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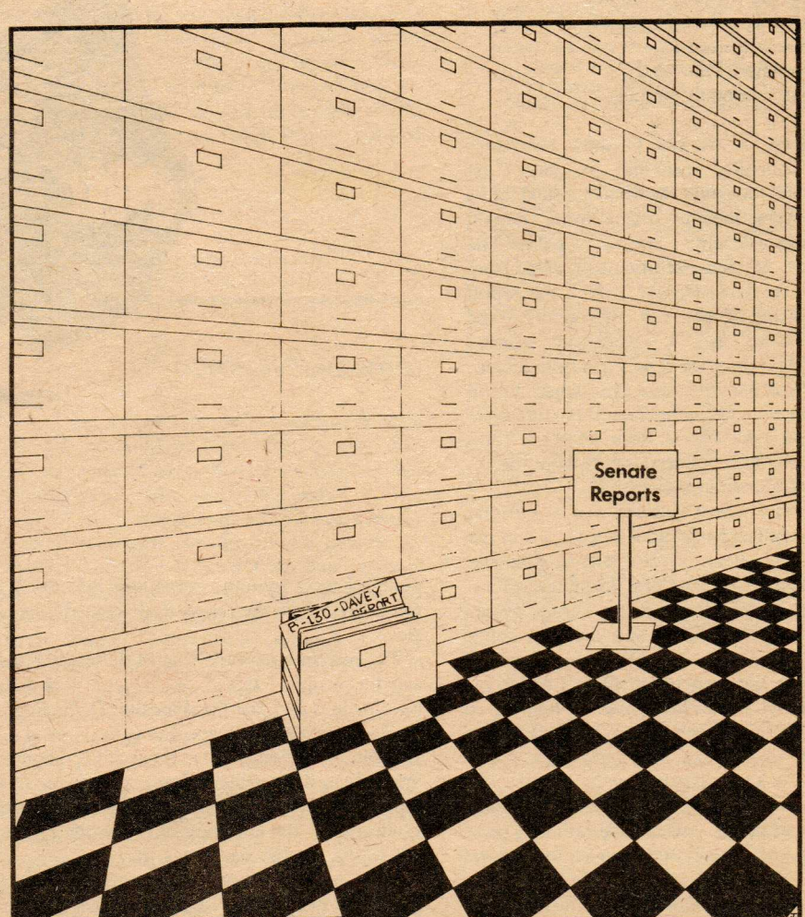
SENATOR DAVEY TAKES A LOOK BACK

content

OUR FAULTY MIDDLE-EAST COVERAGE

. . . AND THE SAME FOR SCIENCE



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Exactly what has emerged since 1970? (If anything.)

by SENATOR KEITH DAVEY

I've never been involved backstage in the opening night of a play, but I think I know the feeling. Three years ago this month, we tabled all three volumes of the report of the Special Senate Committee on the Mass Media. We held a reception in a Chateau Laurier suite to celebrate the occasion. Serving on that committee had been one of the best experiences of my life, and all of us who had helped put it together, the senators and the staff, laughed a little too hard, and some even drank a little too much, as we sat around waiting for the CBC 11 o'clock news and the early editions of the next day's newspapers — the first reviews of a production that had occupied and obsessed us for more than two years.

We even sang songs that night, including one up-beat number composed especially for the occasion by a staffer, called *The Media Monopoly Rag:*

Watch that coverage, watch that beat
Investigate that balance sheet
Probe all the weakness of the
Fourth Estate and
Legislate! Legislate! Legislate!

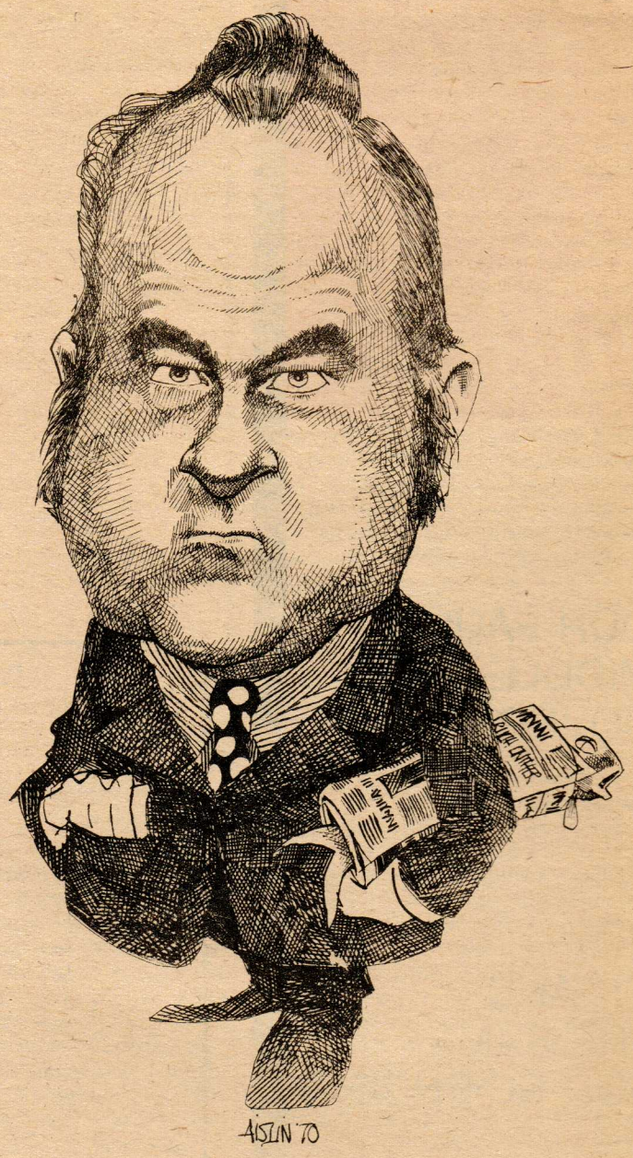
Find what the media's all about
Decide that Time is running out
The public will need ya,
The government will heed ya
The media monopoly raaaaaag!

The reviews, as we say in show biz, were "mixed." Generally speaking, the larger the newspaper, and the larger the financial stake of its owners, the worse they hated what, to my delight and my embarrassment, came to be called The Davey Report. My favorite of course, came from the Halifax *Chronicle-Herald,* which the report mentioned as one of the chief contributors to the Maritimes' status as "a journalistic disaster area." Two days after the report had been tabled, equilibrium had been restored everywhere but in Halifax where the *Chronicle-Herald* ran three pictures, side by side, on its front page — Spiro Agnew, Martha Mitchell and me — with the inscription "Meglomania Incipient."

The reaction in some quarters was so vitriolic that it was actually gratifying. After all, one of the purposes of the whole exercise was to stimulate public discussion on that least examined of institutions, the media. Three years after the event, I can say that we definitely succeeded in doing that.

But what else did we achieve? On my bad days, I suspect that we achieved practically nothing at all. At other times, it seems to me that the report accomplished more than we reasonably could have hoped. As a stimulus to new legislation, the report has proved to be a bust. But as part of what I might as well call a consciousness-raising process, its long-term effects may turn out to be more important.

Certainly it was a consciousness-raising process for me, and it still is. Like any conscientious author, I went out and promoted the book after it was published — several hundred speeches during the last three years, to all kinds of groups, all over the country, on the report and the media it tried to evaluate. I know some publishers have interpreted this as flagrant self-promotion — as though I were trying to perpetuate the critical atmosphere which the report itself helped to generate.



The response I received at all these gatherings, and the people I talked to, suggests that I may have been doing just the opposite: *Defending* the media against an audience that is far more skeptical, far more cynical, far more bitter about the media than their owners appear to realize. In the report, we referred to the "shoot-the-messenger" syndrome — the tendency of the public to blame the media for the bad news they contain. After meeting enough people to have earned some expertise on the subject, I can report that the shoot-the-messenger syndrome is alive and well in Canada.

If publication of the report thrust me into the role of the media's defender, it also thrust me into another role: Media ombudsman. You'd be amazed at the number of letters I still get, three years later, from people with a beef against their local newspaper. I haven't counted, but I must have received many hundreds by now. Most of them are the sort of complaints that no press council would uphold. Still, they may reflect the extent of the public's discontent with the media — and the fact that I, not entirely inadvertently, have become a focus for it.

Maybe that's one positive result of the report's publication. Public awareness of the media, and how they affect our lives, has been heightened over the past three years. That's an intangible; but if it exists, I'm sure the report had something to do with it.

In assessing the tangible results, I'm going to fall back on the approach we used in the report itself. We considered the media, and made recommendations, in three main problem areas: (a), The questions of media diversity and media concentration — the phenomemon of more and more outlets falling into the hands of fewer and fewer owners; (b), the whole question of quality, and

how well the public is served by the media; and, (c), the problem of Canadian cultural survival — how the media affect our sense of nationhood. In some of these areas, the results have been gratifying. In others, disappointing. Let's look at what's happened, or hasn't happened, in the three years since the report appeared:

More voices: The real guts of the report was its recognition that the media, in economic terms, are natural monopolies. The industry exhibits a natural tendency towards concentration, a tendency which militates against the public interest. Three years ago, we pointed out the extent of concentration (77 of the country's 116 dailies were controlled by groups, and 176 of the 369 broadcasting outlets). We suggested how government could arrest this trend — chiefly through establishing a Press Ownership Review Board, which would decide whether proposed mergers were in the public interest.

The Canadian Radio-Television Commission already is fulfilling this function in the broadcast field; and it's the CRTC's stated policy that inter-media mergers (ownership of a cable system by a newspaper, for instance), generally are to be discouraged.

The lack of a corresponding review agency for print media has led to the inevitable result: There are dramatically fewer independent newspapers in Canada than there were even three years ago. While we were preparing the report, the St. John's *Evening Telegram* was swallowed up by the Thomson chain and Southam acquired the Owen Sound *Sun-Times*. Since we tabled our report, the Cape Breton *Post* became part of the Thomson chain. F.P. Publications added the Montreal *Star* to its chain of big city dailies. Thomson bought the Belleville *Intelligencer*, the Brockville *Recorder* and the Summerside *Journal-Pioneer*. Southam acquired the Brantford *Expositor*, the Montreal *Gazette* and that lively independent Windsor *Star*. Most recently the Thomson chain purchased the Niagara Falls *Review*. And on and on it goes. As this is written, only considerable public pressure has delayed Power Corporation's grab of *Le Soleil* and, with it, a virtual clean sweep of French-language dailies in Quebec.

In the Maritimes, the Combines Investigation Branch is pressing a case in court against the K.C. Irving media empire; whatever the courts decide, I think its findings will vindicate our report. If they decide, that the Irving media acted to restrict competition, we said so first; if they decide the opposite, it simply underscores the need for the kind of legislation we recommended.

In Montreal, our observation that chain ownership bears no direct relationship to quality appears to have been borne out by events. The *Gazette*, since its acquisition by the Southam chain, has vastly improved. But my own impression is that the *Star*'s quality, since its takeover by F.P., has declined.

In Toronto, the *Telegram* vanished, in one of the greatest sleight-of-hand acts since Houdini. The *Star* bought its subscription lists — and it's hard not to interpret that multi-million-dollar transaction as an inducement to John Bassett to vacate the afternoon field.

In the end, the *Star* added 130,000 of the *Tely*'s readers to its circulation roster. The *Globe and Mail* picked up practically nothing. Now the *Star*, bloated with advertising, is indisputably the country's richest newspaper. They've got so much cash they're hard-pressed to find uses for it.

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When they bought Comac Communications (*Quest* and *Homemakers Digest*) earlier this year, I'm told they were delighted to find a deal that required so much hard cash. Maybe the two events are unconnected, but the *Star*'s accession to riches also seemed to coincide with a pronounced swing to the right in its editorial policy.

The appearance, and subsequent success, of the Toronto *Sun*, confirms one of the truisms of the business: If a newspaper appeals to a different constituency, it will succeed. I'm a firm believer in the proposition that even the most determined right-wingers should have a newspaper of their own. And now, in the Toronto *Sun*, they've got it. The paper's so bad it actually makes Doug Fisher look like James Reston.

What really worries me, though is the *Globe and Mail*. It's caught in a squeeze play between the affluent *Star* and the penny-dreadful *Sun*, and can only continue doing what it does — which usually consists of the best journalism in Toronto — and watching its position of relative strength decline. Could the *Globe* be the next to go? Obituaries are premature, but I keep wondering what FP's Dick Malone is thinking these days as he scans the latest figures from Toronto. Brigadier Malone's aversion to Reds is well known. It is exceeded only by his aversion to red ink.

One thing at least is certain. The trend towards concentration will continue, unless the government acts to modify it. The new amendments to the Combines legislation, which give the government more flexibility in disallowing mergers that are against the public interest, could be applied in the media field with excellent effect. Or at least they could have been a few years ago. By now, the trend toward chain ownership is so far advanced that it may be time to advocate sterner solutions — like dismantling some of the chains, or at least forcing them to sell some of their properties. The courts ordered IBM to "unbundle" in the U.S.; and chain dominance of the daily field in Canada has now approached the dimensions of IBM's dominance in the computer field.

There's one encouraging counter-trend in this picture: the periodical industry in Canada, despite the burden of those grand old East Riders, *Time* and *Reader's Digest*, has never been more diverse. LIP and OFY grants have performed part of the job which, our report suggested, should be handled by a Media Development Loan Fund. Unfortunately, under the present system of grants most publications can't hack it long enough to survive. It is heartbreaking to see so many fine Canadian publications burst onto the scene and disappear just after a few issues.

However, some magazines such as *Cinema Canada* are becoming viable, thanks to early government funding, which bought them the time they needed to become self-sufficient. We even have a Canadian skin magazine now: *Success*. As an editorial product, it's incompetent and imitative. But how can I, as a conscientious nationalist, wish them anything but, uh, success?

Which brings up another problem-area upon which the report was based: *Canadian cultural survival*. One of our assumptions was that the media, along with the arts and education, are indispensible to developing a sense of nationhood. Periodicals, because they're usually national in character, are especially important. After three years, I think some progress has been made. The magazine industry may not be exactly healthy, but at least it's showing signs of life. Some publishers argued before the committee that the departure of *Time* and *Reader's Digest* from Canada would virtually wipe out the industry, because without them, the industry would be too small and weak to be considered as a viable advertising medium. The Canadian industry has now developed to the extent that this argument, if it ever held water, is invalid now.

In fact, the mind boggles at the government's inactivity on the *Time-Digest* question. In spite of overwhelming mandates at the last two Liberal policy conventions, the government has chosen to do nothing. As long as they persist in their inactivity, the Canadian magazine industry will be weaker than it need be.

The CRTC has given us a good example of what a little resolution, backed by the right legislation, can accomplish. Pierre Juneau has resisted all the broadcasting pressures directed against him, and emerged with policies on Canadian content, which have strengthened — indeed one might almost say, created — a viable Canadian music and recording industry.

Quality: Our underlying assumption was that the media's quality could be judged by how well they were preparing their audiences for social change — taking the "surprise" out of the world by backgrounding trends before they became sudden and surprising events. Ask yourself, for instance, how well the media prepared us for the sudden onslaught of the energy crisis. A public served by alert media might have seen it coming.

Our contention that the media's performance, overall, simply wasn't good enough provided the most controversial section of the report. I'm glad it was controversial, because, as the last three years have demonstrated, the controversy acted as a prod, and led to improvements.

No, I couldn't measure it, but I do sense a greater sense of professionalism, even in Halifax. The Thomson chain, predictably, has done practically nothing about its sub-standard product, except to hire John Harbron as its syndicated foreign affairs analyst. The Canadian Daily Newspaper Publishers Association, after several years of soul-searching, has finally decided to invest some of its funds and energies in editorial matters, instead of devoting itself exclusively to chasing advertising.

Most visible of all, we now have press councils in Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and Saskatchewan. So far, their effect as a spur to editorial quality has been more symbolic than real. And I'm disappointed at the lack of public outcry in provinces where publishers have refused to set them up. Maybe it's just as we said: The public always gets the press it deserves.

But there's no question in my mind that the media are doing a better job, generally, than they were three years ago. Most of this is part of a process of natural evolution. But I'm proud that our report became a part, perhaps an important part, of that process.

It always amazes me, when I speak at universities, to find students who seem to know the report better than I do myself. Volume One has become a sort of *de facto* text book in communications across the country.

And, sometimes, I ask myself: Is that all we really produced? A good textbook? In the absence of legislative changes, it's sometimes tempting to look at it that way. But maybe that's more of a boast than a lament. Too many Senate reports get shelved and forgotten. Ours is still selling briskly at Information Canada, still helping people to think about the media in Canada, still serving as part of that evolutionary process. Maybe that's a hopeful sign. Anyhow, I like to think so.

Senator Keith Davey should need no post-introduction.

Illustrations by Aislin and Julian Lebensold.

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ERROR BY OMMISSION IN MID-EAST COVERAGE?

by MOHAMMED HAROON SIDDIQUI

The North American, in fact the entire Western, news media have been attacked in the past, with some justification, by the Arabs for being pro-Israeli in its Middle East coverage. Covering the recent war against this backdrop of Arab suspicion placed an added responsibility on the media, especially the Canadian media, to make a special effort to be fair to both sides.

Were we? A definitive judgment is not possible without extensive research, but some general impressions can be safely stated.

But before we do, let me acknowledge — for the sole purpose of warding off those who can easily spread fog in a discussion such as this — that I am a Moslem. At least, I was born in that faith and my name continues to be a testimony to that fortunate or unfortunate incident. During some of the more flaccid moments of my self-examinations, I have pondered over the advisability of disqualifying myself from writing on the Middle East conflict which is unfortunately considered by many to be a religious struggle. The absurdity of such self-abnegation, however, becomes clear when I realize that it would lead me — as a matter of logical extension — into an illogical campaign to de-Christianize the Canadian journalistic fraternity now covering this overly Christian nation.

Let us also note — though it may be considered offensive by some — that zealous Arabs look upon the Canadian news media as just another tool of Zionism; and that their equally unreasonable Jewish counterparts detect an anti-Semite in every writer who has the audacity to refuse raising an honorific umbrella over everything that the state of Israel does.

Since both sides don't hold logic in any great esteem, their arguments need not detain us from taking stock of our own performance on the scale of our own well-established ethics. Covering a conflict like the Middle East is not easy. It is not easy to provide a balanced coverage on a day-to-day basis. All that newsmen — and in the case of wars where reporters are assigned to particular sides of a battle, their editors — can strive for is balance over a length of time.

The coverage of the recent war, I am told by those whose judgments I value, was far more balanced than it was in 1967. There probably were no blatant anti-Arab biases in the news stories, despite what some of our Arab friends might say. There were even attempts to carry a story or two about what the Arabs were saying, both in the Middle East and here in Canada.

But there is no escaping the feeling that more, much more, emphasis was being placed on the Israeli side: How bravely the Israeli soldiers were fighting; what Tel Aviv was saying; how the Israeli population was coping with the war; how Washington was not really living up to Israeli expectations; and so on.

In the initial stages of the war, there were stories on how well the Israelis fought on Yom Kippur, when they were fasting. There was a human interest angle of sorts in it. And the reporters assigned to the Israeli side were probably right in extracting a yarn out of it. But having got that story, how could editors remain oblivious to the equally 'interesting' fact that the Arabs were observing Ramadan, a whole month in which Moslems don't eat or drink from sunrise to sunset? The Arab armies thus fought the entire war in circumstances that the Israelis put up with for only one day.

War is not cricket where good manners dictate that you pour tea to the opposing side before proceeding to demolish it; battles are not fought on the basis of either side's culinary intake. But if our news editors were bent on lading out this holy stew of fasting soldiers, they should have done it on behalf of both sides. For it was more of a Ramadan War than a Yom Kippur War.

It was good news judgment on the part of the CBC to fly its Paris correspondent to Tel Aviv. It would have been far better for the corporation to send another newsman to Cairo or Damascus or Beirut, though providing proper news coverage to the Arab side from inside Arab lands remains, despite improvements over the years, an esoteric science.

The CBC did eventually send a man to Cairo, but it was too late by then, for the ceasefire had been declared and the news value of what the Arabs may have had to say — they usually don't say much or say it articulately — was diminished.

The CBC did make attempts to parallel Peter Daniel's, and then Tom Leech's, reports from Israel with wire copy reports and some film from the Arab side. But let's face it: Both are not the same.

While covering the fund-raising activities of Arab and Jewish populations in Canada, the CBC said: "All the money donated to the Jewish fund goes towards social work in Israel, not war" — or words to that effect. That must have cleared a lot of non-Jewish donors' consciences among *The National*'s audience of more than four million. How did the CBC conclusively prove to itself that the money was indeed not being diverted to the war effort? And did it check with the Arabs where the donations to their fund were going? It would have been far simpler and much fairer for the CBC to convey what the two sides had to say about the intended uses of the collected money.

When Southam News Services' Peter Calamai was pressed into service, he also was sent straight to Tel Aviv. But to his credit, he did do a detailed piece on the plight of Palestinian refugees inside Israel — a genuine piece of news that other correspondents ignored completely.

Some interpretative pieces, emanating mostly

from American sources, carried by Canadian newspapers in their news columns, referred to the so-called deliberate decision of the Israeli government to let the Arabs strike first. That is what Tel Aviv said. And there was no way a reporter could have determined that that indeed was the case. But news reports made it appear as a fact.

Some news reports went to great lengths to tell us that the Russians were responsible for prolonging the war. Which is very true. We all know what an Arab will tell you in response. We can leave the right and wrong of Moscow's and Washington's respective roles in it to editorial writers. But were the news editors fair in carrying only one side of this debate in their news columns?

Yet other interpretative pieces, written from Tel Aviv, gave the impression of defending the Israeli cause, not just reflecting it. I write this cognizant that it is quite easy for an observer to confuse the two.

Dianne Woolman reported on *The World At Six* from Beirut that some Syrian military personnel were found guilty of collaborating with the Israeli command on the Golan Heights sector and letting the Israeli army walk in. I didn't see that report in any newspaper or on any major TV newscast. It is quite possible, in fact very possible, that the officers simply were made scapegoats by the government for Syrian defeats in the battlefield. But surely a reporter does not base his news judgment on the politics of such an issue. It was a story worth carrying, though it probably would have been viewed by Israeli supporters as an attempt to take the shine off the Israeli military heroics on the Golan Heights front.

There may be other examples; the ones cited here are based on my own limited perusal, rather than on a scientific survey, of our media during the days of the war.

It won't be an exaggeration to say that Canadian news coverage of the recent war was, by and large, caged in emotion, as though the intent of it all was not to simply reflect what was going on on both sides of the conflict but to whip up — consciously or unconsciously — sentimental support for Israel.

Some editors may not agree with this opinion, and may even think that I am too much under the influence of Arab *gahwa*. Newspaper people, as a breed, react strongly when told they are biased on a given issue. We so react probably because almost all of the criticisms usually directed at us are baseless and nonsensical. The net result is that we often end up making the mistake of treating *all* complaints and criticisms alike.

Lt. Gen. E.L.M. Burns, who commanded the first United Nations Emergency Force in the Middle East has this to say: The Arabs "regard us (Canadians) as having much the same attitude towards the struggle as the Americans. They could take a good deal of the material that appears in the press . . .which generally, so far as Canadians are concerned, the Canadian press is concerned, is favorable to the Israeli viewpoint."

Let me also quote Dr. A.C. Forrest, editor of the United Church publication *The Observer*, though it is considered tactically bad to identify with him in this issue.

To many, Dr. Forrest may be just another misguided liberal, acting with the zeal of a new convert. But his criticisms should not be brushed aside entirely; we must listen when he says "there are distortions in Canadian news media's coverage of the Middle East."

All this leads us to the issue of how the mass media covers a war. The newsmen of a country at war don't follow the same rules of objectivity they do otherwise. They obviously don't weigh their own country's and their enemy's armed forces on the same objective scale. They are not expected to.

The same ethos is often applied to covering a war being fought by a *military ally*. Should it be extended to news coverage of a war being fought by a country which at best can be considered only as an *ally by sentiment*, that, too, not by all Canadians?

Americans are attached to Israel not only militarily but also emotionally — as was not the case in the latter stages of the Vietnam war. So we can understand, if not approve, the tenor of their news coverage.

Is the Canadian nation in the same boat as the Americans? After following the news media in the last few weeks, one is tempted to believe that our news editors, by and large, have concluded just that and tilted their coverage accordingly.

If they insist that they haven't, they are simply guilty of blindly following their American counterparts.

But if they indeed, have, we must raise two questions in the interest of objectivity:

Did they do it on the basis of their own personal opinions and emotions? Or on the basis of their assessment, right or wrong, that Canadians, come hell or high water, are with the Israelis?

Both, I am afraid, are shaky foundations on which to rest a news coverage.

Mohammed Haroon Siddiqui is city editor of the Brandon Sun *and teaches a course in journalism at Brandon University.*

In search of better science coverage

The question at the heart of the current study by the federal ministry of state for science and technology should be, but too often isn't, obvious to journalists. In short, co-ordinator Orest Dubas and assistant Lisa Martel, and above them former Canadian Press writer Ken Kelly, are asking: Are Canadians being provided with adequate and accurate information on science and technology to better understand the world and the choices they face?

They ask that knowing that whether it be concrete achievements in medicine or communications systems or pollution abatement, energy policy or university research, most Canadians are alerted to such developments through the mass media of radio, television, newspapers and magazines. A considerable responsibility, then, for those whose job it is to gather, digest, and feed out information.

Media Impact, as the name suggests, is a research program designed to answer many questions about the flow of science news to the Canadian public via the mass media, and to evaluate the *impact* that this news has on Canadians. The program was conceived in the fall of 1972 as a result of ideas put forward by its co-ordinator, Orest Dubas, to the director of information services of the ministry of state for science and technology, Ken Kelly.

As early as 1971, the need for such an investigation into the presentation of science by the mass media became apparent within the framework of research being undertaken in other countries in the fields of journalism, communication, education and the social sciences. Canadians, it seemed, lagged decades behind other countries in fostering studies into scientific communication. Moreover, while many foreign countries had begun such studies or were developing and expanding them, no university, industry, or government agency in Canada had yet recognized the need for such research.

The importance of promoting the popularization of Canadian scientific achievements in science and technology was underscored by MOSST's first science writing program during the summer of 1972. Dubas and Lisa Martel were among the 15 university and collegiate students from across Canada who were assembled in Ottawa for this program and assigned the task of writing, in laymen's terms, about some of Canada's contributions to science and technology. Here too, the need for a more extensive knowledge of media coverage of scientific and technological activities was evident.

In the fall of 1972, personal meetings and discussions were conducted with officials from several government agencies, journalism departments, and the mass media. With their advice and the recommendations number of U.S. experts in science communication, a tentative budget and timetable were drawn up for Media Impact.

By mid-November of 1972, a pretest of a questionnaire to science communicators in the media was taken at a seminar of the Canadian Science Writers Association in Halifax. By May, 1973, the project was officially accepted as an independent study contracted for the information services of the ministry of state for science and technology.

As one examines the literature on the dissemination of information between the scientific community and the general public, one finds Canada's contribution to this area virtually nonexistent. Few major Canadian studies have dealt with the subject of scientific communication or of specialized mass media reporting.

For instance, Canadian research on science news within the mass media was given only a cursory glance by the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media headed by Senator Keith Davey. This study provided an extensive overview of the printing and broadcasting industries in Canada. In light of these broad objectives, the committee could hardly have been expected to investigate so specialized an area as the handling of science news by the mass media.

The 1969 study for the Davey Committee by Professor Joseph Scanlon, however, provided some statistics on the type of news and the breakdown of news coverage contained in 30 Canadian daily newspapers. Science news, both stated and implied, was tabulated under several categories.

Science and space (2.6 per cent), medicine and health (3.0 per cent) and agriculture (1.5 per cent) fall well down the list of items given coverage by the Canadian daily press, although, undoubtedly, various aspects of science and technology also enter, in varying degrees, into politics and government, business and finance, and other sections of the newspaper.

However, even the total of these areas is barely comparable to the 15.8 per cent found for human interest items, the 15.0 for sports, or even the 5.7 for crime and vice and 3.2 for accidents, fires and disasters.

Studies of information transfer in Canada, such as the *Special Study on Scientific and Technical Information* for the Science Council of Canada and the *Task Force Report on Government Information* stressed the need for more research in this particular area. The task force noted that: "The mass media are the public's most important source of government news, but the federal government has largely ignored media research."

Moreover, the task force concurred with the consensus of social scientists from a number of Canadian universities that "Canada must overcome a time lag of more than twenty years in the continually developing field of survey research."

Also, the 1970 report of the Senate Special Committee on Science Policy under Senator Maurice Lamontagne stressed a need for more research in pursuit of a more comprehensive public policy on science and technology. In a section outlining specific objectives and areas of scientific activities, the report stated that cultural enrichment is one of the broad purposes of society. Yet it noted that: "Little thought appears to be given to how science can best enrich public culture. It has been remarked that many scientists receive their degree without really knowing much about science itself, at least about the overall nature of science. Is the average student's science education designed to allow him to 'know science' or to have a 'scientific sense?' Science obviously has an important contribution to make to culture, but the means of diffusing it still seem to be virgin territory."

The academics of science communication are only half the battle. Just as important are the practical day-to-day issues involved in the reporting of science and technology by the mass media. Here, at least one Canadian organization, the Canadian Science Writers' Association (CSWA), formed in 1970, has concerned itself with this task. Its objectives include the following:

1. To foster dissemination of accurate scientific information and to encourage its use by all news media;
2. To develop improved means of access to scientific information;
3. To foster the training of science writers and prospective science writers;
4. To develop awards and training programs for science writers.

With slightly more than one hundred members, this organization includes in its membership such diverse groups as broadcasters, newspaper reporters, scientific journal editors, producers, freelance writers and people in information services

from government, industry and universities.

Through periodic publications such as the CSWA Newsletter, through the organization of scientist-reporter seminars and annual meetings, they have tried to improve the standard of science reporting and broadcasting in Canada. The first CSWA annual science writing seminar and workshop which took place in 1971 was well received by the science writers and the scientists who participated.

Since then, a number of science writing seminars have been held throughout Canada, demonstrating a desire on the part of both the scientific community and the science writers to devise more effective methods of improving communications. The CSWA's 1974 convention will be held in January in Montreal.

A century ago it may not have been essential for the general public to be informed about science and its implications. Today, the situation has so vastly changed that this view no longer holds true.

The twentieth century could rightfully be referred to as the "science-packed era," where science and technology have become one of the most (if not *the* most) dominant forces in our lives. The fact remains that there are now more scientists at work than ever before and it has been estimated that of all the scientists the world has ever known, 95 per cent are alive and at work today. And from this scientific exploration being conducted in laboratories the world over, an overwhelming amount of information pours forth at the rate of 1,000 books per day and 2,000,000 research papers per year.

Yet not only is most of this information unavailable to the general public, it is also incomprehensible to many. With the intelligent person having an average conversational vocabulary of 3,000 of the commonest words in the English language, the very well-read man a total vocabulary of 10,000 words at his command, and science having produced more than 50,000 specialized technical words, it is no wonder that the average interested citizen is compelled to seek out popularized and digested versions of material from the scientific community.

The public as a whole needs some knowledge of science as a tool in their lives, and this tool is of little value, to say the least, if offered in a way which they cannot comprehend. The minimum should be an awareness of those aspects of science and technology which are vital to the practical applications and immediate concerns of everyday life. On a more aesthetic level, the rewards of this knowledge will be felt in the enrichment and improvement of the quality of life.

From a variety of sources, among them the list of the Canadian Science Writers' Association, and from an analysis of various news clipping services (in particular, the clipsheets provided by MOSST and the National Research Council (NRC)), Media Impact found that there are about twice as many reporters as the 70 to 80 listed who are involved in the coverage of science news. These additional reporters only occasionally cover science-related topics when assigned by their editors, while others cover science full-time, yet simply have not been listed as science reporters.

In taking note that there are 150 to 200 reporters who deal with science to some degree it must be stressed that *beyond about two dozen full-time science and technology reporters, the majority of reporters write stories containing only scattered amounts of scientific information.* And by no means do they focus their attention exclusively on the science or technology angle. In view of this, unless research is the dominant feature of the article, the science and technology aspect may be completely overlooked. Or a science and technology-oriented article may not be written at all, or even investigated, because there may be aspects of that story which, in the reporter's or editor's view, provide a better news angle for the article.

This is not to criticize the reporter since he or she is, in fact, called upon to cover *all* those aspects of his (or her) designated beat which fall into the category of "news interest," and certainly not to give particular preference to the scientific phenomenon. It is mentioned only to question the whole arena of science coverage as it exists in the press today.

As for the broadcasting scene, the coverage is sporadic. Apart from the few writers and producers who regularly work with science programs such as *Ideas* or *La Science et Vous* (aired on CBC), *The Nature of Things* or *La Flèche du Temps* (televised on CBC), *Here Come the Seventies* or *Target: The Impossible* (televised on CTV), the networks are relatively unpredictable with regard to their science programming.

A certain number of specials, prominent among them being the recent BBC series *The Ascent of Man,* are shown on occasion. Most science specials, however, originate from foreign sources. In addition, local stations and educational networks provide some high-quality programs which deal with science, albeit beamed to a limited audience. With regard to broadcast news gathering facilities, newsrooms of local stations or networks have similar access to national and international science news (in printed form or in voice tapes) as that which is available to newspapers.

Some problems which exist in the reporting of science and technology perhaps could be remedied through changes in the traditional educational training of science reporters and broadcasters. As the head of a communication arts department in an applied arts and technology college suggested, what might be needed is the incorporation of science reporting into the curriculum of college and university journalism courses.

While the occasional course in science reporting is offered in the journalism departments of Carleton University and the University of Western Ontario, the question arises: Are the demands being adequately met for qualified writers and broadcasters in specialized areas of science communication — whether these writers are employed by industry, government, education or by the mass media?

Furthermore, should there be additional stimuli, such as fellowships and prizes in science writing — for instance, as done in the past by Columbia University in New York for science writers? Only a limited number are currently offered by Canadian organizations.

Certainly several methods will have to be tried before an optimum approach will be realized. An investigation into the educational training of Canadian science writers can only benefit the whole Canadian scientific community, not only in the immediate future, but in the long term.

Research from countries such as the U.S. on present state of knowledge of public and the mass media cannot really be extrapolated to the Canadian situation. Firstly, Canada, with its official bilingual policy and its heterogeneity of nationalities, has innate idiosyncrasies — demo-

graphic as well as geographic. These differences distinguish it from the U.S. in terms of news coverage of scientific and technological activities.

Secondly, Canada has few writers or broadcasters as established in science reporting as Walter Sullivan of the New York *Times*, Victor Cohn from the Washington *Post* or Earl Ubell of the CBS television network.

Not entirely independent of this is the fact that much of the frontier work in science and technology is overwhelmingly foreign, and primarily American. Many Canadian media outlets have fallen victim to the syndrome of relying heavily on science news from foreign sources, because the acquisition of such news is cheaper than staff-written news. Rather than hire qualified reporters to cover specialized news from Canadian sciences or technology, they tend to supplement their science news with copy from Canadian Press (CP), from their publication group's news service, or from foreign news services such as Associated Press (AP) or Reuters. Some also subscribe to foreign science news syndicates such as Enterprise Science News. As a result, Canadian scientific and technological activities suffer in the long run.

Many Canadians, for instance, are unaware of Canada's numerous achievements in science and technology because they are under-reported, or simply filed away to collect dust in the quagmire of scientific publications reaching the communicators. Yet sooner or later Canadian achievements *are* taken up by American or other foreign researchers, who upstage what should have been recognized as a valuable "Canadian" contribution to society.

—Dick MacDonald
Editor

LETTERS

COMMONER AND . . .

Editor:
I read and enjoyed in its entirety the article done by yourself entitled "Content is Three Years Old This Month" (October).

The sentence "But what of excellence?" struck a responsive chord. Don't be too hard on the media though, for they certainly have no monopoly on mediocrity. The mundane, the hum-drum, the shoddy, the counterfeit pervade every facet of our lives it seems, and when the occasional critic raises his voice in protest, he is answered with reference to the balance sheet, or he is accused of being anti-democratic. Iddings Bell said that we are living in the age of the common man, and he is becoming commoner and commoner.

For a country as young as Canada, one would not expect to encounter the "I'm all right, Jack" syndrome. Nevertheless, on a trip last summer during which I visited about a dozen editor-publishers of weekly newspapers in order to promote a weekly column that I write, I got the distinct impression that these people were all immensely satisfied with their papers.

One avant-garde youngish publisher lectured me on how I could interpret French-Canada to Ontario and the West. I subsequently sent him three or four columns with a French-Canada theme or background, and then a follow-up, but I heard nothing, so presumably the people in his particular corner of Ontario are already well-informed on the question of French-Canada.

Keep up the good work I am filing your article. I shall reread it whenever I start feeling satisfied with myself.

Mac Brockman
Two Mountains, P.Q.

OUR NAVEL-GAZING

Editor: I am a free-lance writer and have been living and working in Japan for the past two years. Recently, I have been doing research for a proposed CBC radio series on Japan.

I have been greatly distressed, both as a reader and as a journalist, at the over-emphasis on 'Canadian identity' in most Canadian publications. It seems to me that newspapers and magazines alike are suffering from a kind of national myopia. In travelling through Asia, I have met very few Canadian journalists. Even the Tokyo Foreign Correspondents' Club can boast no Canadian members, only a couple of American writers who string for a Canadian paper.

Editors will often reject a carefully researched piece of material on the basis that it has no relevance to the Canadian scene. I wonder if other Canadian journalists overseas are as tired as I of having to manufacture a 'Canadian angle', in order to interest the Canadian reading public. Or, are they also turning more and more to American and other foreign markets?

Even the managing editor of CP tells me that he buys most of his stuff second-hand from UPI or AFP. I think this is a dangerous situation. How can Canadians even dream of an independent foreign policy when they have no independent source of information? As long as most of our information on foreign affairs is filtered through American sources, all this talk of Canadian identity is so much bull.

Karen Coulter
Seoul, Korea

THE LITTLE MARKETPLACE

CLASSIFIEDS

The Little Marketplace offers categories for which no basic charge is made — SITUATIONS WANTED, STAFF NEEDED, RESEARCH AIDS, FOR SALE, WANTED TO BUY. For the first 20 words (including address), no cost. For each additional word, 25 cents. Indicate bold-face words. Display heads: 14 pt., $1 per word. 24 pt., $3 per word. Blind box numbers available at 50 cents. Cheque should accompany text. Copy must be received by the 5th of the month in which the ad is to appear.

THE CANADIAN BANKERS' ASSOCIATION is looking for French-language editor/associate editor, **The Canadian Banker**, French edition. Reports to the editor. Basic functions: Edits the final version of all translations, either from English or from French, of speeches, brochures, pamphlets, releases and similar material prepared by the Canadian Bankers Association. Supervises the publication of the French edition of **The Canadian Banker**, responsible for developing and editing articles, assisting in writing articles, translating and supervising translation of material from the English edition. Send resumés to: C. Pitt, Institute of Canadian Bankers, 3920 Place Victoria, Montreal H4Z 1A3.

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PUTT-PUTT: Delightful poetry is Ron Grant's new book, **Let's All Light the Candle in the Putt-Putt Boat**. $3. Orders: Alastair Ink Reg'd, Box 52, Pointe Claire-Dorval, P.Q.

RELIGION COPY from Alberta Bible Belt. What can Noel Buchanan offer? 956A 8th Street South, Lethbridge T1J 2K8 Alberta, (403) 327-8101.

SITUATION WANTED: Young man, 22, bilingual, college-educated, seeking position as junior reporter with daily or weekly, anywhere in Canada. Availability: Immediate. Contact: Serge Tittley, 896 Lafleche Rd., Hawkesbury, Ont. (613) 632-8417.

STU LOWNDES, vsw, alive and well and living in Montreal. Wire, metro, country, community, trade and PR experience. Open for assignment — free-lance and otherwise. 514-389-6355.

BACKGROUND WANTED: Re Senator T.-D. Bouchard being fired as Quebec Hydro chairman June 23, 1944. Any reporter who remembers how Bouchard's statements were issued, please write E. Chisholm, 77 Cartier St., Apt. 1103, Ottawa K2P 1J7.

miscellany

Thanks to Toronto's Ruth Hammond of PR for this gem from Manchester's *Guardian:* There was a tale being whispered around the press club with great glee of one of its most distinguished members who attended a private function in the club. On her way down the stairs, she was accosted by an elderly member who wagged a finger at her and said, "Young lady, do not imagine that when women are members I shall moderate my language." Distinguished and perfect a lady she was, but the temptation was too much for her. She looked him straight in the eye and said calmly, "Neither shall I. Fuck off."

Adrian Waller's third book is out and doing well. It's entitled *Data for a Candlelit Dinner,* published by Clarke-Irwin of Toronto. His fourth book is due in the Spring, as yet untitled; it deals with conflicts he's had on various major dailies across Canada and may be serialized in *Content*. It should cause consternation in some circles. Waller now is devoting all his time to books, having left the *Gazette* earlier this year. Pierre Boucher, assistant to chairman Pierre Juneau of the Canadian Radio-Television Commission, died at the age of 52. A former head of the Union des Artistes, Boucher was widely known for his comedy roles on the Radio-Canada television network.... Dead at 51 is Raymond Crepault, president of Civitas Corporation, who owned Montreal's *CJMS* as the flatship of the Radiomutuel Network; his *CJMS-FM* station in 1963 was the first French-language FM station in Canada. He was a past president of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters.

Elected chairman of the Canadian Advertising Advisory Board was J.S. Crosbie, president of the Magazine Association of Canada. President of the CAAB is R.E. Oliver.... Official Languages Commissioner Keith Spicer told the Commons broadcasting committee he will be investigating a CBC decision to restrict Gaelic programming in Nova Scotia; the weekly live program called *Island Echoes,* on Cape Breton Island, is to be discontinued within a year.... The Canadian Bar Association is offering two fellowships, tenable at either Queen's or Laval universities, in the name of Louis St. Laurent for studies in legal journalism. Purpose of the program is to give media professionals familiarity with the institutions and processes of the judicial systems in Canada, a clear understanding of modern legal issues, and an acquaintance with legal reasoning and reference sources and personnel with the legal system. Closing date for applications is March 1. Write: The Canadian Bar Association, Room 320, 90 Sparks St., Ottawa K1P 5B4.

Syracuse University has been awarded a Willian Donner Foundation grant to establish a program for the study of Canadian mass communications (why can't that happen in Canada?), initially worth $150,000. The grant will fund research at the S.E. Newhouse School of Public Communications and the program is to start in 1974 Cartopix, the first international exhibition of cartooning and news photography, has been postponed to April, 1974 to permit countries more time to prepare their entries. The month-long public show, sponsored by the National Press Club of Ottawa, was scheduled to open in October at the National Arts Centre. More than 30 countries had indicated they would participate, but some needed more time to organize their submissions. Cartopix is open to newspapers and magazine cartoonists and photographers whose works appear in news publications. New deadline for submissions is March 15, 1974. Contact: G. Pearson, National Press Club 150 Wellington Ste. Ottawa K1P 5A4.

A private member's bill designed to protect a journalist from being forced to disclose his information sources got nowhere in the Commons this Autumn. No vote was taken of the bill proposed by the NDP's Arnold Peters; it now goes to the bottom of the pile of private bills and probably will not be revived during this session. Rod Blaker, Lachine's Liberal and former commentator on Montreal's *CJAD*, opposed the bill because, he said, it would create a privileged group which eventually might harm the public good. Stay tuned to *Content* for more material on disclosure legislation.

Spawning at least three more federal-provincial conferences and countless committee meetings, a crucial, albeit belated, conference of federal and provincial communications ministers was held in Ottawa in November; there was not much progress beyond exchanging mutual pledges of cooperation — standard fare for most gatherings of the kind. Federal Communications Minister Gerard Pelletier agreed to study provincial demands for a greater voice in administering communications services, which now fall under federal jurisdiction. What is under discussion is the reorganization of Canada's communications legislation. *Content* will be carrying more during the next couple of months.

Worth reading, with a critical eye, is *The Mind Managers* ($9.95, 256 papers, Beacon Press, 25 Beacon St., Boston 02108), by Herbert Schiller. He proposes that the consciousness of almost every American is programmed. He asks: Why and how does the knowledge industry — recreation and entertainment, polling, advertising, publishing, TV and radio — influence and create attitudes and behavior? The U.S.' *Media Mix* newsletter suggests that those whose minds have been most managed will find the book least acceptable.

From James Aronson: "I do not believe that a revolutionary program for the media is possible or practical until journalists understand fully how they are being manipulated by the owners of the media, and until the public understands how its interest has been largely neglected and often abandoned by the media owners and, unfortunately, by too many journalists."

Gerry Toner of the Peterborough *Examiner* says the paper will make good use of its limited book review space by dealing only with Canadian books, a positive step forward. More papers should do the same, argues the Independent Publishers Association.

The Vancouver *Sun*'s Simma Holt has applied for the position of chief of the city's police department. She's written two books based on research with police forces and earlier this year, when she wrote a series of articles on the police force, a few of Vancouver's finest posted a sign on their bulletin board — "Simma Holt for chief." She decided to take them seriously.

content

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