of cigarette packages, and rolled it into a great big ball. He wanted us to come over and take a picture, and when I turned him down, he said, 'Well, that's how arrogant you can be, because you have no competition'."

Some reporters also contend the paper has given up on investigative reporting. "We used to do an awful lot of consumer investigating," says one. "For example, Mike McDermott went to work as a school bus driver, and he did a terrific story about the fact that almost anybody could get a job doing that, and about how unsafe some of the buses were. It took a long time, and cost a lot of money, but it was a hell of an important story. Now, our idea of consumer reporting is a bunch of guys sitting around eating hamburgers and saying which one is the best."

City editor Davis replies: "I don't remember the school bus stuff, because I wasn't here then. But we are doing investigative reporting. We had a piece the other day about the roofs on some townhouses, not a really big thing, but a good story. We have a lot more coming.

"I don't think we've pulled back. I certainly haven't. There are a lot of hospital offices and school board offices and a lot of other offices who will tell you we're too damned busy."

The difficulty of trying to measure the impact on journalists in a situation like that of the Ottawa *Citizen* is that, essentially, the reader is asked to measure something that isn't there — the stories that did not appear because, if this is indeed the case, there was no competitor out there to worry about. Only rarely, as in the Haydon case, is it possible to see precisely what the effect of the removal of a rival means in the treatment of a given story. More often, journalists complain, on the one hand, that stories are not getting in, and editors reply, on the other, that the stories would not have appeared in any event.

On two occasions, journalists reported instances where they suspected that Southam officials had put pressure on reporters to produce slanted material for the

newspaper. In both cases, however, the assignments were refused by the reporters involved, and in both cases, it turned out that the reporters were assuming the interference had come from Southam. It had not.

A great deal of what appears, or does not appear, in any newspaper comes down, in the end, to a matter of personal judgment. The removal of the *Journal* from the Ottawa scene has given greater importance to the personal judgments of the *Citizen*'s senior editors. In turn, this has produced a natural skepticism on the part of the working reporters that laziness and timidity have become prevalent, and that the earlier trend toward softer coverage has been emphasized.

"We used to cover the arts," one staffer notes: "Now we have an entertainment section. We used to carry information about major developments in every key sector; now we have three pages of television news and squeeze in a story here and there about something else. We sent a serious music critic out to review a rock concert. We're more concerned about how many tickets a performance sold than whether it was any good. Our coverage got so lousy on local events that we had a whole delegation down here to complain. Well, that at least has improved; we're doing a better job of local arts coverage than we did, because we responded to the thing about being the only paper in town. But, frankly, I think we do a lousy job in a great many areas. Is that because the *Journal* isn't there anymore? I just don't know."

Another complaint is: "We are out for every dollar we can get, and I never thought that was the name of this game. We have staff writers turning out copy for advertising supplements. That's like saying, 'Our reporters are for sale.' "

Editor Mills replies to this last complaint: "We have been bringing out special sections for years, and we have been using staff writers to do features in them for years. Our point is that the reader is better served if he gets some real information, and not just the advertising copy. We think we do a good job on these specials, and we plan to continue them. But hell, there is nothing new about them."

Life is very different on the Ottawa *Citizen* than it was when the paper faced competition from the *Journal*. The reporting staff — there are some exceptions — feel that they have few options, and are under the threat of dismissal if they do not conform. The editors — most of them — feel that the paper has been relieved of the necessity to dream up wasteful promotions (such as the disastrous "Dream House" that poured money into a futile attempt to renovate an Ottawa house), and that they are able to get on with the job of reporting the news in a fuller fashion.

The paper's national bureau, working downtown, finds that it is easier to get major political stories into the paper. One senior bureau member reports: "We are a more serious paper now, and we have been given more room and better play. I think that's because the *Journal* did a good job covering the political scene, and we want to appeal to the former *Journal* readers. Whatever the reason, we're getting more in the paper."

A city-side reporter argues just the opposite: "We are no longer interested in solid reporting; we're only interested in gimmicks. We needed the *Journal* to keep us honest."

4. The Montréal *Gazette*

Most journalists at the Montréal *Gazette* consider their paper's finest hour to have been in the period between 1973 and 1976. The *Gazette* was deeply involved in inves-

tigative reporting, won a number of prizes, and, one staffer says, recalling that time: "The newsroom crackled. We were whipping the ass off the *Star*, and we knew it, and we loved it."

Management at the Montréal *Gazette* considers that period to have been one of disaster; the present publisher, Robert McConnell, told the Commission that the paper's reputation was left "in tatters" — a remark that one of his long-term staffers found "stupid and insulting".

There is perhaps no clearer example of the conflicting attitudes of working journalists and their managers than in this tug of war over the *Gazette*'s performance. For the journalists, excellence is measured in awards, scoops, battles engaged — even if not won — and the enthusiasm engendered by the aggressive pursuit of major stories. "If you want to measure the *Gazette*," says a deskman there, "consider the fact that Henry Aubin, one of the finest reporters in the country, the man who untangled the real estate holdings in downtown Montréal, spends his days tapping out editorials of exactly 59 lines each that don't say anything."

For management, the key fact about the 1973-76 period is that circulation, which had been rising, began to fall, that loyal readers were distressed by what they considered to be an offensive attitude in the writing of many of the journalists, that the advertising community was showing increasing signs of restiveness.

The paper's decline, for the journalists, or improvement, for the management, began long before the collapse of the Montréal *Star*, and its course since that time has been determined, at least in part, by changes made when a new publisher was appointed, and he in turn appointed a new editor-in-chief. The publisher was Ross Munro, the editor Mark Harrison. Harrison came from the Toronto *Star*, and began to replace key *Gazette* personnel with other Toronto *Star* editors. Today, Toronto *Star* personnel in key posts include the editor, managing editor, assistant managing editor, city editor, and financial editor. None of these is bilingual, although some have a smattering of French.

For the journalists, this pattern means that, as one reporter puts it: "We have turned our back on the majority of our own community. You'll have a scene where an assistant city editor is called in to tell one of his bosses what the French papers are saying about a major story. A built-in ghetto."

Editor Harrison sees the change in quite a different light. He says, in the first place: "My job is to recruit the best talent available for the job, and frankly, I have been unable to find that talent in Montréal. If you demand bilingualism in every editor, you are excluding 95 per cent of the journalists in this country. . ."

He says, in the second place: "The primary role of this newspaper is to defend and support the legitimate interests of the Anglo community and at the same time to be sensitive to the French-language community."

He denies that the lack of French disqualifies anyone from holding a senior post or understanding the community. "I have worked in the southern United States, and you used to hear that argument all the time. . . .You can't write about us because you don't come from here. It's nonsense."

At the same time, Harrison acknowledges: "It may well be that my successor should be more fluent in French than I am. In the best of all possible worlds, you should have bilingual people, and Montréal people, in these jobs, but if I have to choose between language proficiency and professional skill, I prefer to bring in really skilled professionals, who can pick up the local background on the job."

In short, there is a flat, and long-standing, dispute on the Montréal *Gazette*. A bilingual reporter wonders: "Is it something in the Montréal water supply that creates incompetence? Harrison says we don't have the skills here, but we've been turning out newspapers for over a century. Now it seems we are a bunch of boobs and only people from Toronto know how to edit." Harrison responds: "This is not geared to an elitist thing. I make no apologies for trying to recruit the best people available to do the job."

This conflict began before the series of events that led to the closing of the Montréal *Star* in September, 1979. The effect of that closing, however, was to assure the newspaper's management that it had adopted a proper policy, and to reinforce that policy. As elsewhere, the difficulty is to untangle the effects of the removal of competition from the market from the impact of long-standing disputes between the working journalists and their managers.

The situation since the removal of the Star

Very few of the *Gazette*'s 153 journalists feel — as do, for example, many of those working for the Victoria *Times-Colonist* — that their newspaper is simply doing a bad job.

"There are no horror stories here," says one department head, who had been with the *Gazette* 15 years. "We don't take freebies, we don't suck around advertisers, we don't pull back because we've lost our nerve.

"At the same time," he adds, "we're not going out after the big, long, tough investigations that created so much excitement a few years ago. My complaint is not that this is a bad paper — in many ways, it's excellent, my complaint is that it isn't nearly the paper it should be."

A more recent arrival, who worked at the Montréal *Star*, complains: "This is the smuggest goddamn newspaper I ever saw in my life. People who came over from the *Star* are made to feel that we are failures, that the paper we worked for was lousy, that everything the *Gazette* does is perfect. Well. . . .I don't believe what happened to the *Star* had anything to do with the paper; those were decisions taken in Toronto that had nothing to do with the job we were doing. I'll tell you this, the *Star* was a lot better at backgrounding major stories than the *Gazette*. This paper is so relentlessly breezy, so determined to be upbeat, that it reduces major stories to a mound of mush."

Another reporter with an extensive background in political writing comments: "I don't think you can separate the French-English thing, or the Toronto *Star* hotshot thing from the single-newspaper thing. It's just impossible. All I can say is that we have not adjusted to being alone in the market. We are not covering the French community as we should be, we aren't aware of half the undercurrents in this province, and that is a direct reflection of the interests of the people who run the paper. Hell, you know how a story conference goes. Somebody comes in with a proposal to do a profile of an important PQ cabinet minister, and one of our overlords will say 'Who's he?' If you want to do a takeout on the operations of the *caisses populaires*, you have to get the idea past a bunch of people who really have no understanding of what they mean to so many communities in Québec. You soon learn to stop making such proposals, and dream up gimmicks instead.

"Now, would that have happened if the Montréal *Star* still existed? Probably. The difficulty is to know to what extent the removal of the *Star* did give us a certain amount of leverage. If the *Star* had done something, or was about to do something, we could use that as an argument to get a story going over here. With the *Star* out of the way, it is much harder to make the argument that you're going to be scooped. You're not, and everybody knows it."

When the *Star* collapsed, the *Gazette* received 74 job applications from journalists, and 21 *Star* reporters, editors, and deskmen were taken on staff. The others scattered, some to other newspapers, many into public relations or government jobs. As always, their comments tend to be bitter. One who landed a job in Edmonton comments: "I came out here with the feeling that I was a failure. It doesn't make any sense, but when a paper goes out from under you, you have this feeling that you are somehow to blame. I am no longer a former Montréal journalist, I am a former reporter on the now-defunct Montréal *Star*. So, if you want to know what the impact of a decline in competition is to the journalist, for the guy who loses his job it's pretty straightforward. You are shattered. You lose your self-esteem. That undermines your confidence and you begin to pull back."

Another, now working in public relations in Montréal, notes: "I have become a hack. The collapse of the Montréal *Star* turned journalists into hacks. Period."

But, for the onset of cynicism and uncertainty in the journalists who lost their jobs, there is no offsetting gain in confidence for those who remain. "I feel threatened," says a *Gazette* reporter. "I am standing on a very narrow ledge, and you can bet I'm not going to thrash around very much. The funny thing is, I can't point to anything that makes me feel threatened. These people are not monsters; you can argue with them, debate coverage, in the heat of an argument you can even be quite rude. I have worked in industry, for large corporations, and I can tell you that you would never get away with some of the things we say here in a large corporation. You'd be fired if you told the boss he didn't know what the hell he was talking about. You can still do that here. So we're not talking about heartless monsters crushing the working journalist underfoot. In fact, it may be that my nervousness is my own invention, that I'm perfectly secure. I can only tell you that I am not doing as good work as I used to do, and that I have lost my edge. I put in my day from 9 to 5 and then I go home to spend time with my kids. I used to work 14, 16, 18 hours a day when I got going on something. Now, I watch the clock and stay out of trouble."

There are some dissenting views, of course. One department head at the *Gazette* says: "Frankly, I think we are bringing out a better paper today than we did before the *Star* folded. We had a story the other day that involved municipal politics, and it looked pretty hot. A couple of years ago, we'd have gone with it, but because we weren't under pressure to get it on the street, we did a little more checking, and a little more, and we discovered that it really didn't amount to much. Now, I admit you can't measure the impact of a story that never appeared, but I personally think the reader is better served by more thoughtful journalism, and the journalist, in the long run, is too."

Another, and more recent arrival at the *Gazette*, maintains: "I think the old glory days of the Mark Farrell regime were a bit exaggerated. We got into a lot of lawsuits, and some of them were worth getting into and some of them were not. At

least one was the result of boneheaded carelessness. Well, you may be raising a lot of dust with that kind of journalism, but are you really doing such a good job?"

Most of the paper's editors, deskmen, and reporters believe that the *Gazette* is, at least cosmetically, a superior product. "Our makeup is lively, our heads are sharp, and you don't have that business of typos staying in between editions," one reporter says. "Nobody would call it a shoddy product, which it sometimes was in the earlier days."

But another notes: "We look good, alright, but if you read the paper carefully, you'll see we're not doing a job of covering our own community. The paper is crammed with New York *Times* copy, Canadian Press, features lifted from the Toronto *Star*, syndicated columns. We carry almost nothing from our own Southam News service, and we don't know what is going on down at city hall. If you want the latest poop on Afghanistan, read the *Gazette*, but if you want to know what's happened in Verdun, you'd better get *Le Journal de Montréal*."

Mark Harrison reponds: "We are very happy to be able to get the best wire service material, and of course we use it. Our use of Southam News service is away down, around three per cent (that is, the Montréal *Gazette* runs about three per cent of all the material moved on the wire by Southam News). Part of that is a matter of timing. If you are a deskman, and you get a story from Canadian Press at 6 p.m. for a page that closes at 8 p.m., and you have the alternative of moving that one, or waiting for a Southam story promised for 7 p.m., you'll go with the CP story. The other part is, I regret to say, we don't think some of the Southam material measures up."

It is perhaps worth noting that, at the *Gazette* at least, a complaint raised by some staff members is that the paper does not make enough use of material provided by its own chain, rather than the expected complaints about interference from head office.

The *Gazette*'s wide use of wire copy — often signalled simply with a byline "Gazette Wire Services" — has led to a complaint that the newspaper was trying to downplay personality, and move to faceless, anonymous writing. Terry Mosher (Aislin), the paper's controversial cartoonist, protested when the *Gazette* began to run cartoons from other newspapers without crediting the source. He responded, first by changing his own signature in one cartoon from "Aislin, the Gazette" to "Aislin, the Gargle" (a change that slipped past the desk and got into print) and later by dropping the *Gazette* entirely from his signature. "If they won't acknowledge my colleagues, I won't acknowledge them," he says.

Mosher also designed himself a T-shirt that said "Gazette Wire Services" and, in an elevated state, made a tour of Montréal bistros introducing himself as "That famous writer, Gazette Wire Services". He, at least, is not a man who betrays much feeling of insecurity at the *Gazette*, a fact he attributes to the circumstance that "I don't work there. I have my own studio and refuse to go near the office."

It is editor Mark Harrison's contention that, far from declining because of the removal of competition, "this is a better newspaper, doing a better job, with more resources, and more professional in its attitude".

When he arrived at the *Gazette*, the editorial staff consisted of 94 men and women; by the time of the *Star* strike in June, 1978 — the event that began the series of occurrences that led to that paper's collapse — the *Gazette* editorial strength

was up to more than 100, and went to 135 by the time the strike ended eight months later. Since the *Star*'s disappearance, it has risen to 153, and Harrison has plans to add another seven.

The editorial budget has doubled over the same period, from about $3.5 million annually to about $7 million, and the newshole has increased by 65 to 70 per cent, according to Harrison. He suggests, therefore, that his paper has the resources to do a better job than ever before, and argues that it is doing a better job.

Some of his staff disagree. "There is nothing chintzy about us," one senior reporter contends: "We are willing to spend the money, but you have to ask yourself if we are spending it on the right things. A lot of what we run is fluff, trivia, junk journalism. For the amount of money Southam must be pulling out of here, we are not doing the job. The rule seems to be, if it is light and breezy and can be done in an afternoon, we're interested, but if it's going to take weeks of digging, forget it."

However, there are few complaints about stories being killed or distorted by editorial interference, and those that are raised are far from clear-cut. Three complaints, and the editor's response to them, are worth examining.

1. The complaint: "As a writer, I no longer feel that I can do the job I was trained to do, because of the way things are edited here. The desk is full of refugees from Fleet Street, guys who write a sharp head, but shy away from anything rough. I happen to know that we had a story about (former Liberal cabinet minister) Bryce Mackasey getting into trouble over expenses with Air Canada when he was chairman, and the thing was downplayed to take all the sting out of it. We have no guts."

Harrison's response: "It is true that this story was substantially revised. What happened was that we had a tip that Mackasey had been hit for using Air Canada passes for other people, and when we checked into it, it turned out that about 93 vice presidents and others were all doing the same thing. I wasn't going to have him pilloried and the story was changed to reflect the reality, that's all."

2. The complaint: "We had a story that the General Motors plant at Ste. Thérèse was about to close down because of a lack of productivity. Our man checked into it and found out that it was substantially correct. The union had been warned that things were so bad they once closed down the whole production line. That's the story that was turned in. What came out a few days later was quite different. It was a story that General Motors was going to step up productivity at the plant, a nice, upbeat, fluffy story that left all the rough stuff out."

Harrison's response: "We found out that our original story was not totally true. There had been some vandalism at the plant, but there was no shutdown on the production line — which our original report said — and there had been an admonition to the union that productivity had to be improved, but not that the plant was being closed down.

"There's hardly a week that goes by that you don't get a tip on a red-hot story, but it often turns out that it isn't nearly as breathtaking as it sounded in the first place. I suppose you could argue that if the *Star* had been there, we might have gone with the story before it had been thoroughly checked out, but I am satisfied that the version we did go with was a better and fuller account of what happened."

3. The complaint: "We had a story that said Canada was getting parts for radar installations from Russia. A terrific story with that bizarre angle reporters love. My god, we were getting strategic stuff from the enemy! But everybody is so chicken-shit

around here that the story was held and held until finally one of our guys used it on the radio. Then all hell broke loose in Ottawa and there were questions in the House, and we still didn't have the story."

Harrison's response: "Our reporter got the story alright, but there were some holes in it. We didn't use it for several days because we were trying to get a more complete story. Then the story broke elsewhere before we could get it into the paper. It was one of those stupid things that can happen. What really bothered me was that it was a good story, and I had done some stories like it many years ago. It was a terrific story, and we booted it."

There also have been some general complaints that the paper doesn't pay enough attention to the internal operations of the Parti Québécois, and that it slighted René Lévesque by not covering his last trip to Paris. Harrison believes that his paper carries a good deal of political reporting of all kinds, and says the decision to have Lévesque covered overseas by Southam News and the wire services was "a judgment call".

To a suggestion that, had the Montréal *Star* been in existence, a journalist would have been sent with Lévesque, he responds: "You make some judgments based on what the competition does, but that doesn't make them proper judgments."

Harrison notes: "I must admit to some mixed reactions to not having the *Star* around. To some extent it is less exhilarating because of the absence of a daily yardstick to measure oneself against. It is more difficult to imbue the reporting staff with that sense of zeal and zest and momentum that should be there.

"But the principal factor on the negative side is the amount of complaints and abuse the remaining newspaper gets that make it the more concentrated target for everybody who can't get his story into the paper.

"On the positive side, in theory, it should make it easier to recruit and maintain good staff. I say in theory, because the Montréal market is unique in the sense that the need for bilingualism in reporters places a considerable barrier, sometimes, on the ability to hire."

So the argument comes full circle, and returns to a ground well-trodden before the Montréal *Star* disappeared.

The *Gazette* has conducted a number of surveys and consultant studies to determine its course of action, and, one senior staffer complains: "We are a paper designed by Martin Goldfarb (a Toronto consultant) to produce a product that appeals to the constituency our senior management understands — Scarborough."

Harrison says: "We have not used the Goldfarb recommendations because we didn't think they applied, frankly. We use these reports as a tool, but we make our own decisions."

The *Gazette* recently acquired a new managing editor, Mel Morris, formerly of the Toronto *Star*. He is seen rather differently from some earlier *Star* recruits, however, as a man with a reputation for courage and an interest in tough reporting.

"We're hoping Mel's arrival will mean some changes," says one *Gazette* staffer who knows Morris. "Who knows, maybe we can get to be the paper we used to be again."

5. The Simcoe *Reformer*

The Simcoe *Reformer* is one of two newspapers studied for the impact on journalists from a lessening of competition — not when a competitor newspaper is closed, but when an independent moves into a chain. The *Reformer* is the most recent acquisition by the Thomson chain of an independent daily.

As will be seen, the impact on journalists at the two newspapers was markedly different, and appears to be a reflection of different policies pursued by the two chains.

The *Reformer* was founded as a weekly in 1855, and was run for many years by the Pearce family of Simcoe, and converted by them into a daily.

The newspaper announced its acquisition by Thomson on Feb. 10, 1978, in a front page story that noted: "St. Clair McCabe, Executive Vice President of Thomson Newspapers, said no changes in *Reformer* personnel or policy are contemplated.

"K.R. Thomson, President of Thomson Newspapers, said the *Reformer* will continue to operate as an independent local newspaper.

"We make it a point not to interfere with editorial policy. We believe that a newspaper must live by two principles — it must serve the best interests of the community and, in so doing, report the news fairly and thoughtfully."

These statements do not reflect the views of some of the Thomson employees who dealt with the *Reformer* shortly after the takeover. One of them notes: "The paper was a dog's breakfast, a disaster area. It is a much better paper today than it was. It's still lousy, but it's not an embarrassment any more. We turned it around: new type, new heads, new formats, different emphasis. We helped to train people, showed them how to do things, suggested story assignments."

The implication was that such a transformation could take place only through the strong intervention of the Thomson chain: "Our people went in there at the invitation of the locals, sure. You would get a call about a problem and ask, 'Do you want us to come down there?' The guy would say, 'I guess so," so you would get him to put it in a letter. Then someone would go down and do what had to be done."

In a sense, Colin McConechy, the senior editorial consultant for Thomson for many years — he resigned in protest in 1981, but not on the issue of editorial interference — confirms this view, although he puts it rather differently: "It strikes me as most unrealistic, naive, to think improvement can be accomplished without some direction, some supervision, and a good deal of encouragement."

Whatever its qualities today, there seems little dispute over the fact that the *Reformer* was not highly regarded at the time of the takeover. The edition of Feb. 7, 1978 carried a large, three-column picture whose caption read, "Women and children of El Pariso, Nicaragua, near Leon, pound pots pansand (sic) buckets during demonstrations Sunday to call for ouster of Nicaraguan President Anastasio Somoza.". It is hard to tell if this photo was meant to illustrate the nearby story "Renegade TV network may get license", or "Claims most don't understand Canada Pension Plan", or the scoop that "Canadians travel abroad".

The January 2, 1978 edition carried another three-column picture, again without explanation, with a caption reading: "An historic event of 1977 took place at Prudoe Bay in Alaska last June 2. Newsmen, photographers and pipeline officials waited for the pig, a plug that leads oil down the pipeline at the exit of oil pumping station No. 1 on Alaska's North Shore."

This kind of careless, thoughtless editing no longer appears in the pages of the *Reformer*. The improvement, however, appears to have involved a considerable impact on the journalists employed there.

The situation after the takeover

Few changes took place in the weeks following the Thomson acquisition, although experts from the chain's accounting and production departments were dispatched to Simcoe to perform studies and make recommendations. Then, about six months after the takeover, Colin McConechy paid his first visit to Simcoe. What he found there upset him: "The place was in absolute disarray. People would sit around waiting for the phone to ring and somebody to give them the information for a story. If that didn't happen, they would fill the paper up with wire copy."

McConechy conducted a number of interviews with John Cowlard, the new Thomson publisher, and later sent Regis Yaworski, Thomson's training officer, down to Simcoe to help with reworking the newspaper.

Perhaps the simplest way to understand the impact of what happened — as well as the fairest approach — is to set down the recollections first of Colin McConechy, the Thomson consultant, and then of Thomas Nunn, a reporter at the paper, who now works for the Regina *Leader-Post*.

First, the McConechy version: "When I went down to Simcoe I met with the publisher to discuss editorial progress. . . .Next came a meeting with the managing editor and an outpouring of problems — his.

"There was a certain pattern to all of these things. . . .The editor might have trouble with city council and want to know how other newspapers handled closed meetings. They placed great reliance on us to recruit desk people, reporters, and photographers.

"Talk turned to the coverage being provided currently and a review of recent editions. . . .Local features were suggested. Tips were offered on better composition and cropping of photos. The editor was shown tearsheets from other newspapers illustrating bright and fresh presentation, a different angle for a local story or picture. . . .Means of improving the newspaper were considered in detail, often with the city editor, sports editor, family editor, and other people sitting in, at the discretion of the editor.

"It should be noted that we studiously and deliberately avoided discussion of editorial policy and opinion offered by the newspaper. . . .

"Editors were encouraged and counselled on training, directing, and inspiring their staffs to expand local coverage. No question about it, the emphasis was on community coverage as the most important function of local newspapers.

"News-in-brief formats were suggested as essential in today's community newspapers. The main reason is a simple one — readers like them. Readership surveys showed time and again local news were the most popular features in small city dailies, ahead of Ann Landers. Wire news briefs also have an important place. . . .

"There was no attempt to homogenize journalism. There are basic features readers expect in their newspapers each and every day. Ann Landers, the crossword, a doctor's column, a weather report are common copy to most newspapers in Canada. . . .

"Nor was the intention ever to make all newspapers look the same. Editors were encouraged, and often assisted, in developing their own styles of presentation. . . .

"There is a great difference between just filling a newspaper and professionally providing news of the day. To fill his news columns all an editor requires is the Canadian Press news service: it's the easy way. There need be no particular concern for selection or, for that matter, for staff. We recommended and encouraged the professional approach: the careful selection of significant wire news, the replacing of Canadian Press time copy with local features and the concentration of staff efforts on local news and photos.

". . . During a visit, many, many suggestions were made to the editor to help him improve his newspaper. If he liked them, he agreed to institute them. If he didn't, they were dropped, at least until the time of another visit.

". . . The suggestions made to the editor would be reviewed with the publisher and he, in turn, would agree with them or reject them. Later, what was called a visit letter was written to the publisher. It outlined the points of discussion and agreement, certainly drawing attention to the matters considered of especial importance and urgency.

"Not really a Machiavellian plot, is it?"

McConechy did provide the *Reformer* with many suggestions, copies of which were presented to the Royal Commission at its London hearings. He also put out a memorandum to managing editors, containing suggestions sent in by the staff of various Thomson newspapers, and some of his own ideas, on what to cover and how to cover it.

In short, McConechy's view is: "We were there to help them, and we did help them. We were not there to impose some magic formula on them, and if they didn't want to take our advice, that was up to them."

At the receiving end, the Thomson influence was seen quite differently. What follows is the view of Thomas Nunn:

"As a reporter at the Simcoe *Reformer* between October, 1978 and May, 1980, I was able to witness interference with newsroom policies as Thomson increased their role in the *Reformer*'s operation. While I was there, former owner/publisher Dick Pearce retired and was replaced by John Cowlard, former advertising manager at the St. Thomas *Times-Journal*.

"During the last half of 1979 and early 1980, it became clear editorial decisions were being directed from the publisher's office and, more likely, from Thomson head office. Cowlard's presence in the newsroom and knowledge of editorial ethics was clearly influenced by his advertising background.

"The first evidence that Thomson news executive Colin McConechy was influencing news decisions came in mid-1979. Chris Thomas, the reporter covering Haldiman-Norfolk Regional Council, was instructed to drop the regional council committee meetings because they were not of interest to Simcoe readers. . . .Thomas objected to being pulled off the regional committee meetings because of their importance for covering regional municipal council. Thomas was removed from the beat, I took it over, and coverage of regional engineering, planning and finance committee meetings was dropped. . . .

"After about a month it became clear it was necessary to return to covering the sessions. . . .Without committee coverage, about six to a dozen major news stories

had to be written from every regional council meeting without any background information. The coverage was reinstated.

". . . The source of many changes at the *Reformer* was not within the Simcoe newsroom, but coming from a Toronto Thomson office. The main strength of the Thomson hold on their smaller newsrooms lies in their continuous promotion of advertising managers to publishers' chairs, which guarantees their tight control over their newspaper and newsroom budgets. Very few men in advertising departments understand the underlying ethic of objectivity necessary for a credible reporter to do his job. They sell advertising. When there is a conflict between ad and news departments, few former advertising managers (now publishers) will defend the editorial integrity of a newsroom. The right to write news without outside interference is not allowed if it endangers ad lineage.

"At the *Reformer*, the newsroom was instructed to carry out requests from ad manager Frank Livingstone, despite complaints from news reporters and city editor Bob Blakeley (since demoted). It was common while I was at the *Reformer* for the advertising manager, with the publisher's consent, to instruct the managing editor or city editor to assign news photographers to take pictures or write stories for their ad sales. The store anniversary or store opening stories often appeared on the same page as advertising purchased by the store. . . .I was instructed to take a picture in mid-1979 at the opening of a John Deere tractor and parts dealership at Simcoe's north end. I took the picture and told the city editor I would refuse a similar assignment again. Fortunately, I was never tested again on the issue and a younger reporter on staff was given the ad-related assignments. . . .

"The most glaring example of advertising interference to the detriment of editorial copy I've seen in my four-year reporting career occurred at the *Reformer*. Calbeck's Foods had been charged following a federal investigation into grocery stores suspected of mixing pork and other meats with their beef. The Brantford *Expositor* [Southam owned] carried a front-page story and banner headline in their August 31, 1979, edition mentioning the Calbeck's store in Brantford as one of 57 stores charged after the investigation. I was assigned to rewrite the story for the *Reformer*. After my story was submitted to managing editor Doug MacDonald for the front page, I stood by while MacDonald, advertising manager Frank Livingstone, and publisher John Cowlard looked at the story. Livingstone had walked into the *Reformer* after the *Expositor* came out, laughing at the headline blasting one of the *Expositor*'s major advertisers. 'This wouldn't happen here,' Livingstone said, waving the *Expositor*.

"MacDonald, with Livingstone and Cowlard watching, took his pen and struck out a reference to Calbeck's in my story. The Brantford Calbeck's store was mentioned as the closest store to Simcoe charged in the case — Calbeck's was also one of the *Reformer*'s major advertisers. 'That just won't do,' said MacDonald, and he stroked the line from my story. It was the only time MacDonald removed a line from my story at the *Reformer*. . . .The story subsequently appeared in the *Reformer* September 4, 1979, under a much different guise and headline than what appeared in the *Expositor*. No reference to Calbeck's or any other food store was included in the *Reformer* story."

The question of advertising interference continues to arise at the *Reformer*. "Any time you do a business story," complains a staffer, "you have to go over it with

a fine-tooth comb to make sure no one advertiser gets too much or too little. . . .It is common practice for the advertising manager to be present when story ideas are discussed, and to chime in on them."

The point was raised with the new city editor, Ron Kowalsky, who replied: "Frank Livingstone says 'Why not talk to a good advertiser?', but that goes in one ear and out the other."

Kowalsky said he had no objection to Livingstone's suggestions: "They're just trying to make their job easier."

This is not the usual response of senior editorial personnel to such situations, but Kowalsky appears mainly content with the operation of his newspaper under Thomson. "I've liked it because I've had some guidance," he says, and cites the visits of Colin McConechy and Regis Yaworski to the *Reformer*. "We have a better, brighter paper now, with more consistency".

In common with other staff members, he does note some restraints placed by tight financial controls. "There is not a whole lot of independent investigation done here," he notes, "I would love to be able to turn somebody loose on a story for a whole day, but we just don't have the bodies."

He admits: "The morale here is terrible. . . .People would be more productive if they weren't always bitching about the place they work."

On one occasion, a printer who covers sports for the *Reformer* turned in an account for 99 lines of copy, at 25 cents a line. Kowalsky rounded it out to 100 lines and an even $25, but, he says: "The account was changed and the extra quarter taken off. It did seem a little petty."

One reason morale appears to be low at the paper is that all incoming mail, unless it is marked personal and confidential, is sent straight to the publisher, who opens and checks it.

"It really makes you feel creepy," says one staffer. "I got a letter the other day from my sister in Miami, and it had been opened."

John Cowlard, the publisher, says: "I open all mail unless it's marked personal and confidential. I'm responsible for the newspaper and I'm entitled to know what's going on here. . . .If someone is getting something personal, it shouldn't be sent here."

Cowlard also said he was arranging to see outgoing mail, too.

This matter was raised with Brian Slaight, general manager of Thomson Newspapers, who replied: "There is no policy that a publisher open the mail. As far as I know nobody opens anything marked personal and confidential. On smaller papers, I wanted to see most mail for a couple of reasons. Often there might be a complaint, and it might not get to you. Also, if you read the mail you had a better understanding of what was going on. That would apply on the smaller papers. The publisher would not read the mail on the larger papers. He wouldn't have the time. . . .In Barrie (where Slaight was publisher of the *Examiner*) one of the editors used to pick up press releases out of the mail and just put them in the paper. I'd just ditch them. . . .Where it is done, it is done just to keep on top of things."

The *Reformer* changed to a body type common to many Thomson papers, working from a production manual common to the chain. Emphasis was placed on Simcoe stories, rather than on regional ones, and a district reporter claims: "The biggest story in this area is the waste-dump site at Cayuga. Our man for the area has been

down there precisely once. He couldn't do much even if he did go, because you can't write a story longer than two takes and you couldn't begin that story in that length."

City editor Kowalsky replies: "We have carried a good deal on Cayuga; we have a story in today." (It was a Canadian Press brief.) He says "Many of the writers want to pad stories out" but denies that they are restricted to two takes (about 300 words). "We try to give it what it's worth." (In a John Cowlard memo, the publisher suggests three takes as the upper limit for stories.)

The *Reformer* came under a quantification system common to Thomson papers, in which one week's issues are analysed, in detail, for such things as the number of pictures, the number of stories on page one, the number on page two, and the local page (page three). A long-term Thomson employee says: "The way it works is that somebody goes over the paper and counts all these things. The more stories you can cram onto page one, the better. If you can get six photos and five of them are lousy and one is good, it doesn't matter. That's like six points. The publisher is then given a sheet with all these things on it, and taken through it. The report will say, 'This paper averaged eight stories on page one, compared to 10 in 1979.' The idea is to boost up the story count. Suppose the staff has been busting itself and gets the page one count from 10 up to 12. Then the report will say, 'The paper averaged 12 stories in 1979; it should be trying for 14.' There is no way the journalists can ever satisfy. . . .There are about half a dozen publishers who have a background in journalism, and you can't do this to them. But most come from advertising, and what do they know?"

This Thomson employee contends: "It's all a numbers game, and quality means nothing. Every reporter is turned into a photographer, too, to save money. Well, they really come down hard on wasting photo paper, because it's expensive. So if a guy makes three prints off a neg, and they all come out lousy because he doesn't know what he's doing, they go with the best of the bunch, even if it's not good, rather than waste any more paper."

Colin McConechy suggests that local control is much more important than this account indicates. "You try to establish standards, but you don't lead people by the hand. If they show any initiative, you encourage them."

Reformer publisher Cowlard also emphasizes that "We get advice from the Thomson people, we don't get orders." But at least some of his staff believe that the newspaper today is very largely the creation of the Thomson's editorial consultants. A memorandum from Cowlard to the editors seemed to lean very heavily on notes and opinions given to the publisher by McConechy, and contained such items as, "We need bright story daily on the front page. CP wire gives them daily," and, "Elthan should show me all his editorials before they run. This is common practice in other newspapers, to make sure that they are in the best taste."

The question of monetary restrictions comes up again and again in talks with *Reformer* staff, and this is one issue on which they and McConechy share a common view.

McConechy complains: "I suffered the death of a thousand cuts. There was no one thing that got me down, just a steady drumroll of silly and petty little things."

When he left Thomson, McConechy, who had worked for the firm for more than 30 years, wrote a personal letter to Ken Thomson complaining about financial practices which he believes affect the morale and working effectiveness of Thomson reporters everywhere.

Some of his points, and the Thomson reply, are listed below.

1. McConechy said that on one occasion his assistant ran up a $12 long distance telephone bill calling his wife from Regina. She had been unhappy, and they had a lengthy conversation. McConechy says: "If a man has given all the years of faithful service that he did, and he can't even call home, well, it's just stupid."

Brian Slaight, Thomson general manager, says that the bill was questioned, not refused. His recollection: "I noticed that there had been a number of calls, and my recollection is that they came to somewhere around $30 or $40. I wasn't reprimanding him, I was merely asking about the bills out of concern for him. In fact, I suggested to Colin that maybe (his assistant) should be kept around Southern Ontario, closer to home, for a while."

The assistant's recollection is that the bill was not paid.

2. McConechy recalls: "On the very day Thomson took over FP Publications, for $167.4 million, I asked Brian Slaight for a cash advance for the Ottawa office. The boys were mailing some of their pieces out to the papers, and then putting in for the stamps. I said it seemed wrong that a big organization like ours couldn't afford to provide the money. Brian asked me how much the advance should be, and I said $50. He cut it back to $25."

Slaight says: "As I recall it, the Ottawa boys weren't comfortable with the idea of $50 around the office, because they had no way to lock it up. I said just advance $25, and Colin agreed. Later, we resolved the problem by putting in a postal machine.

"I wasn't trying to save $25. I was just trying to do what seemed best and most convenient for the Ottawa office."

3. McConechy says he was reprimanded because he bought a rug for the Ottawa bureau on a credit card, instead of putting it through the Thomson supply department, and was reprimanded again because he bought drapes for the office in the same way.

Again, Slaight's recollection differs: "It wasn't a question of whether the office should have a rug and drapes, but how they were going to be purchased. We do a capital budget every year, and I mentioned these things to Colin simply because there is a different accounting procedure for various items. He was not reprimanded."

Slaight contends: "Colin and I were always good friends, and I thought we were really close, and then at the end he suddenly blew up and raised a number of things. I had no idea they were bothering him."

There can be few news organizations of any size in North America in which two senior officials could get into a serious dispute about rugs, stamps, and drapes. There can be few such organizations in which the publishers screen mail.

As we will see, there are some sharp contrasts between what happened when Thomson took over the Simcoe *Reformer* and when Southam took over the Sault Ste. Marie *Star*.

6. The Sault *Star*

The Sault *Star* was founded as a weekly by James W. Curran in August, 1902, and remained under the control of the Curran family until it was sold to the Southam chain. It had become a daily in 1912. The Southam takeover was announced in the

paper on April 11, 1975. The conversion from hot metal to photo composition was made in 1975, and the plant was moved from downtown Sault Ste. Marie to the present location on the edge of town in 1978. This move had been planned by the former owners, who had purchased the property some years earlier, in 1973.

The present news editor of the *Star*, Jody Curran, the grandson of the founder, explains the reason for the sale:

"There are a number of difficulties in a family ownership. There were 18 stockholders at the time, half of us working at the paper. Some were willing to invest in the new plant, and some were not. More and more papers have gone to group ownership; there are damned few independents left, and I regard that as regrettable, although I find the Southams a fairly worthy organization. . . .

"Part of the problem was that we were not able to make a respectable return. One year, we had only a one per cent profit. It was hard to keep up an interest for some. There was a tax problem, too; the law seems to make it easier for a group to own a newspaper than for a family to hold onto it."

Curran says that once the decision to sell was made (which took some negotiation, because the family agreement provided that all had to approve a sale outside the family), offers came in from "five or six interested parties".

One of these, he says, was the Thomson chain. "They offered us over $5 million, and we sold to Southam for a good deal less [in fact, for $3.4 million]. The reason for that was that we had some of the Thomson people up here and they said they could lay off 10 per cent of the staff and make a decent profit. We weren't having that."

Thomson Newspapers general manager Brian Slaight, while confirming that his organization had put in a bid for the *Star*, declined to discuss how high it was, and denied emphatically that his organization had made a proposal to lay off 10 per cent of the staff.

"You certainly wouldn't do that as part of a bid; it would just be stupid. I can say definitely that there was no such discussion."

After the takeover, Southam appointed Bill Dane, a former journalist and publisher in Owen Sound, Ontario, as publisher, and Dane brought in Douglas Milroy, city editor of the Edmonton *Journal*, as editor.

There were some notable contrasts between arrangements after Southam took over and those made when Thomson Newspapers acquires a new paper. For example, when the Thomson organization went over the books in Victoria, it was noted that the pensions of retired workers were brought up to date annually, to keep pace with inflation. This arrangement was stopped in 1980, although employees were informed that it might be resumed again.

Thomson's Slaight explains: "We had a legal opinion that we were not required to do this, and that if we did it every year, it could become a legal obligation. We therefore suspended the practice for the year."

In Sault Ste. Marie, the same question arose, but, publisher Bill Dane explains, was disposed of rather differently: "I told the Southam people that we should keep our retired people in line with inflation, and they asked me, 'Well, what about the ones who are already retired?' I said I assumed that we had no obligation there, but Southam's said, 'Well, that isn't right; they should be looked after, too.' So that's what we did, and the pensions are kept in line with inflation every year."

Dane insists, "Nobody from Southam ever comes here to tell us what to do. Head office is there to help us, and obviously there are financial structures to be complied with. If I want to buy a big piece of capital equipment, I talk to them, but in the ordinary course of events, we draw up the budget here, and then we are expected to make it work. They're not going to take a mediocre performance year after year, but the responsibility remains here."

The situation since the takeover

The Sault *Star* was regarded by its staff as an excellent paper at the time Southam took it over. Many staff members today believe it is a better one, a few feel it is worse, and some regard it as just about the same.

The paper had 37 editorial employees, and has the same number today. There has been some change in the disposition of these employees, with bureaus closed down in nearby towns, and more manpower put to work on investigative and background stories.

One reporter, Alex Mitchell, considered by most of his colleagues to be the paper's best, works under the direct supervision of editor Douglas Milroy, and is known as "the green memo brigade" because of special assignments he receives on green memo paper. The paper has carried a number of major "series" stories, often reflecting Milroy's interests in such subjects as the need — or not — for Grade 13 in Ontario high schools. Staff have ranged as far as Europe, to cover a local sports team on a visit there, and the southern United States, to cover the 1980 drought.

No direct comparison applies to the Simcoe *Reformer*, about one third of the news staff and circulation of the *Star*, and where permission must be obtained to make each long distance telephone call.

However, where the two papers can be compared is in the attitude of the working journalists toward their publication, and it should be noted that complaints at the *Star* centre on two subjects. One is the occasionally abrasive approach of editor Doug Milroy; the other, and perhaps related, complaint is that, as a number of staffers put it, "The family feeling is gone."

A surprising supporter of the Southam takeover is news editor Jody Curran, who says: "I am in favor of individual ownership, but I can't point to any instance where we have pulled back, or where there has been interference because we are a member of Southam. . . .

"We're showing a little more intiative now; there is much more push on getting the news out quickly, and on developing stories fully. We don't seem to be afraid to tackle things, either. We did a piece on the fact that the Memorial Centre was under-exited, for example, which was not exactly well received by some people. I think the paper is still committed to the community."

Fred Loader, the paper's chief editorial writer, and a long-term employee (as are many of the journalists) says there were a number of problems in working for a family-owned paper. "There were about eight or nine Currans on board all the time, and they didn't always agree with each other, so you could get in trouble with one for doing something one of the others wanted done. . . .You had the feeling that, no matter what job you had, any member of the Curran family outranked you."

Loader says that, on one occasion, he wrote a column on the subject of therapeutic abortions (to which he is adamantly opposed), and, "Somebody showed a

proof of it to the women's editor, who happened to be a Curran, and the column was killed, just because she didn't agree with it." (This editor later left, after a clash with editor Milroy.)

Loader says that he has freer expression now than he did when the paper was family-owned. "We sit down in the morning and talk about editorials, Doug (Milroy), Bill (Dane), and myself. Often, we agree on what we want to tackle and how to do it, but if there is a disagreement, I make my points as strongly as I can. In the end, it is my job to reflect the publisher's and the editor's point of view, and once I have been overruled, I do the best job I can to do that. If I don't persuade anybody, I am not doing my job. . . .But I have my own column, and nobody touches anything that goes in there, so I have sometimes written an editorial going one way, and then a column flatly disagreeing with the editorial."

Loader also feels that his paper may benefit from the fact that "there are more resources behind us now. If there is a paper strike at Abitibi, we could be in trouble, but with Southam behind you, there are other options."

The contention that Curran family members usurped power on the paper is not universal. One woman reporter says: "I never felt I wasn't being given an equal opportunity; if anything, the opposite, because a couple of the Currans were very strong for Women's Lib. . . ."

"There was a better feeling around the place," she says. "There was very little squabbling and infighting. Now, because the editor tends to be such a powerful figure, people feel a little threatened."

Another female reporter notes: "I really can't see that my life has changed in any way. The Currans had a certain number of sacred cows, and we have some sacred cows now. They are different, but there aren't any more or less of them. . . .After all, most of the people I report to are the same ones I reported to before, so nothing much has changed."

The "sacred cows" this journalist says are currently favored by the paper are "the business community in general and Algoma Steel (the city's largest industry)". She notes: "We did a great series going after the Children's Aid Society for some abuses. I would have been even prouder if we put that much effort into tackling Algoma Steel and finding out, for example, whether they comply with all the environmental standards."

However, this reporter adds: "I'm not suggesting this is a worse paper. I think there was more concern for the community before because the people who owned it lived here all their lives. It always had the reputation of being a good paper. But there were a lot of things wrong with it, and there have been a lot of improvements in some areas."

A sportswriter says: "You hear a lot of bitching around the newsroom of any newspaper, and I used to be taken in by it, but when you travel around a bit, you see this is a pretty good place to work. When you talk to a Thomson guy, you are very conscious of working for a better outfit, where you don't get niggled to death. If you work hard, this is a good place to be."

People working within a few feet of each other in the *Star* newsroom come to quite different conclusions about their paper. One desk-person notes: "This is a better paper than it was, more copy, more local coverage. There is a little bit more digging than we ever did before, and Milroy showed us how to put stories together. He

really opened my eyes. In the old days, anything that came in off the wire, why, we'd just stick it in the paper. Now, we're rewriting it, looking for local applications. We're not satisfied just to fill up the paper."

And then there is the contrary view: "We don't have the same feel for this town that we used to have. We don't do nearly as good a job of covering local personalities. We're better at the formal side of news reporting, going to a press conference, covering council meetings, but we used to do a very good job of writing about local life, and we don't do that nearly so well today."

The *Star* carries a good deal of material from Southam News, printing about 45 per cent of the copy that moves, compared to three per cent at the Montréal *Gazette*. This gives the paper much better coverage from outside its own circulation area than it had under the Curran regime, but some of the staff think the paper has paid too high a price. One photographer with long service says: "The number of assignments of local interest are down. We used to carry about two-and-a-half pages of art on the women's pages, and now it's about a page and a half. We used to send out six photographers on Community Day and just fill the paper with pictures of all kinds from around here. Now we send out one photographer and run maybe half a dozen pictures."

He suggests that the Southam takeover explains this difference in emphasis: "Well, they're not from here, are they?"

However, most criticisms made by editorial staffers deal not with the content of the newspaper, but with staff and morale problems. One department head who has spent most of her working life at the *Star* says: "With the family, you had a feeling of belonging. You were just more secure. I can't point to anything anyone has done to make me feel worried, but I'm just not comfortable the way I was."

A number of other staffers, particularly among the long-term employees, made the same point, to which a younger reporter replies, "Well, of course they were comfortable, because you could just sit on your ass and collect your pay cheque. Milroy won't let you do that. He chews people out, thinks he's Lou Grant, sometimes, but he's been good for this paper, and whatever I feel about Southam, they deserve credit for bringing somebody like Milroy in here."

Money is a problem, as always in the newspaper industry. Editor Milroy notes: "I have a budget of about $1 million a year for editorial, which is okay, but, of course, there is never enough to do all the things you want to do."

Some shortcuts are applied. The paper's hockey writer, whose family lives in Toronto, stays at home when he travels with the Sault Greyhounds, to save on expenses. But, Milroy contends: "There is none of this business of having to beg for every dime to do the job. There are constraints, but it's not like working for Thomson. I decided this morning that we needed a new typewriter, so we went and bought it. There was no going to Southam."

Milroy is aware that his own abrupt approach raises some hackles among staff members. "When I first came here, I was pretty rough on people, because I thought things needed shaking up. I suppose they're all telling you, 'That Milroy is a mean bastard'. But I think we're over that, and things will improve."

Milroy feels that, because there is no direct newspaper competition, his staff must be pushed to compete against other media and against themselves. "They don't get excited, don't get outraged enough," he says. "Hell, if a newspaper doesn't have a sense of outrage, what is it all about?"

Star journalists are paid as well or better than others in comparable jobs; the weekly salary of a reporter runs $378 a week under the union contact, compared with $350 at the Thomson-owned Sudbury *Star*. The journalists are organized as members of the International Typographical Union, rather than the Newspaper Guild, because, as a union officer explains: "The ITU and the Guild are going to merge, and the ITU had the print-shop here, so it made sense to start out with them." The unionization has produced some friction, particularly among staff members who do not hold a high opinion of the combative ITU, and this tends to confuse the already complex feelings among the journalists.

However, asked the straightforward question, "If you had it in your power to turn the paper back to the Curran family, would you do so?", most of the 23 editorial staffers who were on the *Star* before the takeover replied, with varying degrees of uncertainty and qualification, "No."

7. The Edmonton *Journal*

The Edmonton *Journal* was looked at, briefly, because it represents a situation opposite to that in most of the case histories presented here. That is, the *Journal* was alone in its market until the arrival of the Edmonton *Sun*, a tabloid, three years ago.

Journal staffers were asked to comment on their own working conditions as the result of the arrival of the *Sun*. What follows is a sampling of replies:

"They're really paranoid about the *Sun*. They put out a morning edition, and ladled out a lot of money to try and scoop the *Sun*. We even tried to go the cheesecake route. You know, the *Sun* runs these girlie pictures, so we tried to match that, and it was just embarrassing. We ran rotten pictures. If you're going to be sleazy, you've got to put your heart in it."

"We're putting big pictures on page one, and cutting down the stories. On Saturday, it is almost impossible to get on page one. The biggest story every Saturday is the Index. The type is larger, the white spaces bigger, and the stories shakier since the arrival of the *Sun*."

"They say we're in competition, but as far as I can see, we're not. We don't really care what the *Sun* does. In a market sense, I guess somebody cares, because we do all this hype about what a great paper we are on every billboard in town, but we're not reacting to anything the *Sun* carries except the cheesecake. . . .The problem here is that we have people sitting around all day with very little to do. When I assign a story, I know that even if the reporter brings back exactly what I asked for there is only about a 40 per cent chance the stuff will get into the paper. There is just no room, what with all the ads, and the features we grab off the wire, and the big pictures."

"There is no reluctance here to spend money, but there is a hell of a reluctance to rock any boats. So you can go to Spain to do a big story, but not take on the Alberta tar sands. The *Sun* has no effect on that whatever, because, what are they doing, anyway? There was a big blowup at the *Sun* a while back and a lot of people got fired. We hired a bunch of them, but they were mostly just kids, summer replacements. That's our whole problem. The way this business is going, you work for two or three years and if you're any good, about the time you learn what a reporter's job is, you bail out and go into PR, so you can make a living wage."

"The presence of the *Sun* doesn't have as much effect on us as what happened on August 27, when they shut down the [Winnipeg] Trib and the [Ottawa] *Journal.* Reporters suddenly realized that the corridors out there are very crowded. It makes you marvellously polite. You can't go across to the *Sun* if you get turfed out of here because, let's face it, the *Sun* is not an alternative for a serious journalist, it's an entirely different kind of journalism."

"When the *Sun* first came in there was a feeling that, wow, this would shake things up, but it didn't. It was tits and ass and a few columns and a lot of junk journalism, that's all. Sure, some money was spent, but it was spent trying to imitate the junk journalism, not trying to do a better job."

"Well, my complaint is that we have to do a lot of schlock promotion assignments that we never had before. We opened a new plant, and you'd think it was the second coming of Christ. A whole section page devoted to it, with huge pictures and all that stuff. . . .And, we have these billboards all over town, 'Have Coffee with Ronnie' or 'Have Juice With Jones'. Honest, they are just embarrassing."

6
Living with concentration

by
Gérald LeBlanc

As early as 1970, the Davey Committee had already singled out Québec as being in the vanguard of the movement toward concentration of ownership of the news media. By the middle of the decade *Le Devoir* had become an exception to the rest of the daily press, which had come under the control of Paul Desmarais, Jacques Francoeur and Pierre Péladeau.

Privately-owned radio stations and the weekly press are now the arena where the drama of concentration is being played out in Québec. As far as the dailies are concerned, the phenomenon has already begun to seem commonplace and, when studied, tends to be censured or praised indiscriminately.

Behind this uniformity lurk some curious anomalies which have too hastily been made to fit certain ideological viewpoints. Those who work on the dailies, however, have had first-hand experience of the hold exercised by the large publishing empires over the French-language print media in Québec. Some 50 journalists, from editors to local reporters, were interviewed, and it became evident that the tale should be told of:

1. The apparent rescue of *Montréal-Matin* by the daily, *La Presse*.
2. *Le Soleil's* painful encounter with UniMedia's marketing practices.
3. The defeat of Quebecor's *Le Journal du Nord-Ouest* by its own weeklies.

1. The illusory rescue of *Montréal-Matin*

In the middle of the summer, on August 10, 1973, the journalists at *Montréal-Matin* heard the good news: their paper had just been bought by *La Presse*, through Gesca, holding company of Power Corporation, a group belonging to Paul Desmarais.

The euphoria of the journalists at *Montréal-Matin* struck a jarring note in the midst of the anti-concentration offensive led by the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec (FPJQ) and the journalists' unions which, several months later, would block the sale of *Le Soleil* to Power Corporation.

Tabloid writers, without much interest in the great ideological debates of the time, the journalists at *Montréal-Matin* were more concerned with bread and butter issues and the survival of their newspaper.

"We were convinced that we were heading for bankruptcy. The appearance on the scene of the Power empire meant survival and hope for the journalists," Bernard Brissett explains.

"It was a great relief to break out of that unbelievable — almost neurotic — atmosphere of uncertainty at *Montréal-Matin*," Raymond Bernatchez adds.

"One had to have lived through the muddle of the preceding few years to understand the joy of the journalists upon hearing that the newspaper had been sold to Power Corporation," says Nicole Gladu.

In the footsteps of the Union Nationale

Launched in 1930 by a group of Conservative supporters rallying around Camillien Houde, *Montréal-Matin* was published under the name *Illustration*, and then *Iliustration-Nouvelle*, until 1941.

Printed on pink paper, and selling for 2¢ a copy, the illustrated tabloid embodied the main ideological traits of Montréal's colorful mayor: it was nationalist, populist, and defended the rights of the French-Canadian "common man".

Sold to the Union Nationale in 1947, it was directly controlled by Premier Maurice Duplessis until his death in 1959. Indeed, Charles Bourassa, a close friend of Duplessis and manager of *Montréal-Matin*, considered himself the "boss's personal representative".

With an outstanding circulation department, which was plugged directly into Duplessis' powerful Union Nationale organization, *Montréal-Matin* experienced a constant increase in circulation and revenues during that period. "It was the paper that subsidized the UN, and not the other way around," Raymond Bernatchez states.

But the "boss" died in 1959, and his party began its slow decline, the effects of which gradually became apparent at *Montréal-Matin*. Gabriel Loubier, elected head of the UN in 1971, undermined the daily's credibility by allowing doubts regarding the honesty of the managers and over the very future of the newspaper to remain unsettled.

At the paper itself, management was squandering its inheritance by massive investments in a new building and new presses, and seigniorial perquisites for management. Nothing was too good for the management of the paper: spacious and luxurious offices, infra-red heating for the patio, a Jordi Bonnet engraving, a private cook for the publisher, and uniformed guards for business entertaining.

Meanwhile, the news staff had to make do with crumbs. "They made us fill out subscription forms to swell the circulation figures; the paper became an advertising catalogue; there were fewer than 30 journalists; there was no subscription to CP, the typewriters were defective and there was no possibility of travelling to cover stories," says Bernard Brisset bitterly.

Brisset remembers that when the Mount Wright mine collapsed, management agreed to send a reporter to the scene, provided, however, that he find a sponsor to pay travelling expenses. "At the time", he adds, "a train derailment in Wyoming was our front page story."

Raymond Bernatchez will never forget the day he had to get the paper out alone, aided by Claude Guy Jasmin, who had three months' experience, just one less than Bernatchez.

"With the exception of Lucien Langlois — an outstanding journalist whom everyone remembers with admiration — the paper was being run by incompetents, who, by the end of the Sixties, were no longer equal to the task," says Bernatchez.

In 1972, Gabriel Loubier, the leader of the Union Nationale, sold *Montréal-Matin* to its publishers: Régent Desjardins, Roland Gagné, and Paul Gros d'Aillon. The cutting of ties with the party did not, however, lead to any improvement in the lot of the news staff, according to Bernard Brisset; in fact, if anything, the situation deteriorated. The interregnum was, however, short-lived, to the great joy of the journalists, who preferred the fearsome Power Corporation to the "political ragbags" (the term is Nicole Gladu's) of the old days.

A publisher-journalist

Two months after acquiring *Montréal-Matin*, Paul Desmarais sent Luc Beauregard to it with the task of putting the paper back on its feet. Following a seven-year career as a reporter at *La Presse*, Beauregard had made short forays into government circles in Ottawa and Québec City, before starting his own public relations firm.

"It took me less than a week at *Montréal-Matin* to realize that the paper was bankrupt," Beauregard said. Wanting to protect himself, he immediately informed Paul Desmarais of the paper's financial straits. "Why do you think we bought it, young man?" was the reply.

Desmarais and Roger Lemelin, then president of *La Presse*, made no bones about it: *Montréal-Matin* was purchased in order to protect the advertising market of *La Presse* by preventing *Le Journal de Montréal* from taking a lead in advertising. It was therefore necessary to revive *Montréal-Matin*, and Beauregard was to be given means to accomplish this. The new publisher called the journalists together and told them: "The quality of the news reporting is what is going to get this paper out of its difficulties."

Bernard Brisset has not forgotten the impact of this initial encounter. "Beauregard was seen as a god. Finally, we were under the direction of someone who knew the trade and believed in it. It was heaven."

"When Beauregard talked about news policy, it was like sweet music to our ears," adds Nicole Gladu, one of the reporters.

And Beauregard did not stop at words: he went on to hire some 20 journalists in two years, including Jean-V. Dufresne, who "would not have worked on the old *Montréal-Matin*"; built up quite a respectable editorial page around Marc Laurendeau; and put Michel Lord in charge of a Sunday edition, which was a sharp contrast in quality to the second-rate products available to Quebecers over the weekend.

This renewal effort culminated in the coverage of the 1976 Olympic Games in Montréal. Combining its best sections, sports and miscellaneous news, together with the overall view projected by Jean-V. Dufresne, *Montréal-Matin* offered, according to most observers at that time, the best coverage of the 1976 Olympics. Enthusiasm was so great that the sports editor, Pierre Gobeil, slept at the paper in order not to miss anything.

To crown it all, improvement in the product coincided with a spectacular climb in circulation. After 1971, when it had reached a circulation peak of 158,000 copies while *La Presse* was on strike, *Montréal-Matin* had experienced a constant decline.

In March, 1976, the Audit Bureau of Circulations indicated that the downward rush had been stopped at 125,000 copies, and the March, 1977, ABC figures showed a rise to 142,000 copies, an increase decidedly greater than that of *Le Journal de Montréal*. It seemed that the joyous expectations arising from this fresh start would be confirmed as actual fact. Beauregard had organized a large post-Olympic party at Chanteclerc in the Laurentians to thank his troops and to celebrate the paper's success.

It was to be a celebration: it became a day of mourning. After the usual congratulations, Beauregard announced to *Montréal-Matin's* news staff that he had just been dismissed, the day before the party.

"Everyone was absolutely stunned: the savior responsible for the recovery had been fired," Nicole Gladu recalls.

"Tears were shed that night. He was a boss who we felt was on our side. For the first time, we realized that we were dependent on someone else, *La Presse* and Power Corporation," Bernard Brisset explains.

Brisset, who was news editor at the time, had been told about Beauregard's dismissal the day before. "He explained to me at the time that he had been let go because he had rejected *La Presse's* control, tried to safeguard the autonomy of *Montréal-Matin's* news staff, demanded separate premises from *La Presse*, and had a personality conflict with Lemelin."

The sudden dismissal of Beauregard was, in fact, merely the final outcome of a process that had begun two years earlier, as the principal person involved has frankly explained.

From Desmarais to Lemelin

At first, Beauregard was offered the opportunity to become the editor of *Montréal-Matin*. He wanted more, and they agreed to make him the publisher. "This meant having final say. I reported directly to Desmarais or to his private secretaries," Beauregard says.

The publisher's autonomy was, however, short-lived, lasting just long enough to settle the newspaper's twelve collective agreements. In the words of Beauregard, sentiment was in favor of upping the ante and for parity with the employees of *La Presse*. Guy Pepin, a manager at *La Presse*, had told the union leaders at *Montréal-Matin*: *"Money is no object,"* or so Nicole Gladu reports.

On the basis of three-year projections of union demands that he had had prepared, Beauregard reached the conclusion that the paper would never make a profit.

At that point Lemelin agreed to take "little brother" under his wing: *La Presse* undertook to wipe out *Montréal-Matin*'s deficit, in return for allowing all services, with the exception of the news staff, to be gradually absorbed into the larger organization.

"We had no choice: *La Presse*'s offer was our only hope, and it seemed reasonable to make the paper profitable by combining services," Beauregard says. But the situation had radically changed for the publisher of *Montréal-Matin*. "From December, 1975, on, to all intents and purpose I had become a branch manager of *La Presse*."

Beauregard had accepted the principle of combining services, but he had to disagree with the way it was carried out. "The top brass at *La Presse* were constantly

threatening to overwhelm *Montréal-Matin*'s people," he explains. Moreover, Beauregard saw that combining services was not achieving the expected results. As an example, he cites a ridiculous attempt to economize in the advertising department: he let go 20 employees making $20,000 a year only to see *La Presse* hire 15 at $30,000 a year.

"*La Presse* was like a big machine, with no discipline or leadership, which did not know how to profit on a daily basis from combining services."

Michel Lord, who followed him in managing *Montréal-Matin*, says, along the same lines: "One of the major factors in the success of a company is management. Well, *La Presse* was not very well endowed in that regard."

"The management housecleaning, which was carried out at the end of 1980 and was marked by some 15 dismissals and the placing of Lemelin under close supervision, was clear proof that *La Presse* was run by incompetents," according to Claude Pichet.

The last straw: relocation

As services were merged, Beauregard saw his room for manoeuvre decline. "With my responsibilities limited to the news department, I felt like a housewife who does all the spending without ever earning an income."

Beauregard's last card was played when the paper was relocated from Saint-Joseph boulevard to the printing plant of *La Presse* on St. James Street.

According to Beauregard, this move had a good aspect, for it put the news staff downtown, where the action was. But *Montréal-Matin*'s publisher held out doggedly for a separate building for his news staff. "It was a visible sign of autonomy," he explains, "and it was important in order to preserve the spirit and the fresh approach of the *Montréal-Matin* team."

Beauregard had even located a building on Place d'Armes and was about to sign the lease, when Roger Lemelin informed him of his dismissal. Michel Lord, then in charge of the Sunday edition and closer to production, saw no problem in the physical proximity of the two papers.

"We needed to be in direct contact with the printing plant. As for the dangers of proximity, 500 or 1,000 feet were not going to change things. That depended more on the kind of people working there," Lord has explained.

After Beauregard was fired, Lord was appointed publisher of *Montréal-Matin.* Since Lemelin considered him too young to be president, Desmarais himself took on this role.

The relocation of the news staff to the *La Presse* complex, between Saint-Antoine Street and St. James Streets, made the journalists aware of their dependency.

"Beauregard's dismissal opened our eyes; the relocation worried us and made us suspicious," says Bernard Brisset.

In an interview, published in March, 1977, in the magazine of the FPJQ, Raymond Bernatchez, the president of the newspaper union at *Montréal-Matin*, discussed two of his worries. "What bothers us the most is that the paper might end up looking too much like *La Presse*. What would happen if *La Presse* went out on strike? It must not be forgotten that all *Montréal-Matin* has left is a newsroom and a circulation department. Would the paper be printed elsewhere? In actual fact, could a dispute paralyse both papers?"

Six months later, the prophetic nature of these questions became apparent.

In the shadow of big brother

Meanwhile, the news department of *Montréal-Matin* kept its autonomy, without, however, completely escaping the influence of *La Presse*. Even appointments and hirings often resulted from the wishes of the parent company.

So it was that Michel Lord was shifted to *Montréal-Matin* in 1975 by the news editor of *La Presse*, Jean Sisto. "If things do not work out over there," Roger Lemelin told him at the time, "you can come back to *La Presse* whenever you want."

Marcel Desjardins, the news editor, feels that he owed his transfer from *La Presse* to *Montréal-Matin* on October 1, 1976, more to Jean Sisto than to Michel Lord. Yet Desjardins maintains, "As far as our daily work was concerned, combining services did not mean very much. We had our pride, and we were in competition."

But, as he adds in the same breath, the financial dependency of *Montréal-Matin* made it vulnerable to pressure from *La Presse*'s management. "They controlled our annual budget, and any additional expenditure had to be approved by the parent company."

Their influence was felt in varying degrees. "When we dismissed Kirouac, the make-up editor, Sisto had been letting us know for some time that the lurid kind of layout he favored could not continue," says Desjardins. On other occasions, Lord and Desjardins had to overcome resistance by *La Presse*'s management to hiring journalists who were not in the good graces of the parent company.

Some of their interference was aimed more directly at news content. During the provincial elections of 1976, Roger Lemelin had promised Desmarais that there would be no opinion polls. As far as he was concerned, this applied to both papers. *Montréal-Matin* had nevertheless ordered a survey from CROP Inc. The night before it was to be published, Lemelin informed Lord that house policy prohibited the publication of polls. Lord appealed to Desmarais, who gave his permission. "The big problem," according to Lord, "was to get close to Desmarais."

On another occasion, Lemelin had told Lord that it was not appropriate to accept advertising from dating services. "I told him that we could not afford to turn down advertising and I did not hear anything further on that subject," notes Lord.

Qualified autonomy

In June, 1976, *Montréal-Matin* had a scoop; it had obtained a map of the route that the Montréal Grand Prix would follow. *Montréal-Matin*'s dummy disappeared from the printing plant, and the very same day, the map of the route appeared in *La Presse*, with no acknowledgment. Informed of this incident, the Québec Press Council severely censured *La Presse*'s news editor.

"*La Presse*'s conduct in this affair constitutes a serious breach of journalistic ethics. An incident of this kind was almost bound to occur, since both papers, printed at the same facility, belong to the same financial group. Such a situation may generate conflicts of interest for companies in competition, and pose a threat to the autonomy of newsrooms," the Press Council declared.

Acknowledging the wrongdoing of his paper, Jean Sisto, assistant publisher of *La Presse*, indicated that formal directives would be issued in order to avoid a repetition of such mistakes.

"This case was exceptional, but, nonetheless, it clearly demonstrated our newsroom's lack of autonomy," says Michel Desjardins.

In the summer of 1977, a *Montréal-Matin* photographer obtained some exciting shots of striking Robin Hood employees being fired on by security guards. It was a scoop that *Montréal-Matin* shared with an English-language television station in Montréal. Michel Samson, then make-up editor, decided to play up the affair: the first four pages were devoted entirely to this incident, and included a number of photographs and stories.

Around 6 p.m., Lemelin called the *Montréal-Matin*'s newsroom to urge Samson to moderation. "One must tread very softly where social revolts are involved," the *La Presse* president is supposed to have said.

Around 10 p.m., Guy Pepin, a manager of *La Presse*, turned up in the newsroom of *Montréal-Matin*, and urged Samson to "put a hockey story on page one". Confident that he had done a good job, Samson did not change the make-up of the paper one iota.

"My superiors (Lord and Desjardins) backed me up," he says, "and I did not want to make a fuss, since the essential had been respected."

Samson also adds that the incident involving the Grand Prix and the Robin Hood affair were exceptional for the *Montréal-Matin* newsroom. The same refrain is heard from the editorial staff; Marc Laurendeau maintains that he was given a free hand by his superiors, Luc Beauregard and Michel Lord. "I realized that *Montréal-Matin*'s editorial page did not always please *La Presse*, but criticisms were never directed at me."

Laurendeau added that he had been asked to read the 1972 directives concerning the ideological orientation of *La Presse*, but that there was no attempt to impose anything on him. Openly nationalistic and social democratic, the editorial page of *Montréal-Matin* was totally opposed to *La Presse*'s editorial policy.

In November, 1976, Marc Laurendeau declared himself in favor of the election of a PQ government, whereas the directives sent down to the editors by Lemelin recommended the unconditional defence of Canadian unity.

Profitability within sight

As was the case with the 1976 Summer Olympic Games, *Montréal-Matin* attracted attention by the extent and the liveliness of its coverage of the fall election campaign of 1976. The upturn continued in every department, including circulation, and the ABC figures for March, 1978, were expected to show a circulation of 155,000 copies.

Since the break-even point had been set at 150,000 copies sold, Michel Lord thought the battle had been won: "*Montréal-Matin* was finally going to stand on its own two feet." Or so he thought at the time.

But he had not counted on the unexpected setbacks which plagued the five-year reprieve given *Montréal-Matin* by Power Corporation. The final blow was delivered this time by the "older brothers" in the other newsroom. In March, 1977, Raymond Bernatchez had asked: "What would happen if *La Presse* went out on strike?" The answer came six months later, on October 6, 1977. Protesting against the appointment of a sports editor without prior consultation, the journalists at *La Presse* staged a 48-hour walkout.

The work stoppage was to last seven long months. It was customary at *La Presse* to take a long break every seven years. While the break was only cyclical at *La Presse*, it spelled the death sentence for *Montréal-Matin.*

An innocent bystander

Despite claims by some union leaders, *La Presse*'s dispute was never shared by *Montréal-Matin*, where the climate of labor relations gave no hint of an impending strike.

A similar opinion is expressed by almost all the journalists questioned, namely Bernard Brisset, Nicole Gladu, Jean V. Dufresne, Odette Bourdon, Claude Picher, Michel Samson, Johanne Mercier, Marcel Chouinard, and even André Bouthillier, who replaced François Piazza as union head, two weeks after the strike began.

"There was no danger of a strike at *Montréal-Matin*, given the precarious situation of the paper. But I felt, at the beginning of the negotiations, that we were no longer on our own," Bouthillier says.

In the general meeting, opinion was divided. Whether or not they supported the strikers, people did not want to go out on strike," he adds. Furthermore, at least six votes were required before the *Montréal-Matin* journalists would support the strike of their colleagues at *La Presse.*

"It was not our dispute. But we were as powerless against *La Presse*'s union as our superiors were against Power Corporation. *Montréal-Matin*'s union was as much a pawn as the paper's management," Nicole Gladu explains.

It is also worth noting that, on Thursday, October 6, journalists from *Montréal-Matin* were confronted by two obstacles: the picket line of their union colleagues, and a lockout by *La Presse* management.

Under the circumstances, why did they not print *Montréal-Matin* elsewhere? The answer to this question gives a rather good indication of *Montréal-Matin*'s state of total dependency, where management could no longer even meet with its journalists.

Two days after the strike began, the news executives of *Montréal-Matin* (Lord, Desjardins, Gobeil, Ménard, and Gagnon) agreed to request that the paper be printed elsewhere. Jacques Vallée, the production manager, had even ascertained that a printing plant was available.

Fernand Roy, personnel director of *La Presse* and management spokesman in the negotiations with both newspapers, was supposed to forward the message to the *Montréal-Matin* union. While Roy claims that François Piazza, the president of the *Montréal-Matin* union, categorically refused this offer, Piazza swears he never heard of any such proposal.

To this day, *Montréal-Matin* reporters do not know what happened. André Bouthillier remembers a telephone conversation in which Michel Lord said to him: "Didn't Roy ask you to publish somewhere else?"

What really happened matters little to this story: it shows the inability, for structural reasons, of management and the journalists at *Montréal-Matin* to control their own destiny.

A byproduct of the pulp and paper industry

Luc Beauregard believes that the danger had existed from the beginning, when *La Presse* assumed the debts of *Montréal-Matin*. "Concentration", he says, "is not necessarily a bad thing, provided one is not dependent. But dependency will make itself felt somewhere along the line."

Looking back, Beauregard thinks that there was no way to save the paper without financial independence. "When the collective agreements for 1974-75 were being signed," he explains, "we should have rolled up our sleeves, put the figures on the table, and agreed to live within our means. But that was unthinkable at the time."

Jean V. Dufresne has already written that the papers had become a byproduct of the pulp and paper industry and the empires that control it. He now says that "the papers are of negligible importance in the Power Corporation empire, and *Montréal-Matin* was of negligible importance among the Power newspapers."

Postcript to a stay of execution

When the strike at *La Presse* was finally settled, *Montréal-Matin*'s journalists returned to work. This was at the beginning of May 1978, at the same time as their colleagues at the parent company.

The day before the newspapermen went back to work, Roger Lemelin tried to replace Michel Lord on the management of *Montréal-Matin* with one of his friends, Pierre Roche, then in Paris. Opposition by the union, which refused to sign the agreement, and an appeal by Lord to Desmarais prevented this eleventh-hour move.

"I was not really optimistic, but I wanted to try my luck one last time," Michel Lord explains.

As expected, the circulation of *Montréal-Matin* started up again at 80,000 copies, well behind its competitor, *Le Journal de Montréal*, which had profitted from the strike to boost its circulation to some 250,000 copies.

Lord launched a distribution agency, a television guide, and a promotion campaign. But *Le Journal de Montréal*'s lead had become insurmountable: *Montréal-Matin* would never again go over 100,000 copies.

The aftermath of the strike was also hard on *La Presse*, which saw its previous profits melting away. For that reason, it decided to support *Montréal-Matin* no further, and the paper closed its doors on December 28, 1978. This date was chosen to avoid triggering a debate in the National Assembly, which had already blocked the sale of *Le Soleil* to Power Corporation.

Michel Lord accepts complete responsibility for the absence of farewells to the readers who had known *Montréal-Matin* since 1930. "I am not sentimental," he explains, "and I was not in the mood for a post-mortem."

Lord adds that *La Presse*'s management feared a reaction from its union, which could have reciprocated the favor shown them the previous year by their colleagues at *Montréal-Matin*. This fear was baseless. The union at *La Presse* remained quite silent.

"From top to bottom, from management down to the journalists, one conviction held sway at *La Presse*: *La Presse* was an institution which could not and must not fail. *Montréal-Matin* was an unimportant appendage," says Nicole Gladu, putting her finger on the reason why the rescue of *Montréal-Matin* by *La Presse* was so short-lived.

2. *Le Soleil* goes to marketing

Le Soleil was not born yesterday. Nor were its employees. Despite a larger turnover than in the rest of the company, the news staff still includes some 10 journalists who have celebrated their 25th year with Québec City's daily newspaper.

Only 15 of the 98 journalists, whose average age is 41, have less than five years' seniority.

Custom, which, as Aristotle would have it, arises from the repetition of acts, is firmly established in the old Lower Town building on the corner of rue de la Couronne and rue Saint-Vallier, which has housed the daily for 52 years.

"There is a whole tradition, an established set of customs, which someone from outside the paper would find difficult to understand," Jacques Dumais, a journalist at *Le Soleil* since 1964, explains.

"Québec City is a city of government workers, used to changes in leadership. Management comes and goes, but *Le Soleil* employees stay put," Michel Alloucherie, who has been at *Le Soleil* since 1956, says candidly.

It was into such an atmosphere, dominated by tradition and a sense of permanence, that UniMédia, a holding company of Jacques Francoeur, burst in January, 1974. In order to understand the changes that took place in the news product at *Le Soleil* after it joined Jacques Francoeur's empire, we must go back in time.

It is not necessary to go all the way back to the Liberal Establishment at the turn of the century, to people like Wilfrid Laurier and Lomer Gouin, who founded *Le Soleil* in 1896. It is enough to look through the back issues from the time when the paper belonged to the Gilbert family, between 1948 and 1974.

The Saturday of the truncheons

In the fall of 1964, Queen Elizabeth made a visit to Canada. Her stop in Québec City, scheduled for October 10, aroused lively opposition from supporters of independence and nationalist elements. Fearing the worst, the Québec City police, urged on by the inflammatory language of the then minister of justice, Claude Wagner, deployed an exceptional array of security measures.

Everything was in readiness for the confrontation, and it was brutal: the police charged the demonstrators in a way hitherto unknown in the Old Capital. *Le Soleil* headlined the incident as, "The Saturday of the truncheons" ("Le samedi de la matraque"). The headline was to pass into history, and its author, Jean-Paul Quinty, to another job.

On October 22, J.-C. de La Durantaye, the managing editor, called together both union and non-union staff, and read them a statement that Papadopoulos would have loved. The editorial management accepted a certain degree of responsibility for the "regrettable events" of October 10. *Le Soleil* had erred in publishing the security measures taken by the police, and by giving space to the protests of the nationalist groups, according to the statement read by de La Durantaye.

"We must now redeem ourselves," he added, "by discrediting the proponents of independence, by encouraging good relations between the two main ethnic groups in Canada, and by giving preference to established authority and private enterprise."

It was take it or leave it. Employees who did not wish to implement these directives had to leave *Le Soleil*. Jean-Paul Quinty was one of the few to do so.

Censured almost universally, even by Claude Wagner, minister of justice, these outrageous directives marked the beginning of the end of an era: the reign of Col. Oscar Gilbert and his second-in-command, A.-F. Mercier, who had made *Le Soleil* into the household paper for the traditional elite of the Old Capital. Col. Gilbert was succeeded in the direction of the paper by his sons, Gabriel and Guy.

The Baribocraft affair

In the fall of 1967, three years after the "Saturday of the truncheons", the Baribocraft affair showed that the newsroom was no longer content to be kept on a tether by *Le Soleil*'s management.

Journalist Michel Samson prepared an in-depth report on the strike at the Baribocraft plant in Saint-Romuald. Well-documented, supported by sworn statements, and filled with revelations concerning the Baribeau empire, the set of articles was indeed devastating for the owners: it was revealed that Baribocraft workers had to work in extremely dangerous conditions for starvation wages. When the second article in this series was published, Guy Gilbert asked the news editor, Mario Cardinal, to remove the photograph of Hervé Baribeau, the patriarch of the empire. Cardinal refused, but Gilbert went to the presses and had the offending plates blocked out. On December 8, the paper appeared with an empty space in the Baribocraft article.

The newsroom executives (Cardinal, Sauvageau, Rondeau, and Gaudreau) demanded a statement guaranteeing their autonomy. Gabriel Gilbert had a letter forwarded to them to this effect, but the union decided to press for more.

The 19 unionized staff members resigned from their positions, and, in less than 48 hours, the Gilbert brothers agreed to the creation of a board of arbitrators to settle the "news grievances". Thereafter, collective agreements included far-reaching clauses concerning the "professional independence" of the journalists.

The golden age of the Gilbert brothers

The older journalists at *Le Soleil* speak of a golden age when they discuss the Gilbert brothers' reign from 1967 to 1974. "Everything was done by consensus" (Jacques Dumais). "It was joint management without joint responsibility" (Gilles Boivin). "A time of sweet anarchy" (Florian Sauvageau). "The Gilberts were in the building. When a dispute arose, the journalists stopped work and it was settled" (Magella Soucy).

Publisher and general manager Gabriel Gilbert had a soft spot for university people and for journalists. He surrounded himself with young avant-garde editors, such as Mario Cardinal and Florian Sauvageau, and then relied on them. He protected the news staff by keeping it strictly apart from the rest of the company.

It was he who allowed Sauvageau to set up a readers' committee and did not oppose the creation of an ombudsman for his newspaper. It was he who signed the astonishing statement of principles, which still stands, recognizing the social responsibility of the paper.

In the words of the final paragraph of the statement, "*Le Soleil* believes that in order to maintain its independence, it is essential to make profits in a way which takes into account both the economic context in which it finds itself and the public service character which it sees as belonging to a newspaper."

"Gabriel was proud of his paper. He would rather have received a compliment on the quality of *Le Soleil* than an extra $1,000 in profit. He was a publisher in the style of Katherine Graham. With him, we could have made the paper great," says Florian Sauvageau.

The rise of the union and the large influx of well-educated university graduates coincided with the Gilbert brothers' reign. Ever since the "Saturday of the truncheons" of 1964, the union's appetite for power had become steadily more voracious. The gains won in collective bargaining attest to this fact: a joint committee (a form of ongoing bargaining), a hiring committee, and an editorial board. In less than 24 hours, the union could demand and obtain the resignation of a news editor, as in the case of Hubert Potvin in 1970.

Better equipped intellectually and more aggressive, the journalists were no longer content with official handouts. In their words, they represented "active" as opposed to "passive" journalism.

It was the era when the paper was opened up to national and even international news: it subscribed to the wire services of the New York *Times* and the *Christian Science Monitor*. It even sent reporters abroad; for example, during the Biafran crisis.

This era was also marked by the advent of more in-depth reporting, such as that which unleashed the Baribocraft affair. A daily page of background analysis and investigation was added as a counterweight to the editorial page, which at that time was staunchly conservative and federalist.

Social reforms, instances of government intervention, union struggles, and Québec's demands for autonomy, all of which followed in the wake of the Quiet Revolution, found mention in the pages of *Le Soleil*. Analyses and commentaries by various journalists appeared in a weekend section.

In short, according to the journalists of that era, *Le Soleil* "had ceased to be a loudspeaker" (Léonce Gaudreau) and had become "a catalyst for conflict" and "a tool of collective progress" (François Demers), "a provocative paper" (an expression often repeated by journalists of the period).

The return of the boomerang

In May, 1973, the newspaper union shut down the paper to protest against the "bulldozing through" of technological changes. After three days, the strike was settled, and the return to work protocol stipulated that employees would be paid for the time they were on strike. This marked the beginning of the end for Gabriel Gilbert.

Despite a quasi-monopolistic situation, and a circulation of 160,000, *Le Soleil* was no longer paying dividends to the members of the Gilbert family. The enormous investment in technological change had reduced the Gilbert brothers' room to manoeuvre. Gabriel Gilbert's inability to meet the reporters' escalating demands, which were increasingly costly, was the last straw.

"The reporters thought they had a gold mine; they took advantage of their power," says Florian Sauvageau, while François Demers wonders if the journalists did not kill the goose that laid the golden eggs.

Rumors of an impending sale began to circulate in newspaper circles. The last year of the Gilberts' reign was marked by uncertainty and disaffection on the part of the news staff.

"*Le Soleil* had become a paper made up of syndicated material: a number of reporters did not produce so much as a single page of copy per week," says Louis Falardeau, who was news editor during this difficult period.

The debate regarding the possible sale of the paper to the Desmarais chain was even waged in the commentary pages of *Le Soleil*. The president of *La Presse*, Roger Lemelin, let it be understood that *Le Soleil* would become a mere offshoot of *La Presse*.

Florian Sauvageau, Louis Falardeau, and François Demers attacked Lemelin in the pages of *Le Soleil*. The "young, educated reporters" on the news staff tried in vain to form a co-operative to buy the paper.

In *Le Devoir*, Claude Ryan revealed that a letter promising to sell already bound the Gilberts and the Power Corporation. The movement against concentration of ownership gained force, and the Bourassa government had to set up a parliamentary committee.

Finally, Jacques Francoeur, the head of UniMédia and a former associate of Paul Desmarais, purchased *Le Soleil* in January, 1974. Michel Alloucherie remembers that period as "a dense fog of uncertainty and insecurity".

The transition

Although somewhat relieved to have eluded the embrace of *La Presse*, Roger Lemelin, and Power Corporation, nonetheless *Le Soleil* journalists felt a certain anxiety about Jacques Francoeur, who was known to favor short news items and cheap news.

The transition went smoothly, however. François Demers and Michel Alloucherie, executives at the time of the takeover, say that Francoeur kept a low profile at the beginning — a few telephone calls to the news people, a greeting here and there, and that was the extent of it.

For the first time, however, a lawyer, Jean Beauvais, was seen representing the owner at the bargaining table. "We no longer dealt directly with the owners, and for the first time there appeared the famous 'employer's right to manage' clause in the collective agreement with the journalists," says Gilles Boivin.

Claude Beauchamp came at the end of April, 1974, as editor and assistant publisher. In his early thirties, Beauchamp had already carved out an enviable niche for himself in the newspaper business: *La Presse* financial editor, former Québec City bureau chief, former president of the FPJQ, and former head of the inter-union united front at *La Presse*. He was given a free hand by Jacques Francoeur, who introduced him to *Le Soleil*'s journalists with the comment: "I'm in Montréal. He is the boss here."

All the journalists interviewed agree that Francoeur kept his promise and did not interfere in the newsroom at *Le Soleil*. There was one major exception, however, during the 1980 Québec referendum on sovereignty-association. The editorial management had decided to support the partisans of a "Yes" vote, but Francoeur enjoined neutrality upon them. "It was a compromise between what they wanted and what we wanted," says Paul Audet, *Le Soleil*'s publisher since Francoeur's purchase of the paper.

The era of the managers

According to Claude Masson, what Jacques Francoeur wanted can be summed up in one short sentence: "Put out a good paper, so that the readers are happy, and make a

profit. That is the Francoeur method: every component must be self-supporting and show a profit."

Beauchamp is more specific: "I had one mandate. The Gilberts had lost control over the newsroom at the administrative level. Francoeur gave me two years to put the paper in order."

"The executives," he adds, "did not make any decisions. What it boiled down to was that those who had the most nerve ran the paper, without any kind of supervision. Having seen eight managing editors come and go, in a period of 10 years, the executives no longer dared to confront their opponents."

Beauchamp lost no time in setting his house in order, "in giving every employee a single superior" and "every executive a specific area to manage", as he says.

First of all, he transformed the wage structure of the news staff by giving non-union executives immediate raises of $10,000 per year. Under the Gilberts' management, almost a third of the journalists earned more than the news executives.

Assuming control over expenditures himself, Beauchamp reduced overtime by more than half and brought it down to 11 per cent of total wages, whereas, under the Gilberts, it had hovered near the 30-per-cent mark. As a result, some journalists were earning less in 1977 than in 1974.

He called on a colleague from *La Presse*, Claude Masson, to assume the position of news editor. Subsequently, the editorship of the editorial page was entrusted to Marcel Pépin, also of *La Presse*. The Québec City and Ottawa columns were also entrusted to "outsiders", Gilles Lesage and Jean-Marc Poliquin, who was later replaced by Richard Daignault.

"I deliberately went outside," says Beauchamp, "because I wanted to change the style of the paper, and concentrate on covering hard facts. Those in charge at the paper were accustomed to another point of view. Moreover, there was no pool of employees at *Le Soleil* from which those positions could be filled."

Beauchamp ascribes these two opposing views of what a paper should be to the traditional distinction between news and commentary, between news and editorials.

"*Le Soleil* was a paper where journalists engaged in political activities rather than covering them, where the distinction between reporting and commentary had become blurred, where the columns always had an ideological thrust, and where the Québec City area was not even covered," says Beauchamp.

As part of the same effort to restore the distinction between news and commentary, Beauchamp considerably strengthened the editorial page after replacing some of the staff. During the provincial elections of 1976, he forbade the editorial writers, Gilles Boyer and Paul Lachance, to comment on the campaign.

Greater participation in management objectives

The reforms advocated by Beauchamp and Masson involved a tighter measure of participation by the news staff in company objectives, as is revealed by a document presented on behalf of the editorial management as early as July, 1974.

"In the framework of a five-year budget for 1975 to 1980, the editorial management recommends that the paper's fundamental objective be a gradual and sustained increase in circulation. Realizing the major role that it may play in achieving this objective, the editorial management intends to set its own priorities accordingly," Beauchamp stated at the beginning of the document.

He then announced that sections for local news and miscellaneous news, as well as travel and leisure, had been added. He saw this as leading to greater uniformity and an improvement in the layout of the paper. In addition, he stressed the need to give more space to features and to service and entertainment columns, "such as television, movies, travel, fashion, do-it-yourself, gardening and stamp collecting".

In conclusion, Beauchamp explained the rationale behind his action: "It can also be said that what we are proposing brings together, in a sense, two doctrines current in marketing circles: the theory of the mass audience and that of target groups."

All the way to the Supreme Court

The Beauchamp-Masson team did not wait around for results. They forced the pace of change by getting involved themselves. Taking their place at the news desk, they pointed the way. They scribbled notes on reporters' copy, praising or criticizing their work, as required.

In some cases, there was even more direct intervention. One of these cases ended up in a grievance committee, another at the Québec Press Council, which criticized *Le Soleil*'s management, and a third at the Supreme Court of Canada, which, by refusing to hear an appeal, left the employer's absolute right to manage unchallenged.

This last incident, known at *Le Soleil* as the "Bunel affair", should be briefly related. It involved a survey carried out by a Frenchman, Jean-Dominique Bunel, among secondary-school students in Québec. Three newspapers (*Le Devoir*, *Le Soleil* and *The Gazette*) and one radio network (the French network of the CBC) had each advanced him $1,000 so they might publish the results of the survey.

Assigned to prepare the articles for *Le Soleil*, Anne-Marie Voisard found the survey and its author "not very reliable". Voisard had her first impressions confirmed by two sociologists, Jean Giroux and Jean-Guy Lacroix. She discussed the matter with Beauchamp and Masson, who asked her to continue preparing the articles. "At the time, I had the impression that the expenditure of funds had to be justified," Anne-Marie Voisard says.

Accordingly, she prepared nine short articles with tables and an introduction in which she warned readers against the unscientific methods of the survey and against its author, "a Frenchman who is obviously unfamiliar with Québec life".

Masson asked Voisard to rewrite her introduction. She refused. Masson rewrote the text, considerably toning down the warning. The make-up editor, Michel Samson, resigned when ordered to put this article on page one. The union lodged a grievance, and Beauchamp replied by placing a letter of reprimand in Voisard's file for having submitted her copy late, and for having confused "news and commentary".

The adjudicator decided in Voisard's favor: in his opinion, it would have been better for the readers if *Le Soleil* had published Voisard's original article, and he ordered the letter of reprimand to be withdrawn.

Le Soleil management went to Superior Court, alleging the matter was outside the adjudicator's jurisdiction, because he was not competent to express an opinion regarding the respective merits of the two articles. Mr. Justice Maurice Jacques rejected the application, but his decision was set aside by the Court of Appeal, which ruled in *Le Soleil*'s favor: the adjudicator was not competent to judge the quality of the news editor's work.

An appeal against the decision was brought before the Supreme Court of Canada by the adjudicator (Claude Morin) and by the newspaper union at *Le Soleil*. The Court refused to hear the appeal.

It was important to review this long legal narrative, because it is at the heart of the conflict caused by the methods of the new management.

The great upheaval

"Francoeur had bought *Le Soleil* to make money; Beauchamp came to *Le Soleil* to transform it," says Michel Alloucherie. It was, in fact, both a radical and a sudden change, and represented a great upheaval for the reporters, who had been accustomed to the easy-going ways of the Gilbert brothers.

In varying degrees, the journalists keenly resented these major changes, which they never completely accepted, as the 10-month strike, launched in 1977, attests. Preliminary reactions were not, however, completely negative. On the contrary, Michel Samson, for one, was not sorry to see the news editor introduce some order, consistency, and unity into the operation of the paper.

"For the first time, I felt that there was a management which was there to stay. The time was over when we put out 10 newspapers in one, and everyone did whatever he pleased," he says, stressing the noticeable improvement in the layout of the paper. He adds, however, that he became somewhat disillusioned when "Beauchamp began increasingly to push for the implementation of his policies when he should have relied on persuasion".

A number of other people have acknowledged that there was an urgent need to improve and streamline the layout of the newspaper. Léonce Gaudreau also concedes that there was room for greater variety and a better treatment of miscellaneous news. "However, we went from one extreme to the other," he says, "by giving too much importance to Marie-André Leclerc, Moïse and Capitaine Herb. They had publicized the new 4 x 4 format and the police blotter, and the marketing strategy was beginning to show through."

Jacques Dumais also thought he saw the borderline between advertising and news beginning to vanish. "For example, why insist on publishing all the names of those who took part in the Patro Roc-Amadour benefit golf tournament?"

Gilles Boivin stresses that copy was shrinking while official news handouts were taking over. "They made me waste my time following a family from Charlesbourg around who had come to take part in a gathering of Jehovah's Witnesses in Montréal."

Former news editor Florian Sauvageau, now a professor at Université Laval, even sent an open letter to *Le Soleil* to protest the treatment of a news item in August, 1977.

"The first three pages of *Le Soleil* on this particular day illustrate a whole philosophy of news. There are seven photographs and two articles devoted to 'suspense', to 'a doctor's escapades' and to 'a mad sniper', who terrorized Ste-Anne de Beaupré. . . .News presented as a side show has its own peculiar requirements. . .and its merchants. . . .But too much is too much!"

Emphasis was placed on short miscellaneous news, service columns, short articles, official news handouts, and features. It would be difficult to show that this tendency was more pronounced at *Le Soleil* than in the written press as a whole dur-

ing the past decade. But the journalists' frustration went deeper than any of these complaints, which in many cases they were unable to communicate clearly.

Alienation and demoralization

"The two executives from Montréal exercised genuine control over *Le Soleil*, which had been an unruly paper, but one with an underlying vitality. They took the paper away from the journalists," says Jacques Guay, a professor at Laval and author of a humor column in *Le Soleil* until the 1977 strike.

The fact that the five most prestigious editorial positions were awarded to outsiders was interpreted by some as an expression of contempt. Jacques Dumais says: "They told us we were no good. It was this contempt that was at the root of our demoralization and the dispute of 1977."

"Beauchamp himself made drastic cuts in the copy," according to Dumais, "and did not hesitate to tell the desk: 'This kind of copy belongs in the wastebasket'."

A number of people also remember the feelings of alienation and demoralization aroused by the new management's statement that "of the 100 or so journalists employed by the daily, there were at most some 30 competent ones".

Even the managers, whom they wished to cultivate and shield from the union, were not won over by the new methods. "Beauchamp decided everything, and executives were reduced to the level of mere drudges," says Michel Alloucherie.

The old chemistry of the newsroom had broken down. "Co-operation between managers and the unionized staff was at an end, and so was the united front maintained by the news staff against the other sectors of the firm and the conservative establishment of Québec," says François Demers.

"The contents of page one were now determined by management, instead of allowing the day-to-day instincts of the news team to dictate how space would be allocated. With their autonomy lost, people were demoralized. There were more bureaucrats than before on the news staff of *Le Soleil*," says Gilles Boivin.

For Léonce Gaudreau, the fundamental difference lay in the meaning attached to the notion of newspaper ownership by the new management. "The Gilberts based their pride on the prestige of their paper as an institution; Francoeur's depended on its profitability as a business."

Jean Garon is wont to describe management as having given Beauchamp the "power to crush the union and to bend the news staff to the financial aims of the company". Union president from 1974 to 1980, the same Jean Garon came to symbolize, as did Beauchamp on the opposite side, the epic struggle being waged between the journalists and the editorial management at *Le Soleil*.

An unavoidable conflict

The bargaining table was set for the important meeting to renew the journalists' collective agreement in 1977. In 80 years, *Le Soleil* had never had a strike lasting more than three days; this time, however, the journalists' strike would close down the daily for 10 long months, from August 1977 to July 1978.

Ownership of copy, a guaranteed minimum number of positions, and exclusivity of service topped the list of union demands, which were based on its rejection of *Le Soleil*'s new management practices.

"The situation is clear and plain: the aims of the Francoeur-Beauchamp management are well known; they are to turn the news into as lucrative a business as possible. The principles governing their actions are also familiar, since we and the readers have been their victims for the last three years: they are the laws of marketing." These are the words of the document presenting the bargaining objectives of the union.

"The journalists felt that their competence was being called into question."

"The journalists were really acting from professional motives, but they did not get this message across."

These two statements were made by, respectively, Jacques Guay and Florian Sauvageau, professors at Laval, who had close ties to *Le Soleil.*

"The union wanted to get back responsibility for news content, which had been lost in 1974. It was a coherent plan that management could not accept. Accordingly, there was a deadlock," says Magella Soucy.

Some people call this strike pointless, others say it was unavoidable. Whatever the truth may be, losses were heavy; the journalists had to make do with the status quo, and the paper incurred substantial losses, which included seeing the rise of its competitor, *Le Journal de Québec*, which doubled its circulation and posed a real threat.

"The strike would have killed the Gilberts," says Paul Audet, the publisher of *Le Soleil.* But union président Jean Garon maintains that such a dispute would never have arisen under the Gilberts. "Our demands would not have been the same," he explains.

The swing of the pendulum

Shortly after the Bunel affair and a little before the 1977 dispute, Michel Samson left *Le Soleil*, after criticizing the methods employed by the news editor. On his return in 1979, as make-up editor and news editor, Samson found a paper that had been battered, but at the same time purged by the 10-month dispute.

"The battle no longer loomed. They had realized that they could not destroy each other, that they had to live together, and that they should learn something from the whole affair," he explains.

In the fall of 1980, Claude Beauchamp left *Le Soleil* to become manager of the review, *Les Affaires.* Claude Masson, the other half of the team, took over as editor.

One month after his appointment, Masson tendered an invitation to the journalists: "Dear associates," it began; it was an invitation to participate, to consult, and to work as a team. At the same time, he surrounded himself with journalists who were well established at *Le Soleil* to direct the news room — especially Gilbert Athot as managing editor and Michel Samson as news editor. Former union president Jean Garon co-ordinated the preparation of the pages devoted to news analysis.

For Magella Soucy, the pendulum had swung through another cycle: "The union was dominant under the Gilberts' reign; Beauchamp wanted to dominate, and now we have reached a certain equilibrium between the opposing forces."

3. Quebecor vs Quebecor: weeklies win

In Québec, which has witnessed the disappearance of six dailies in the past 15 years, the trend is obviously not toward starting newspapers but rather toward closing them down.

Pierre Péladeau, however, is an anomalous figure in this shrinking market. In 15 years, his paper, *Le Journal de Montréal*, has moved to the forefront, with a circulation of more than 300,000 copies, while, since 1966, *Le Journal de Québec* has built up a circulation of more than 100,000 copies.

This was more than enough to validate the magic formula of Mr. Success. People were talking about an expected miracle when Péladeau pushed his daring to the point of launching a new daily in far-off Abitibi in October, 1974.

The ingredients of success

Moreover, the launching of a daily newspaper was the second phase of Quebecor's offensive in northwestern Québec. The way had been paved to the operation by the purchase, in May and September, 1974, of the area's two large regional weeklies: *La Frontière* and *L'Echo Abitibien.*

Owning in addition two small English-language weeklies, Quebecor already controlled 90 per cent of the print media market, with the usual advantages in printing and distribution that this implies. It was, therefore, merely a matter of repeating Péladeau's classic formula: publication, printing, and distribution were to be treated as a single entity in order to ensure the profitability of the undertaking.

Trusting in the formula's strength, the men from Quebecor even decided to step up the timetable: the daily was originally scheduled to appear at the beginning of 1975, but the first issue saw the light of day on October 7, 1974. Such intemperate haste would create certain problems, however, for the editorial management, which had been taken over by Gérard Cellier, now publisher of *Le Journal de Montréal.*

"Péladeau made me the kind of financial offer one cannot refuse," recalls Cellier, who was working at that time at *Montréal-Matin.* "We had one month to set up the newsroom and to train the printing staff: the carpenters were still on the premises when the first issue came off the press."

To be sure, a personal friend of Péladeau, Jacques Saumur, had made a get-acquainted tour in the summer of 1974. But Bob Martino, the publisher of *La Frontière* in Rouyn, did not remember ever having met Saumur.

Gérard Cellier explains that Saumur's report contained no market survey and neglected to indicate what form the new paper should take. "But its conclusion, that a daily should be launched, was accepted by Péladeau, who saw this as an opportunity to extend his newspaper empire."

The Journal de Montréal formula

There was, however, no starting from scratch. The model was quite familiar, and the formula had proved its worth at *Le Journal de Montréal* where, moreover, Gérard Cellier had worked from 1964 to 1970. Over 3,000 copies of *Le Journal de Montréal* were already being sold in Abitibi; *Le Journal du Nord-Ouest* was really, therefore, a smaller version of its big brother.

It had the same tabloid format, the same enticing page one layout, the same photographic spread in the centrefold, the same coupling of short articles with abun-

dant photographs, the same kind of split between sports and general news, the same pin-up on page seven.

Moreover, the many successful columnists in *Le Journal de Montréal* would find their way to the pages of *Le Journal du Nord-Ouest*: the humor of Rufiange, hunting with Pagé, sports with Beauchamp, Des Rameaux's lonely hearts column, Pier's cartoons, and Girard's political column. And finally, coverage of professional sports (Alouettes, Expos, Canadiens, and Nordiques) was provided by journalists from Montréal and Québec City.

In short, at least half the paper came directly from its big brothers in Montréal and Québec City. Incidentally, this is a phenomenon quite distinctive to Quebecor. Such multiple use of the same copy had always been strenuously denied to *La Presse* under Desmarais and to *Le Soleil* under Francoeur by the newspaper unions and the entire movement against concentration of press ownership.

Local color

Nonetheless, Quebecor also wished to give an "Abitibi flavor" to *Le Journal*, which in six months, according to Gérard Cellier, reached a promising circulation of approximately 6,000 copies.

Some 10 full-time reporters, backed up by five part-time correspondents, were hired locally by Cellier and his sports adviser, Jean-Pierre Sanche, both of whom had been sent from Montréal. Following the tradition of *Le Journal de Montréal*, the writing staff and the space were divided more or less evenly between general news and sports. In addition to providing very extensive coverage of sports in the region, *Le Journal du Nord-Ouest* devoted its best news pages, pages one to four, almost exclusively to local events.

In December, 1974, two journalists from the region, Jean-Michel Wyl and Léandre Normand, replaced Cellier and Sanche in editorial management.

For journalists in northwestern Québec, the coming of a daily newspaper was a piece of good fortune. According to Philippe Châtillon, "It was a chance to get out of the weeklies, to make a breakthrough on the market."

Châtillon, a reporter on the weekly newspaper *l'Echo*, had agreed to write some articles every week for the daily, for $40 in extra pay. "I was supposed to write two or three articles a week for the daily, but I wrote two a day, because it was so much fun," he said. According to Michel Poirier, the reporters would wait up until the small hours of the morning to see the paper coming off the presses. Gérard Cellier had also spoken of the extraordinary atmosphere of enthusiasm and even euphoria which was created by the young news staff, whose average age was less than 25.

A parochial mentality

The vitality and drive shown by the news staff did not prevent difficulties from arising. The widely scattered population and the severe winters made distributing the paper particularly difficult.

Le Journal du Nord-Ouest could draw on a population of 100,000, distributed over an area with a radius of roughly 100 miles, which included three centres (Val d'Or, Rouyn, and Amos) surrounded by a string of small villages.

Such a readership made it difficult to apply *Le Journal de Montréal*'s formula, "to play up a good piece of news for all it is worth", as Gérard Cellier put it. "Paro-

chialism kept us from giving optimal treatment to the best stories as they came in: we always had to maintain a fair balance in covering the three regions."

Although the journalists interviewed (Châtillon, Parent, Poirier, Normand, and Gilbert) agreed with Cellier on the subject of regional competition, particularly between Rouyn and Val d'Or, they believed, nonetheless, that people just needed time to get used to the daily.

But Cellier maintains that the parochialism of the readers in northwestern Québec was a permanent obstacle to the establishment of a regional daily. "I was surprised to see," he adds, "that people were buying *Le Journal de Montréal* and *Montréal-Matin* in order to get news of Montréal. They want to know whether there is a snowstorm or a big fire in Montréal; they already know what is happening at home."

A sudden closing

Despite the lack of planning before launching the paper, and despite the difficulties intrinsic to the region, *Le Journal du Nord-Ouest* was making satisfactory progress, inasmuch as a circulation of 6,000 copies was reached in five months.

At this time, Jean Neveu, Péladeau's second-in-command, and the first publisher of *Le Journal du Nord-Ouest*, undertook a profitability study which resulted in the sudden closing of the daily.

"The break-even point had been set at 8,000 sold copies," Cellier explains. "But the more the circulation went up, the more the deficit grew; this was because of the distribution problems and especially because of the lack of advertising."

Péladeau had waited patiently for 10 years before making money on *Le Journal de Montréal*, which, however, brought grist to the mill of his printing plants and his distribution agency. It might be asked why Péladeau's men put an end to their northwestern venture after a trial period of only six months.

A conflict of interest

In the last issue of the daily, the journalists were allowed to say their farewells to the readers and to let off steam. A number of them took the occasion to give their version of the reasons behind the closing.

Somewhat more direct than the others, Gilles Boucher entitled his column: "It was to be expected."

"The big boss will probably not like what I am going to say, especially since I am going to keep on working for him, but I was expecting this. That is the truth. The boss bought up everything, *L'Echo* and *La Frontière* in particular, and then he started a third one. What is the point of taking money away from *L'Echo* or *La Frontière* if it is only to put it into another newspaper which also belongs to you?"

Editorial, printing, and distribution problems all played their part in the difficulties of creating a daily newspaper, but it was advertising that had the last word.

With ill-concealed satisfaction, Bob Martino, the publisher of *La Frontière*, explains the victory of the weeklies over the daily: "Everyone knew that they were going to start a daily. They sent a team of specialized salesmen from Montréal, who spent two or three months in the region. Despite the competition, we lost hardly any advertising at *La Frontière*."

"It was a strange experience to live through", adds Martino, noting that both staffs (one from *La Frontière* and the other from *Le Journal du Nord-Ouest*) were working in the same building, for the same owner, but for different sides.

Well acquainted with the region and supported by a 50-year-old tradition, the advertising salesmen for the weeklies had the last word over the team of specialists flown in from Montréal.

Gérard Cellier admits that the weeklies were a major obstacle to the establishment of the daily. "We were not allowed to work against *La Frontière* and *L'Echo*, whose publishers were bitterly opposed to the daily."

This is not the place to dwell on the struggles within the Quebecor empire. But everyone, managers and journalists alike, admits that a choice had to be made between the weeklies and the daily.

Confident of the proven worth and profitability of their newspapers, the publishers of the weeklies, Bob Martino and Jacques Nadon, had no doubts regarding the right course to follow and were in a good position to gain acceptance for their point of view. In addition to publishing *La Frontière* and *L'Echo*, Martino and Nadon had been appointed publisher and vice-president respectively of the *Journal du Nord-Ouest*, at the beginning of 1976.

As far as Quebecor's monopoly over the print media in northwestern Québec is concerned, it may be said that, following this local disturbance, the weather has returned to fair and settled; *Le Journal de Montréal* sells over 8,000 copies every day in the region; together, the two weeklies sell some 30,000 copies per week, and maintain a high advertising ratio — nearly 60 per cent at *La Frontière* and 63 per cent at *L'Echo*.

In short, Quebecor has maximized its profits from the print media in northwestern Québec without having to sustain the costs of a regional daily.

Péladeau's outriders

The adventure of *Le Journal du Nord-Ouest* is a closed chapter in the history of Quebecor. So closed, in fact, that it has been impossible to obtain copies of the paper either in Rouyn or at the Montréal headquarters.

Fortunately, Léandre Normand, a journalist still convinced that a daily could survive in his region, possesses a well-bound collection of the 175 issues of "his" paper.

The only traces still remaining of Quebecor's Abitibi venture are to be found in the financial balance sheets and at the department of revenue, where the losses of this last-born son of the imperial family were deducted. Accountants will undoubtedly be able to analyse the financial balance sheet of this affair, but the "million dollar loss" which launching *Le Journal du Nord-Ouest* is supposed to have caused, can already be scaled down.

"Nearly half that amount," Gérard Cellier explains, "was used to renovate *La Frontière*'s premises and to install new printing presses. These capital investments are still serving the Quebecor weeklies in the region."

The rest of the deficit should not be attributed too hastily to the paper's production costs. Cub reporters earned less than $150 per week, while the contributing journalists were producing a dozen articles for $40 per week. Moreover, a major part of

the production staff's salaries was defrayed by the federal government's job creation program.

The heroic era of the rue Port-Royal warehouse, where Péladeau launched *Le Journal de Montréal* in direst poverty, is past at Quebecor. Péladeau's outriders have given way to executives who are well paid for their efforts and for the loyalty they displayed in the beginning.

One after another, men like Saumur, Neveau, Marcoux, Cellier, Sanche and the team of specialized salesmen visited the luxurious apartments of La Tourelle in Rouyn. On the list of expenditures incurred for *Le Journal de Nord-Ouest*, those of the Montréal contingent no doubt figure at the top.

While invincible against his major competitors in Montréal and Québec City, in Rouyn Péladeau seems to have tripped up against conflicts of interest and the clumsiness of his own organizational machine.

Conclusion

Used as a buffer to protect *La Presse*'s advertising market, *Montréal-Matin* lost its own identity as soon as it entered the Power Corporation empire. Saved from bankruptcy and handsomely maintained by the parent firm, *Montréal-Matin* was sacrificed in the aftermath of a long strike, which ended its chance to attain profitability and autonomy. With its own foundations none too solid, *La Presse* decided to close its appendage, *Montréal-Matin*.

The entry of *Le Soleil* into Jacques Francoeur's empire occasioned a cultural clash between Québec City traditions and Montréal marketing practices. As the flagship of the UniMédia fleet, *Le Soleil* had to survive; it modernized without losing its own personality, which was staunchly defended by the long-established employees of the Old Capital's daily.

Anachronism among publishers, Pierre Péladeau tempted fate by launching a daily in far-off Abitibi at a time when papers were being shut down in all the big cities of North America. A victim of his own success, Péladeau had to close *Le Journal du Nord-Ouest* in order to ensure the survival of his very profitable weeklies in Rouyn and Val-d'Or.

One swallow does not make a summer. By the same token, the story of three newspapers does not supply enough evidence for a watertight theory about the concentration of ownership of the daily press.

These three case histories invite us, however, to question certain assumptions held by the partisans and adversaries of concentration.

Press empires do not necessarily kill newspapers, but they do not automatically save them through their financial capacity and managerial competence.

III
Monitoring and training

7
Press councils and ombudsmen

by
Dominique Clift

Accountability

Canadian dailies, both through their news gathering and their editorial statements, have contributed enormously to the broad acceptance of the principles of accountability and openness in the various relations between political authorities, free enterprise and the general public.

In their efforts to reach a constantly expanding readership and in order to improve their commercial operations, the large metropolitan dailies became more or less consciously the spokesmen for new political ideas and attitudes which went counter to established practices. Numerous efforts were made to reach out towards various categories of marginal persons who were not integrated into the consumer society whose benefits were constantly being referred to on the advertising pages. In order to do so it was necessary to display interest in groups who were without influence and who were politically underrepresented. Their defence had to be taken up against the incomprehension of state bureaucracy and exploitation by business firms. This was all the easier to do since newspapers in the United States had already dealt with this type of issue; facing severe racial problems and widespread poverty, they had innovated and developed more aggressive forms of reporting designed to question and to denounce.

During all of the 1960s, political winds were rather violent in the United States and their effects were felt after a certain time lag on the social and economic organization of Canada. However, Canadian newspapers were initially hesitant about following the advice they generously offered to public bodies everywhere and to private enterprise as regards accountability and openness. It is only when they themselves felt threatened by existing trends that they provided the public with the means of registering complaints, thereby contributing to media critique.

Editorial resistance began to fall when publishers realized they must make a choice between the interests of their readers and the world of authority embodied in the political system. The problem occurred first and extraordinarily early at *La Presse* in the late 1950s; it was grasped intuitively without realizing all of its implications. Under the direction of Jean-Louis Gagnon, the paper began defending its

Montréal readers against the abuse of power indulged in almost systematically by the government of premier Maurice Duplessis and of the Union Nationale. *La Presse* attacked the conservatism and the corruption of the regime, as well as its ideological leanings which caused it to neglect the development of the urban economy and to concentrate exclusively on its rural and agricultural supporters. However, *La Presse* stayed within the realm of political opposition and did not innovate with respect to its internal organization.

The first to modify its organization and its policies to fit the new social needs was the *Toronto Star*. In the late 1950s it created the Star Bureau of Accuracy which was supposed to take note of the public's complaints about accuracy of both news and advertising contained in the paper. Management was convinced that the circulation of the *Star* and the preservation of its advertising market rested primarily on the public being convinced that both conformed to reality. This policy helped the *Star* retain its lead over its two rivals, the *Globe and Mail* and the *Telegram*. It also helped compensate for the growing attractiveness of television for advertisers.

Somewhat later, the *Star* launched a column called *Action Line* which was designed to defend consumers against reprehensible commercial practices, particularly where products and services advertised in the paper were involved. Management was definitely taking the part of the readers. Its advertising standards, which were much stricter than those of competitors, gradually gained the support of the public and of advertisers themselves.

These motives of a commercial nature were supported by other considerations. First of all, politicians were beginning to bypass newspapers and reporters and were addressing themselves directly to the people through the intermediary of radio and of television. All those involved in public life were no longer disposed to accept the presence of middlemen apt to distort or simply scramble the contents of their messages. Moreover, governments as well as large corporations were displaying a similar attitude by having more frequent recourse to advocacy and institutional promotion in order to reach their respective publics.

It is this problem of credibility affecting the entire operation of the press in Canada which persuaded the *Star* to appoint an in-house press ombudsman. In this, it was inspired by precedents in the United States. His responsibilities and the manner in which he conducted his job could vary from one newspaper to the other. But, essentially, the basic idea was to receive complaints from readers, not only on simple questions of fact but also on questions of judgment such as, for example, the abuse of ethnic stereotypes and unfairness in the coverage of current events.

At the same time, the *Star* became the promoter of the idea of a press council for Ontario. The idea was mainly of British inspiration. Its intention was to provide additional satisfaction to the public which was increasingly suspicious and skeptical about mass media and to provide people with a simple means of recourse against the failings of newspapers. Expectations were that standards of fairness and responsibility could be raised and aligned to the needs of a population that was evolving very rapidly.

This strategy, accompanied by heavy promotional expenditures, helped raise the institutional prestige of the *Star* and of the industry in general. Apart from a desire to cultivate the loyalty of the readers, the intention was to preserve the homogeneity of the mass of readers and consumers by creating new lines of solidarity between the

daily press and its audience. In this way, the unity and the cohesiveness of the advertising market could be defended against fragmentation along class lines.

Such a possibility appeared all the more dangerous in that costs of operations in the large metropolitan dailies were constantly rising and internal organization was growing heavier and more bureaucratic. Survival required a continuous expansion of the readership and of the advertising market. Two extremely favorable factors in this respect were the spectacular rise in the level of education during the postwar period and a sustained improvement in the country's standard of living.

On the other hand, some negative fallout could be expected from technological innovations and from new concepts of management applicable to the newspaper industry. A very threatening possibility was that reduced costs would make it much easier to launch a new paper aimed at what are called downscale readers with no more than average education and whose appetite for news is limited to crime and sports.

This analysis of possible trends in newspaper circulation and advertising markets was not, however, accepted everywhere. It received rather limited support. It took 10 years for the idea of an in-house ombudsman, as applied by the *Star* in Toronto, to be taken up elsewhere in Canada. Moreover, the Ontario Press Council, established in 1972, started out with only eight members representing only 55 per cent of total daily newspaper circulation in that province. In 1980, there were 15, representing 63 per cent of total circulation. Six weeklies had also decided to join. Only Alberta and Québec among the other provinces set up their own press councils.

There seems to be a very direct relationship between the interest shown in press councils and the financial and commercial situation of individual newspapers. It is those newspapers with a large advertising market to protect and with a readership representing all classes of society that have taken the initiative of setting up existing press councils. Management in these newspapers has shown a desire for representativeness and for social roots that has contributed to influencing their decisions in that direction.

In spite of all the practical or ideological reasons that have been invoked to justify the refusal to join the press council, one cannot help noting that most newspapers that have stood apart are precisely those which are not closely identified either with the consumer society or with mass communications. The *Globe and Mail* in Toronto and *Le Devoir* in Montréal have both tried to develop a readership belonging to the upper echelons of the social and economic pyramid. The dailies belonging to the *Toronto Sun* and to Quebecor (*Le Journal de Montréal*) are aimed at the base of the pyramid, or were more visibly so at the time when they were launched. Members of the Thomson chain, on the other hand, are located mostly in fairly small cities where relating to mass readership is hardly pertinent.

One may conclude, therefore, that the various press councils established in Canada until now are seeking to perpetuate the social consensus which has ensured the success of so-called omnibus papers. These are newspapers whose formula is specially designed to satisfy a homogeneous society which is oriented towards advertising-led consumption patterns and whose basic unit is the traditional family.

Given the nature and the breadth of their commercial operations, these newspapers are dependent on an economy which is experiencing constant growth and progress. They necessarily project an optimistic view of the world and they firmly

believe in the perfectibility of society. The dark side of this ideology founded on belief in progress is the indifference with which they perceive the problems and the difficulties which may affect both individuals and groups. There has to be a very conscious effort and unusually strong commercial pressures before media coverage of social issues becomes more complete and hence more realistic.

In this context, press councils and in-house ombudsmen become indispensable instruments for enhancing the social awareness of management and ensuring the good health of large metropolitan newspapers. Their value is also derived from the adverse effects of an increasingly complex division of labor in newsrooms, and of the recourse to hierarchical structures in order to meet the difficult problems arising out of ever expanding personnel. These have brought about the bureaucratization of journalism and they have caused the gap separating journalists from their public to become wider all the time.

However, it would be unfair and untrue to maintain that only commercial reasons motivate membership in press councils or appointment of newspaper ombudsmen. In fact, there is widespread interest in improving the quality of journalism which has very little to do with economic considerations but a great deal to do with the intellectual satisfaction which it can obviously provide.

The progressive bureaucratization of newspaper management has inevitably brought about a defensive reflex on the part of many journalists eager to promote their professional interests and resist the trend towards the commercialization and trivialization of news and commentaries. For this reason, they like the idea of an independent referee capable of setting forth standards which would be morally binding on management and which in turn it would have to impose on its employees in the newsroom. Press councils constitute a valuable line of defence for journalists, both unionized and part of management, against the commercial requirements which are persistently undermining professional values.

It is, therefore, the convergence of the commercial interests of management and the professional interests of journalists, or perhaps simply their reconciliation, which has facilitated the introduction of accountability and self-criticism. Another factor which weighed heavily in the balance was the apparently irreversible trend towards concentration of press ownership and the rise of regional monopolies in the field of information. This state of affairs was a source of concern for both politicians and the public who feared that freedom of the press and the dissemination of information might be disastrously curtailed. These fears were particularly strong in Québec where the number of newspapers was already very small. Thus the idea of accountability and openness gradually gained ground in the industry.

The Ontario Press Council

In 1968, a provincial commission of inquiry into civil rights proposed in its report to the Ontario government the establishment of a press council in order "to control and discipline the press and other news media". The McRuer Commission was concerned with the publication of news and comment that may tend to prejudice the fair trial of an accused should a charge later be laid. The commission was objecting to sensational reports in the press which tended to constitute pre-trial condemnations.

The McRuer report was very much in line with public sentiment. The editor and publisher of the Toronto *Star*, Beland H. Honderich, attempted to persuade his colleagues at the head of other newspapers in Ontario to react positively. In the course of a newspaper award presentation speech, Honderich explained that a press council composed of journalists and representatives of the public would help disarm growing suspicions about the press and would provide at the same time a valuable line of defence against encroachments on freedom of the press. And he went on to say:

> In my experience, the greatest threat to freedom of the press in Canada comes from within and not without. We are not always as diligent as we should be in searching out the significant news and reporting it to the public. The second object of an Ontario press council would be to maintain the character of the press in accordance with the highest professional and commercial standards.

In 1970, the report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media accused the press of neglecting its responsibilities toward readers and the public. More specifically, it pointed out that media were apparently not concerned with warning their respective audiences about the probable impact of forthcoming social changes. In order to improve the responsiveness of the press, the report suggested that a national press council should be created.

The Davey Report was a source of deep concern among newspaper publishers, particularly in Ontario. Although it stressed government should have no involvement in a press council, the recommendation seemed to pave the way for federal intervention in the field of information, something that was feared above everything else. If the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), whose authority extended over radio and television across the country, was to be the model that Ottawa had in mind, the result would be an unwarranted intrusion not only in the field of information but also in the property rights and freedom of action of newspaper publishers.

However, there was no denying the fact that the public and their elected representatives were more disposed than ever to hold the press responsible for the confusion and the tensions brought on by unrelenting social change. It could be said, however, that neither the public nor people wielding political authority were in any way ready to tackle the problems of services and of income distribution which were coming to the fore in the affluent society. In these circumstances, as in many others, there was a distinct possibility that the media would be made the scapegoats for existing feelings of anxiety.

Certain publishers felt that the industry should take the lead and make a concrete gesture to meet the criticism directed at it in a way that was becoming more intensive all the time. It was obvious that no national press council working effectively could be set up without the financial and even legal assistance of federal authorities. It was thought preferable to operate in the local or provincial field, in Ontario, which in any case was far more suitable for the type of links that the industry wanted to establish with the public. It offered much better chances of success. Another inducement to move in this direction was the knowledge that provincial intervention in most areas produced a type of regulation that was considerably milder than that which came from Ottawa.

The Ontario Press Council was finally established in June, 1972. However, its members had to resign themselves to the fact that only eight newspapers had decided to join: the Toronto *Star*, Ottawa *Citizen*, Hamilton *Spectator*, Brantford *Expositor*, Kitchener-Waterloo *Record*, London *Free Press*, Owen Sound *Sun-Times*, and Windsor *Star*. Even though the Council represented only a minority of newspapers, there was some consolation in the fact that it accounted for slightly more than half the total daily circulation. Subsequently, *Le Droit* in Ottawa joined the Québec Press Council whose make-up and proceedings were mostly in French.

The Ontario Council was set up along the lines of the British model of 1963. First, there are 10 members delegated by newspapers and selected from among both management and newsroom. But they are given no precise mandate and act in their own name only. The first president, chosen from among the public, was Davidson Dunton, formerly president of the CBC and later president of Carleton University of Ottawa. His term ended in the fall of 1981. Ten other members represent the public and are chosen from a broad range of occupations and interests. Headquarters are in Ottawa.

At the end of 1981, 10 daily newspapers had joined the Council, and their share of total English-language daily circulation in the province came to 53.5 per cent. However, 34 newspapers were still refusing to join or showed no interest whatsoever in its objectives. This group includes the 22 Ontario newspapers belonging to the Thomson chain. By 1981, 14 weeklies had joined. In addition, the Ontario Weekly Newspapers Association began negotiations that could eventually lead to greater participation by weekly newspapers, either on a group or individual basis.

The first objective of the Council, according to the agreement signed by member newspapers and published as an annex to the Council's first annual report in 1973, is to preserve "the established freedom of the press". The Council also aims to serve as a medium of understanding between the public and the press, to encourage the highest ethical, professional and commercial standards of journalism, as well as to consider complaints from the public about the conduct of the press in the gathering and publication of news, opinion, and advertising, and the conduct of individuals or organizations endangering the public's access to information.

The Council operates with contributions levied from member newspapers and based on certified annual circulation. The budget must be submitted for the approval of supporting newspapers. It amounted to $89,000 in 1981, an increase of 5.7 per cent over the preceding year. Contrary to the trend in Québec, the scope of the Ontario Press Council's activities is largely determined by the generosity of member newspapers. It is fairly easy to achieve a meeting of minds in this regard since participation in the Council in Ontario is limited to the written press, whereas the Québec Council exercises jurisdiction over radio, television and magazines.

Complaints are received by an inquiry committee which hears testimony from both sides and may seek to obtain satisfaction from the newspaper involved should this be necessary. In case it cannot promote a compromise that is satisfactory to both parties, the committee reports its findings to the Council itself which then proceeds to an adjudication. This type of procedure obviously encourages reconciliation, as appears from the list of problems submitted to the Council. Of the 57 complaints received in 1979, only 14 were adjudicated by the Council. Seventeen were resolved

in consultation with the newspapers involved while 25 others were simply withdrawn; one is still pending.

Each year, the Council receives a number of complaints concerning publications that do not belong to it and which do not come under its jurisdiction. In such cases, the Council proceeds only if it has the agreement of the newspaper against which the complaint is lodged. Only four of the 21 complaints involving non-members during 1979 could be taken under consideration. In 16 cases, the Council was refused authorization to proceed while another complaint was withdrawn. These figures indicate that the resistance of some publishers to the concept of a press council is not quite ready to give way; it is also clear that the usefulness of such a council is not universally acknowledged in the industry.

Among the 513 complaints received by the Council between 1972 and 1979, according to the classification established in the report for the latter year, 102 had to do with refusal to allow access to the paper, in the form of either letters to the editor or advertising; 279 complaints had to do with the accuracy or fairness of news items; and 90 were concerned with such things as cartoons and headlines. The report notes that complaints dealing with news and information tend to diminish compared to those that concern access to the paper or the contents of advertising.

The Council has also been interested in broad questions that emerged from the jurisprudence it was trying to establish. It has published, in pamphlet form, an examination of various issues concerning professional ethics and public responsibility. It raised the question whether newspapers should publish the names of persons charged with minor infractions of the Criminal Code. Another brochure published in 1978, Sexism and the Newspapers, came to the conclusion that women were generally treated as a not very interesting minority by most newsrooms. More recently, the Council issued Press Ethics and Freebies which dealt with the problem of free services and gifts for newspapers and their employees.

In the course of 1979, the Council pressed the Ontario government for an amendment to the provincial libel laws following a decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Cherneskey case. The consequences of this decision were to broaden considerably the legal responsibility of newspapers themselves in libel suits arising from the contents of letters to the editor. It was thought that an amendment to provincial statutes could re-establish freedom of expression in this particular area. The government passed the suggested amendment in 1980.

The Alberta Press Council

Founded in 1972, the Alberta Press Council includes five of the eight daily newspapers in that province: Edmonton *Journal*, Calgary *Herald*, Red Deer *Advocate*, Medicine Hat *News*, and Grande Prairie *Herald-Tribune*. There are 10 members in addition to the president and the secretary: one representative from each paper and one representative of the public from the area served by that paper.

As in Ontario, the Alberta Press Council sees its role primarily as that of conciliator. A complaint is examined only after the plaintiff has demonstrated that he has not been able to obtain satisfaction from the paper concerned. Should mediation be unsuccessful, the case is then adjudicated. The Council refuses, however, to hear complaints addressed to non-participating newspapers unless the editor expressly asks.

The mandate given to the Council covers many points of general interest. It is first of all interested in giving voice to the public in the case of abuses committed by the press. It seeks to promote further improvements in the quality of information and in professional ethics. It must also ensure that nothing will interfere with the public's access to information and with the freedom and independence of the press.

The rather limited activity of the Alberta Council — it hears only two or three cases a year — is due mostly to the very low level of politicization which prevails in that province. Most cases with which it must deal originate with politicians or with persons professionally involved in the field of information. Moreover, the appointment of an ombudsman at the Edmonton *Journal* has contributed to a greater degree of caution and objectivity in this particular newspaper as well as among its competitors and other media.

The Council was called upon to deal with several complaints formulated by newspapers themselves and having to do with the manner in which various public authorities understand the question of access to information: penitentiary authorities at Fort Saskatchewan who forced photographers to expose their films following an official visit; the Speaker of the Alberta legislature for having limited the opportunity for contacts between reporters and members of the assembly; the University of Alberta for having claimed the right to hold certain official meetings behind closed doors.

The Windsor Media Council

The Windsor Media Council is actually the first press council in Canada, having been founded in 1971 by the publisher of the Windsor *Star*, Mark Farrell. It is a community type of organization such as exists in several cities in the United States. Its mandate is approximately the same as that of other councils in Canada, which is to oversee the quality of information and to defend free access to information.

It differs from other councils, however, by the very great preponderance it accords representatives of the public. Two-thirds of the Council, and its chairman, must be people who have no connection at all with news media. The single representative of the *Star* is elected by newsroom employees — management and staff. Radio station *CKWW* is the only other organization to belong to the Council.

Several attempts were made through the years to attract additional members, but without success. Apparently, the overwhelming influence given to the representatives of the public was felt to be unacceptable to several managers of radio and television stations in the area. The CBC, which had originally refused to join the Council, is said to be reassessing its decision.

The Windsor Media Council was called upon to deal with only two complaints during 1979 and one in 1978, although an indeterminate number were either withdrawn or resolved through conciliation. The complaints actually heard by the Council since its foundation touch on subjects such as access to information and access to the pages of the newspaper.

The Québec Press Council

The Québec Press Council, which was created in 1973, differs in many respects from other councils in Canada and in other parts of the world. It covers all news media

accessible to the public, which includes radio and television as well as the written press. It gives professional journalists a place in its membership distinct from that given to media owners and managers. It is slowly moving toward a form of financial support independent of the media, which should eventually allow it to become a full-fledged public institution. Moreover, the problems which gave rise to its establishment, while they were very close to those existing in other parts of Canada, had such an intensity that the Council has acquired in its operations a character that is distinctive and specific to Québec.

The first to come out with a press council project were the members of l'Union canadienne des journalistes de langue française around 1955. It was submitted to various media owners and rejected because of a somewhat obvious fault: it was to be composed solely of journalists but financed solely by the owners. The basic idea of a council was taken up again at the beginning of the 1960s by Jean-Louis Gagnon of *La Presse* and Jean-Marc Léger of *Le Devoir*. This time rejection was because owners were fearful that the Council would impinge on their rights and prerogatives. Nevertheless, the proposal encouraged greater awareness of media problems and helped bring about the creation of L'Association des quotidiens du Québec which a few years later would bring publishers around to becoming the main promoters of a press council.

The UCJLF returned to the idea of a council at its annual convention in 1966, along with L'Alliance canadienne des syndicats de journalistes which was a true labor organization. The two groups then began negotiations with the association of Québec newspapers. It was decided very early on that the Council would be tripartite, to include representatives of management, of professional and union organizations, and of the public. Parties to the discussions agreed that they would have to reshape their respective organizations in order to make them more representative and enable them to make judicious appointments to the proposed council. That is when La Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec was created.

In 1967, financier Paul Desmarais acquired *La Presse* and the next year made a move to take over *Le Soleil* in Québec City. The government of premier Jean-Jacques Bertrand convened a special committee of the National Assembly on freedom of the press. During the discussions he stated that in spite of all the problems associated with concentration of ownership he had no intention of limiting the exercise of property rights, either through a law or through a regulatory board. He was counting on owners and journalists, as well as the public, to work together in order to prevent whatever abuses result from excessive concentration. He saw the creation of a press council as an excellent means to that end. The associations representing journalists and press owners informed the committee of the progress they had achieved in their negotiations.

The premier's views were generally welcomed even if many people thought he was a little too quick in turning his back on any responsibility the state might have in these matters. The National Assembly's committee, which never managed to make any specific recommendations, seemed to believe that concentration of press ownership was a necessary evil and that by attempting to counteract the process one ran the risk of weakening the economic base of French-language media and causing a deterioration in the quality of the information being offered to the public. It was thought preferable to rely on the self-discipline and the sense of responsibility of the media themselves.

Newspaper owners, who had long feared the possibility of government intervention in their business, were greatly relieved. They resumed talks with journalists for the creation of a press council, but progress was extremely slow. It was only in 1971 that agreement in principle was reached, and it was only in 1973 that the main object was realized. This surprising slowness can be attributed to the doubts and hesitations resulting from the very rapid evolution of the situation in Québec. When society was in the midst of a mutation triggered by the Quiet Revolution, each group experienced considerable difficulties in determining the real nature of its own interests and reconciling them with those of others. It seems that agreement is hard to come by when the future is so uncertain.

During the 1960s, the media in general were extremely harsh towards those who were still defending the social structures identified with the former regime of premier Duplessis. Newspapers, radio, and television were all united in promoting policies supposedly associated with the modernization of Québec. In fact, it was much more than that: the media were attempting to restore the ideological unity of the province around collective and nationalist themes.

By doing this they brought about the unity of the advertising market. They did away with the old social divisions, particularly those which encouraged differing expectations among people living in the country and the small towns and those living in the cities. This transformation ushered Québec into the consumer society. The broadening of the advertising market favored the modernization of the press and also made possible dramatic improvements in the working conditions and the income of journalists.

The role played by the press, and particularly the way in which it attacked everything identified with the old order, created enemies in many quarters. Politicians, including premiers Jean Lesage and Daniel Johnson, saw the pernicious influence of the press in the steady rise of social unrest. Throughout the 1960s, veiled threats of a crackdown by the government were a frequent occurrence.

Newspaper owners came to believe that the establishment of a press council would help rehabilitate the press in the eyes of political parties and of public authorities, thereby warding off the possibility of intervention. Moreover, it was then becoming clear that the government was heading towards some serious problems in their communications with the public, so that it seemed desirable to have some neutral body able to criticize the provincial administration on this score and to state the professional requirements of various news media.

There was also some concern among newspaper managers about the tendency shown by unions to use collective agreements to resolve the journalists' own professional requirements. The arbitration procedures suggested by many union negotiators seemed very similar to those which might be used by the press council. Accordingly, it was thought a useful gesture to seek some sort of institutionalized conscience situated beyond the union contract which in any case was not designed for such a role. The existence of a press council, with the participation of the public, would have the effect of keeping the lid on the inevitable confrontations on professional issues when collective bargaining got under way.

From the point of view of journalists, whether in professional associations or in unions, the political situation did not look very promising. Taking advantage of the social unrest which kept growing throughout the 1960s, police forces began to put

increasing pressure on reporters. Unfavorable stories or criticism of police practices very often brought about withdrawal of police identity cards issued to members of the press. Many reporters were thus barred for all practical purposes from the scene of a crime, of an accident, or of a fire and were denied access to police information. This meant that it was the police who decided if any person was to be allowed to work as a journalist on many beats.

The same considerations applied to political demonstrations which were rather frequent throughout that period. These demonstrations occasionally turned into riots. It therefore happened that reporters were subpoenaed to appear in court and forced to testify about events they had witnessed and covered. This practice constituted an abuse since police really had all the information they needed to prosecute. It made journalism both difficult and dangerously compromising. Occasionally, police descended into newsrooms, without warrants, searching for incriminating documents and information that reporters might have in their possession.

The use of the War Measures Act on the occasion of the October Crisis of 1970 helped convince even the most refractory of the vital necessity of coming to terms with newspaper owners in order to protect the independence and the integrity of the press. The fact that labor relations in the newsrooms were much more tense than anywhere else in the country, plus the tendency of most journalists to move towards more radical political opinions, indicated the extent to which the situation could be dramatic at that time.

Another problem which encouraged co-operation was the proliferation of journalism courses in community colleges and in universities. Most of these courses had been set up without any kind of consultation with journalists and without any regard for the media's manpower requirements.

The adversarial nature of the relations between employers and reporters helps explain why it took five years before the Press Council could finally be created in 1973. Starting in the 1950s, unions were fighting to limit the editors' rights to modify story content without reporters' consent. The concept of editorial co-management also began to take shape during that period. Journalists who were acutely conscious of the role they played as opinion leaders showed themselves eager to challenge the power of the owners on the contents of the information provided for the public.

It was only after having established some sort of *modus vivendi* between employers and employees that the Québec Press Council was able to start operations in February, 1973. Incorporated as a non-profit organization, it is composed of 19 members. Six of them are selected among the management staff of firms belonging to the following organizations: Les Quotidiens de Québec (dailies), Les Hebdos du Canada (weeklies) and L'Association canadienne de la radio et de la télévision de langue française (radio and television), plus Radio-Canada and Radio-Québec. Six other members are selected from La Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec. These two groups choose the president who must be an outsider and represent the public, which has another six members. This tripartite character is unique in Canada.

The manner in which the Council is funded reflects the tensions which exist in Québec newsrooms and in political life as well. Whereas elsewhere in Canada few people are bothered by the fact that press councils are financed out of newspaper

contributions, there is a strong desire in Québec to move away from this formula which is felt to be compromising for the Council's freedom of action.

For this reason there was general agreement to set up La Fondation pour le Conseil de presse whose ultimate goal is to ensure totally independent funding. By early 1981, the foundation has gathered a sum of $280,000. Provincial authorities have already subscribed $200,000 and are willing to match public contributions up to an additional $300,000. Another fund-raising campaign was organized in 1981 so as to increase the Council's independence from its constituent organizations. During 1979-80, the Council received $20,000 from the foundation, an amount which is still very far away from the ideal that members have in mind. Total income for that year was $136,000, the bulk of it coming from newspaper owners. However, as a matter of principle, the professional association of journalists makes an annual contribution of $7,000 to the Council's budget, a gesture which has no counterpart outside Québec.

The importance of the foundation lies in the possibility that the highly antagonistic relations between journalists and management might eventually cripple the Council or even destroy it. Already the representativeness of La Fédération professionnelle des journalistes seems to be in doubt because of the problems it has in enrolling the bulk of the profession and in collecting the funds necessary for its own operations and for its contribution to the Council. On the other hand, La Fédération nationale des communications (a constituent member of the Confederation of National Trade Unions), to which are affiliated most journalists' unions in Québec, is currently looking into the possibility of soliciting membership in the Council. The Council's constitution would have to be amended if it decided to accede to that request; there is no guarantee that present members would agree.

Participation of the CNTU in the Council would surely transform the spirit in which it now operates. It now offers a meeting ground where opposing groups can limit debates to the minimum on which they can ultimately agree. The appearance in their midst of a militant union group could easily transform the Council into an arena with all the risks this entails for its efficiency and its stability. But in such an event, the availability of adequate revenues from a totally independent source would give the Council a certain detachment which it might not be able to muster in other circumstances.

The Council also has its own way of dealing with complaints which sets it apart from other such organizations in Canada. While the latter stress conciliation and use adjudication only as a last recourse, the Québec Council considers itself to be a kind of honor court and it always seeks to maximize this role. The committee dealing with complaints will therefore adjudicate a far greater proportion of them than will other councils. This policy, which has majority support, nevertheless draws criticism.

Some publishers blame the Council for accepting a large number of trivial complaints because of a lack of adequate screening. It is also felt that the procedure leading to a decision on a case is too summary: the plaintiff is heard, after which explanations are requested from the paper or journalist concerned. It is on this basis that most decisions are rendered. There is pressure for a more rigorous examination on the Ontario model where complainants and newspaper representatives appear with witnesses.

However, the Council has deliberately chosen this type of procedure. It feels that budgetary constraints require it to use the most simple and expeditious procedures. As for hearing complaints, the Council believes that its approach must above all inspire confidence in the public. It seeks to avoid confrontations and elitism which could only serve to intimidate plaintiffs who are unfamiliar with the inner workings of the media. The justification advanced is that the tripartite character of the media requires it to depend on the support of the public if it is to have the necessary moral authority to overcome the antagonism which exists between management and journalists and the occasional collusion between the two groups.

At the time of its founding, the Council had to choose between a code of ethics and a jurisprudence emerging from its adjudications. For many reasons, the idea of a code was abandoned even if it was more in line with Québec's legal tradition. During the 1950s, L'Union canadienne des journalistes had drawn up a code of ethics. But the unions, eager to negotiate the most advantageous professional clauses, refused to be bound by it. Later on, as the creation of a press council was winning general agreement, it was realized that drafting a code acceptable to all would be an insurmountable task. Journalists refused to accept a code which regulated only their own professional activities; they also wanted a code that would regulate press managers and owners. But there was no way limitations on management rights would be acceptable to the industry. Eventually, everyone rallied to the flexible and pragmatic solution.

In its report for 1979-80, the Council defined its role in the following manner:

> The fundamental objective of the Québec Press Council, a body devoted to the public good and representative of all elements concerned with information, is to protect the public's access to free, honest and complete information in all its forms.
>
> The Council also has the basic purpose of safeguarding freedom of the press. By showing itself vigilant against all breaches of this freedom, it is only reaffirming and reiterating publicly the right of all the press (newspapers, magazines, radio and television) to inform and to comment, without being hindered or threatened in the exercise of its responsibilities by any power whatever it might be.
>
> In order to fulfil its main objectives and to ensure the most favorable conditions for the improvement of information in Québec, the Council monitors very closely all the development which will affect, here and elsewhere, trends in the whole field of information.

During 1979, the Council received 77 complaints, which is an increase of 28 per cent over the preceding year. Most of them, 85 per cent in fact, originated from the public, while 10 per cent were lodged by journalists and five per cent by management. The report states that the public is twice as prone to complain about the press as about journalists. Whenever the latter complain it is usually about the paper they happen to be working for or about a competing one. When the plaintiff is a newspaper, the complaint usually concerns a rival one.

Of all the complaints received by the Council since its foundation in 1973, 16 per cent were about partiality and errors of fact. Another 16 per cent were about professional laxness. Discrimination accounts for 10 per cent of the complaints while incorrect methods and invasions of privacy each account for seven per cent. Various

public bodies and administrations, in 7.5 per cent of all cases, find themselves accused of having impeded access to information.

Through the years the Council has been called upon to make statements on various issues of public interest. Among these were the protection of journalistic sources, polls and the public's right to information, a draft law on information submitted by the communications minister of Québec, professional ethics, as well as several other topics arising out of various complaints.

Since 1975, the Council has also been involved in issuing professional identity cards. This is in line with the oft-stated wishes of newspapers and reporters to have some form of identification that would facilitate newsgathering. However, since only 600 journalists out of a total of about 1,500 have requested identity cards, the Council is wondering whether it should continue with this task.

Jurisprudence

Press councils in Canada are voluntary and self-regulatory bodies with no policing powers. They cannot impose penalties beyond the obligation to publish adverse adjudications. Their decisions are at most a set of rules exerting moral influence on information media and on journalists as well. These decisions have contributed a great deal in bringing about general acceptance of principles of fairness and accuracy in the treatment of news and in making media managers more sensitive to complaints from their respective audiences. Similarly, the latter have learned to become more demanding.

In spite of reservations shown by some owners and publishers toward the whole idea of press councils, the decisions they have rendered through the last decade have served to confirm the independence of management from any form of outside control or regulation, whether public or private. In this respect, press councils operate as instruments of self-regulation and self-criticism on the basis of a community of interests between newspapers and readers.

An examination of the accumulated jurisprudence and of statements issued on questions of general interest shows that press councils serve other functions as well. They operate as powerful lobbies serving the needs of the information industry, defending it against any attempt at intervention by government. They will occasionally go on the attack and criticize the public administrations for too often resorting to closed door deliberations and official secrecy. By asserting on numerous occasions the close relationship between the newspapers' quest for information and the public's right to know, press councils have opposed bureaucratic and official control of information and have thereby helped clarify the concept of access to information.

Press councils have also acted as promoters of tolerance and egalitarianism. On numerous occasions they have stood up against sexism in advertising, news, and commentary, and they have defended the right of access of minority groups such as homosexuals to newspaper advertising. In addition to educating the public about its rights, they have also contributed to modernizing the very conservative attitudes that still persist in Canadian newspapers.

Canadian press councils have all adopted a procedure which is based not on a code of ethics applicable to all situations but on an assessment of each complaint as it arises. They have chosen a pragmatic way of doing things which would gradually

bring forth broad rules of conduct with their own moral authority. This was a significant choice. Codified rules of behavior always exhibit a binding character and they inevitably raise the whole problem of sanctions. This thorny problem is avoided by having recourse to a still undefined custom. It is a procedure better adapted to the needs of self-regulation.

Another noteworthy aspect of this procedure is that press council rulings are based on the possible harm suffered by some group or individual rather than on a broad and binding principle. The distinction is an important one in a context where there is commercialization of information and where there exists a homogeneous mass of readers and consumers. It makes it easier for individuals to seek redress, but it seriously inhibits any group that is challenging established values or that is seeking to be heard by a larger audience than the one it normally has access to. In other words, press council jurisprudence addresses itself primarily to individual rights and it is only through occasional statements of principle that group or collective rights are recognized.

In spite of an idealistic vision of the press as constituting a public service or as having a definite responsibility towards society in general, press councils have always confirmed in their rulings and statements the autonomy of management. They have consistently defended its discretionary powers although they have often criticized the price to be paid to obtain management co-operation in setting up press councils whose main purpose in this context was to forestall the possibility of government intervention in the press.

The majority of the complaints brought forward by the public concern some lapse of judgment or attention quite easily rectified to the satisfaction of all parties concerned. However, a certain number raise questions of principle which may be more difficult to resolve. The most frequent complaints of that nature concern access to newspapers through advertising, letters to the editor, or news coverage.

All press council rulings explicitly recognize the discretionary authority of newspapers over the advertisements they might carry. During the first year of its operations, the Ontario Press Council was called upon to adjudicate two such cases involving the Toronto *Star*. The first concerned a complaint that the paper had refused an ad on behalf of a magazine devoted to gay liberation. In a style that it has maintained through the years, the Council ruled:

> A publisher has the right to determine the acceptability for publication of any advertisement and decisions may be based on many different considerations. In this case the Council feels there was discrimination in refusal to publish a simple advertisement for a periodical.

In the second case, which involved a movement opposing organized religion, the Council supported the *Star*'s refusal because of the rather direct way in which the Roman Catholic Church was being attacked. The Council ruled:

> While it is essential in a free press that space be found for minority views, the publisher must have discretion as to what advertisements will be published. In this case there were several phrases which could be offensive to persons of certain faiths. Therefore, there is no criticism of the way the discretion was exercised. The complaint is dismissed.

In its comments on these two decisions, the Ontario Council quotes the three considerations which the *Star* claims to have in mind whenever it must determine the acceptability of certain advertisements. These seem to be shared by the Council in the light of the decisions rendered through subsequent years.

1. Advertising is a form of news and the paper has a responsibility to publish advertising news whether it agrees with it or not;
2. Advertising news the paper publishes must be correct, by fact and by implication;
3. Advertising news should not tend to arouse hatred or contempt for any group in the community on the grounds of race, color, creed, religion or national origin.

Access to newspapers in the form of letters to the editor has been the subject of numerous complaints in Ontario as well as in Québec. Some of them, if not most, were clearly trivial or groundless. Others were brought about by the prejudices or the stubbornness of editors in charge of the letters pages. But the very principle of access, while it is certainly not seen as absolute, is not challenged, and the rulings of press councils have served to confirm its general acceptance.

Considering this particular issue, the chairman of the Ontario Council, Davidson Dunton, stated in the report for 1976:

> In its adjudications the Council has shown it does not believe that every letter to an editor should be published, but that all main viewpoints should have a fair chance; and that if a certain letter is the only one received that represents a particular perspective of a much-discussed issue, then that letter should appear.
>
> The Council has made it clear in some findings that it agrees an editor may properly edit a letter to reduce the length and improve the style, but should not alter the sense or omit significant passages.
>
> In several complaints about lack of access to a newspaper's columns the Council has thought appropriate redress lay in the publication of a letter. In such conclusions it has had in mind that surveys show that Letters to the Editor command high readership.

The Québec Press Council expressed similar views in a ruling cited in its report for 1979-80:

> No one can claim to have access by virtue of right to the letters pages of a newspaper. Any decision on this matter is the responsibility of the editor whose prerogative it is to determine his paper's policy in this regard. In spite of the latitude he enjoys, the editor's appreciation in a society that claims to be open and progressive must show the openness of mind necessary for the press whose function to inform also includes the obligation of facilitating the expression of individual and collective freedom. If newspapers decide to open a page for letters from their readers — a practice which the Council warmly encourages because the expression of varied points of view helps improve the quality of information — it must act in such a way that the readers' access is real and effective.

Press councils have also been called upon to rule on complaints made by persons or groups who thought themselves wronged for not having received in the news columns all the attention which their activities seemed to warrant. This type of complaint often comes from political candidates who are dissatisfied with the way they

are being treated by local media. The principles defended by press councils in these cases are those of balanced and impartial reporting of news. They find universal acceptance although their application often gives rise to strong protests.

In the end, it is the discretion and the judgment of editors that is invoked whenever there is disagreement about the importance to be attributed to any particular event or situation. However, the principles that have been put forward through the years apply mostly to controversial situations where two or more opponents may be facing each other. There are certain types of situations that do not lend themselves to this kind of resolution. Thus, while abortion is an issue where diversity of opinion is readily attainable, this is not always so with such issues as pollution and consumerism; the points of view are not so well balanced. This also helps explain the problems of minority groups, such as welfare recipients, who find it difficult to penetrate the consciousness of the more affluent majority. These groups do not have a ready access to news columns or air-time unless they can successfully stage media events that will attract reporters and cameras.

The problem was raised on several occasions during the hearings of the Royal Commission on Newspapers. In Montréal, speaking for L'Institut canadien pour l'éducation des adultes, Lina Trudel said:

> Actually, we are in a situation where the media are dominated by those who finance them, advertisers and so on. It is a determining influence on the contents of the media.

In Toronto, Barrie Zwicker, publisher of *Content* magazine, told the commission there was today *de facto* censorship in Canada and that it was apparent from the very sameness of newspaper contents across the country and from the outer limits of comment generally allowed. He said:

> The vast majority of these people, who choose personnel and make all the major decisions on the allocation of human, financial and technical resources, reside within a range of the socio-economic spectrum that is middle class, a part of the racial spectrum that is white, a part of the sexual spectrum that is male and — give or take a few mavericks — inhabit the stands right of centre in the political stadium.
>
> By contrast, a large proportion of the Canadian population and a significant proportion of the newspaper-reading population, is lower class, non-white and of course female. Perhaps a fifth of the Canadian population, as shown by democratically cast ballots in elections, fairly consistently indicates it sees merit in left-of-centre programs, ideas and leaders whereas few of our papers, on their editorial pages, or in columns, ever do.

Many other groups across the country also complained about the unrepresentative character of the press. In Winnipeg, Bill Blaikie, a Member of Parliament, said that the groups who are most important to advertisers become so to newspapers. In the same city, a feminist organization deplored the fact that concentration of press ownership was driving up advertising rates, putting them beyond the reach of small businessmen, minority cultural groups, and voluntary associations. Consequently, there is a consolidation of stereotyped views in the press which then becomes insensitive to complaints and hostile to the idea of social reform.

Press councils as well as media themselves have made persistent efforts to overcome the stereotyped views which many social and ethnic minorities complain about. Sexism, in particular, has been much discussed. But the results are not very conclusive and hardly provide adequate guidelines for the industry.

While the Québec Press Council has criticized *Le Journal de Montréal* for its use of girlie pictures, it has not established a firm jurisprudence in the matter. The 1977-78 report mentions a complaint concerning a number of weekly publications with names like *Rendez-vous*, *Contact*, and *Swingers* and which is summarized in the following manner:

> Offence against journalistic ethics. Deficient information. Sensationalism. Publication of photographs designed to exploit women as sexual symbols. Offence against human dignity.

The resulting ruling leaves something to be desired since the Council seems to believe that a minority group protected by some other public body does not fall under its jurisdiction:

> The Council deplores the fact that such practices can result in casting discredit upon the quality of the press but cannot intervene to prohibit them without running the risk of becoming an instrument of censorship. The complaint is directed towards the Council on the Status of Women, a body set up essentially for the defence and the protection of the rights of women.

An article signed by Helen Worthington in the Toronto *Star* of January 26, 1976, suggested that all those who felt offended by sexism in advertising and in news should write a letter of complaint to the Ontario Press Council. Close to a hundred letters were received by the Council which wrote back to those who had included a return address:

> The Council concluded after careful consideration that it could best deal with the issue by following its normal practice of considering complaints about specific stories or specific advertisements.
>
> This is in line with the Council's primary purpose which is to consider complaints from the public about the conduct of the press in the gathering and publication of news, opinion and advertising.

This suggestion brought the irate response of one correspondent who said it would be far more effective to formulate general guidelines than to ask women to launch individual complaints against specific articles. "I cannot help but wonder at the politics of such a choice," the person wrote.

Recognizing that the criticism was well founded, the Council decided to form a committee to examine the whole question of sexism. Its preliminary report condemned the general attitude of newspapers on a large number of points and concluded that they all added up to a sorry situation.

In acting this way, the Council was indirectly questioning the basis for its initial decision to rely solely on complaints inspired from the notion of personal wrong rather than on a code of ethics applicable to all situations. It amounted to a recognition that on questions of great social importance jurisprudence and custom were totally inadequate.

Among the problems which the Council's committee had set aside for further study was "the cultural lag that afflicts the media, which should not lag in reflecting the changing life styles of women".

Racism and ethnic stereotypes, because they are much less obvious in the media than is sexism, have not resulted in as many complaints and have not attracted the same attention. Nevertheless, one may still detect the need for broad rules of conduct. Rulings by press councils and the grounds invoked for them show a certain improvisation and the great difficulty involved in formulating a consistent approach.

Two decisions rendered by the Ontario Council may serve to illustrate this point. They would certainly surprise a great number of French-speaking people in Québec. In October, 1977, the Council blamed the Toronto *Star* for two successive headlines over a background story after a TWA jetliner had been hijacked by a group of Croatian nationalists. The first headline read "Croatian Nationalists Carve a Trail of Bloody Murder". In a later edition, the headline was compressed to read "Croatians Carve Bloody Trail". The text of the adjudication reads as follows:

> The Council sees nothing objectionable in The Star's story. However, the first headline could be construed as referring to all, not some, "Croatian nationalists" and the second headline to all, not some, "Croatians" and to that extent could be misleading.
>
> Council reaffirms its concern that a newspaper must exercise particular caution when dealing with such potentially sensitive topics.
>
> To this extent, the complaint is upheld.

In its 1979 report, however, the Council analyses the two charges of racism that came up during the year. It describes the circumstances that led to one of the complaints after the Ottawa *Citizen* had published an editorial opposing the language policies of premier William Davis. An article, subsequently published in the same paper and offering a diametrically opposite view, drew loud protests from a Québec organization, La Société nationale des Québecois de l'Outaouais. The Council's report describes the adjudication in the following manner:

> The reporter, then head of The Citizen's Ottawa bureau, disagreed with the newspaper's editorial stand so it gave him the opportunity to express that disagreement in the column which contained a strongly-worded criticism of Québec's language legislation, Bill 101, and an implication that Québec's treatment of English-speaking people might be compared to Nazi treatment of Jews in Germany during the Second World War.
>
> In disagreeing that the column was racist and discriminatory, the Council noted that the writer was expressing his own sincerely-held views on an issue of public importance.

The Québec Press Council, acting on a complaint filed in 1979, accusing rod and gun columnists on several newspapers of fostering prejudice toward Amerindians, made the following statement on the kind of judgment that newspapers could make on various groups in society:

> It is impossible that information media be required in their writings to convey views conforming exactly to the image and sense that individuals and groups want to project about themselves. Freedom of the press, and hence the public's right to information, would be gravely compromised if the press were limited in its approach to certain subjects, to some philosophy or some current of ideas originating with the state, some pressure group or any other movement.

> However, any organization, any group and any individual, has the right to expect that the press will not project a deformed image. Thus, the press, even in the case of a journalistic device such as a column, should not stray from the truthful description of facts and from the honesty imposed by a sense of duty and responsibility to inform the public in a satisfactory manner.

The great difficulty of resolving issues that relate to prejudice is also apparent from a decision rendered by the Québec Press Council in 1979. The complaint was lodged by a person who had just gone through a sex change operation and whose problems had been discussed in court. The decision here is more to the point than is the case with ethnic stereotypes.

> In the performance of its duties, the press must naturally aim at lively and dynamic information capable of holding the reader's attention. One cannot fault the journalist in the present case for having treated the incident in a style that would make the news interesting. Nevertheless, the press must keep to a tone and a vocabulary that are respectful of persons, and it should avoid ridiculing their predicaments in such a way as to draw scorn upon them or fan popular prejudice. The irony which transpires from the article in question may precisely have had the effect of ridiculing transsexuals in general and the plaintiff in particular, even if the reporter in the present case took the precaution of not identifying the person.

In its 1977 report, the Ontario Council pointed out that since its foundation five years earlier it had not received a single complaint on invasion of privacy. This situation may be partially explained by the fact that newspapers likely to engage in the kind of sensationalism that would draw such a complaint do not in fact belong to the Council.

Québec, however, has had several of these cases. In 1979, the Council looked into the detailed description which several newspapers gave of Margaret Trudeau's stay at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montréal. The Council decreed that such news was of public interest and did not constitute an invasion of privacy. In another case, the Council condemned the editor of a weekly newspaper from Saint-Georges-de-Beauce in the following terms:

> He has failed to show proper discernment and to observe the distinction that must be made between the notion of public interest and that of public curiosity.

The article in question related in a sensational manner the circumstances in which the husband of the plaintiff had taken his own life. The Council thought the following guidelines would be in order:

> The Council believes that if incidents of this nature might contain some elements that are of public interest, the report made of them should display a great deal of caution and discernment, particularly in the case of local and regional papers that are published in communities where everybody is known by most other people and where incidents of this nature assume an importance they do not usually have in an urban and metropolitan setting.

The problem of sensationalism has often drawn the attention of the Québec Council. It notes in its report on a complaint filed in 1977 that the worst offender in this respect has been *Le Journal de Québec*. The Council was moved to comment:

> The Council would have a better opinion of the quality of the information offered in this particular newspaper if the public were not moved as often as it is to complain about it. In the course of the last two years (1976-1977), in fact, the complaints brought to the Council about this newspaper by the public account for 15 per cent of all complaints on written and electronic media, 21 per cent of those addressed to the written press, and almost 30 per cent of those addressed to the thirteen dailies in the province.

When he testified before the Commission, Serge Coté, editor of *Le Journal de Québec*, recognized that it had been the object of an unusually large number of complaints. He added that they dropped off considerably after 1979 when the paper began to show more discretion in its presentation of the news.

The unanswered question is whether this change can be attributed to the influence of the Québec Press Council. It could be said that the change coincided with a rapid rise in circulation. Previously, *Le Journal de Québec* had appealed mostly to people who were not in the habit of reading newspapers or anything else. After having developed this particular market, it began to challenge *Le Soleil*, a prosperous omnibus paper. Supposedly, *Le Journal de Québec* was toned down to make it more acceptable to the new customers it was trying to appeal to.

However that may be, Coté explained the attitude of his paper as a result of the repeated condemnations it was getting from the Press Council. He told the Commission:

> Let us say that we have certain reservations about the Council. There is a certain psychological distance, one might say, between us and the Council because our product 'swings', our product is different, our product is arrogant, sometimes it is biting and that goes against the whole tradition of news in Québec. If only for this reason, we take with a grain of salt whatever is being said by the traditionalists in the field of information. . . .
>
> The way we see it at *Le Journal de Québec* is that there is no such thing as serious and trivial news. There is the news. News that may interest a whole range of people. News that can be handled in a great variety of ways. By definition, we always go for what is 'hot'. We try to avoid the traditional presentation of news. Our style, the preparation of our stories, the heads, the use of pictures, the editing finally is not something that is stratified. . . .
>
> What I mean to say is that our product one day, will be based on human interest; the next day, it might be mostly on the economy, and the day after that we might have a full page, a full front, on politics. We always go with the trends of the day.

These remarks, which could equally well have been made by the publishers of the Toronto *Sun* or the Edmonton *Sun*, may indicate that the handling of news in the future will be closely identified with the social class that happens to be the target readership. This trend, which has been perceptible for some years already in both English and French Canada, has been the source of some uneasiness in the Québec Press Council. The members of the various associations that belong to it, even the association of professional journalists, all belong to the middle class by virtue of their functions and of their income. They are inclined to feel part of the consumer society which, in turn, sustains a particular form of journalism. The notions of privacy which the Council seeks to defend, as well as those of good taste, are part of the psychological universe of the middle class.

The Council plays a key role in this respect. It is far more normative in its operations than any other similar body anywhere except perhaps in Sweden where the legal system has little to do with the Canadian one. In Québec, the Council sees its jurisdiction extending to all publications and communications addressed to the public. Thus any firm refusing to co-operate with the Council draws an almost automatic condemnation. Towards the end of 1979, radio station *CJMS* in Montréal, was the object of the following statement by the Council:

> The Council deeply deplores the indifference shown by the defendant and by the director of programs at *CJMS*, who have not deigned, unlike most professionals in the field of information, to respond to the requests for information issued by the Council, in spite of several reminders to this effect. Such an attitude can only be prejudicial to the credibility of the media ostensibly mindful of facts and of quality, and respectful of the public's right to know.

Consciously or not, the Québec Press Council is active in the preservation of certain values and of the social order which these values support. It is helping to preserve the internal cohesiveness of Québec society by putting forward norms of behavior for a particularly important sector of the communications industry. This would help to explain why the Council should seek to assert its independence from the two principal groups which have been responsible for its existence, publishers and journalists, and that it might eventually be able to dissociate itself from their narrow interests.

Press councils in Ontario and Alberta are much more circumscribed in their action. However, the concepts to which they are attached are considerably reinforced by the presence of in-house ombudsmen at the Toronto *Star* and the Edmonton *Journal* whose influence extends much beyond the readership of these two papers. The interaction of ombudsmen with the public supports the system of values associated with omnibus papers and with the consumer society. The professional standards which they seek to promote within their respective newsrooms are simply an extension of the work performed by press councils but in a broader manner.

One must note that the influence of press councils and ombudsmen everywhere bears on the professional quality of journalism rather than on the actual management of media firms and of their corporate behavior. The social and economic impact of business decisions lies outside the mandates of ombudsmen and of press councils. Journalism and management are two unrelated fields. When the Québec Press Council was set up, the publishers wanted to insert a clause in its constitution giving it the responsibility of acting as a watchdog on concentration of press ownership. However, journalists were strongly opposed to it on the grounds that the responsibility was illusory and amounted only to a smokescreen.

The decisive factor for the improvement of journalism in Canada has been the rapid rise in salaries which began in the 1950s and which continued for more than 20 years. This was the time when the bulk of professional journalists acceded to the middle class and began participating in its material well-being and in its social values. Press councils and ombudsmen came later to confirm this evolution and provide journalists with standards of conduct — preferably not in a codified form — similar to those which other professionals, such as lawyers and accountants, had drawn up for themselves.

It is this imitative or mimetic social process that press councils and ombudsmen support with conciliation or adjudication, and with the jurisprudence that can be drawn from past decisions. They have sought to define not only the standards which should govern professional activities but also the rights which effectively will guarantee their freedom.

In Québec, the concern with professional standards was shown mostly through the Council's rulings rather than in broad statements of principle. The abundance and diversity of complaints, compared with Ontario, are such that the jurisprudence becomes sufficiently clear for this purpose. In many rulings affecting weeklies, the Council has promoted the airtight compartmentalization of news and advertising. Sometimes a complaint will unexpectedly open up a new perspective such as the warning issued by the Council that theatre critics should tell their readers if they left before the end of the play.

In Ontario, the Council's concern with ethics was displayed through brochures, study committees, and general statements. In 1978, it published a brochure, Press Ethics and Freebies, raising the question of gifts and services given to newspapers and journalists by firms interested in advertising or in information. The study arose out of a complaint concerning the omission of such data from stories in the travel pages of newspapers.

The professionalization of journalism, whether it is enforced by newspapers themselves or promoted by press councils, necessarily depends on the co-operation of the public and on the general interest it will arouse. The same applies to newspaper circulation and readership. A climate of confidence must prevail between those who work in the field of information and those who are professionally or personally interested in it; there must be a constant interaction in order to sustain a community of interest. In the case of the public it is the confirmation of its basic ideological orientation plus support for the kind of lifestyle it wants to have; in other words it seeks a reflection of what it is and what it wants. That is why newspapers are so eager to provide in their pages the same variety of opinion and attitudes that readers perceive in the society around them.

The support of the public is vital for the media for reasons which are not always economic. But it is quite natural that the media, preoccupied as they are with the commercialization of information, should resent any attempt to limit its availability and should work towards increasing its flow.

Significantly, all press councils in Canada have dealt frequently with complaints attacking public bodies and government authorities for limiting access to information. Councils in Windsor and Alberta, in spite of the very small number of complaints they are called upon to deal with, have had these complaints. One dealt with a hospital board and the other with a university council wanting to meet behind closed doors. Both complaints were filed by newspapers.

In Ontario and Québec there were many complaints of that nature. One of the best known was that submitted to the Québec Council in 1975. As a result of it, both the federal and the provincial government were blamed for refusing to place advertisements in the separatist daily *Le Jour*. In its adjudication of the complaint, which concerned federal energy minister Donald Macdonald, the Council stated:

> The Council denounces the gesture in question as being motivated avowedly by political considerations and sees it as a threat to the

> freedom of the press. The distribution of government information in any form, including advertising, because of its great interest to the public, must steer clear of politics and must adhere to recognized procedures which confirm the rights of citizens to be informed whatever their political views.

The jurisprudence accumulated by press councils shows that conflicts over information policy are most likely to emerge with governments. It is from this direction that the most severe restrictions come on the role which the press sees for itself. The large number of complaints in this respect shows that there is a serious problem in Canada as regards information, or more specifically as regards access and control.

In the proposals it submitted in 1975 to a joint committee of the House of Commons and the Senate on access to information, the Ontario Council's chairman proposed the appointment of an information commissioner to defend the rights of the public against bureaucratic encroachments. He proposed that any future legislation on access to information should spell out the type of exemptions that would be provided for. In 1977, in a submission to a provincial inquiry into freedom of information, he proposed that all public bodies be forced to adopt consistent rules regarding open and closed board meetings.

The Ontario Council has found itself many times in the situation of a lobbyist on government legislation. As mentioned earlier, it sought and obtained from provincial authorities an amendment to the law on libel after a Supreme Court decision had vastly increased editorial liability for the contents of letters to the editor. The problem arose in 1975 and was successfully resolved in 1980. In 1975, the Council asked federal authorities for an amendment in a proposed competition bill which placed advertising and promotion outside the scope of the law governing restraint of trade. It was feared that the way the proposed legislation was drafted would enable large advertisers to dictate news content. The request was granted.

The Ontario Council has also pursued for several years its public discussion of whether media should continue the practice of publishing the names of persons charged with minor infractions and whether discretion should be maintained as regards children appearing before the courts.

It is in Québec, however, that conflicts between the media and the government are most likely to lead to outright confrontations. In the course of 1980, tensions between police and reporters were on the rise after a period of relative quiet. The leading issue was the seizure by provincial police of film taken by Radio-Québec reporters and cameramen. In 1978, the Council was asked for comment on draft legislation on information submitted by Communications Minister Louis O'Neill. It helped revive fears that had long been held concerning the tendency of government to regulate the press.

The political problems associated with information are countless if one is to judge by the Québec Council's report on activities in 1977-78; its president Aimé Gagné stated:

> The Council is an organization that is now widely consulted and listened to. It has been active in many of the problems associated with information: concentration of press ownership, free access to information in government and public bodies, the professional requirements of journalism, the protection of privacy, the seizure by police in newspaper offices of documents being readied for publication,

> closed doors in welfare courts, relations between reporters and personnel in the administration of justice, the impact of public opinion polls on the public's right to information and many other questions. . . .

The list is an indication of the widespread activity of the Council and of the prestige it has earned. But it is an indication of the changing nature of the problems it must deal with. While its moral authority over the media has been consolidated, the problems that are now coming to the fore are of a political and ideological nature. They are not nesessarily issues that can be translated into complaints. They are issues that are steadily pushing press councils in Québec, Ontario, and Alberta into assuming political stances. While the consensus on the professional activities of journalism has become more solid, press councils are becoming more politicized, which may be an indication that the country is entering a new age of information and media action.

8
Journalism education

by
Tom Sloan, Pierre Ivan Laroche, and Jean Cloutier

This chapter is abridged from a study conducted by the Institut international de la communication, of Montréal. The state of journalism education in Canada is described, on the English side, by Tom Sloan and on the French, by Pierre Ivan Laroche. The director-general of the Institut, Jean Cloutier, drew up the concluding section.

1. A varied English-language program

At last count, there were 31 educational institutions in English-speaking Canada offering courses leading to some sort of degree or diploma in the field of journalism. Of this number, six offer university degrees and the remainder are all diploma or certificate courses at the community college level.

While it would certainly be wrong to suggest that these 31 institutions embody 31 distinct philosophies of and approaches to journalism education, it is no exaggeration to say that there is a divergency of views within the Canadian journalism education community as to the best method of preparing young people for a career in journalism; the differences may not be basic, but they are significant.

There is, first of all, the general difference between the approaches of the two levels of institutions, with their varying facilities and requirements. But within each level, there are also variations in the approach to the subject.

Before entering into specifics, let us consider briefly the common characteristics shared by all journalism programs. They are not numerous, but there are at least a few.

1. All confer some written recognition, in the form of a degree, a diploma, or occasionally a certificate, for successful completion of the course.
2. While the proportions vary markedly, all offer a mix of academic subjects and practical professional training.
3. All programs are designed to permit graduates to go immediately to work in a journalistic capacity.

Table 1

University and community college communication and journalism programs in English-speaking Canada, (1980-1981)

Region	Number of universities	University communication programs	University journalism programs	Number of colleges	College communication programs	College journalism programs
Atlantic	11	0	1	33	0	1
Québec	3	2	1	5	1	—
Ontario	16	7	3	46	18	16
Prairies	19	1	1	42	6	5
British Columbia	4	2	0	24	3	3
Total	43	12	6	150	28	25

Table 2

Communication and journalism programs in English-language universities in Canada, (1980-1981)

Universities	Communication				Journalism	
	Ph. D.	M.A.	B.A.	Prog.	M.A.	B.A.
University of King's College						
McGill	•	•	•			
Concordia			•	Dip.		•
Ottawa			•			
St-Paul			•			
Carleton			•		•	•
Western		•	•		•	
Windsor		•	•			
Guelph	•	•	•			
Wilfrid-Laurier			•			
Ryerson						•
Regina						•
Simon Fraser	•	•	•			

Courses in communication or cinema are offered in the following universities: McMaster, Waterloo, York, Calgary, Alberta, British Columbia.

4. There is an apparently universal trend towards an ever larger proportion of female students within journalism programs.
5. All demand at the very least high school graduation as a basic entry requirement, except for those defined as mature students who can be admitted at the discretion of the school authorities. There is also a growing tendency to require interviews or proficiency testing.
6. In most if not all cases, there are many more applicants than places available.
7. There is virtually universal optimism concerning the employment futures of journalism graduates, whatever the level.

Despite these shared characteristics, as well as occasional blurring at the edges, there are reasonably sharp distinctions to be made between university programs as a whole and those of the non-degree-granting institutions. We shall consider these in the following sections.

University programs

There are at present six university journalism schools in operation, and one more hoping to open its doors within the next two years.

The six already operating are: the University of King's College, Halifax; Concordia University, Montréal; Carleton University, Ottawa; Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, Toronto; University of Western Ontario, London; and the University of Regina. Hoping to join their ranks is the University of British Columbia, in Vancouver.

While there are considerable differences among them — no two are alike — there are some quite basic similarities which should be noted before we go on to the factors that distinguish them.

What they share above all is a commitment to a thorough, non-journalistic academic preparation for journalism students. This commitment expresses itself in one of two ways: undergraduate programs in which non-journalistic subjects predominate or the requirement that the student have at least a bachelor's degree before starting to study journalism. Whatever the approach, the philosophy is the same. It is considered essential for any graduate to have either a general background in liberal arts or an academic specialization to accompany his journalism degree.

Accompanying this academic emphasis is a tendency to downgrade the importance of training students in the "new technology", involving the operation of Video Display Terminals (VDTs), which are now in use in most Canadian daily newspapers. There is some variation among the schools, ranging from no training at all to considerable use of the electronic equipment; but all tend to accept the opinion expressed by the Canadian Daily Newspaper Publishers Association and the Canadian Managing Editors Conference that, given the difference in its use among papers, there is no reason for extensive training in its operation in the schools.

Another shared characteristic of the universities is that the proportion of students to teachers tends to be somewhat smaller than is the case with other institutions. This factor, together with those of prestige, salaries, facilities, holidays and a relatively light classroom load, enables the universities to attract to their faculties

journalists with more than average prestige and experience. To that extent, university staffing is somewhat easier than is the case of the colleges taken as a whole. This is not in any sense to denigrate the ability and dedication of community college teachers, but simply to point out that, as a general rule, their situation is more difficult than is that of their university colleagues.

With these common characteristics in mind, let us turn to the different university programs, more or less in the order of precedence dictated by their appearance on the Canadian scene.

We have to say "more or less", because in choosing between the first two, the choice is somewhat arbitrary owing to a slight disagreement between Carleton and Western as to which actually came first. In this case, we shall avoid judging by allowing size to determine.

Carleton University

In the 36 years since 1945, when what was then Carleton College accepted its first few ex-service students for journalism training, what is now the School of Journalism of Carleton University has become the supermarket of Canadian journalism departments.

Most of the 600-odd Carleton journalism students this past year were in the four-year honors Bachelor of Journalism program, where they have a choice of taking a general liberal arts course, together with journalism, or of taking a combined honors degree in journalism and one other discipline, which could be sociology, French, economics or any one of half-a-dozen others. For those who have already obtained a degree in another discipline, there is a special one-year (eight-month) program leading to a B.J. degree; and for those who already have an honors B.J. there is a Master's program, leading to an M.J., which offers an intensive professional education in one chosen area of specialization, such as politics, economics or international affairs. Last year, there were 50 students in the one-year program and 24 full-time as well as five part-time students in the M.J. year.

In addition, the Journalism School offers a course leading to a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communications, in which the accent is on communications theory and research into the media. There is also a combined honors course available in Journalism and Mass Communications.

To cope with this massive program, Carleton has 22 full-time professors, of whom 18 are former journalists, and eight part-time instructors, all of whom are journalists. The non-journalists are specialists in the mass media and communications theory and research. As for former journalists, the general rule is a minimum of 10 years practical and professional experience before they are considered for teaching posts.

In the four-year honors program, into which about 175 students were accepted in 1980, journalism school director G. Stuart Adam distinguishes four separate areas of studies: academic subjects proper, public affairs, communications theory, and professional journalism subjects, with the first and the last components taking up the lion's share of the time.

Unlike some other programs, Carleton's starts its students off with journalism as well as academic subjects, and maintains a mix of the two through all four years. The final two years involve all students in practical training in radio and TV as well

as on the school-produced community newspaper, the Centretown News. In the first two years, students have courses on mass media problems, film documentary, international media systems and comparative media studies as well as reporting and editing. In the final years, the journalism courses include law and contemporary issues. The one-year course also includes studies of contemporary issues and the media and society as well as intensive practical work in all three information media. In addition, all students must complete an original piece of research, in print or electronically, before receiving their degree.

The Master's program also requires a thesis which can be in the form of a major piece of journalism. And, while specialized reporting is stressed, M.J. students also work in media research.

In fact, there is no doubt that one of the principal assets that the School possesses is precisely its location at the centre of the national political scene. The consequent ability to draw on the resources available in Parliament and the Public Service as well as the journalists who are covering them, is certainly a source of enrichment to students and staff alike; and the regular incursions of staff members into media operations at the national level does not hurt either their efficacy or their prestige; on the contrary. The Carleton school is well served by its location, and has known how to profit legitimately from it.

Given this situation, it might appear surprising that Carleton does not, as some other journalism schools do, require its students to study French.

University of Western Ontario

While the full journalism course started in 1945, in at least one sense Western takes precedence over all other schools, having offered individual journalism subjects to its students in the Faculty of Arts since the mid-1920s. The London-based university has a long and distinguished record in the field of journalism.

Describing Western's program in his 1974 thesis, Dr. Donald K. Wright[1] wrote of what was then a department in the Faculty of Social Sciences: "In summary, the journalism program at the U.W.O. is smaller and less diversified than the one at Carleton, but it provides the same type of education with the four-year honors program and the one-year special program for students in other disciplines." This is no longer the case. It was, in fact, in precisely that year, 1974, that Western moved its journalism department to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, and closed its undergraduate program, apparently for good.

The only degree in journalism now offered at Western Ontario is the Master of Arts in Journalism, for which the entrance requirement is an undergraduate degree or equivalence in the form of professional experience. As described in its brochure, "The School's commitment is to professional excellence in journalism. Its objective is to equip selected men and women for significant and satisfying careers in the public media."

Instead of the usual fall entry date, Western students begin their first term in May, finishing 12 months later. Their numbers are limited to about 40, which the School says represents one-third of the applications received. They are served by nine full-time professors — all but one former journalists — and about 20 part-time instructors, almost all of whom are involved directly in the information media.

While there is much emphasis on professional subjects, including both newspaper writing and electronic reporting, as well as basics such as shorthand and typing, the Western program includes academic courses on Canadian economic and political issues and professional background subjects that range from Social Science Research and Journalism through Communication Theory to Native Political Issues for journalists. In the final term, the stress is on practice, involving either a four-week internship outside the School or advanced work within the School on print or electronic reporting. This is the climax of a year of practical training that involves students in the publication of half-a-dozen issues of a School-produced newspaper, the London Extra, as well as radio and television programming. It is at this stage that the students choose their specialization; and, like Carleton, Western is experiencing an increasing interest in radio and TV work. Whereas several years ago, the choice was overwhelmingly in favor of print, today, the figures are about half and half.

In one aspect of print, that of the new technology in the form of VDTs, Western is slightly out of step with most — but not all — other university programs. Referring to recent strictures of the industry against going into such training, Professor J.L. Wild comments "for us, they are two years too late". However, although the School has invested in equipment, the emphasis, he insists, is as much as ever on the substance of journalism training, with the VDTs being used primarily as newsroom tools for producing publications; and there is no long training course in technological matters. In fact, Professor Wild is heartily in disagreement with what he considers to be the over-emphasis on technology in United States journalism schools, and agrees with most of his colleagues and the industry here that Canadian schools should not follow suit.

After seven years' experience with the strictly graduate program, Western spokesmen are enthusiastic about the results. While he agrees that there is something to be said for the installation of a certain journalistic ethos over a three or four-year undergraduate course, Professor Wild suggests that most undergraduate programs inevitably involve an immense wastage for both students and staff in the form of student attrition over the first year or two. "We were spending a good deal of time with people who just weren't destined to be journalists," comments Professor Wild, who notes more commitment on the part of students in the post-graduate program. "Perhaps today the whole process should be at the graduate level, in the interests of both journalistic and media standards," he suggests.

With between 35 and 40 graduates annually, Western is not concerned about the job situation. According to Professor Wild, the market has been good to Western students. Of 21 potential graduates on the print side in 1981, as of January 13 already had permanent or temporary employment offers for after graduation this spring.

While Western has no second-language requirements, either French or other — a matter presumably of university policy — the School of Journalism does maintain a regular relationship with Québec through an annual student exchange program with the journalism department of Laval University in Québec. The exchange involves two students from each university who participate in the studies of the other over a four-week period.

In another new departure, the Western School now offers a special three-term basic journalism diploma program for a group of Canada's native people to prepare

them to go back and organize communications within their own communities and between those communities and the outside world. This spring saw the graduation of the first seven students, who have come from different parts of the country under the sponsorship of local organizations. In 1982, the School expects to receive 14 students, including one or two Inuit sponsored by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Ryerson Polytechnical Institute

Since its creation in 1949 as a part of the Graphic Arts Department of what was then the Ryerson Institute of Technology, the journalism course at this Toronto institution has acquired the reputation of being above all concerned with the "nuts and bolts" of the trade in turning out graduates who are ready to make their contribution in a newspaper, radio or television newsroom from their first day on the job.

The reputation with both the positive and negative connotations it suggests, is not unwarranted. But especially since Ryerson became a degree-granting institution in 1972, the idea of a Ryerson journalism graduate as someone with few or no academic qualifications must certainly be modified. Those qualifications differ from those of other university-level departments, as does the course itself; but they fit in well with the philosophy of journalism education at Ryerson, which is peculiarly its own.

As between Western and Carleton, the Ryerson program is much closer to the latter, in offering courses for both graduates and undergraduates and in starting its practical journalism training the first year of its undergraduate program. But, while there are similarities, the two programs are far from identical.

As is the case with Carleton students, the entrance requirement for Ryerson undergraduate journalism is completion of Ontario Grade 13 or the equivalent, and for the graduate program a recognized university degree, with, at both levels, the usual provisions for mature or professionally qualified students without the usual academic qualifications. And, again as usual, applications far outnumber places available — the ratio being about four to one in each case.

The Ryerson program is three years in length, ending in the awarding of the degree of Bachelor of Applied Arts (B.A.A.) in Journalism. The special program for graduates lasts two years, with the same degree at the end of the road.

With more than 400 students, including 50 in the two-year program, Ryerson has a full-time teaching staff of nine along with seven part-time instructors, all former or practising journalists.

As part of their course of studies, Ryerson students take a variety of non-journalism academic subjects, which constitute about one-half of the three-year program. While the study of English literature is required in all three years, there are also optional subjects including philosophy, history, psychology, politics and sociology. Unlike other university programs, however, there is no opportunity to specialize in a subject other than journalism. There are no apologies from Ryerson spokesmen, who believe that the school's vocation is to train newspaper and broadcasting journalists ready to step into most if not all newsroom jobs. "They won't be instant specialists," says departmental chairman Richard Lunn, but many Ryerson graduates, he says, have gone on to specialize once they have started to work in the media.

In common with those in other programs, Ryerson students receive multi-media training; but it is more intense than the others. In addition to internal radio and television programming, second and third-year students write, edit and publish the Daily Ryersonian, which appears four days a week during the school term. Because of the intensity of their practical work on campus, they do not participate in outside media internships, as do students in most other departments.

While the basic multi-media approach is being retained, Ryerson is moving towards a greater degree of specialization, which will permit senior students to place the emphasis on the medium of their choice. While print is still dominant, there is, here too, a growing interest in radio and television.

As for the new newspaper technology, students have limited access to it in the form of one VDT unit; but there is no extensive training program emphasizing technological change.

With Ryerson, we come to the end of what might be called the first wave of university journalism education in Canada. For a quarter century no new departments were formed. Then, starting in the mid-seventies, perhaps partially as a result of the recommendations contained in the report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media in 1970, a new impulse towards journalism education appeared, and with it a new wave of Canadian journalism schools in conjunction with universities outside Ontario.

The first of the new wave appeared in Montréal.

Concordia University

Formed in 1974 by an amalgamation of Sir George Williams and Loyola Colleges in Montréal, Concordia inherited the prestigious Loyola communications department, which was not, however, in the business of training journalists. The Concordia journalism program started in a small way in 1975 at the downtown Sir George Williams campus.

The program, which leads to a Bachelor of Arts degree is, as is usual in Québec universities, three years in length — considered the equivalent of a four-year program in other provinces because of the two-year general college (CEGEP) course which precedes university entrance.

This past year there were about 100 students in the Concordia Journalism Department, with just under 20 graduates expected in the two options. There are at present two full-time professors, both with journalistic backgrounds, and nine part-time instructors, all but one of whom are involved in journalism in the Montréal area; the other is a lawyer, who teaches communications law. Like Carleton and Ryerson, Concordia provides a mix of journalism and academic subjects throughout the program. It has no technological orientation, having decided not to invest either in VDTs or wire-service printers.

As befits its location in the heart of French-speaking Canada, Concordia sees one of its major responsibilities as that of adapting to the modern Québec scene. To help accompish this, the Journalism Department requires a working knowledge of French of its students before they can graduate. In addition, it offers a required course on Québec media and an option on Québec affairs, the latter being given mostly in French in the third year.

As a new department, with limited resources, it has not yet involved itself in academic research. However, the department is proud of a 74-page survey and analysis of the attitudes of the Montréal English-speaking community concerning the services it is receiving from the city's English-language media. The work, which was presented to the Royal Commission on Newspapers, is considered by the department as a start in its research activities. It was prepared under staff direction by the efforts of all the students enrolled in the journalism program.

University of King's College

In terms of the sheer gap between supply and potential demand, the Atlantic Provinces, more than any other region, needed the Journalism Department that was finally set up in 1978 at the University of King's College, which is located on the campus of Dalhousie University in Halifax. It finally appeared after what has been described as a long, hard gestation period, dating back to the years following the Second World War, when the first efforts were made to bring journalism education to the region. The intervening years saw extension courses scattered among three universities in Halifax and what turned out to be a premature attempt to start a university course in the 1960s. In the meantime, except for a tiny operation in Prince Edward Island, there was not even a journalism course available at the college level in the four Atlantic Provinces. That the felt need was great was indicated by the number of applications — three times the places available — as soon as the new program opened its doors three years ago; the proportion has remained roughly the same since.

In several aspects, the King's program is similar to that of some other universities. It involves a four-year undergraduate program, culminating in an Honors B.J., together with a one-year course for university graduates. The fact that the first 24 recipients of that B.J. were able to graduate as early as 1980 was due to that one-year program, to which many students switched from other courses when it became available in 1979. Like the students in all the other universities, they too entered a course that in several ways is unto itself.

More than any other program, King's has logically adopted the formula of a steady but gradual increase in journalism subjects during the four-year normal undergraduate program. In first year, none at all are given; but, after a gradual year-by-year increase, by the time the King's student arrives in fourth year, all his or her time is devoted to journalism-oriented subjects.

During those four years, in addition to providing an increasing accent on journalism, King's is trying to accomplish two other objectives that are more or less separated in other journalism programs: to give its students both a liberal arts background and an area of academic specialization in addition to journalism. It does this in two stages.

In the first year, the students must follow a program known as the Foundation Year, which is unique to the University of King's College. Its objective is to serve as an introduction to every major aspect of Western Civilization, from art, literature, music and science to economics, politics and social development. Following that ambitious undertaking, students are required to submit a coherent program of studies to enable them to specialize in a specific academic discipline in the arts or

sciences during the next two years. In the final year, all the emphasis is on journalism subjects, and especially on practical training.

The accent is on print journalism, but, in common with other programs, King's is planning to expand its radio and television education facilities, already available to some extent in the final two years. However, says director George Bain, it will not be done to the detriment of print, which is still the major interest of most students.

While it is not pushing them, the King's program has quietly invested in two VDT units, which are being used by senior students for departmental publications, including a weekly newspaper called *The Watchman.*

This last year the number of students enrolled in the four-year program was 85, of whom about 30 were first year students; there were 14 students in the one-year program. The total number of graduates in 1981 was expected to be 23. There are four full-time professors, all with experience in journalism, and 10 part-time instructors, most of whom are involved in the media.

As with other directors, Mr. Bain is optimistic about the opportunities for his students, who come mainly but not solely from the Atlantic provinces. In terms of quantity at least, he considers the Atlantic region to be one of the better newspaper areas of Canada, with a number of well-established dailies and weeklies that seem likely to remain so.

Despite its distance from Québec and Ottawa, King's is the only English-language journalism program that, except for Concordia, requires its students to satisfy a requirement for some knowledge of French as a second language before they can graduate.

University of Regina

A major university journalism school, the first in Western Canada, came as the result of an enthusiastic and quick decision on the part of the university authorities, backed by a broadly based advisory committee of western media people, who thought that the prairie drought in university-level journalism education should be ended. Regina is the capital of an economically and psychologically resurgent province, symbolic in its own way of the new western spirit, and with a young university ready to show that it could lead the way in western journalism education. By May of 1977, a special university task force had issued a 360-page, two-volume report looking at every aspect, including job markets, and strongly recommending the move. Just two years later, in 1979, the School of Journalism and Communications had opened its doors, and the first students in the four-year course will graduate in 1982, with the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Communications.

Like most of the others, the Regina undergraduate program covers a four-year period, comprising academic subjects and practical and theoretical journalism courses. But it too has its own ideas as to how these should be combined. At Regina, the first two years are in effect a pre-journalism course, similar in concept, according to director Ron Robbins, to a pre-medical course. During that period, the students must take nine required subjects, including English, logic, Canadian history and government, fine art and a natural science. Their only contact with the journalism program is through the occasional briefing and guest lectures in some of their classes by journalism professors. Acceptance in pre-journalism does not constitute acceptance in Journalism proper. This comes only at the end of the second year, and is based on

academic record, an English proficiency test, a written examination, and a personal interview.

Once accepted, students are faced with two years of professional training in all three media, including one full 16-week semester in a paid internship working as a journalist outside the university. Inside the School, they also participate in a school publication that appears once a semester. In addition to the usual writing, reporting and law courses, the course includes journalistic ethics, the role of the journalist, research, and interviewing techniques. And, while it is only for one term, Regina has taken the technological bull by the horns in the form of a required course on media production processes, including the new newspaper technology, an experiment that other programs will doubtless be watching with interest.

The number of students entering each of the two years of the journalism program is limited to 30, and while most come directly from pre-journalism, there are also openings for others, including university graduates and practising journalists who wish to upgrade their skills. In the latter case, says Mr. Robbins, a special faculty committee can give dispensation from some courses to allow a practising journalist to receive a degree in under two years.

In addition to its regular academic operations, Regina is embarking on a series of symposia and seminars for working journalists. Last year saw a business seminar drawing participants from the Western provinces and a special energy policy seminar is scheduled for next fall.

The present staff of the Regina School consists, in addition to the director, of two full-time professors and three part-time instructors, all former journalists. An additional full-time staff member was expected in the fall of 1981, as was another part-time teacher.

University of British Columbia

If the swift process by which the University of Regina's journalism program came into being could be compared to a 100-yard dash, the University of British Columbia's might be considered the equivalent of the Chinese Long March. The first proposal for a journalism course came in 1945, others came periodically, and like it came to nothing. In the mid-1970s the torch was again taken up by the English Department culminating in the establishment in 1976 of a special university committee to study the subject which submitted its report in 1977 and resubmitted it in 1978. As a result of those reports and enthusiastic support from a few university staff members, the university accepted the idea and is now awaiting final approval by the provincial Department of Education. Should that come through, as is now believed almost certain, the first students will be accepted into the program in the fall of 1983.

While the UBC program does not yet exist, the concept most definitely does, and, like the others in Canada, it is unique. According to the recommendations of the committee report, a School of Journalism will be created as part of the Faculty of Graduate Studies to offer a two-year (18-month) program for a maximum of 15 students per year, who at the end of their studies will receive the degree of Master of Arts in Journalism.

As envisaged, the program will be tripartite, one third concerned with the study of journalism as an academic subject, one third devoted to practical training, includ-

ing an internship program, and one third consecrated to academic post-graduate training in academic subjects — normally those in which the students had specialized in their undergraduate years.

The conception of the program is unabashedly elitist. In the words of English Professor Fred Bower, the committee chairman and a staunch advocate of journalism education, "The university should make journalism a difficult program to get into and a difficult program from which to graduate."

According to UBC Dean of Arts, Robert Will, who is in charge of the project, the objective is to develop something "different and unique" which will emphasize subject-matter rather than technology and will contribute to the growth of professionalism.

A national system

Should the UBC plans come to fruition — as it seems they will — Canada will finally have what many in the media industry have felt was necessary — a national system of journalism programs at the university level, involving all regions of the country. The system will be far from uniform. The question remains open as to whether it will be coherent; but on the basis of our present knowledge and experience, there would appear to be little reason for pessimism.

Just as journalism is one of the loosest and most diverse of professional activities, with a variety of specialties that even lawyers or doctors might envy, so there is every reason for satisfaction at the diversity of educational options available — a variety all the more essential because of the growing importance of formal journalism education as a source of practitioners of journalism in Canada. It is often said that diversity itself is a source of strength. That statement may be more or less true depending on the area of activity but there is every reason to accept its validity when it comes to the area of journalism, all the more so, considering the existence of a common basic academic standard we have already noted.

A well-known recent Chinese philosopher might have been thinking of Canadian university journalism education today when, a quarter of a century ago, he issued the dictum: Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom. Or he might have been thinking about another group of institutions.

The community colleges

If university journalism education resembles a cluster of luxuriant growths stemming from a single root, what can we say about the 25-odd programs that go under the name of journalism in Canadian community colleges other than that, while the growths are sometimes luxuriant, a common root is not always easy to discern. Depending on where and what they are, the programs offered at the college level are, variously, the objectives of praise, scorn or indifference on the part of editors and others whose role it is to scrutinize and evaluate those who seek journalistic employment. They range in size from courses with one instructor and a handful of students to those grouping several hundred students and a considerable squad of teachers. The programs vary from one to three years in length, while the students may come directly from Grade 11 or 12, or they might be university graduates or people with professional media experience. Their prospects vary enormously, depending on

region and reputation of the school. In general, though not universally, community college graduates are not considered for employment by major media outlets. This does not mean that the education they receive is of poor quality — although in some cases, editors say it is. It does mean that the major media are looking for people with the kind of academic background that most community college products simply do not have; where they do have it, the situation can be different.

What follows is a small sampler of the courses available in half-a-dozen such colleges, based in all cases on inteviews as well as documentation. Given the fact that this *is* a sampler, and only that, we must be wary of both judgment and generalizations, especially considering the wide differences that exist between programs. The facts will speak for themselves.

Humber College

Situated in Metropolitan Toronto, Humber College's Creative and Communicative Arts Division offers a wide range of courses, one of which is journalism. With about 200 students and five full-time instructors, Humber Journalism is the largest college program, and the third largest program at any level, in Canada. In its three-year course, Humber offers print and electronic journalism training. In the third year, students can specialize in writing for newspapers or magazines as well as in TV or radio broadcasting.

As is the case with all college-level courses, Humber's is heavily weighted towards practical subjects usually absent from the university curriculum. They include photography and photo journalism, voice-training, layout and design, management, and advertising and promotional writing. These are in addition to the universally required courses in writing and reporting for the media in general.

The Humber program has become somewhat symbolic in educational circles because of the importance it attaches to the new technology in newspapers. No fewer than 14 computer terminals (VDTs) are available to the students, who are required to learn electronic editing as part of the course.

Centennial College

Also in the Toronto area, Centennial College has a specifically oriented print journalism program as part of a general Communications Division which also includes programs in Creative Advertising and Broadcasting.

Created 15 years ago, the journalism program offers practical courses in reporting, editing, layout and typography and photo journalism, as well as feature, interpretive and magazine writing. The full-time instructors are two young and enthusiastic former journalists, assisted by a photographer who teaches part-time.

The three-year program involves students in a regularly published community newspaper, produced by students and distributed to some 20,000 suburban residents. In their final year, Centennial students serve a five-week internship.

Algonquin College

Situated in Ottawa, Algonquin College is the only journalism school at any level in Canada to offer two complete journalism programs, one in English and one in French. English-speaking students must take French as a second language during all four semesters of this two-year course, including four week-long periods of immersion.

In professional training, the program offers courses in photography, public relations, page-makeup, broadcast journalism and magazine writing, as well as the usual basic reporting techniques. The one-third of the subjects which are academic tend to be more specific than the norm. They include local and provincial government, labor management and Canadian economic systems.

So far, Algonquin has not invested in the new technology, but a move in that direction is under consideration. The school has good relations with the Ottawa *Citizen*, which helps in the publication of a regular community newspaper produced by the students. In the fourth semester, there is a six-week internship in which the Citizen is involved, along with other local media. There are two full-time and six part-time instructors, all with a journalism background, with 35 students being accepted each year — one in five of those who apply. Despite that ratio, the attrition phenomenon persists. Last year there were 15 graduates.

Vancouver City College

Known to Vancouver media as Langara, from the name of the campus on which it is located, the VCC operation is another practically oriented program, but with its own specific characteristics. Langara shares with the Univerity of Regina a considerable interest in the new newspaper technology, and teaches it in terms of theory as well as practice. Director Nick Russell has himself become involved in technological research, the results of which have been published internationally in scholarly and other journals.

While VCC has about the median number of students, accepting about 40 a year, their composition is different from the usual. Owing to the presence of a large number of mature students, including several who are university graduates and others with experience in the news media, their average age last year was 26. In fact, says Mr. Russell, only two of those accepted came directly out of high school. This, plus the fact the college has had no university competition, helps explain VCC's relative success in the Vancouver area, where its graduates have been welcome at the Vancouver Sun as well as other large media operations.

Holland College

Some 3,000 miles to the east is one of the smaller journalism programs at the college level. Holland College, in Charlottetown, P.E.I., has had a journalism program since 1972 and is oriented to print and radio. After a two-year lapse due to the lack of an instructor, the course is being offered again in the fall of 1981.

"Print is not the only emphasis, but that is where the jobs are," says Hartwell Daley, who was the sole instructor for five years until his retirement in 1979.

The one-year course permits the student to set his or her pace under an approach apparently unique to Holland, called Self-Training and Evaluation Process (STEP), with the results being monitored by the program instructor. At the end of the program, the student receives a certificate and a chart with progress recorded. It is, according to Daley, strictly a practical course for the training of beat reporters. The number of students each year is in the neighborhood of 20. According to College records, of the 103 graduates since 1973, 74 have found work in radio, daily and weekly newspapers, and public relations.

Emphasis on the practical

From the colleges surveyed, and from another dozen institutions that answered queries for program information, a few common denominators emerge. First, while they vary enormously in size, the college programs invariably emphasize practical journalism and tend to put the accent on print. Secondly, while academic subjects are taught, their importance is secondary. Third, the market for graduates is varied, but weekly papers, small dailies and radio stations appear to be the most important job outlets. Fourth, the courses tend to be popular in terms of numbers of applications, but lose a high proportion of actual students through attrition. Fifth, given the lack of common standards of the kind provided by the university system, the quality of the programs is uneven. Nevertheless, the jobs seem to be waiting.

The view from the editor's chair

Like journalism education programs, editors come in many shapes and sizes and the title covers many areas and degrees of responsibility, from cooking editors to editors-in-chief. We are concerned here only with those who are involved in the hiring and firing of journalists. This restricts our list basically to city editors, managing editors, executive editors and editors-in-chief. These are the people whose opinion of journalism schools, the quality of their teaching and the abilities of their graduates, is of the greatest concern to the schools themselves and to all who are interested in journalism education.

The preparation of this section of the report included interviews with editors of papers in eight Canadian cities, from Vancouver to Halifax, to discover their reactions to Canadian journalism education. As with our look at the community colleges, this represents only a sampler of a much larger reality. Fortunately in 1978, the Canadian Daily Newspaper Publishers Association (CDNPA), through its Editorial Division, circulated to managing editors a questionnaire on this very subject. The findings are summarized in the general introduction of the present study but it may be worthwhile to look at some of the salient points of that survey to see how they compare with our findings from the interviews.

One of the more inconclusive of the CDNPA findings was the degree of satisfaction among editors concerning the journalism graduates they had hired in recent years. At first glance, it would seem that, with only seven per cent showing dissatisfaction, we had a ringing endorsement of journalism schools. However, when we notice that, according to the same report, only five per cent were dissatisfied with non-journalism university graduates, and only three per cent with all others they had hired, the endorsement is something less than ringing. It would seem to indicate as much as anything that the editors were satisfied with their own hiring judgment.

At least two other questionnaire findings were more substantial. They concerned the perceived weaknesses of journalism education and the question of numbers. Almost half the editors cited the main weakness as lack of practical skills, including spelling, grammar, typing and interviewing. There was also criticism of journalism graduates as tending to lack background in disciplines other than journalism which would enable them to cope with the increasing trend to specialization within newspapers. The danger of a glut of journalists was seen as real by a large number of edi-

Writing and journalism programs in Canadian community colleges outside Québec

Prince Edward Island

Holland College
Charlottetown

Ontario

Algonquin College
Ottawa

Cambrian College
Sudbury

Canadore College
North Bay

Centennial College
Scarborough

Conestoga College
Kitchener

Durham College
Oshawa

Georgian College
Barrie

Humber College
Rexdale

Lambton College
Sarnia

Loyalist College
Belleville

Niagara College
Welland

St. Clair College
Windsor

Sault College
Sault Ste. Marie

Sheridan College
Oakville

Manitoba

Red River Community College
Winnipeg

Alberta

Alberta Vocational Centre
Calgary

Grant MacEwan
Community College
Edmonton

Lethbridge
Community College
Lethbridge

Mount Royal College
Calgary

Red Deer College
Red Deer

Southern Alberta
Institute of Technology
Calgary

British Columbia

Capilano College
North Vancouver

Douglas College
New Westminster

Vancouver Community College
Langara Campus
Vancouver

tors, who tended to agree that more limits should be placed on student enrolment. Two-thirds of the editors who replied took that point of view.

Among the editors interviewed for this report, the viewpoint is the same; however, a distinction must be made. While there is a feeling that perhaps too many would-be journalists are being turned out by the schools, there is also the equally strong feeling that there is not — and there is highly unlikely to be — any glut in the number of *good* journalism graduates anywhere in the country. In the words of one publisher, "There are never enough good people." "Quality, not quantity is what the journalism schools should be working for," says a Prairie editor. According to a third, while there may be too many graduates in general, "There are certainly not too many good ones."

As for the lack of practical skills, the general feeling seems to be that it is inevitable and that journalism graduates are quick learners. It is this latter quality that seems to impress the editors interviewed as much as any other factor in hiring a journalism graduate. It is put in different ways. "There is certainly a short-term advantage in hiring a journalism grad," or, from a slightly different aspect mentioned by several, the very fact that an applicant had attended a journalism school is seen as an indication that he or she is motivated for the profession.

There are, in fact, some editors who can find little or no fault with Canadian journalism education as they have experienced it, at least at the university level. At some papers virtually all hirings of those who are not already journalists involve journalism graduates, who are, in fact, steadily becoming ever more numerous in the newsrooms of the larger papers. Graduates of college programs are not universally excluded, but by and large, there is a widely shared feeling that, unless they have special qualifications, they will not offer as much as a university graduate.

Those same graduates, however, are sometimes perceived as having their own weaknesses to overcome. One frequently mentioned is impatience or a variation thereof, such as overweening ambition, reluctance to do junior jobs and even general reporting assignments, and insufficient humility before the professional criticism of their work by experienced editors and deskmen. Another criticism, heard more than once, concerns a perceived tendency to insist on plunging headlong into advocacy journalism and to consider objectivity as somehow degrading. From another angle comes the criticism that many journalism graduates tend to be too passive and show reluctance to dig behind the obvious in writing their stories.

From the standpoint strictly of training, a quite general criticism concerns what some editors see as a lack of knowledge and interest in the field of copy editing. "We're always looking for good deskmen," remarks one editor, who says that he doesn't see them coming from the journalism programs.

Despite the criticisms, however, there is also general agreement that the quality of the graduates they meet is improving; and the fact that most of the large papers now send senior staff to recruit at the major university schools annually shows that at least the principle of journalism education has won grudging, and often better than grudging, acceptance from editors. The fact that a growing number of them are themselves the products of such education does not necessarily hurt.

If there is one phrase heard more than any other, it is: "It all depends on the individual." In other words, journalism graduates can never assume that they are somehow immune from criticism or assured either a job or a promotion. From the

interviews with the editors, however, it seems that they now have better opportunities than most of their job-hunting friends to prove — or disprove — themselves in Canadian newsrooms.

Assessing the programs

It is not only editors who pass judgment on journalism education, but also students, and more particularly those who have graduated and who can look back with some perspective. In 1980, the CDNPA issued a report based on responses to a questionnaire by more than 400 graduates of 1978 and 1979. The reviews were mixed. While 87 per cent of the students rated their journalism education as excellent, very good, or at least adequate, only 31 per cent said their present attitudes towards formal education were more positive than ever, and 28 per cent of those responding said they were less so.

Barrie Zwicker, the publisher of *Content* magazine and a thoughtful media observer, thinks the journalism schools may be falling short in one way that no one else thought fit to mention: failure to inculcate a generally critical spirit among their students, not just to the society but to the media themselves. In Zwicker's view, probing courses about the workings and the structure of the media should be an essential part of any university journalism program. "Now, by the time they are in third year, students are often psychologically too close to the media even to think of questioning what they are up to." This lack of a critical attitude can, in turn, help perpetuate self-delusion among journalists about the media and their place in them. Zwicker also questions whether courses in the history of journalism offer a proper appreciation of the whole concept of the freedom of the press as well as the battles that had to be fought in order to gain it. "There is a frightening lack of understanding among media people about the operation of the whole system and ignorance of their own role in it."

In English-speaking Canada, we have noted a wide diversity in virtually every aspect of journalism education, and one common characteristic: a commitment to the idea that it is possible to prepare men and women as professional communicators to inform their fellow citizens about what is happening in their communities, in their regions, in their country and in the world.

In popularity and sheer activity, Canadian journalism schools are thriving. By and large they have been accepted as valid and valuable institutions by the public, by the media, and even by most if not all of their graduates. After a late start compared with the United States, journalism education at all levels has expanded steadily if not rapidly over the past 35 years, and in at least one region of the country is still doing so. It appears, however, that the time of expansion is coming to an end. Whether or not the University of British Columbia will be the last journalism school founded at any level, it will almost certainly be the last one in a university setting.

If the time of expansion is ending, can it be that the time of reflection is at hand? One might hope so. There are certainly a number of things to reflect about. Are professional journalism schools in danger of becoming too professional? To what extent must professional training be identical with an uncritical acceptance of journalistic practices and media operations as they in fact exist today? Can there be a reconciliation of professional training and critical observation of the media?

If we assume that there is no such thing as the perfect journalism education program in Canada, what can the different schools, at all levels, learn from each other, if not mutual inspiration? What is the new technology really going to mean, not just in jobs but also in the quality of information journalists produce? What does the concentration of ownership mean to flow of information within Canada? There is plenty of room for qualitative expansion in Canadian journalism education.

2. The growth of French-language programs

There are only a few institutions offering journalism programs in French: three universities and two colleges (see Table 3). French-language education is concentrated in Québec and dates from the late 1960s, when Université Laval in Québec City began offering extension courses.

University programs

Of the 10 totally or partially French-language universities in Canada six, as of 1981, offer communications or journalism programs leading to a diploma. Three of these offer specific journalism programs: Université Laval, Université de Montréal, and Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). Université Laval, and the Université de Montréal, however, are the only two which provide journalism courses leading to a diploma or degree in journalism: the certificate in journalism (Laval and Montréal) or the Bachelor of Arts with a minor in journalism (Laval). Université de Montréal has studied a plan to set up a bachelor's program with a major in journalism, but it is unlikely to get off the ground in the near future.

As yet, there are no graduate journalism programs in the French-language universities in Canada. To obtain a Bachelor of Arts degree in Québec, a student must generally complete three years of study after receiving a college diploma (diplôme d'études collégiales: D.E.C.) granted by the Department of Education, the CEGEPs, and the private colleges. (CEGEP stands for "Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel; "Cégeps" are a community-college level of education between high school and university.) The Bachelor of Arts usually requires 90 credits of 15 hours each. These credits can include a major (60 credits) or a minor (30 credits) in any of the various disciplines taught at the bachelor's level.

The aim of the Université Laval program is to provide students with a knowledge of journalistic methods and techniques by giving them a good introduction to the journalism process and the practices of the various media.[2] Thus, training at Laval is directed mainly toward future journalists.

The Université de Montréal program is designed to enhance skills and provide students with basic theoretical and practical knowledge in the various fields of print and broadcast journalism.[3] It allows students to concentrate in specialized areas most useful to a journalistic career.

Université de Montréal and UQAM also gear their programs to a larger group, which includes information officers, "communicators", communications designers, and those working in a field related to journalism. UQAM defines "communicator" as a person who is capable of organizing a true message, controlling its scope and measuring its effectiveness, and of creating a new awareness in informed (or better informed) individuals. With developments in communications technology, this person

Table 3

Information on French-language communication and journalism programs in Canadian institutions (1980-1981)

Program and institution	Degree, diploma or certificate	Admission requirements	Length of program	Credits for theoretical courses	Credits for practical courses
Journalism program, Department of Information and Communication, Université Laval	certificate or minor	DCS or equivalent	1 year	20%	80%
Information and journalism program, Faculty of Continuing Education, Université de Montréal[1]	certificate or minor	journalism experience or DCS or equivalent	2½ years	65%	35%
Journalism Communication department Université du Québec à Montréal	BA in Communication	DCS or equivalent	3 years	50%	50%
Media Arts and Technology Department, Jonquière CEGEP	DCS	Québec	3 years	35%	65%
Journalism Department Algonquin College Ottawa	Diploma	Grade 12 plus examination	2 years	85%	5%

[1]Evening courses for adults.

sometimes acts as a catalyst, since once information has been produced and disseminated, individuals and social groups can themselves begin the active process of communication.[4]

College programs

In Québec, only the Jonquière CEGEP offers a journalism program in its Media Arts and Technology Department. The three-year program, which leads to a college diploma, was launched in 1967. Originally designed to educate "communicators", it provided students with training in print journalism, radio, television, and advertising. In 1973, revision of the program shifted emphasis to the training of journalists and technicians and the program was divided into four options among which students could choose: print journalism, radio, television, and public relations.

In Ontario, only Algonquin College in Ottawa offers a French-language program in its Journalism Department. The two-year program was created in 1971 and is designed primarily to train journalists for the print media.

Views of educators and students

While recognizing that a university diploma is neither inconsistent with, nor a substitute for, experience, Jacques Guay of Université Laval is quick to stress the need for university teaching in journalism. He says that a distinction must be made from the

Credits for internships	Introduction to new technology	Number of professors	Number of lecturers	1980-81 enrolment	Number of graduates in 1980	Research activity	Formal relation with the media
3	no	2 full-time (2 journ); 2 part-time	6	26	19	yes	yes
on request	no	—	20	258 70%: M 30%: F	35	no	yes
12	no	1 journ	8	30 50%: M 50%: F	25	no	yes
14	no	3 journ	—	326 45%: M 55%: F	65	—	yes
10%	no	2 journ	—	30 48%: M 52%: F	8	—	yes

beginning between the teaching of communications and the teaching of journalism, a distinction which journalists must take into account. The university is the place to learn a journalistic approach — an approach that is rigorous and systematic. "Journalism is a great art unfortunately all too often misunderstood and scorned by the practitioners themselves."

Roch Côté, who is responsible for the journalism program at UQAM, sets forth as a basic premise a distinction between "communicologists", or theoreticians of communications, and "communicators", or practitioners of communications. He thinks, however, that the relationship between the two functions is not clear. That is why, in his opinion, the combined training of both theoreticians and practitioners in the Department of Communications does not facilitate the teaching of journalism.

Guay is satisfied with the program of studies in journalism at Laval, and states that he attempts to train journalists through coverage of actual events. He adds, "This is not really accepted yet. Educational institutions even wonder sometimes if journalism can really be taught at all, especially when they begin to discover the cost of this kind of teaching once we abandon blackboards and learned dissertations and set out to recreate the newsroom, basing the theory on practical work."

It is Guay's opinion that the student must have an excellent knowledge of his environment and that journalism training must provide him with the means of seeking out and handling news.

Guay thinks that there are too many centres of journalism education in Québec and that there is room for better co-ordination. He regrets the lack of any mechanism for such co-ordination and would like to see a real school of journalism created in Québec, dedicated to teaching and research.

Côté believes the present number of journalism education centres in French-speaking Canada is sufficient and thinks that the ambiguity between the college and university levels of training should be cleared up. Although he would like to see a consolidation of the existing teaching centres, he realizes that such centralization might be a Utopian idea since the advantages of concentrating physical and educational facilities would doubtless be offset by serious disadvantages for regional training.

Céline Martin, co-ordinator of the journalism certificate program at Université de Montréal, is of the opinion that there will be too many journalism graduates in Québec if they are not steered toward the openings created by the new information needs. She, too, believes it would be as well to establish a clear distinction between the university and college levels of journalism studies, and to develop training programs appropriate to each level of learning.

For their part, students of journalism in Québec see it as an advantage to be able to choose specialization in print media, radio, or television.

They would like journalism education programs "to allow and encourage the acquisition of general knowledge as well as specialization in journalism, so as to develop in the students a critical understanding of society".

Lastly they want French "to be respected as the language of work of journalism students; that is to say that it be well taught at the levels where it is to be taught, that education programs offer remedial opportunities to those who have difficulty using the French language, that in any case a good quality of French be required during training at all levels and in all courses".[4]

The students strongly criticize the general lack of apprenticeship policies in the training institutions and are extremely worried by the problem of their integration into the labor market.

Editors' views

A number of editors expressed rather ambivalent opinions in the interviews they granted us. While they recognize the value of a university education in journalism, Michel Roy, of *Le Devoir*, and Jean-Guy Bruneau, of *Le Droit*, specify that it is far from the only way to enter the profession. Roy mentions that the "craft" can be picked up quickly and easily, but he adds that the university should play a role in the training of journalists. University can give them good work habits and knowledge, in short, the general culture they need to practise their profession with care and accuracy. Thus he recognizes a role for the university in initial training and also, in particular, in the professional development of journalists. Denis Tremblay, of *Le Quotidien* in Chicoutimi, favors hiring university journalism graduates because of their "ability to synthesize". Claude Masson, of *Le Soleil*, believes that journalism education centres have vastly improved in recent years. The emphasis, he says, is on the practical aspects; the professors are journalists; the programs have been revised to take into account the comments and suggestions of the press. At *Le Soleil*, hiring

preference goes to university journalism graduates. However, it cannot be said that this is true of most of the other papers.

With regard to hiring criteria, we note in passing that the Faculty of Continuing Education of Université de Montréal carried out a study in 1980 with 11 representatives of the field of journalism, in order to find out their papers' hiring and selection criteria for prospective journalists. The requirements are: (1) experience in, or practical knowledge of, the trade; (2) good knowledge of French and an ability to write. On the latter point Tremblay and Roy emphasize the need to give students better language training, particularly in written French.

At the risk of contradicting some of the conclusions of the CDNPA study, it can be said that university and college journalism graduates in French-speaking Canada have yet to prove their competence in the newsroom. The reasons? There are still very few journalism graduates in the newsrooms. Journalism education is barely 10 years old in French-speaking Canada, and there is no established tradition as there is in English Canada; on the big dailies there are very few journalists' positions available to graduates.

The tradition of university and college education in journalism is young in French Canada, and has therefore not yet won its spurs. Even so, managers in the newspaper business are generally in favor of it, although to varying degrees. In connection with this, Michel Roy observes that the professional level of journalists has vastly improved in Québec over the past 20 years.

Even though the employment prospects for young journalists are hardly encouraging, there is a general belief in the need for better education concerned less with the techniques of the profession than with the acquisition of a broader spectrum of knowledge both in the area of general culture and in science.

In this regard, the university has a role to play that it has not yet fully assumed. The competition and lack of co-ordination between universities are lamentable, as is the absence of a close relationship between universities and the press. The universities are reproached for their isolation and are even accused of being more interested in increasing their student population than in improving the professional calibre of journalists.

Universities, colleges, and newspapers need to combine their efforts with a view to improving the training and development of journalists on the basis of real needs as defined by the journalists themselves and by the industry. In Michel Roy's opinion, this is where a central school of journalism and communications in French Canada could play a positive role.

A question of priorities

The teaching of journalism in French-speaking Canada is concentrated in Montréal, Québec City, Ottawa, and Jonquière, and is rather varied in terms of both courses and level (university or college). Because journalism has been taught in Québec for only 10 years or so, most practising journalists, in particular those working for the large dailies, have no formal training in journalism. However, graduates of journalism programs are beginning to make a name for themselves, both in the print and in the broadcast media.

Our examination of university and college training programs and our meetings with the directors indicate how essential it is that future graduates in journalism be

given training which aims at nothing less than excellence. It is obvious that the program directors are working energetically toward this goal. Their work and their activity in the media industry bear witness to this fact.

However, we regret that the priorities set by the universities and colleges (except perhaps the Jonquière CEGEP) and, beyond them, by government show little readiness to provide financial support for the program directors' efforts. There is room for development and improvement in the training given in French-speaking Canada. The short-term and medium-term prospects give no reason to believe that this development, however urgent and necessary it may be, will take place. On the contrary, teaching at the university level is stagnating, if not regressing, while colleges, although they appear more dynamic and better equipped, are not meeting the need for a complete general training.

French-speaking Canada, with its three university programs, may at first glance seem well endowed, but it would be wise to examine the question a little more closely. A study of the data in Table 3 reveals the true situation of journalism studies in French-speaking Canada.

The journalism program at Université Laval stands out from the rest of the university programs (all of them at the undergraduate level) by the fact that a student may add training in a second discipline of his choice to his journalism training proper. At Université du Québec à Montréal, journalism training is offered within the communications program, while in Université de Montréal's rather unusual program, the students are all part-time and take evening courses. There is variety both in the number of journalism courses as such and in the number of courses leading toward a specific field of knowledge. In this regard, we note that it is difficult, because of the way university studies are organized, for a journalism student in French-speaking Canada to opt for a more advanced general or varied education with which to round off his training in journalism: the student, except in some respects at Université de Montréal, is almost forced to specialize in a single discipline beginning at the undergraduate level.

Université Laval and Université de Montréal offer an undergraduate training in journalism which comprises 450 hours in class time. There is no bachelor's degree as such in journalism, nor is there any graduate or postgraduate training. In addition, teaching resources are limited in terms of number or availability both at Laval and Montréal. Laval University employs two full-time and two part-time professors, as well as six lecturers. At 26, the number of students enrolled there in 1980-1981 is relatively low. Université de Montréal has approximately 20 lecturers for the 258 part-time students in the certificate and minor programs. Journalism training at Université du Québec à Montréal is integrated into the communications program. A single full-time journalism professor teaches there and the number of students is limited to 25.

It therefore seems clear from an examination of these figures that, in spite of the tireless work done by the program directors, the teaching of journalism at the university level in French-speaking Canada is far from occupying the place it deserves. We take as our initial assumption, of course, that, as recommended by the Davey Report, journalists should in fact receive university training. However, although a degree in journalism is desirable for all journalists, we have found from

listening to a number of newspaper representatives that they do not necessarily place any greater importance on this particular degree than on others.

The Davey Report's recommendation to solidify journalism training programs in the universities should be reasserted for French-speaking Canada.

The following model, which was proposed by Jean de Bonville and which we adopt as our own, could be used as a basis for discussion:

> The university, in collaboration with the employers, should provide three types of training. First, an undergraduate training of the traditional type intended for general sector, college graduates. . .modelled on Université Laval's journalism program.
>
> Secondly, a certificate program intended for students who already practise a media-related profession and who wish to improve their command of its techniques. Université de Montréal's certificate program in journalism would serve as prototype. Finally, a master's degree for career journalists, media administrators and university graduates which would permit a more thorough study of the practice of the profession and its problems.[5]

It was noted that none of the programs included courses to introduce the student to the new electronic technology which has already begun to penetrate the media world. On this subject, the program directors believe that it is better to concentrate their efforts on helping the student to learn and develop the basic qualities of a journalist: to learn how to learn and to know how to communicate orally or in writing. Given the importance that word processing will have in the new society already in the making, we must hope that room will be made in the programs for this subject.

In addition, although it is impossible, and indeed undesirable, for the student to possess encyclopedic knowledge as it was understood in the 18th century, it should be emphasized that there is need to organize the programs on the basis of a solid general education which would begin at the college level and continue into the university undergraduate level. The cultural and scientific fields should not be neglected: to do so would affect the quality of the media and the ability of the future journalist, wherever he works, to meet the needs of the public.

Meaningful dialogue and co-ordination should be established in order to improve journalism training and professional development in French-speaking Canada. The media industry, employers, and journalists should take part in this dialogue to make sure that programs respond to the needs of society and of the job market.

It should be noted here that the directors of the journalism programs have expressed the wish to see the creation of a school of journalism and information-related professions in French-speaking Canada to develop teaching, research and continuing education, since the teaching of journalism in the universities does not seem capable of progressing in the near future.

In French-speaking Canada, the Jonquière CEGEP and Algonquin College offer two different approaches. The number of students enrolled at the Jonquière CEGEP, as well as the number of graduates (73 in 1980), is relatively large. The quality of the technical training in both colleges is impressive. It is necessary to dispel the ambiguity that exists in Québec with regard to the journalism training offered in the college level's general sector. The symposium of Québec journalism students was revealing in regard to this ambiguity between the journalism training at

the university and college levels. For its part, the Media Technology and Art Department of the Jonquière CEGEP hopes to achieve the standing of a major school within the next few years, thus combining the college and university levels. There is clearly a need to establish a meaningful dialogue between the college and university levels in order better to define the objectives and the steps needed to ensure better training both of journalists and of all specialized personnel necessary for the functioning of the media.

There is certainly reason to emphasize the need for improvement of the general cultural, scientific, and linguistic training offered at the college level. Special attention should be given on this last point to linguistic training in both French and English.

If the teaching of journalism is relatively new in French-speaking Canada, research in journalism began even more recently. We have seen how much the lack of journalism programs at the graduate and postgraduate levels affects research. Responsibility for research in journalism therefore rests on the universities' other departments; in particular, on the communications departments. But the communications sector is just as young in French-speaking universities. Private research (CDNPA, Sorecom, Multi-Reso) and government-financed research (Departments of Communications, the Press Council, Radio-Québec, the CBC) have only just started to come into their own.

It is significant that the university program directors, with the support of the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec, have joined together to form the Centre Québécois de Recherche et de Perfectionnement des Journalistes. There is an obvious need to promote university research and continuing education in the fields of journalism, the media, and communications. The university teaching centres sorely feel this need and deplore the poverty of the physical and financial resources presently at their disposal. We must hope that the efforts of the directors find some support that will improve the quality of research and continuing education. Governments, the media industry, and universities should together provide encouragement and financial assistance for research activities in the field of journalism.

Conclusions

University and college training in journalism has not yet been fully accepted by media executives or by the people in the newsrooms of French-speaking Canada. They remain generally skeptical as to the quality and advantages of such training.

In spite of the efforts made in the universities and colleges by the directors of the journalism programs to adapt the curricula to the needs of the job market, representatives of the media industry continue to regret isolation and lack of flexibility of the university with respect to the real needs of journalists.

A school of journalism and media-related professions is seen as a way of creating the necessary co-ordination and dialogue between the media industry and the educational institutions. This dialogue is lacking at present, and it is obvious that it is the main hurdle which must be overcome before the journalists' training and, more especially, development needs can truly be met.

3. Overview

Since the Davey Committee in 1970 declared it was not greatly impressed by journalism training in Canada, real progress has been made in English as well as French Canada. There can be no doubt that the opportunities for professional training have increased and that the quality of training is now higher, although in many cases there is still room for improvement. The situation differs considerably, however, from French-language schools to English-language schools, just as it does from one training centre to another.

Training varies so widely from one institution to the next that there is a very real need for dialogue in English Canada as well as French. Journalism professors in the French-language universities have just created a Québec centre for research and professional development in journalism which may be able to initiate this dialogue. The English-language universities maintain informal exchanges among themselves. There is a need for dialogue at the college level as well as at the university level. We feel that such a dialogue would enable institutions to define their individual objectives better with a view to real complementarity, which is not always the case at present. On the other hand, perhaps as a result of the parallel approach which we took in our study, we noted no particular desire for dialogue between the French-language and English-language education systems. The media situation in French Canada is not the same as in English Canada and educators do not feel the need to seek identical or even joint solutions to their problems.

Both researchers from the Institute deplored the lack of emphasis placed on knowledge of the two official languages in Canada. French-speaking students do not always master the English language and are not forced by their program to do so, just as English-language training centres do not generally require that students take French courses. It is obvious that in a country which claims to be bilingual, journalists, because of the requirements of their profession, should be among the first to be able to communicate in both official languages.

The two surveys reveal that the main problem in journalism education in Canada today is to increase not so much the number of students, but rather the quality of the journalists trained. It is clear that, in 1980, journalism education in Canada is no longer in a developmental or transitional stage as it was in the 1970s, but in a stage of consolidation. This is true of the universities with an established tradition, such as Carleton, Western, Ryerson, and Laval, as well as of the newer centres, such as the University of King's College, Regina, Concordia, UQAM, and Montréal. Obviously the situation varies a great deal from one institution to another, but on the whole, the English-language institutions appear to be better established and more solid than their French-language counterparts.

Another fact which emerges from our study is that journalism education is no longer restricted to the print media. Practically all of the institutions now offer courses and even specializations in electronic journalism, radio, and television. This is an inevitable development which meets both the wishes of the students and the needs of the market.

Another lies in the fact that most universities are somewhat reluctant to include the study of new technologies in their programs, which is not necessarily true of the colleges.

It is clear that journalism training centres are not noted for change or even innovation. This is true of most training centres in any field and particularly of centres for professional training. Perhaps it is better this way, and more in keeping with the needs of society and employers. Nevertheless, it is important that educators be aware of what is happening in the world of information, that they not lag too far behind, and that they be able to adapt their programs accordingly.

During the study, we became aware of the reluctance of academics and employers to accept the study of new technology. They justify their reserve by saying that it is more important to them that students have a solid general and traditional education based on established, commonly accepted socio-cultural values. They seem not to realize that, in addition to simply changing ways of working, the new technologies may bring about fundamental changes in the media themselves. They are not restricted to new "typewriters with CRT screens", as some educators would seem to think, but create a new relationship between man and information. This aspect of new technology does not appear to be included or even considered in most current programs.

We feel that journalism education could be provided at various levels and achieve numerous clearly defined objectives. Thus, the basic training which leads to a minor or major or a college diploma should reflect the requirements of work in the small media. It should be multi-faceted and encompass the technical aspects of the profession as well as its administrative aspects. It is important to remember that these media can be the small and medium-sized businesses of the information world; otherwise, they will only be branches of other media. At the same time as this basic training, programs designed to train replacements for the mass media should be offered at the master's level (as at Western) either to graduates in any discipline or to professionals with experience and adequate personal training.

There is another important aspect of journalism training which we have only mentioned briefly, as it was beyond the scope of our study. It is the relationship between journalism education and communications education. There are a large number of communications departments and programs, particularly in the universities. In English Canada, there would appear to be little connection between communications education and journalism education. In Québec, except at Université de Montréal, the connection is close in theory (the Université Laval journalism program is offered by the Department of Information and Communications and the UQAM journalism program is an integral part of the Communications Department), but problematical in practice.

In both cases, however, the problem of the connection between journalism education and communications education remains crucial. It could be the subject of a separate study and should give rise to frequent exchanges involving educators themselves. Our personal view, which is not shared by everyone, is that communications should be considered an area of study comparable to administration or health and that journalism should be considered as a profession within communications. We feel that it is a mistake to develop parallel journalism and communications departments in the universities, just as it is a mistake to try to combine the two disciplines in a single program. In our opinion, the solution should be to set up faculties or schools consisting of complementary departments or sections, including one for journalism. However, there is still much to be done before communications and journalism can be integrated completely into the university and linked harmoniously.

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Appendix

Appendix

Main results of the survey of journalists on Québec-language dailies (Chapter 3)*

1. Evaluation of the quality of French-language journalism in Québec.

Very good	8.7
Fairly good	69.8
Acceptable	20.1
Poor	1.4
Total	100.0

Remarks

- The most highly educated journalists are much more likely to have a negative opinion of the press.
- The youngest and oldest journalists are the likeliest to think the quality is very good.
- On the other hand, the proportion expressing a *disparaging* opinion *decreases* with age.

Note: The tables on which the analysis is based are not all included in this appendix.

*The methodology of the survey is described at the end of this appendix.

2. In general, do you have to take the following factors into account in doing your job?

	Yes	Partly	No	Total	(N= Number)
Marketing needs	11.6	48.3	40.1	100.	(147)
Colleagues' reactions	4.1	29.9	66.	100.	(144)
Pressure from information sources, prominent figures	5.5	43.8	50.7	100.	(146)
The public's expectations and needs	79.1	19.6	1.3	100.	(148)

Remarks

- The youngest are much more concerned than the others with marketing needs, as are the least educated. Those with longest experience are likelier not to be concerned.
- There is less concern with colleagues' reaction outside the big cities. There are no differences by age or education. On the other hand, journalists with the least experience are more sensitive to their colleagues' reactions.
- Older and more experienced journalists are less likely to say that they take pressure into account.
- Those with the most experience are the most sensitive to the public's expectations, as are the journalists working for Quebecor (93.1 per cent); (Perceptions as to what the public's expectations, and especially needs, are actually vary from journalist to journalist: for some, this can be the public's need as defined by the journalist, while for others it may mean public demand in market terms).

3. What importance should a journalist give to the following functions in his or her work?

	IMPORTANT					
	Very	Fairly	Not very	Not	Total	(149)
A Investigating the activities of governments and public bodies	59.8	36.2	4.	0.0	100.	(149)
B Being an agent for change in society	23.6	41.9	28.4	6.1	100.	(148)
C Transmitting information as quickly as possible	59.1	32.9	7.4	0.6	100.	(149)
D Analyzing and interpreting difficult issues	57.1	35.4	6.8	0.7	100.	(147)
E Accurate reporting of what is said by prominent people you meet	76.4	19.6	4.0	0.0	100.	(148)
F Publishing news that interests the greatest number of readers	52.7	35.8	10.8	0.7	100.	(148)
G Enlarging the public's area of cultural and intellectual interest	41.5	43.5	13.6	1.4	100.	(147)
H Contributing to the public's leisure activities, entertainment	13.7	40.8	33.3	12.2	100.	(147)

4. What is the most important function a journalist fulfills?

1. Investigation of the activities of governments and public bodies	9.5
2. Being an agent for change in society	13.5
3. Transmitting information as quickly as possible	18.9
4. Analyzing and interpreting difficult issues	21.6
5. Accurate reporting of the remarks of prominent people you meet	12.8
6. Publishing the news that interests the greatest number of readers	13.5
7. Enlarging the public's area of cultural and intellectual interest	8.2
8. Entertainment and contributing to leisure activities	2.0
Total	100.0 (N=148)

Remarks

- The leading supporters of investigative journalism are the young, while while the older favor the notion of the "agent for change".
- The most educated choose objectives 1, 2 and 4 to a greater extent. These objectives are tied to an approach in which the journalist is more active, *more "interventionist"*.
- The least educated prefer (in higher proportions) objectives 3, 5, 6, and 8, which tend to limit the journalist to a passive role in conveying information.
- The relative interest in the role of analysis and interpretation tends to offset the great importance given in the preceding question to the job of reporting accurately what is said, and to confirm the hypothesis that the Québec journalist is rather moderate in the way he sees his craft.

5. In the context of your present job, can you fully perform the role you consider the most important?

entirely	35.6
enough	38.2
a little	22.8
not at all	3.4
Total	100.
	(N=149)

Remarks

- It should be noted that the journalists working for Quebecor stand out sharply, with 63.3 per cent answering "entirely", as against only 27.9 per cent in the case of the full-size urban newspapers, and 30 per cent at the regional press.
- The youngest and those with the least experience are the likeliest to answer "a little" or "not at all".

6. In 1981, should collective bargaining be aimed primarily at material gain for the journalist or increased professional guarantees?

Material gain	43.1
Professional guarantees	56.9
Total	100.0
	(N=144)

Remarks

- On this question, the regional press is much more concerned with professional guarantees (75 per cent). In the big dailies there is an emphasis on material gain (62 per cent), and in the Quebecor group, on professional guarantees (83 per cent).

  Thus, there are important variations according to the type of newspaper.
- There is a sharp contrast between age groups: the younger journalists prefer professional guarantees, the older ones material gain. The same is true as far as experience is concerned.

7. Types of newspaper ownership that were considered the *most* and *least* likely to allow for quality journalism.

	Most likely	Least likely
Private ownership	26.8	11.1
State ownership	3.6	69.1
Journalists' co-op	2.7	6.2
Consumers' co-op	6.2	12.3
Editorial association	60.7	1.2
Total	100.	100.

Remarks

- Only the older and less educated journalists are strongly in favor of private ownership.
- The most educated favor the editorial association.

8. Satisfaction with the Québec Press Council, on a scale of 1 to 5.

Very satisfied		Dissatisfied			Total
1	2	3	4	5	
5.6	26.6	40.6	16.1	11.1	100. (N=143)

Remarks

- Satisfaction is more marked in the regional press and much less in the big dailies.
- The less educated journalists are more satisfied. No difference in terms of years of experience.

9. Should the state intervene in the field of information?

Yes	64.2
No	35.8
Total	100.0 (N=148)

Remarks

- No difference in terms of the type of newspaper.
- The less experience respondents had, the more they favored state intervention. Similarly, the most educated call for intervention.

10. Types of government intervention

	Yes (%)
• subsidies to newspapers	16.1
• code of ethics for journalists	14.1
• imposition of standards of quality on companies	20.8
• setting up delivery services in distant regions	36.9
• preventing ownership concentration	48.3

Responses may exceed 100% due to multiple responses.

11. Certain criticisms are sometimes made of Québec newspapers. What do you think of them?

	Agree 100%	Agree somewhat	Mainly disagree	Dis-agree 100%	Total % and (N)
Articles are inadequately documented, superficial:	14.8	58.4	22.8	4.0	100. (149)
Newspapers are only interested in the sensational, the spectacular:	14.8	49.7	30.1	5.4	100. (149)
Articles are too long, people don't have time to read them:	16.8	35.6	36.9	10.7	100. (149)
Journalists lack objectivity:	4.7	12.9	57.4	25.0	100. (148)
Newspapers are too intellectual, journalists should learn to write for ordinary people:	14.1	20.8	43.6	21.5	100. (149)
Papers are dull, journalists are afraid to be committed:	14.8	24.8	40.9	19.5	100. (149)

Education and academic training

One quarter of the journalists have fewer than 15 years of schooling, and only 10 per cent have more than 17 years of schooling.

We can establish at 37 per cent the proportion of journalists stating that they have a university degree, while about 20 per cent have a high-school diploma or the equivalent. In all, 42 per cent have done post-secondary studies but not attended university.

A number of answers showed the influence of education on the journalists' attitudes. The most highly educated had a negative opinion of the press, wanted to set up editorial associations, and see state intervention; the least educated favored private ownership of newspaper companies and stated that they took their employer's marketing needs into account.

Age

Overall, half the journalists interviewed were under age 36, and only 20 per cent of them were over 45.

Years of experience

Half the journalists had 13 or fewer years of experience in the profession.

Methodology

Our survey was carried out among journalists working at the nine French-language dailies published in Québec, listed in Table 1. The total group comprised 471 journalists, 411 men and 60 women. We decided to take a stratified proportional sample to ensure good representation of all the papers. Remember that researchers always stratify in terms of a variable they consider capable of explaining the phenomena under study. In this case, the important element seemed to be the connection with a given type of newspaper.

Since the total number was relatively small, we decided to interview half the journalists by mailing them a questionnaire. The rate of response was on the whole very high: 63.4 per cent. Table 2 shows how the response rate was distributed according to the newspapers respondents work for. The percentage was over 50 in eight of the nine papers, the exception being the small daily, *Le quotidien*. In the regional press (outside Montréal and Québec City) as a whole, however, the response rate was greater than 50 per cent, which makes it easy to carry out analysis according to the categories we established (grouping of types of newspapers by various criteria).

Finally, the characteristics of respondents in our final sample have to be compared with those in the population as a whole to see if the sample is fully representative of the population, and above all to check for systematic bias. Examining Tables 3 and 4, we note that the sampling used in our analysis (N=149) reflects the total group very well. We retained two variables, sex and employer. Study of the sex variable shows that the differences between the population and the sampling are less than one per cent, and analysis of the employer variable shows that most variations are around one per cent, the highest being only 2.7 per cent. We can therefore affirm that the sample taken for analysis accurately represents the population from which it was drawn.

Table 1

Population and sampling figures according to newspaper type

	Population	**Sampling**
La Presse, Montréal	125	62
Le Soleil, Québec City	106	53
Le Journal de Montréal	69	35
Le Journal de Québec	33	16
Le Devoir, Montréal	38	19
Le Nouvelliste, Trois-Rivières	40	20
La Tribune, Sherbrooke	30	15
Le Quotidien, Chicoutimi	178	
La Voix de l'Est, Granby	13	7
Total	471	235

Table 2

Percentage response by newspaper

	Rate
La Presse, Montréal	58.1
Le Soleil, Québec	69.8
Le Journal de Montréal	60.
Le Journal de Québec	56.3
Le Devoir, Montréal	68.4
Le Nouvelliste, Trois-Rivières	70.0
La Tribune, Sherbrooke	53.3
Le Quotidien, Chicoutimi	37.5
La Voix de l'Est, Granby	71.4
Average	63.4

Table 3

Distribution of journalists according to newspaper, in the population and in the sample

	Survey population (%)	Respondents (%)	Variations (%)
La Presse, Montréal	26.4	24.7	−1.7
Le Soleil, Québec City	22.6	25.3	+2.7
Le Journal de Montréal	14.9	14.4	−0.5
Le Journal de Québec	6.8	6.2	−0.6
Le Devoir, Montréal	8.1	8.9	+0.8
Le Nouvelliste, Trois-Rivières	8.5	9.6	+1.1
La Tribune, Sherbrooke	6.4	5.5	−0.9
Le Quotidien, Chicoutimi	3.4	2.0	−1.4
La Voix de l'Est, Granby	2.9	3.4	+0.5
	100.	100.	
	(235)	(146*)	

The differences between the survey population and the distribution of respondents are very slight.
(*Three sources did not provide complete information.)

Table 4

Distribution of journalists according to sex, in the population and the sample

	Population (%)	Sample (%)	Variations (%)
Men	87.3	86.5	−0.8
Women	12.7	13.5	+0.8
Total	100.	100.	

The sampling is very representative of the survey population.