

# content

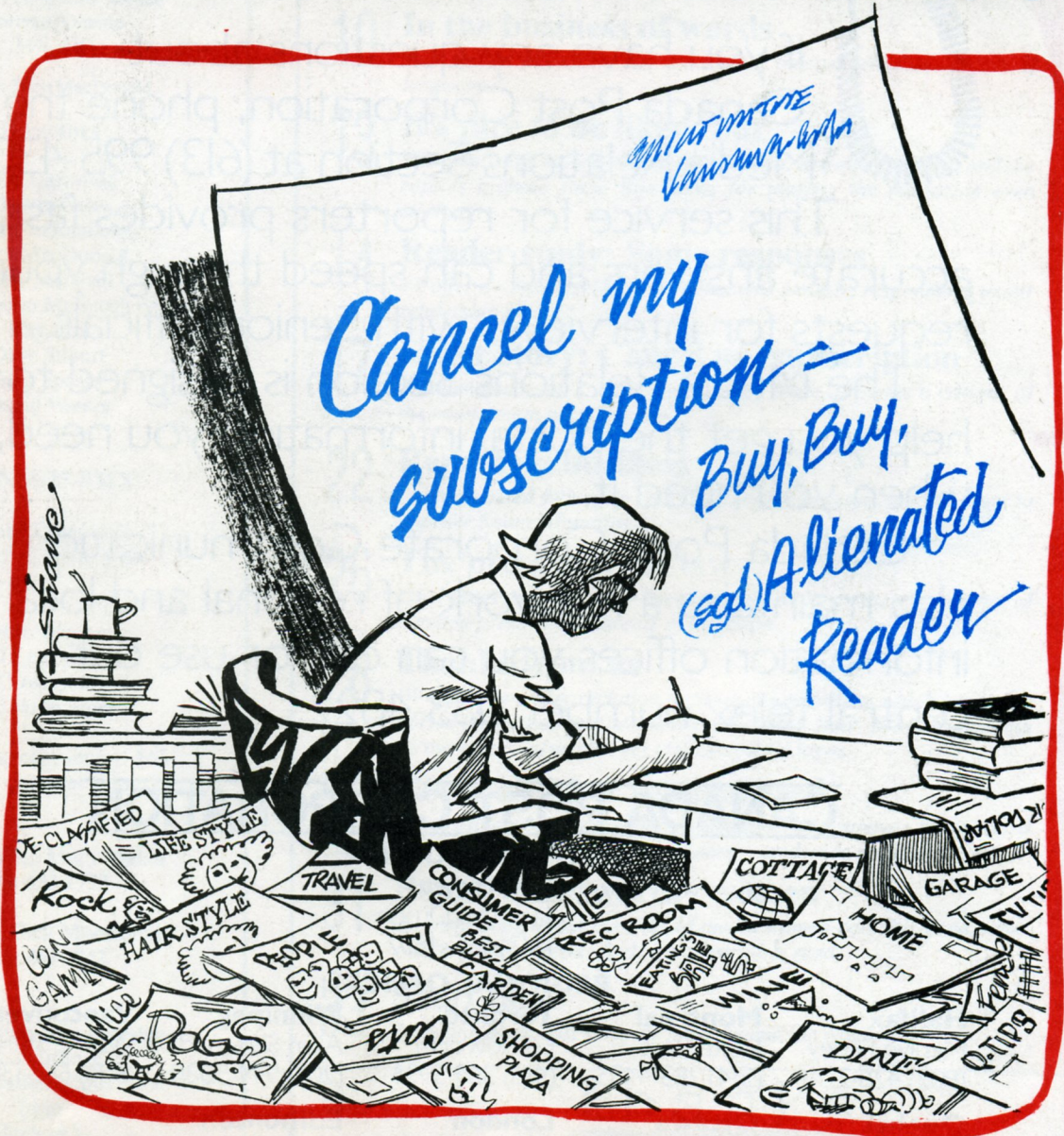
Our 15th  
anniversary

\$2.50

for Canadian journalists

September-October, 1985

## The disenchanted reader



- Workplace relations II
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OCT 4 1985





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# *content*

for Canadian journalists

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# Thanks

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## Letter from the Editor

# An anniversary and an update

A year and a half ago, it seemed Canadian journalists would lose their only national periodical of news, analysis, and comment about the profession.

Humber College, home to *content* for two years after Barrie Zwicker determined that both his bank account and energy were wearing thin, had decided to end its substantial subsidy of the magazine. (Zwicker, in a previous turn, had assumed publishing responsibilities from me, the founding editor, in 1975.)

When it became apparent at the beginning of 1984 that the magazine might very well disappear, an ad hoc group of writers and editors came together to explore ways of at once rescuing and breathing new life into it.

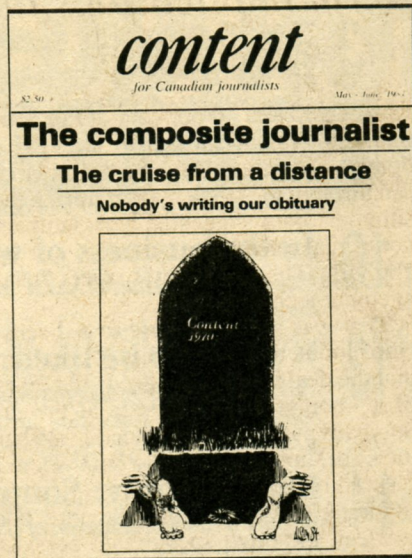
Well, here we are, publishing not only our ninth issue since May-June, 1984 (it remains a bimonthly, appearing on a pretty regular frequency), but in fact observing the 15th anniversary of the inaugural appearance of *content* magazine.

All those associated with Friends of Content Inc. — we're now a legal entity — are delighted to be able to mark this special occasion with what we think is a particularly substantial issue. More, we're delighted that so many people in journalism and allied information fields, from coast to coast, have responded so favorably to our endeavors.

*content's* core group continues to look on the journal as both a labor of love and as something of a mission, whose primary purpose is to help enhance professional journalism standards in this country. It pleases us that so many people appear to share that commitment. The simple fact that the magazine has been slugging away for 15 years is proof that many in our field share that view.

To bring readers up to date, Friends of Content has, as mentioned, become an incorporated non-profit organization. The formal transfer of ownership from Humber College finally was concluded in July. The deal brought with it a total separation of relations between Humber and *content* (which is not to say I'm not still on the journalism faculty there).

If *content* today is in a slightly healthier financial position than even



New life: May-June, 1984

we had predicted a year ago, it is due not only to the enormous amount of unpaid labor given to the magazine (a situation the Directors plan to slowly but surely rectify, even on a modest scale), but to the steadily growing number of paid subscriptions, to a most welcome grant from the Gannett Foundation via Mediacom Inc., and to the encouraging increase in advertising in our pages. (We recognize the interest and support of those who have advertised in *content* since its 'rebirth' elsewhere in this issue. This, however, is as good a place as any to express our gratitude to Mary Walsh and her tireless efforts as advertising salesperson for the magazine. She has performed minor miracles in conveying to a wide range of organizations the merits of appearing in *content*.)

While we speak of unpaid labor by contributors across Canada, I'm reminded of a remark made recently by a high-profile journalist who'd been asked to consider doing a piece for the magazine. He didn't for a moment hesitate in agreeing to do it, and when I launched into the standard tale of fragile finances, and therefore our inability to pay much of a fee, his response was direct. "Look," he said, "I'm doing very well now in journalism, the industry has been pretty good to me, and I think I may have some worthwhile ideas to pass long. Let's just say I'm

putting something back."

It's that sort of attitude which is, yes, encouraging, but perhaps more to the point gives an even deeper meaning to what we're trying to do to make this magazine essential reading in newsrooms across the country.

Some people considered it essential reading right from the beginning 15 years ago, when it was a little dream by a handful of people based in Montreal — Donna Logan, Harry Thomas, Bob Reid, and I. During the past decade and a half, under various managements, the magazine has attempted to not only critique Canadian journalism, but to document changes in the craft/profession and their possible consequences for the broader public.

The trends and the changes have been, history will show, profound.

The point is, the need for a journal such as *content* may be greater today than when its original concept was evolving around a diningroom table 15 years ago.

A great many of you appear to hold a similar belief, according to the report and analysis of the Content Readership Study conducted for us earlier this year. (See stories elsewhere in this issue for much more detail.) While the fact that a clear majority of survey respondents believe the magazine has improved considerably since its rebirth is naturally encouraging to us, what comes across as most significant is the range of issues you believe are of some urgency to the profession.

Certainly those who completed the questionnaire are interested in critiques and assessments and general news of the trade. But most indicated they are concerned, even troubled, about professional ethics, quality, standards, and questions of law. These are areas which *content* has tried to cover in some depth, given limitations of budgets and space. We'll obviously be doing more in these, and other, domains as circumstances permit.

Because we want *content* to be — to paraphrase James Reston in the *New York Times* some years ago — on the leading edge of journalism comment and journalism's self-improvement and growth in Canada. ☺

Dick MacDonald  
Editor  
for Friends of Content



# The SouthStar waltz

*The deal between the communications giants had its basis in corporate concerns. Are there long-term implications for journalism?*

by Dan Westell

**T**he interconnection of two leading newspaper companies, Southam Inc. and Torstar Corp., has raised the possibility of a real national newspaper chain with a presence in most major English-speaking cities, along with Montreal.

When Southam and Torstar announced Aug. 26 that they had organized a share swap, the news was treated largely as a corporate development. Southam was believed to have been a takeover target all summer, so the transaction whereby Torstar got 25 per cent of Southam's voting shares and Southam got 30 per cent of Torstar's non-voting stock was seen immediately as a defence measure intended to strengthen the Southam family group's position.

Before the deal, they had somewhere

Even when they stand by themselves, figures can be fascinating — especially when they refer to the dowries each party brings to the creation of an interlinked media conglomerate, as in the case of Torstar Corp. and Southam Inc. The figures which follow are for 1984:

Torstar had sales of \$619.4 million; Southam, \$1,084.3 million.

Torstar's profit was \$20.3 million; Southam's, \$44.4 million.

Torstar had 14 newspapers, but only one, the *Star*, was daily;

Southam had 16 newspapers, including a weekly.

The *Star's* average circulation was 509,000; Southam's total was 1.6 million.

Of the total revenues cited above, Torstar counted \$327.2 million in newspaper sales, while Southam claimed \$548 million in newspaper sales. The balances came from other operations, albeit in allied communications fields, ranging from Harlequin Romances (\$233.1 million) for Torstar to Cole's Bookstores (\$112 million) and commercial printing (\$275 million) for Southam.

between 30 and 40 per cent of the Southam stock, not enough to fend off a determined raider. And the rumors that ran through the stock market during the summer often suggested that Southam could make tons more money, just by applying Thomson Newspapers management techniques.

That was about as close to a discussion about the impact on journalism that the deal initially aroused. But fears of a Thomson-type squeeze at the fat Southam papers have receded now that the Torstar-Southam group seems assured of a control position.

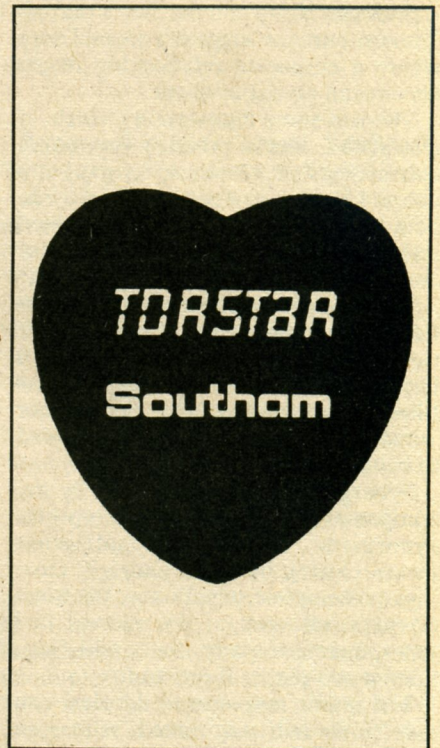
Torstar's corporate motives are not as clear, although speculation persists that Southam has agreed to buy out the handful of aging shareholders who hold Torstar's voting stock. Torstar chairman and Toronto *Star* publisher Beland Honderich has maintained control of the organization by keeping the insiders together, but the next generation holding large and valuable chunks of Torstar voting shares might not be so agreeable.

Torstar may also have much less complicated corporate reasons. It has tried to move into other lines of business in the past, and has a number of scars to show for its efforts. Given the small number of Canadian newspaper companies, a chance to hook up with Southam and expand in an existing line of business would be highly appealing.

If the deal was aimed simply at protecting two groups of insider shareholders, it should be seen like any other corporate deal where minority shareholders suffer so the insiders can be assured of their positions. It should be regretted and denounced, but, ultimately, is only one more example of the increasing concentration in the Canadian economy.

But there must be some operational benefits and plans when two of the largest newspaper companies in the country announce that they are going steady.

Southam and Torstar have flirted before, even gone out a few times. Former Toronto *Star* executives are senior in Southam papers, which use *Star* stories. The *Star*, meanwhile, uses



Southam News copy. The two companies have been in joint ventures — in rotogravure magazines and in high-tech information distribution.

Rumors of a more intimate relationship go back to at least 1980, partly because the benefits are so clear. Southam covers great chunks of the English-language market in Canada, while the *Star* sells more than a half-million papers a day in Toronto area, where Southam had not been represented.

For any advertiser contemplating a national print campaign, a package of Southam papers and the *Star* would give the best daily coverage in the country. That could well be the first step toward increased integration of the companies.

Business advertising is one obvious place to start, and business reporting could follow as the first integrated editorial service. A run at the lucrative business ad market, now dominated by the Thomson-owned *Globe and Mail* Report on Business and Maclean



Hunter's *Financial Post*, would require editorial support.

Above and beyond an interchange of stories between the *Star's* solid business section and the substantial business reporting by such Southam papers as the *Montreal Gazette* and the *Calgary Herald*, an emphasis on business copy might provide Southam with a way to develop its weekly *Financial Times*, which consistently has been a burden.

Southam News and the *Star's* out-of-Toronto bureaus suggest a second area where a corporate relationship might become an operational one.

There is some duplication (which, if eliminated, would produce very small cost savings, in corporate terms) but a merged bureau system would provide both companies with a high-powered and extensive network of correspondents.

This has provoked some speculation that the *Star* might try a national edition, which seems unlikely. But a bureau merger, with correspondents filing stories for whichever Southam or Torstar paper wanted them, could lead to better papers.

Synergism is the word used by the companies, but to one cynical reporter synergism means rationalization means closing bureaus. Outright closings of complete papers was the most obvious outcome of the second last newspaper company deal, and Southam was a player there, too.

The public response to the deal can only be described as muted, with even the people who usually are trotted out when a media business story develops, such as Tom Kent, saying in essence that the arrangement is not as bad as it could be.

It apparently could have been worse if a non-media company had taken over Southam — or, as the Kent Royal Commission worried about, a conglomerate whose holdings may include media properties but also include a raftful of other interests.

The deal may be bad enough as it is, but what sort of response really can be expected?

After all, Torstar and Southam are following a well-worn path, tripping after Thomson, which bought the FP Publications chain several years ago prior to the Thomson-Southam "rationalization" in the industry, and Maclean Hunter, which acquired a majority interest in the four Toronto *Sun*-based papers more recently. (30)

Dan Westell used to write about the media for the *Report on Business* of the *Globe and Mail*.



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# Union-made

Concluding his mini-series,  
our observer sees a move to join  
editorial unions under one umbrella

by David Silburt

“We’re not gonna take it anymore!” That’s the battle cry, all right. Who wrote that first, anyway? Was it Paddy Chayevsky? Or Twisted Sister? No matter; whoever it was, they wrote the slogan that flies over every organizing drive that ever happened, and especially the ones that hit newspaper editorial departments.

That was certainly the case at *Maclean’s* magazine and at the *Windsor Star*, both of which were classic organizing drives, and both of which were described in the last issue. I have nothing further to say — at least not for the record — about either one. Except that *Windsor Star* editor Carl Morgan called to say that former *Windsor Star* reporter Bill Schiller’s belief that his stories were spiked because he was a union man, is crap.

Which is par for that course. Different interpretations of any union drive always come from both sides, even when the unionizing process happens in a fairly civilized manner, as it did in *Windsor*. But when the situation gets dirty, the Marquis of Queensberry rules are the first to go . . .

Linda Torney, a former Southern Ontario Newspaper Guild organizer who now works for the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, says some managements use genuinely mean chess moves to turn any union gain into a Pyrrhic victory. They can stall union certification with endless court challenges, based on creative gerrymandering of the bargaining unit. “They can find some department stuck in a corner someplace that you never knew about, and insist it’s part of the logical bargaining unit,” she says. Or they might declare 50 per cent of a bargaining unit is management, based on the notion that, A) they do confidential work, or, B) they’re in supervisory positions.

Each legal challenge keeps lawyers hanging around with their meters run-

ning, and this saps union resources while the delay saps morale.

Although it’s ancient history now, the Guild’s losing battle at the *Winnipeg Free Press* in the 1970s makes interesting reading in Research Volume 5 of Tom Kent’s Royal Commission on Newspapers, as a case study of this sort of thing. Especially in the light of recollections by Katie FitzRandolph, now an OPSEU PR officer (and a *content* director), then a reporter at the *Free Press*.

## Second of two parts



The Kent Report says clinically that “inequitable salaries and working conditions applied” to editorial and advertising people, and “large discrepancies existed at the *Free Press* between reporters and editorial writers in both salaries and treatment.”

FitzRandolph puts it more bluntly. Some reporters were making as little as \$150 a week. Sixty or 70 hour work weeks common. No overtime. “There was one woman in the library who was getting a supplement from welfare,” FitzRandolph remembers. “She had been there 20 years.”

Against that background, FitzRandolph and a few others contacted the Guild and started a weekend drive in late May of 1973 that saw more than 78 per cent of editorial and advertising employees signed up.

Next thing they knew, an “employees association” sprouted, a sort of company-inspired alternative to a union, that would bargain with the company (FP Publications) with about the same force as an elderly woman can bargain her way out of a mugging.

In that Royal Commission volume, a section by Allan Patterson describes the action like this: “. . . Before certification, management tried to organize an association, and it had some individuals speak before the labor board against the Guild. The company did not file its nominal roll with the board as required by regulations. One Guild member alleged that this was because some classified ad-takers were receiving less than the minimum wage.”

The association did not get enough people to topple the union, and despite lots of resistance by management, the Guild was certified on July 6, 1973. Victory for the union, right?

Well, no. The *Free Press* immediately challenged the Guild’s legitimacy in court, on the grounds that, 1) Labor board chairman Murdoch MacKay had resigned to run in provincial elections, thus the board was not properly constituted, ergo its certification was no good; 2) the board was not impartial because then-premier of Manitoba Ed Schreyer and then-labor minister Russ Paulley had let slip, publicly, their enthusiasm for the Guild; and 3) that the Guild had signed up people on a Sunday, a violation of the Lord’s Day Act. This last one is my personal favorite — a platoon of pinstriped lawyers



defending a status quo in which some employees need a welfare supplement, arguing that certifying the union would violate Christian principles.

It was about two years into the blizzard of pettifoggery that they finally got around to a strike vote, FitzRandolph recalls. "By this time there had been enough raises from management 'generosity' . . . that people were not hurting quite as much. The strike vote went down, 69 to 67."

By 1976, when she moved to the *Ottawa Citizen*, the Guild still had no contract and in fact never got one out of bogged-down talks. "We still had the support, so they couldn't get us decertified," she remembers. But with no contract and no strike militancy, the union was effectively neutralized.

Yet there is a happy ending here anyway: when Manitoba brought in its first-contract legislation, the *Free Press* people relinquished the Guild and signed up with the International Typographical Union. The legislation assured them of their first contract.

I like happy endings. It's nice to see the good guys win, as long as you can clearly establish the difference

between the Luke Skywalkers and the Darth Vaders. Sometimes, however, the plot gets a hell of a lot more complicated than that, and is very difficult to sort out. More so if either or both sides are at least prevaricating a bit, if not lying like scoundrels.

The story of The Great Welland Union War is my example: It starts out looking like a straight good guy/bad guy thing, then gets positively Byzantine.

In 1982, the ITU organized the staff of the Thomson-owned *Welland Tribune*, a little paper in a union town. I first heard about it some time later when I answered an ad in the *Globe and Mail* and discovered it was the *Tribune* looking for what union people call scab labor. I remember dropping the phone like a scorpion, and that was the last I heard about it until I talked to former *Tribune* district editor Ted Thurston in early June this year. Thurston now works for the *Guardian Express*, a strike paper set up by the ITU against the *Tribune*. He recalls the original organizing drive: "We had people with five years' experience who had no benefits, were doing skilled

labor, and only taking home \$145 a week." So the ITU, which already controlled the composing room, came in and organized the rest of the place, top to bottom.

In a set of written recollections sent to *content*, former *Tribune* writer Michael D'Souza said simply: ". . . after a series of barren bargaining sessions between local 927 of the Welland Typographical Union and the company, the union members were locked out on October 9, 1982." According to Thurston, "The story the *Tribune* likes to spread is that we walked off the job." In fact what happened was a poorly planned job protest that just didn't work out too well.

A series of planned meetings and "barren bargaining sessions" had accomplished zilch, and the Thomson people balked at more meetings. "We knew they were waiting for

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the expiry date (under Ontario labor laws) when they could go for decertification," says Thurston. So they staged a one-day illegal walkout (a "wildcat strike," in union argot).

"There's no use horsing around about it," admits Thurston. "We claimed, of course, that it wasn't a strike, but you know it was all games. It was games on their side and games on ours." What the union demanded was a date for more negotiations. They also demanded to be paid for the few hours they worked before the walkout, which lasted only one day. Company says no. Union gets mad, walks out again. Much anger and very little generalship. So on October 9, 1982, the lockout was on, and "they had the place filled with scabs."

Since then the "scabs" have become permanent and the union is effectively broken, its remaining members simply running their strike paper. There are plenty of claims that the strike paper is hurting the *Tribune*. And counter-claims from the *Tribune* that it isn't. History is against the strike paper, because few strike papers survive in the long run. But the very existence of the *Guardian Express* figures prominently in the analysis offered by *Tribune* publisher John VanKooten.

According to VanKooten, the small ITU unit in the composing room was out to build its strength. "They had a new organizer who, I would say, oversold. He made lots of promises: 'You sign up and we'll get you this and this.' I guess he got his Brownie points for signing people up."

VanKooten believes the ITU never explained to the workers the six-month deadline in Ontario's labor laws, so the workers never knew until it was too late how vulnerable they were. Meanwhile, Thomson tabled the same pay offer and similar clauses, before the talks broke off, that they offered in simultaneous talks at the Peterborough *Examiner*. Peterborough accepted. Welland refused — according to the union, because the same percentage increases wouldn't have put them on a par with Peterborough.

More seriously, VanKooten says the union never told the workers what the negotiators were turning their noses up at. And he thinks he knows why. "They already had a guarantee that if they couldn't settle here, the ITU would fund a paper for them. Now, think back a minute. You've never run a newspaper. This is a labor town. You firmly believe that if you position it carefully, you're going to get tremendous union support. You remember that the Toronto *Sun* was a success . . . and

you're sitting at the negotiating table and if you don't settle you're going to get your own newspaper. Where's the incentive to settle?"

This is the kind of suggestion that gets the union very upset. But Thurston's high enthusiasm for the strike paper gives it the ring of truth. VanKooten suggests that labor laws should enshrine a worker's right to know what goes on in negotiations: "open communication," he called it, in first contract talks.

I suspect this will happen only over the bodies of every union lobbyist and NDP member in Canada. Because there is little if any room in any army for foot soldiers who ask the generals what the hell is going on up there in Command Central. On a need-to-know basis, foot soldiers are not considered needy. Just fill them with flag-waving chauvinism and remind them of their place when they get uppity . . . because they just might not be so anxious to charge up that hill if they know what's waiting at the top.

Given this ugly parallel, it's hard to shed anything but crocodile tears over Thurston's tragic analysis of the whole useless debacle: "I'd have to say yes, we lost . . . it was obvious they (the company) were looking for a show-down."

Yet Thurston is not gloomy about the

results. He is very enthusiastic about the prospects for the *Guardian Express*, and he insisted that I come down to Welland, where he would tell me things that would amaze me.

Being a dedicated journalist, I went. It was worth the trip. After a tour of their offices, Thurston explained that until early June of 1985, they were worried about the fate of the *Guardian Express*. The ITU, as he tells the story, was keeping a tight hold on the paper, and, says Thurston, "We knew we had to tackle certain things, to improve the viability of the paper . . . but we felt we were too tightly tied to our union, which had the ultimate say."

At the time of his early June meeting with the ITU, the paper had 33 employees and was only 20 per cent short of having enough revenue to make ITU strike pay unnecessary. Problem was, some of the 33 were not productive. After negotiations with the parent union, though, triumph: the ITU granted them what they needed. More management rights. They also came up with a generous payoff scheme whereby those workers

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who were not committed could accept a lump-sum payment (severance pay) and leave without penalty.

The arrangement, Thurston explained, allowed them to get rid of unproductive workers and obtain more management rights, the better to compete in the marketplace. Said Thurston: "The ITU recognized the need to move from a fight against the *Tribune* as a union to a fight against the *Tribune* as a business."

Thurston had not lied. He promised to tell me things that would amaze me, and he surely did. It isn't every labor story where you get to see a union man grinning like Alfred E. Neumann over the prospect of more management rights, to gain a business advantage

Meanwhile, there is a movement afoot to join editorial unions under one big union. In fact, early in the spring of 1985, the ITU was busy fighting off a bid by the Teamsters Union to take it over. Doug Grey, president of the Toronto Typographical Union, didn't seem enthusiastic about the Teamsters: "If they get their hooks into newspapers, the backroom dealing they will make will mean favorable stories for the Teamsters. You know they've been hit pretty hard in the media." And he added a more ominous note: "The ITU is a stepping stone. The Guild will be next."

A Teamster-controlled press is about as threatening a thought as a serious journalist can entertain. But the idea of all newspapers under one umbrella union, such as the Guild, is at the root of most union thinking, whether they admit it or not.

I wish them well. Many non-unionized newspaper journalists are exploited, and unions will do them a lot of good. I'm not so sure if unions always do the best thing for the craft itself, because I've never heard of an editorial union threatening, for example, to strike to force a paper to join a press council. I've never heard of a union insisting on ways to discipline journalists who routinely foul up, either. In fact, it is the role of unions to make it very tough to fire a worker for any reason.

This doesn't bother the Southern Ontario Newspaper Guild's John Bryant, who compares it to the criminal justice system: In cases of disputed firings, the union acts as an advocate. Everyone is entitled to that, even if they're guilty, says Bryant.

He's right, of course. The clear-eyed certitude of Bryant and other unionists that they have the inside track on rightness is inspiring. Their dedication to



As reported in the July-August issue, the Southern Ontario Newspaper Guild represents the editorial staff at Maclean's magazine. But it took a strike and picketing to help get agreement on the first contract.

the principles of less work for more pay and diminished chances of ever being fired for any reason at all is a healthier value system, I suspect, than my own.

Personally, as a freelancer I don't file to a publication hit by a legal strike, because it's not right and because I fear the consequences of riling a union. I know the union people will finally achieve victory, whatever that turns out to be. And I also know that nothing in their experience will allow them to

understand how I can look at the cream of Canadian journalism, with their secure incomes and jobs, and decide, for some of the reasons set out in this two-part series, and for some highly personal ones, too, that I won't be signing a union card. ☐

*Dave Silburt is a freelance magazine writer based in Toronto and is a regular contributor to content. He also is a Director of Friends of Content Inc.*

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A WORLD OF CANADIAN TECHNOLOGY.



# A Little by-play

ontario hydro 

**byline** – name of writer over newspaper or magazine article

**buy-line** – a sales pitch

**buy-lyin'** – a dishonest sales pitch

**buy-lion** – chief purchasing agent

**bye-line** – direct passage into second round of a tournament

**'bye-line** – farewell message or swan song

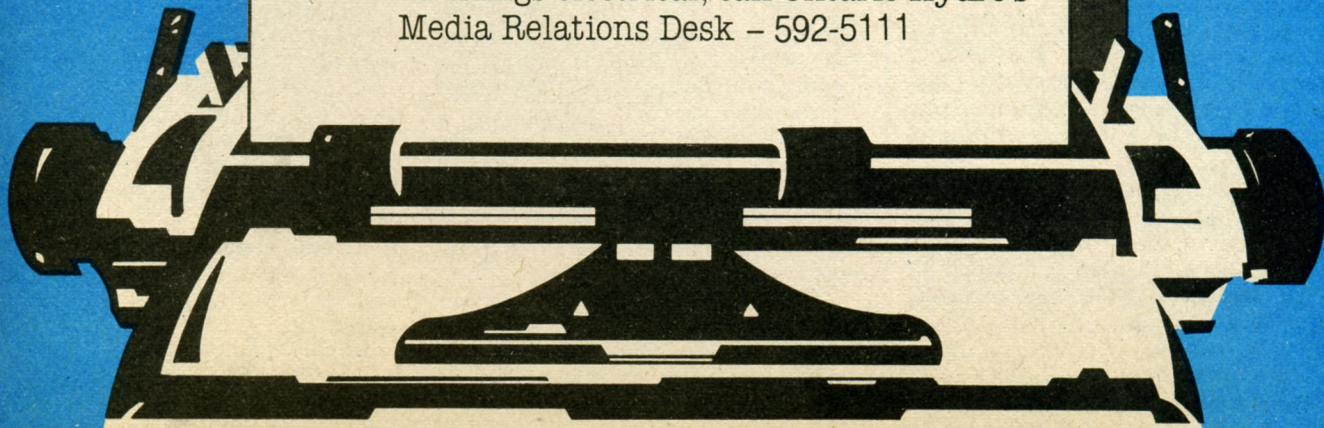
**bi-line** – official Languages policy

**I'se the B'y-line** – Newfoundland song

**by-and-by-line** – “let's have lunch sometime”

(with apologies to Oxford, Webster,  
Funk & Wagnalls, et al.)

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# In the business of words

*Your typical freelancer  
has a streak of independence  
and a love of language*

by Judy Lynn Tait

**F**reelance writers have dichotomous natures. With one part of their psyche apparently in touch with the child within, they are boundlessly energetic, delightfully funny, grossly underpaid (they say), charming, open, daring, curious, and not above acting a part to meet your expectations or to get a story. They are Peter Pan and Alice, lovers of freedom, either off on an adventure, just returning from one, planning the next one, or telling you about the last one.

But there is another side, a serious, sensitive side. They are highly individualistic. Their medium of exchange — language — is sacred. As do all responsible journalists, they strive to write about truth. And since truth is often stark and cruel, the closer one blunders into truth the more restless and endearing becomes the spirit.

Gary Michael Dault, a well-known Toronto freelance writer, was in a flap when I phoned him for an interview.

"Thursday?" I question.

"No. How about Friday?" he suggests.

"Not good for me."

"Sunday afternoon," he begins. "— No, the kids. Oh, Gawd —" Like a sinner who had to stand too long in line for the confessional, he blurts out: "I have a deadline."

"When?" I ask.

"Tomorrow," he says with a sigh of exasperation.

"Next week," I suggest with soothing undertones of understanding. "Monday? Seven?"

"Fine, fine," he agrees, followed by a click and silence.

From professor of English and Art Appreciation, Dault eased his way into the freelance world. Once a teacher, always a teacher, his friends tease. As an art critic he gives you the excitement and enjoyment of art. He informs and teaches.

He began by being in the proverbial right place at the right time — an art show where someone requested a written review of the show. Dault volunteered. One thing lead to another: a six-year weekly column stint for the *Toronto Star*, until in 1981 he gradually went full-time freelance.

With the aura of a professor, minus the pipe, Dault begins to talk about descriptive writing and words. The academic composure, solid and pensive, fades as a humorous wit emerges. He punctuates his conversation with emphatic thrusts toward you. He mentally shakes you, then unobtrusively leans back.

Dault is a wizard with words. He bewitches you with visions — metaphors and similes that free-float in a magical wordland until you catch them, join them, and create.

His writing style is poetic. He goes playfully beyond the obvious. A painting is not just gorgeous, it has character. It's "cheeky, clever, and unstintingly gorgeous." A car's interior is not just big, it's "bulbous."



Under his spell, words come alive. Disdain, personified, becomes "dandified disdain." A Jaguar's interior has "cathedral silences." A fisherman's "piscatorial success" necessitates a scramble through the dictionary. The words must harmonize like a church choir, or step colorfully across the page like a tightly choreographed chorus line. Words must whisper, yell, sing, dance — live!

"Will yourself to write better, be better," Dault urges. "Analyze what you read and why you like to read it, as well as your own work." Monitor yourself, push yourself. But he warns: "Don't fall into the grotesque."

After leading you to the precipice of

innovation, he warns you not to fall into illusions of grandeur and bad taste. Where, oh where, is the fine line?

That's where the editor comes in. Most writers seem to have a psychic love affair with their editors. While walking a tightrope of words, the writer may be entirely carried away, exhilarated by creativity. Or one might get lost in research. The editor steps in like a safety net: pull yourself together, stop fooling around!

Although a writer must develop that abstract and hard to define "feel" for the work, with a good editor one feels free to push the creative spirit to "purgatorial obscurity" (to borrow from Dault), or stumble into sheer genius. You discover your own fine line in bold experimentation. The writing expands and evolves spontaneously. Parts of the self are exposed as the personality fuses with the writing. You are what you write. Trust your editor, trust yourself, test yourself, push yourself, to break new ground.

"Never be afraid of revealing yourself," says Dault. It's all part of learning.

Carsten Stroud, a freelancer for 10 years, dressed in a black shirt, jeans, stylish wide belt and cowboy boots, looks more like a stunt man than a writer. But then, what does a writer look like? On a good-looking boyish face topped with blond curly hair sits a pair of gold-rimmed glasses, and you think, maybe he is a writer.

Stroud is a pacer. Energy seems to bounce from him as he sits, stands, and strides back and forth. He talks exuberantly about his tape recorder. He often works closely with the police; to him, the recorder is indispensable. Small, it can be pinned to your shirt; it's voice-activated, best on the market, and he never does an interview without it.

He talks about his horse and the time he did a story on a fox hunt and felt sick and sorry for the horse. He rides for relaxation.

Writer's block? You press. Doesn't believe in it. It's fatigue, lack of research, or an unclear focus. Then he tells you about the time he was helping some police friends subdue the bad



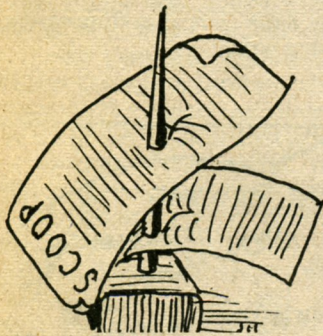
guys, and he ended up being taken hostage.

The blank page? Ah, yes, the blank page, and he launches into his writing diversion — of cleaning and dusting the desk, changing the typewriter ribbon, rearranging the furniture, watering the plants, watering the grass, suddenly needing to go to the store or the bank, or the bank and then the store. With his energy you could imagine him doing all this in the space of an hour.

Sometimes you are "cooking" the idea, he says; most times you are merely procrastinating. "But," and he laughs, "it's at a manageable level now . . . the chaos."

But does he secretly enjoy living on the edge? "Oh, of course, but it is grim out there," he continues, turning serious. The corruption and unfairness he sees in society make him angry. He tries to expose them in his writing.

Stroud takes an investigative approach to journalism, writing well-researched articles to which he adds his own twist of suspense. The dividing line between fiction and non-fiction disappear under his pen. He gives you the facts, mixed with intrigue.



His methods and manner are a story in themselves. In his articles *The Man Who Stalked Women* (*Toronto Life*, November, 1983), Stroud leads you inside the life and the mind of a killer. Like a hunter, he guides you through the tension-filled days of the nurses on wards 4A and 4B for his story *Life After Death At Sick Kids* (*Toronto Life*, September, 1982). Day after day, past nurses who cope with the pressures, he takes you, until finally one of them breaks down in relief — that someone, anyone, could really understand the strain. That's what he wanted, the nurse's point of view. It's a story. It's a high.

Stroud presents both sides of his world, then like a master salesman subtly diverts attention from the negative aspects until you are sold. You buy, you reaffirm your own desire to write, you even embrace the agony — you would be disappointed if it were not present. He sold you the whole package.

Why writing? You question, envisioning childhood dreams of the Great Canadian Novel. And Stroud tells you with quiet candor that he began to write because he did not "fit" anywhere else. He was a "chronic independent." The decision came in Mexico where he had a job scraping boat bottoms.

Raised in the Hull-Ottawa area, educated at the University of Toronto with an art history degree, always a voracious reader, writing was, he decided, his last chance for accomplishment. It clicked.

You have to "believe in yourself," he states. "Choose your reference and don't diffuse your energy." To get started Stroud bought all the magazines he wanted to write for, analyzed them, then sent in query letters. His first paying article was on historical costumes, for which he was paid \$300. Becoming established in the first four or five years was "scary," but now, after writing one book, he's working on two more. And he's paying the rent.

Stroud speaks of the fear, even after 10 years, that his writing is not good enough. "You put yourself on the line each time you hand in a piece, criticism cuts deep, it takes courage." Looking back on his early work embarrasses him, he says, and maybe 10 years from now the work he's currently doing will embarrass him. Stroud is frank, analytical, with himself and with his work.

He venerates the English language with the conviction of a Benedictine monk. He speaks of the cadence, the grace, and the power of the language. "You are what you read: be selective," he urges. "Good writing has power." Good literature, he suggests, has a rhythm that the reader internalizes and then, if you are lucky, the quality of what you read surfaces in your own work, in your own style.

In this grim world, Stroud's writing takes a piece of life, that he feels for you, tints with his spirit, then he gives you his picture. The "truth," he says, is not to be seen, it is to be felt. "I feel it for you." And he does it with style.

Debra Robinson, in her mid-20s, is a newcomer to the freelance world. She describes herself as a professional student and shopper. With a B.A. in psychology, a teacher's certificate, and a fashion and merchandising degree, but an inability to sit still for long, she was enticed by the relative freedom of freelance writing. No boring, 9-to-5 office-bound job for her.

Hailing from the U.S., Robinson was attracted to Canada by a man. Finishing her education here, she started writing fashion pieces in 1983 for the *Toronto Sun* through a friend who

worked there. She started sending out query letters and gradually developed a rapport with several Toronto magazines. Every new fashion publication on the stands gets a query letter from her.

Believe in yourself — the recurring if something of a cliché theme — and be aggressive, she says. In the beginning, you should get published, period, and not get hung up on money. That comes later. Her launch was subsidized by independent means. She hopes to be self-sufficient in writing in a couple of years.

Toronto is too conservative, she quips; it needs more "hip" fashion magazines. Since fashion is her forte, she concentrates on personality profiles, new talent, and trends in the fashion world.

She tells you of the time, while working with a photographer on a fashion shoot, that she chose a long-haired model from an assortment of pictures, only to have the model arrive later with a punk look, her whole head shaved in a criss-cross pattern. Robinson paled, prayed, and went ahead with the shoot. Fortunately, her editor loved it.

Another time, doing a piece on cosmetic surgery, she had to get up at 4.30 a.m. to meet the doctor at 6. She got the story, then went back to bed. And there was the time she spent six hours in and out of the fridge because she just couldn't get anything down on the blank page. An exercise workout every

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morning now, without fail, compensates for the nervous munchies.

"A great life," she insists. She works hard, plays hard. Women simply can't be Mrs. so-and-so any longer, she contends; this is not the 1950s. "You have to have your own identity."

What would she change? "Men, but that's another story." It's late. Robinson has to get up at 6 a.m. tomorrow. She's off to New York in the morning.

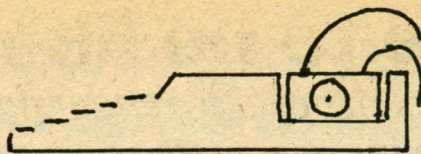
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Three writers together in the same room, talking about their work, is a learning experience, for either a neophyte or practiced freelancer. They politely take turns — at first. In between vignettes on the places they used to work, they offer their advice.

Your query letter should demonstrate that you are a writer, they agree. It should display your style and command of the language.

Copy or type the work of your favorite author to get the feel for the language, one suggests. Type an interview to let the essence of it soak in.

The first draft is "awful," one says, collapsing on the table in mock despair. He loves the rewrites (that's plural). Moving things around from here to there, cutting and chipping like a sculp-



tor; that's "fun."

You must learn when to switch from hot subjects, such as child molestation, to light pieces, such as Bathtubs of the World. That's not being a hack or simple have-pen-will-travel behavior, you're assured. Rather, it's balance, in your writing, in your life.

If a piece doesn't really say anything, isn't serious, then it must somehow delight the sensibilities of the reader. It must have style, rhythm, and elegance.

You always unravel yourself in your writing. It has saved a lot of people from insanity, but then, one interviewee says, driven a few there, too. You have to know when to stop the unravelling process, he concludes.

Every sentence must revert to the premise. Every paragraph must support that premise. Paragraph after paragraph, you must pound home the message. Each word is important.

Words! Some dictionaries are destroying the language by inviting in,

without question, each new word that's coined. When thought and language decline, we are in trouble. A good dictionary will insist that new words wait politely in the anteroom for acceptance before they are allowed in.

But the language must grow and expand. New words enrich the language, the other writers object.

They bombard you. They play and banter among themselves.

"Keep quiet, I'm talking," one says.

"I was here first," counters the second.

"I'm the oldest," says the third.

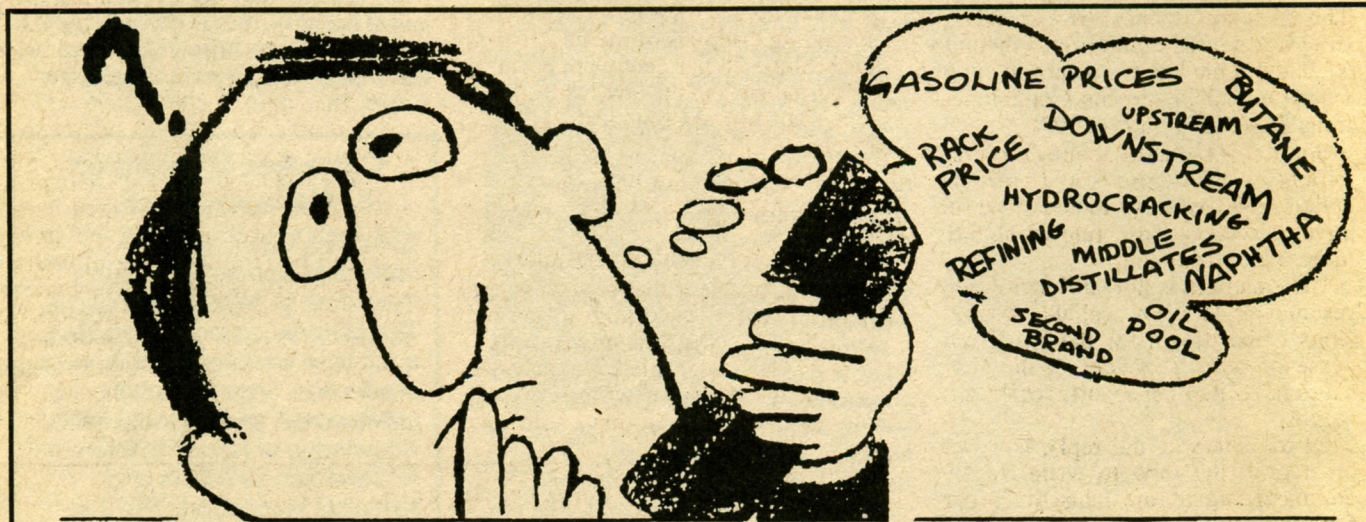
As a participant submerged in a story, the writer experiences a visceral reaction. Yet on another level, as an observer, one must maintain some sense of distance.

In discovering the truth, truth unfolds within, one writer suggests, becoming very philosophical. You uncover what is there by realizing what is not. The deeper you go, the deeper it gets.

\*\*\*\*\*

You stand. They smile. It's time.  
You go home and write.

*Judy Lynn Tait is a Toronto-based freelance writer.*



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# It's nice to be liked, but...

*The results of our readership study  
are in, are encouraging, and  
the replies include some fine ideas*

The majority of *content* readers like the magazine, and most think it has improved noticeably since its so-called rebirth just more than a year ago.

But the readers — the majority of whom are working journalists — also think *content* could do a better job by improving its format, the quality of its writing, and by digging deeper into some of the issues the magazine already looks at.

And they propose an array of specific topics they'd like to see addressed.

Those are but a few of the results and impressions of a readership survey carried out during the spring to help find out who its readers are, and where they'd like to see the magazine to go.

The survey was commissioned by Friends of Content Inc. shortly after the group assumed publication from Humber College in Toronto, which had produced the magazine since 1982. The study was financed by a grant from the Gannett Foundation, through Mediacom Inc., and was carried out by Leonard Kubas and his Communications Research Centre (CRC).

Some 2,500 questionnaires were distributed. Production and mailing delays may have contributed to the relatively low response rate of slightly more than 10 per cent.

"The sample is not sufficiently representative to allow reliable conclusions to be drawn for the entire universe of *content* readers," the CRC cautions in its final report, received in August.

Of the 258 who did reply, however, most took the time to write lengthy comments about the magazine's performance and where it might head for the balance of the decade. (See sidebar for a random selection of responses to the open-ended section of the questionnaire.)

On the whole, they were kind to *content*.

Sixty-four per cent of the magazine's readers think it has improved during the past year. Readers who aren't in journalism (roughly a third of those who responded) were more likely to say it has improved.

And asked to rate *content*'s overall

performance, 49 per cent said the magazine is doing a good or excellent job. *content* was rated, journalistically, ahead of network TV news (45 per cent said it's either good or excellent), "Canadian journalism" (41 per cent), daily newspapers (41 per cent), news magazines (29 per cent), or journalism schools (24 per cent).

The study showed, though, that *content* can do better.

Thirty-five per cent of respondents said the quality of writing should improve; another 22 per cent think the format could be better; and 17 per cent said the articles lack sufficient depth and variety.

Yet readers don't want the magazine to alter its character radically.

Asked to define what its main focus should be, readers obviously want it to remain a publication for journalists and about the news media.

Specifically, two-thirds of the respondents say they're very interested in reading critiques of media performance. Some 54 per cent want coverage of journalism and the law, while 46 per cent want to read practical "how-to" articles.

The survey took a look at *content*'s readers as well as at the magazine itself.

If the respondents are at all representative, it's clear that *content* is read mainly by people working in journalism. More than half the respondents — 55 per cent — identified themselves as journalists, freelance writers, or editors. Still, 40 per cent have some sort

of management responsibility (e.g. editor, publisher, news director).

Nearly half are in print media, but only 13 per cent identified themselves as being in broadcasting. Another 13 per cent cited public relations.

The survey didn't achieve a good balance between the sexes. The vast majority of respondents — 78 per cent — were male. Two-thirds were between the ages of 25 and 44.

Of special significance — to the magazine as well as, presumably, the craft itself — was a question asking readers to identify the two main problems facing journalism today.

Topping the list was the issue of ethics, credibility, and professionalism, picked by 31 per cent. Perhaps surprisingly, editors and journalists identified this as more of a problem than readers who aren't working in day-to-day journalism.

Running a close second was the matter of inadequate budgets and a lack of time or support to do the job properly. Reporters, not surprisingly, were twice as likely as editors and managers to name incompetent editing as one of the main problems. And 23 per cent of reporters, but only 12 per cent of editors and managers, named chain ownership or monopolies as a big problem.

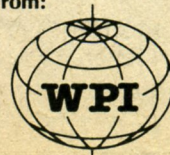
There is much more to the survey than can be reported here, of course, the sidebar of respondents' comments notwithstanding. The Directors of Friends of Content already have started analyzing the survey results to determine which actions may practically be taken in the months ahead. ☐

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# Reader study: Some responses

**M**any of the respondents to the *content* readership study, while answering the usual array of survey questions, took time to offer general comments in the opened section. We're grateful for those observations, impressions, and suggestions, for they give us a more complete picture of readers' reactions to the magazine since Friends of Content assumed publishing responsibilities a little more than a year ago.

Many of the comments were highly complimentary, for which we express our collective appreciation. But there were some negative responses, and quite a few mixed ones, and it is those which will give the Directors most pause for thought as time is spent examining ways in which the magazine can be further improved.

What follows, then, is a random selection of respondents' general comments about the magazine — how it has been performing, how its performance might be modified, and, above all, how *content* can more effectively serve the interests of higher standards in Canadian journalism.

\* The trade needs it — absolutely!

\* Let's see more scandal and gossip about newspapers or other news organizations that fail in various ways to serve their readers.

\* Watch the preaching.

\* Keeps me in touch out here in the boonies where the overall Canadian picture can be hard to come by.

\* Dull-looking. But it's topical.

\* Very informative. Easy to read. Informal and impartial.

\* Tending to become a bit academic for me. But those types of philosophical forays may well be deemed valuable to working journalists. All in all, a very necessary publication that deserves to live on and flourish.

\* It needs more news industry ads to help keep it afloat.

\* More and better photo-journalism needed. Coverage of world affairs — from a journalist's view — would help a lot.

\* A much-needed organ. Keep it coming. We don't have enough media monitoring in Canada on a regular basis.

\* You should wake journalists up to the existence of the alternate press. Canadian journalists' horizons are almost as narrow as those in the U.S.

\* Put more money into it.

\* Given obvious budget restraints, publication does good job. Only wish it could be better bankrolled, go glossy stock, and expand coverage.

\* Too urban-oriented. Often too long-winded. Seems to have built its own ivory tower and is busy polishing it.

\* I like it all. Fly at it.

\* Am not sufficiently impressed to renew my subscription. Sorry.

\* Keep up the good work. It's important!

\* It is crying in the wind. Until the public cares about the quality of information it gets, and the working conditions of journalists, journalism will get worse, not better.

\* Is there nothing constructive being done by anyone in any of the major newspaper groups? *content* really has a bias and it shows.

\* Supply some emphasis on help for those of us stuck on small dailies without resources to spend on articles. Need examples of good journalism and how it was done.

\* Considering that no one is getting rich putting it out, the Friends of Content are doing an admirable job. Best of luck.

\* Stinks.

\* Thank God we have you.

\* It really has improved. Would like to see more stories on how the industry is doing financially — trends in advertising, readership, and how they affect editorial direction.

\* Needs much more material on and from the community newspaper field. Perhaps a regular column written by someone in the industry would suffice.



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\* It's the only magazine I read from cover to cover as soon as I take it out of the mailbox. And then I put it in my bathroom magazine rack so my guests can read it, too.

\* In the past, there has been some personal sniping against news organizations that is vindictive and negative. Less of that, please, and more constructive critiques. We all want to improve the state of the craft and personal venom only hurts.

\* Don't let it die, but keep it honest, not into advocacy.

\* Good, and getting better.

\* I think *content* has the same liberal bias as most of our Canadian daily newspapers. To balance the fem/lib, pro-abortion types, you need someone who can present a conservative viewpoint, if only for light relief.

\* Overall, *content* is a thorough 'trade' publication, serving a valuable function to the working journalist.

\* Some of your recent pieces ramble

on and on. I get the impression you are padding to fill space. Articles could be more concise.

\* Whatever you do, don't neglect the grassroots — the journalists who don't work at the major press and media outlets. They may not make up the largest percentage of your readership, but they need *content* more than anyone.

\* Provides service unavailable elsewhere. Holds journalistic values important in face of increasing tab mentality in newsrooms.

\* Articles are well written. The magazine has improved in its look — better layout and graphics. Good work.

\* Particularly enjoy looking for familiar names in the *Short takes* section.

\* Maintain and strengthen your rigorous editorial standards.

\* Need to keep up the 'cutting edge.' More introspection on the craft — expose journalists to the wider view. In general, you're doing a fine job.

\* Improving all the time. Still a bit too much emphasis on print as opposed to electronic journalism.

\* Invaluable. Hell, if the pork growers' association can have a trade publication, why can't journalists?

\* Could we have an article or two on the editors, news, assignments, copy?

\* I may not always agree with the views expressed, but they provoke thought, and that's what journalism is supposed to be all about.

\* No doubt there are financial problems to explain any petty criticisms I might have.

\* It's a must on my reading list, like an addiction. I have to have it.

\* Take heart. As in the case of most periodicals, you doubtless have many readers who are grateful for what you are trying to do, but neglect to take the time to tell you so.

\* Don't give up! ☺

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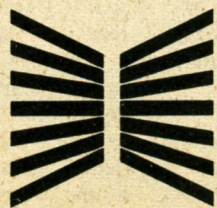
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*An alienated reader,  
not a journalist by trade,  
presents a critique of the mainstream press*

by Robert A. Hackett

**T**o: Circulation Department,  
Vancouver *Sun*:

Late last March, you made an offer I couldn't refuse — a trial subscription to your newspaper. "If you're not satisfied after three months," you told me, "you can ask for a refund." Well, I'm not, and I shall. Here's why.

First, it's not because the *Sun* is a bad newspaper — it isn't, as far as newspapers in Canada go. Nor is it because I prefer to get my news fix from TV or radio; people relying on the electronic media are even less well-informed.

No, I'm cancelling because, basically, the time I invested in reading the paper wasn't rewarded with information that I could use to understand the world, and (in concert with lots of other people) help to change it. Let me explain.

The paper arrives with a thud at our doorstep. Flipping through its bulk, it quickly becomes apparent that in what is still described as a NEWSpaper, virtual acres of space (about 60 per cent) are devoted to advertising. In one typical Saturday edition, just the classifieds and the commercial inserts total 52 pages, all of it ads. A lot of the remaining 66 pages are taken up with ads. Trying to find the news stories sandwiched in between the ads, my eye was often drawn to the inviting layout of the latter. (When was the last time an AD was ever interrupted in the middle and continued on another page?) It occurred to me that perhaps in attending to the ads, I was really doing work on behalf of your advertisers!

Well, you might say, advertising provides up to 80 per cent of the paper's revenue and makes it possible to get all the news, sports, etc., for only 25 cents a day. So we readers really should be grateful!

Well, I might reply, first, we end up paying for the ads anyway, when we as consumers buy the advertised products. And, second, how does your dependence on commercial revenue affect the news?

In the You, Home, Travel, Sports, and Leisure sections of your paper, everything is targeted at the consumer

— of airline, cruise ship and hotel services, of spectator team sports, suburban homes and gardens, furniture, films, and fitness. And that's just in the news stories!

Most of them discuss products and services and how the reader can integrate them into her/his "lifestyle." (When was the last time the Travel section offered a feature on how tourism distorts Third World development, or undermines indigenous cultures? Instead, we're encouraged to think of the world as our playground, and to go see our local travel agent.) Clearly the "me" addressed by the "You" section is somebody with disposable income prepared to acquire a "lifestyle" based on conspicuous and privatized consumption.

Ah, but what about the real news in its bastion of integrity, Section A? News editors pride themselves on their autonomy, and I'm sure that advertisers usually don't exert direct influence on your editorial copy.

But there may be more subtle constraints. The "inverted pyramid" form of the standard news story, in which the facts are presented in descending order of importance, makes it easy to chop the story from the bottom up, should more ad space be required. And perhaps even the substance of news and commentary is targeted toward the consumer (albeit more subtly than the ads).

After all, isn't labor-management conflict made virtually synonymous with the disruption of consumer goods and services, and inconvenience to the (consuming) public? Oil price increases are interpreted in terms of what it will cost the driver "at the pump." It seems that readers are asked to take the standpoint of the abstract, average "consumer."

**N**ow, consumer awareness and consumer protection legislation are good things. But consumer-ISM is ultimately a rather conservative way of orienting ourselves to the world, because it obscures the identity of most of us (about 77 per cent of

Canadian income earners) as WORKERS.

Workers have (a) bosses, and (b) interests in common, such as improved wages, safer working conditions, more control over the workplace, less alienating jobs. There's not much information in your paper that would help us ACT on these realities and concerns.

You have a Business section. Why not a Labor section? You import syndicated advice columns for the emotionally troubled, columns which typically offer individual "solutions" ('get counselling'). Why not provide advice — or, better still, a forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences — for students facing unemployment, for injured workers, for underpaid (or unpaid) women working with vacuum cleaners or video display terminals? Is it because given a chance to communicate freely, these groups might produce some real (and "dangerous") solutions?

Instead, you promote consumerism and privatized "lifestyles." To the extent that readers opt into them, the sphere of public discourse is diminished; our ability collectively to take charge of the conditions of our lives is reduced.

Then there's your political commentary — MORE imported U.S. columnists, who usually share the imperial arrogance and provincialism of American political discourse (why don't you at least get some Europeans, for goodness' sake?), and a handful of homebrews. Of the latter, Les Bewley alone is sufficient reason to cancel a subscription. Perhaps he has a constituency, but, really, there can't be TOO many white, male, 19th-century captains of industry among your readers. If you believe in the ideal of "balanced" journalism, you should provide equally thoughtful radical counterparts to Bewley's columns — say, a weekly denunciation of running-dog lackeys by the Marxist-Leninist party. Or how about reprinting the suicide notes of Islamic Jihad martyrs?

Perhaps more serious than the lack of balance is the passivity induced by







are rarely reflected in your paper. How often have you published headlines like these?

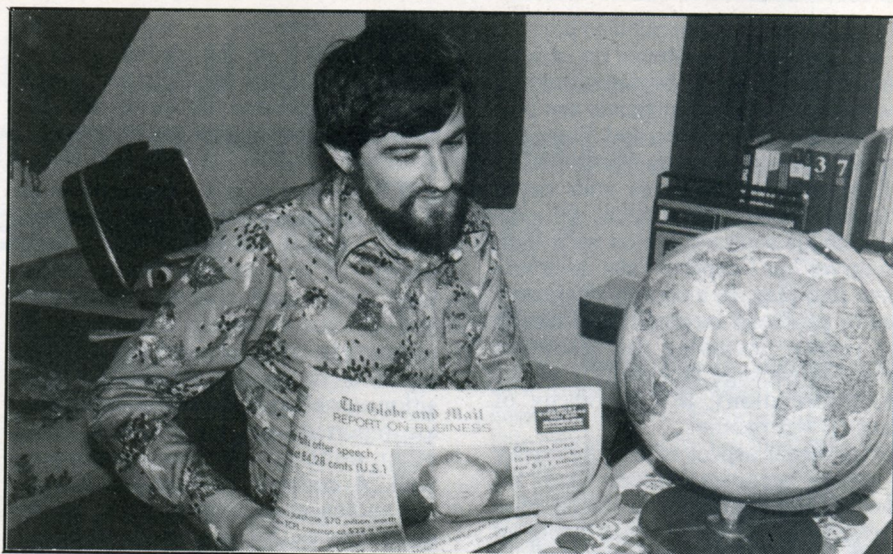
- \* WHY SMALL BUSINESS CAN'T SAVE CANADA'S ECONOMY
- \* SHOCK SURVIVORS: AN INSIDER REVEALS THE FRIGHTENING POWER OF PSYCHIATRY OVER PEOPLE'S LIVES
- \* LIFE WITH THE BOMB: IT'S THREE MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT AND COUNTING
- \* BEAUTY PAGEANT PROTEST: 'MYTH' CALIFORNIA EXPOSED
- \* MASS UNREST AT HOME AND ABROAD IN THE GLOBAL YEAR OF THE MISSILE; NATIONWIDE ANTI-WAR PROTESTS CONFRONT NUCLEAR ARMS BUILD-UP
- \* A MILLION CANADIAN KIDS WRESTLE WITH POVERTY

The above headlines have all appeared in print — not in the mainstream press, but in small “alternative” journals. The difference between these journals and the *Sun* is not that they are “political” and the *Sun* is not — but that the political principles underlying their scanning of the world are much more explicit. (Another difference, of course, is that they are much less appealing to advertisers, who want safe content and suitable demographics.)

To be sure, consensus and harmony doesn't sell newspapers. After all, “the bread and butter of news is conflict, violence, rivalry, and disagreement,” as John Hartley noted in his excellent book *Understanding News*. “But for all these negatives to be newsworthy, a prior assumption of the ‘underlying’ consensus to which they are a threat must be at work.”

Now, I would not deny that there is a certain urge to investigate, to expose, to reform, in the mainstream press. We can all think of instances of wrongdoing in high places rooted out and exposed by journalists — that is, when their profit-oriented, play-it-safe bosses give them the resources to do the job. Such stories help explain the misguided, conservative-promoted theory of “left-liberal bias” in the media.

More plausibly, such (all too occasional) exposes are products of the “watchdog” ambitions of the press, of the initiatives and ideals of individual journalists, and/or of the commercial incentive to attract readers with juicy scandals. After all, newspapers which want to retain mass audiences cannot be seen as mere handmaidens of powerful elites.



Robert Hackett: Seeking real news

What is often overlooked, though, is that media expose individual wrongdoings against a backdrop of routine “right-doing” whose legitimacy is taken for granted. Take the example of the most famous media expose of modern times. Richard Nixon was a bad man, but Watergate was treated as an isolated aberration within a basically sound political system. The media found establishment heroes (remember Senator Sam?) who could “restore” the presumed fairness and decency of the system. The view that Watergate was a surface manifestation of deep structural biases in the U.S. political system — “democracy for the few,” one writer called it — found little support in U.S. media.

**T**he consensual underpinning of mainstream journalism is reinforced by the high degree of access that your newspaper gives to the elites who benefit most from the value placed on consensus. These groups include the leaders of the major electoral political parties (especially cabinet ministers), and the official spokespersons of established institutions — the police, business, organized interest groups, government departments. Any newspaper reader with a highlighter pen could identify the people and institutions who are quoted or cited as the sources of information in newspaper reports.

The Simon Fraser University Media Group's list of sources in *Sun* news stories about Canada included judges, a museum curator, provincial premiers, police spokespersons (both anonymous and named), MPs, a consulate official, chairman of the Toronto Transit Com-

mission, a Maritime Command spokesman, a postal union president, anonymous post office officials, a federal mediator, and several media organizations. Only a handful of non-office-holders become sources, usually when they are participants or witnesses at a news event, when they are interviewed in an informal street poll, or when some act of heroism (Steve Fonyo) or notoriety (Jim Keegstra) catapults them to celebrity status.

The journalistic reliance on official and bureaucratic sources extends beyond quoting their opinions and statements. It can extend to the incorporation into news reports, sometimes without attribution, of official definitions of reality. A good example would be the unemployment rate, which is calculated monthly by Statistics Canada. Critics charge that the official rate excludes many people who would like full-time work, but the media generally report the rate without qualification, as in this sentence from the *Sun*: “In Vancouver, the April rate was 15 per cent, up from 14.5 in March, while in Victoria it rose to 12.6 per cent from 11.4 per cent.”

Another example is crime reporting, which is based on how the “phases” of each case are structured by the police and judicial bureaucracies: arrest, arraignment, preliminary hearing, trial, sentencing, etc. These institutionally structured events, and the rules which govern their public visibility (e.g. contempt of court laws) also structure the media's reporting. Possible alternative perspectives, such as the treatment of the prisoner in his/her cell, or the patterns of social violence which are associated with crime, are



generally hidden from public view.

Your paper's dependence on official sources is no doubt organizationally convenient. After all, officials and politicians are articulate, and they can supply pre-packaged newsworthy information, which saves your paper time and money. Ideological assumptions about sources' status as "representatives" or "experts" also no doubt come into play. In a society characterized by profound inequalities of wealth and power (including the resources needed to package newsworthy events and information), this hierarchy of access is worrisome.

A different aspect of this hierarchy of access becomes evident when we consider the geographical distribution of overseas stories. A monitoring of the *Sun's* "international" page for a randomly selected nine issues yielded a total of 56 items. No fewer than 17 came from the U.S., and a further 16 from the culturally similar pillars of Western civilization, Western Europe, South Africa, and Israel. Accounting for perhaps 80 per cent of the world's population, the rest of the planet (the Third World, the Soviet bloc) received just 23 out of the 56 items.

Moreover, it seems that different news values apply to different parts of the world. The only humorous or "cute" international stories came from the U.S. Other Western stories included elections, non-political atrocities, and non-violent conflict within or between established institutions. Third World news dealt with disasters, coups, atrocities with political implications, and misfortunes that befell whites. (Perhaps the most outrageous example was the April 18 headline, decried as racist by one appropriately irate letter-to-the-editor writer: **BLACK CROWD TORCHES WHITE.** It was the only South African story to make the front page in weeks, notwithstanding the murder of dozens of blacks during this period.)

If your paper simplifies the richness and complexity of economic and political life in the West, it virtually ignores that of the Third World. To be fair, the problem is partly beyond your direct control, given Canada's dependence on the four big Western-based news agencies. Associated Press, United Press International, Reuters, and Agence France-Presse dominate the flow of news between the non-Communist countries of the world.

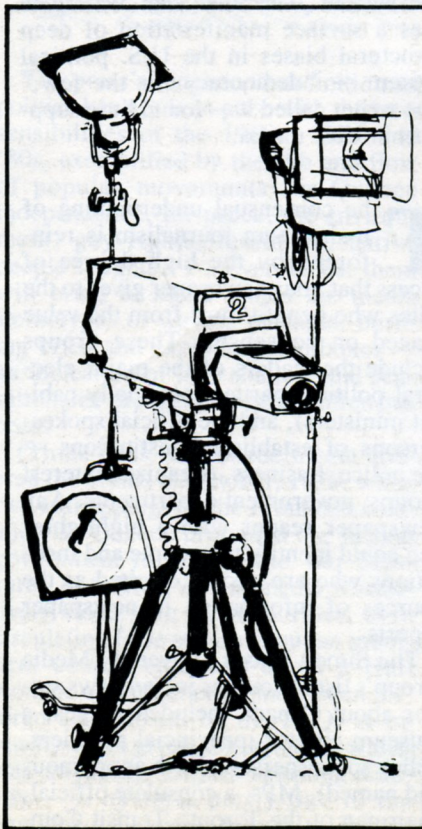
So the Third World news in your pages doesn't even reflect Canadian perspectives, let alone African or Latin American or Asian ones. The reluctance of The Canadian Press to fund

overseas bureaux is well known. Instead, much of our foreign news is filtered by Associated Press, which seems to select and file stories with its largely American audience in mind.

**T**he *Sun* is not a monolithic or propagandistic organ. It is reasonably "objective" and "balanced" in its coverage and commentary. Debate and dissent, controversy and criticism do appear in its pages. Its columnists offer (somewhat) contrasting views on provincial politics. Opposition as well as government statements are reported, and sometimes those of other political advocacy groups as well. A commercial newspaper seeking audience acceptance could hardly do otherwise. It can even be entertaining; there's nothing like reading the comics or the sports pages after a hard day.

But then, junk food can be fun, too. In 1970, the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media suggested a single simple criterion for evaluating Canada's press: Does it prepare people for social change? Tom Kent's Royal Commission on Newspapers asked a similar question more than a decade later.

I don't think the press does. One need not support social change, only recognize its inevitability, to regret this shortcoming. Why have I reached this conclusion?



First, the press clings to antiquated notions of "objectivity" in its news pages. Philosophically, objectivity implies an untenable distinction between facts and values; practically, it leads journalists to base their accounts on the statements of the accredited representatives of "both sides" of the story — at the expense of other sides of the story, and at the expense of considering alternative definitions of what constitutes a newsworthy "story" in the first place.

Second, the *Sun* subtly promotes consumerism not only in the ads, but in the news as well. Consumerism both creates false needs, and displaces the real issues of jobs, of wages, of who works for whom, of who has social power.

Finally, the *Sun* adopts a limiting definition of politics, subtly interprets social conflict from the smug assumption that this best of all possible worlds leads naturally to consensus, and systematically over-accesses official and Western perspectives. These tendencies make other ways of interpreting the world, including radical dissent, seem unintelligible and even dangerous.

Such effects are perhaps to be expected when news media seek to generate advertising revenue, minimize editorial expenses, and entice readers with content which both attracts their attention and encourages the purchase of advertisers' wares. That doesn't solve the problem facing the reader — how to obtain information efficiently about an increasingly incomprehensible world, in order to understand it, and act in it (in ways other than buying the latest beer or pantyhose).

My choice is to use the electronic media, especially CBC, for today's news headlines. I shall turn to the non-commercial "alternative" media — journals like *New Maritimes*, or *Goodwin's*, and such dedicated community radio stations as Vancouver's *CFRO* — for the information, analysis, and perspectives which you usually exclude. ☐

*Robert Hackett is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. Among other functions, he teaches courses on press and broadcasting policy and on politics and the media. He hastens to point out that while the Vancouver Sun is the focus of this essay, most of the observations apply to much of the mainstream media in Canada.*



## Podium

# Well-informed citizens: An emerging elite?

by Daniel Johnson

**T**he topic for my sermon this issue will be: Just as the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, economically, so the already informed become better informed and the masses become more ignorant. My readings will be from the *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, and the *New York Times*.

I will reveal at the outset that on Jan. 1, 1984, I cancelled my subscription to the *Calgary Herald*. I have, since then, picked up an average of one copy per week at the newsstand — usually for the TV guide. I have not, under any circumstances, ever bought a copy of the *Calgary Sun*. I quit the *Herald* after a long series of disappointments in the paper's coverage of almost everything.

Here was the last straw.

On Sept. 20, 1983, the *Herald* reported a speech delivered by Noranda Mines chief Alf Powis. The headline for the story was: "Economic 'fascism' may be on the horizon." Powis was reported to have said, in a business section front-page story: "If the current economic recovery 'aborts, people will start to get desperate, then heaven knows which way things will go... it (state capitalism) is possible.'"

Three days later I talked to David Pommer, then editor of the business section (since promoted to city editor), and asked him why there had been no balance to the story or a sidebar suggesting that what Powis said was not fact, but a debatable opinion.

I can, of course, refute Powis in one sentence. Last year, for the first time in history, the top 500 companies in Canada had combined assets greater than the nation's Gross National Product.

Pommer said that the *Herald* was not interested in whether what Powis said was true, but "our job is to report the news." He said: "If Alf Powis says the world is flat, we'll report it because he said it." He added that statements by less-well-known people are of less interest.

Four days later, the Alberta NDP, the United Mine Workers, and the Western Canadian Coal Association sponsored a one-day seminar featuring federal NDP leader Ed Broadbent to promote the idea that western coal should be

used in Ontario instead of Pennsylvania coal. The seminar went unreported in the *Herald* which suggests that Pommer only thought it important to report some of the news. The next day, Sept. 28, 1983, an article did appear on page B9, gleaned from an interview with Broadbent that took place "during a day-long stopover in Calgary."

As far as readers of the *Herald* were concerned, Broadbent could have been in town getting his shoes fixed!

Shortly after giving up on the *Herald*, I began to get the *New York Times* every Sunday. I also regularly read the *Globe and Mail*. Other than the weather — and I know this will sound pompous — I found it increasingly difficult and frustrating to talk about what I consider meaningful affairs with most people. I had unwittingly become part of an elite in Canada — the informed citizen.

This does not mean that I was always right, but that I was more likely to be right because I had a far greater range of informed opinion and information on which to draw. Nor does it mean that I was or am blessed with greater vision than others. What it does mean is that I was able to enjoy more, let's say, breadth.

Most Canadians, who, frankly, rely on most radio and television, *Sun*-type newspapers and their clones for their information about the world are woefully ignorant. This is the same mass of people who are expected to vote intelligently.

Some of the early Greeks, notably Socrates, believed that knowledge alone would suffice to produce the perfect man. We know now that knowledge can be put to evil as well as good ends.

What is necessary for the good society is wisdom in the population — and knowledge is the essential ingredient on the way to that wisdom.

Socrates also taught that democracy is possible only in an informed population. The media in Canada by and large are controlled by the Ken Thomsons, Conrad Blacks, Allan Slaights, and their corporate confederates.

Their object is profit, and they make their money not by supplying comprehensive news, but by providing a saleable product that for the most part lacks substance.

And the CBC, regrettably, appears to believe that by copying the commercial media it will ensure its survival in the myopic eyes of the business-dominated Mulroney government.

Democracy in Canada, and in the whole Western world for that matter, is not threatened as much by the Soviet bloc as it is by the ignorance and limited views of its own population.

Democracy as we have known it is, I fear, doomed. The rank-and-file citizen, egged on by the media, will vote it away. (30)

*Daniel Johnson is a Calgary-based writer and contributing editor for Goodwin's.*

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# Report on business

*In an extended followup essay,  
our writer suggests specific ways  
to improve financial writing*

by Andrew Allentuck

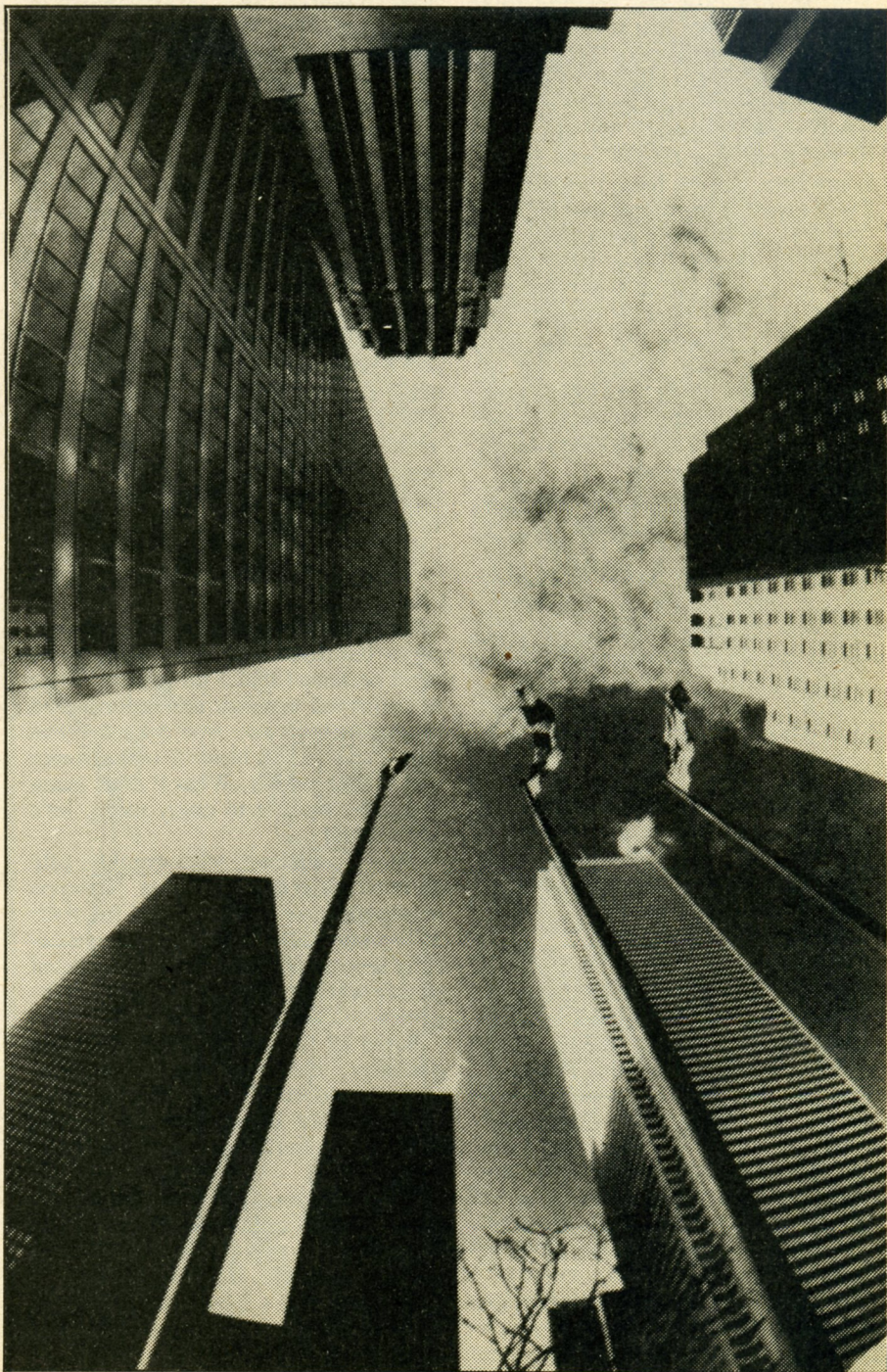
**W**hy is the business section at the back of the paper? Perhaps because it's dull. Sports has heroes and thugs, politics an ample supply of fear and gloating, showbiz has glitter, but financial writing is often little more than puff and cliché.

At its best, in the *Globe and Mail's* Report on Business and in *The Financial Post*, business and economic reporting is usually accurate and insightful. But non-specialized business reporting in metropolitan dailies and in community weeklies tends to lack a perception of what is true and important in business. What's lacking, as I suggested in my previous *content* critique of Canadian business writing (July/August, 1985) is lack of sensitivity to what makes finance matter — that money is a mirror of people's motives.

It helps, of course, to have a degree in economics, corporate finance, law, or a few years of experience auditing public corporations or doing their cost analyses, but none of that is essential. Indeed, immersion in years of academic drudgery and the resultant diseased prose (“... not a few of Keynes' critics would have disabused themselves of monetarist naivete . . .”) are no sure route to success in journalism. One can gain literacy, indeed fluency, in business in the back office of a stockbroker's office, too.

Hemingway wasn't a business reporter, but had a knack for explaining technique. He could find order in any kind of mayhem, whether bull fighting, boxing, or matching wits with a hooked fish. “The most essential gift for good writing,” he claimed, “is a built-in, shockproof bullshit detector.” That's good advice for writing about business.

A financial reporter should realize that many facts he encounters in his work will be part of an adversarial process. The company officials at an annual pipeline or other utility company meeting want to make their firm look good to stockholders. The same utility that presents a rosy picture of itself at the annual meeting can plead poverty at a rate increase hearing the



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next week. And then give a different story in labor bargaining at another time. The essential first question the reporter should ask, therefore, is who is talking and for whom?

One would think that a source's name would be followed by an accurate explanation of who he or she represents, yet journalists let companies get by with a great deal. Last year I heard CBC Winnipeg broadcast financial advice from a salesperson from a major mutual fund organization. The speaker was identified as a "financial planner," but the host failed to say that her job, in fact, is peddling shares of her employer's investments.

The same muddling of identities was used by Investors Overseas Services, the greatest mutual fund scam of the 1970s, to peddle its shares. I discussed the confusion of identities with the producer, who took the position that since the woman does plan finances, the CBC had committed no error. It's logic that makes it right to call the Khmer Rouge agrarian reformers or Josef Mengele a personnel specialist.

It is vital that the reporter consider what kind of game is being played. Is it a process in which, as in the case of the spending side of a budget, only benefits are being distributed and the net effects of the spending on society may be constant? Or is it a case in which, as in Las Vegas casinos, the players are, as a whole, net losers? The analysis can be subtle, but the exercise is valuable, for it leads to other, essential questions.

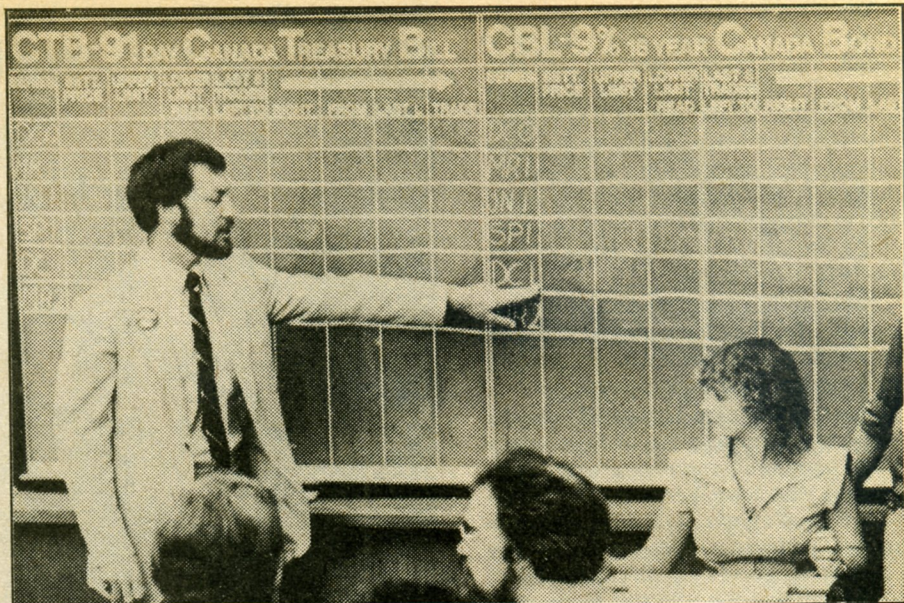
At times, all the business information handed out to the press is false. When monetary authorities announce, as Gerald Bouey did for the Canadian Commercial Bank, that a bank is sound, you can probably bet that it's not. When a minister of finance or a president of a country promises, as is a custom in some places, that hell will freeze over before the currency will be devalued, you can be reasonably sure it will happen very soon.

So reliable is the high denial level as an indicator of opposite truth that reporters should assume as a working hypothesis, subject to verification, that for any company or government up against the wall, any testimonial of support is a nail in the coffin.

By implication, publishing the statement without at least a remark to set it in perspective is abetting a lie.

Even apparently plain numbers can lie.

The April, 1984, *Globe* story that 239 Canadians with incomes over \$250,000 paid no income tax in 1981 was a lie that became part of the foundation of the NDP's campaign for ordi-



*Financial affairs, writer Allentuck contends, can be made understandable "if the froth of statistics and the gobbledegook" is cut away. And simplification, rather than sophistication, needs to be the approach to writing about business accurately and attractively.*

nary Canadians.

The 239 people were 4.1 per cent of a group of more than 5,800 residents of Canada (not necessarily citizens) and 95.9 per cent of the people in that group did pay progressive tax rates. The \$250,000 was a phony figure that

included a 50 per cent increase in actual income as a basis for calculating the federal dividend tax credit. But a trivial numerator over a deceptive denominator produced a quotient that became one of the important issues in the campaign.

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Any number can be turned into a lie if put into a ratio. To make the ratio bigger, use a smaller base or denominator. To minimize it, use a larger denominator. Thus mutual funds measure their performance during the time elapsed since market lows and governments in power measure their performance in curing social problems by comparing the problem in its worst recent year with the present.

Public utilities are masters of the artful ratio, for they have almost 200 cost formulas to choose from in making their pitches for rate increases.

The rate increase requested sets the regulated firm against almost every other economic interest group. It is obvious that what benefits, for example, Bell Canada will hurt its customers, reducing their ability to buy non-phone goods by the amount of additional revenue allowed to be paid to Bell.

This effect is unsurprising and hardly news, yet every proposed rate increase that results in a story generates features and sidebars reporting the dire predictions of the Canadian Council for Social Development and the Consumers Association of Canada that the poor, the old, and perhaps the rural will be driven to penury or criminality. The only news in any of this would be if these organizations didn't wring their hands.

Rather than just the obvious, reporters should examine the need for the rate increase proposed. Get to the heart of the matter. If the utility or airline is crying poor, on what is its argument based? What is the ratio of operating expense to management expense? How does the firm apportion executive office buildings, limousines, conventions, and other perks to the different services it provides? At what rate are various facilities depreciated or paid off?

This is not pedantry, but the essence of the rate request — the nuts and bolts behind the request for more money.

Perhaps the phone company needs more money; perhaps it's spending too much telephone revenue on non-phone technology research that has nothing to do with its statutory mandate to run the phone system.

Bell Canada as a phone company now is a unit of Bell Canada Enterprises, a holding company; provincially-owned phone companies present clearer problems since they are communications firms in a purer sense than BCE.

Business schools at major universities and national accounting firms often have professionals who can cope with



*Reporters who lack economic or financial expertise on their own must choose their oracles with care — and that may extend right down to the floor of the stock exchange, as well as to the offices around the corner and around the country where intricate decision-making can affect the nation's economy.*

the issues in rate requests. They should be questioned for original insights into rate increase requests.

Chronicles of effects of government budgets are trivial if they do not do more than churn the issue of rich versus poor.

Commenting on the increases in corporate taxes via the temporary debt reduction surtax and, in particular, the Mulroney government's proposed extension of the corporate profits surtax to compensate for re-indexation of federal old age pensions, a *Globe* staffer quoted a University of Toronto economist to show that the 1985 budget is discriminatory against labor. Because capital-intensive businesses such as mines have larger depreciation deductions than labor-intensive businesses like dancing schools or accounting firms, the capital-intensive firms will be less heavily taxed.

This is as stunning as the news that a non-negative number has a greater

product if multiplied by a large number than by a small number.

Yet the story is not right, for in spite of the simplicity of the idea, labor-intensive firms get many job development grants unavailable to capital-intensive firms. The story is another triviality wrapped around error. Was the source set up to goof or merely selectively quoted to produce the story the reporter wanted? Or was the reporter flummoxed by the source?

Somewhere between interview and story, the idea should have been checked with a second source. Correctly viewed, the story was unworthy of publication.

Clearly, reporters who seek to build stories on pronouncements by economists but lack economic or financial backgrounds on their own must choose their oracles with great care. That's especially important when dealing with macroeconomics, the mathematical study of whole economies, saving,



investment, consumption, and taxation. As a sub-discipline, macroeconomics is immature. Faced with identical facts, different economists can come to very different conclusions.

Keynesians, a major group of macroeconomists, believe that government debts incurred by spending more than taxes bring in merely present a question of redistribution of incomes — more payments to bondholders who finance the overspending. If the spending is financed by inflation, the result of printing money faster than goods are produced, the problem is no different. In either case, government need only tax away the rich bondholders' high incomes or tax away the higher money (not real) incomes inflation produces to make things right.

Opposed to the Keynesian view, supply side economists and monetarists believe that if deficit spending could cure unemployment, Canada, which had an orgy of such finance during the Trudeau years, would have a very full employment economy indeed. Monetarists believe that only a stable money supply can ensure long-term growth of economies and prevent financial disaster.

It is not surprising that macroeconomists squabble over theory, for most are academics and make dispute their business. That broadcast and print journalists regularly seek out the views of theoreticians at polar opposites of their fields is, however, surprising.

Naive Keynesian economics untempered by a sense of what has happened since Lord Keynes published his theory in 1936 is as obsolete as pure Marxian economics and consequent inability to explain why two bottles of red wine produced with identical labor (or exploitation) can have very different prices.

What the reporter should do, rather than wasting time on academic fossils, is to analyze the budget itself. How good are the arguments put forward to defend it? Has a budget gambit been tried before and, if so, what happened then? If the budget is going to promote employment, then at what cost in terms of tax, debt, and inflation? If it is intended to reduce debt and inflation, then at what cost of unemployment?

Clarence Darrow, the great American lawyer who successfully defended John Scopes' right to teach the theory of evolution in the schools of Tennessee, used to say that there is no issue that cannot be explained to the ordinary person on a jury. Financial affairs can be made understandable if the froth of statistics and the gobbledegook of most professors is cut away. Without the

mantle of sophistry, economics is just people in pursuit of a buck.

Explanation therefore comes down to style. The most demanding form of explanation is deduction. It is the most demanding because it requires that the reporter or speaker have a rigorous understanding of what he or she is doing. Deduction is usually left to sources and columnists. Less demanding is induction, piling up the circumstances from which one can distill a conclusion. At the bottom of the heap of formal logic is the biographical approach. If you can't explain a system of business, science, architecture, or whatever, then write about the people who can. It's a legitimate and scholarly pursuit, but in business reporting it has recently been turned into a kind of propaganda.

Peter C. Newman lifted the biographical style of business reporting to a prestige I don't think it deserves. Newman has been followed by imitators rushing to ennoble the saints of business. Great wealth or a monomania for running a business should not confer a patent of nobility, but that's just

what the new hagiographers of business are doing. The technique does, to be sure, sell a lot of books. But for a reporter to urge that a sociopath with a desk is just a quirky guy with a pile is an evasion of truth.

I have no easy solutions to the difficult problem of writing about business accurately and attractively. It helps to be well read, it probably helps even more to have the time to do a story well. But I do think simplification, rather than sophistication, has to be the approach.

Take down the veils of titles, scrape away the dross of numbers, filter out the professional and professorial mumble, and, just maybe, the reporter on the financial beat can do what Hemingway suggested: Write a story without the bullshit. The results could be startling, and rewarding. (30)

*Andrew Allentuck is a Winnipeg-based writer and economist. He is senior editor for business books for publishers Fitzhenry & Whiteside and a contributor to The Financial Post and The Financial Post Magazine.*

## Doing a story about...

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## The press and the law

# Libel cases and costs have been soaring; then there's the price of a muted press

by Peggy Amirault

**L**ibel actions in Canada have increased 1,000 per cent during the past 10 years. And that's not the worst of a worrisome situation.

Damage awards are disproportionately high when compared to personal injury cases. Additionally, legal fees and disbursements far exceed those incurred in other, normal types of litigation.

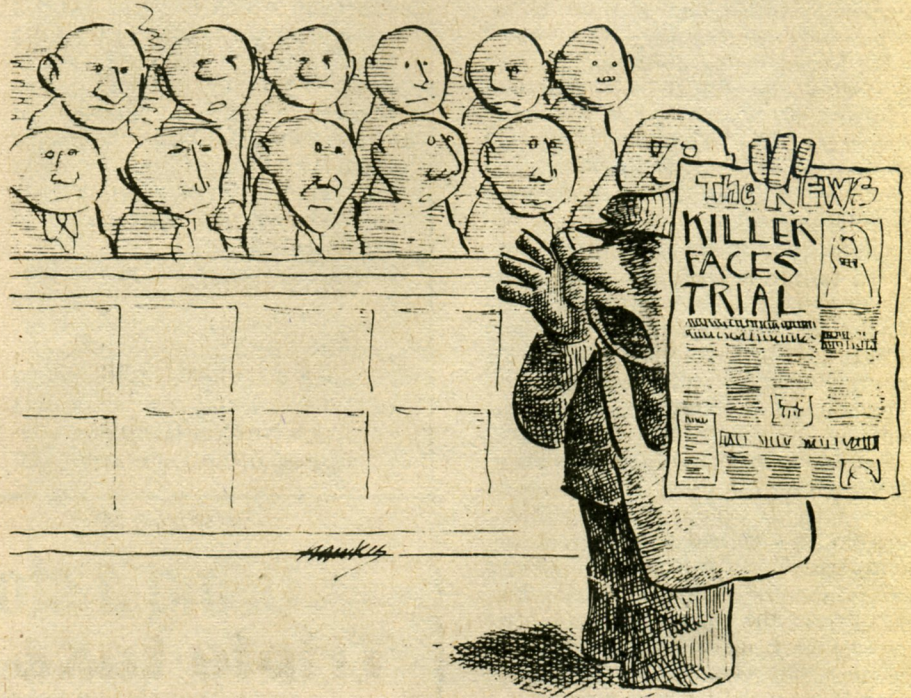
American insurers estimate that 80 per cent of all money paid out by insurance carriers in defamation cases goes for counsel fees — 20 per cent to damage settlements. This year, insurance premiums are estimated to be rising 50 per cent to 1,000 per cent, depending on who is carrying the insurance, simply from the cost of legal services.

This was part of the message delivered at the August convention of the Canadian Bar Association, held in Halifax, by three lawyers specializing in libel law: Stuart Robertson and Dan Henry of Toronto and Robert Murrant of Dartmouth.

About the only good news in their litany of gloom was from Robertson, a former CBC counsel who has written extensively on the news media and the law. Some lawyers are recommending to their clients the establishment of a Media Resource Centre, which Robertson described as a "lawyer-inspired initiative recognizing the fact that legal costs may become one of the major obstacles in the defamation tort." He planned to ask the CBA for its support.

The Media Resource Centre would have a wide membership of individuals and organizations. Its basic purpose would be to gather and disseminate information on the legal rights of the media, and to express the views of its members. Original research would be conducted, in addition to tracking all draft legislation affecting the media and following all litigation involving the media, especially cases which involve constitutional issues.

The proposed centre would not duplicate the efforts of existing organizations but would co-operate with and complement them. The centre could act as a voice for members of the news media, either by public statements, negotiation for group insurance or ben-



efits, or in intervening in a legal or legislative proceeding.

Its areas of interest would include: research into demonstrable evidence justifying limitations on the fundamental freedom of expression as set out in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; definition of freedom of expression under the Charter; defamation; contempt of court; access to courts and to information held by governments; and protection of privacy.

Robertson also encouraged lawyers to look to press councils as forums to resolve defamation cases. "In my own practice," he said, "I've started to see the use of press councils very effectively. Press councils can move a lot faster than courts, and at least have the effect of getting a followup article correcting the original situation published in the newspaper. That often is a very useful resolution for a plaintiff and a lot less expensive."

The average defamation award, very roughly, is \$50,000, while in personal injury cases the Supreme Court of Can-

ada has limited damages to \$100,000 plus a slight cost-of-living increase. Panelist Murrant was of the opinion that "we have a judicial system that seems to be cheating our innocent accident victims, and over-compensating our libel plaintiffs."

He added: "In a libel situation, damages are presumed. Juries are charged in terms of contemptuous, nominal, general, aggravated, punitive, or exemplary damages. Those are things that would not occur in typical tort law situations, such as a gross accident case where an innocent child is run down by a grossly impaired driver."

Murrant pointed out the obvious — that a libel action is biased toward the plaintiff. Defamation law seems to turn around the innocent-until-proven-guilty concept and tradition. Essentially, all the plaintiff has to establish is publication (which in law includes broadcast, of course), that it's referable to him, and that it's capable of being defamatory. Falsity and malice are virtually presumed.



Said Murrant: "We operate on an inverse onus of proof. That is something that affronts a number of recent cases under the Narcotics Control Act and the Charter of Rights. If the Charter is providing for freedom of expression and of media of communication, one has to wonder how our libel laws can continue to carry an inverse burden on the person making the expression."

The traditional defences of fair comment and justification, i.e. truth, seem to be taking second place to a negligence and/or malice concept. The use of expert witnesses in defamation cases is increasing.

Murrant again: "Counsel are heavily involved now in expert evidence and the trade and practice of journalism. If it can be shown in any way, apart from the veracity of the words, that there was a failure of editorial review, a hastily-prepared broadcast, a failure to contact the subject of the broadcast before the broadcast, or that the reporter was outside his scope of expertise, or was not diligent, then generally the plaintiff will succeed."

Dan Henry pointed out the law does not encourage the media to correct stories; rather, it penalizes them. "Perhaps the law should correct that, so there's an incentive to tell the truth." He said there are severe effects on the media from the current nature of the law. As well, many lawyers advising the press are conservative or simply inexperienced in libel law. Journalists practice self-censorship and often they, too, lack a clear understanding of the law and its implications.

It has been argued that standards in journalism have improved at least partly because of the effects of libel suits. Yet the threat of litigation also can effectively mute the press. Murrant commented: "Standards have definitely improved. Research is much more prudent. Writing is much more careful. Lawyering is an everyday event."

"If we're at the stage where we've made the media much more prudent than they've ever been, I'm afraid that what we have done in terms of public-figure or public-matter topics is remove any breathing space for Canadian journalism. That leaves the public in certain darkness."

"As high standards are required there is no breathing room and effectively on a day-to-day basis we are seeing matters which should be published but which are not, out of fear of libel actions, the strict law, and the totally unpredictable damage situation." (30)

*Peggy Amirault is a Halifax-based freelance writer.*



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It's pretty much a custom for publications, when they're observing an unusual or significant event, to solicit advertising in support of that occasion. It's an effective way of generating revenue which otherwise might not be readily accessible.

Well, as explained elsewhere, this issue marks a special event in the history of *content*: The magazine was launched 15 years ago this October. Although there were a few hitches along the way, we're regarding this September-October issue as the commemorative 15th anniversary edition of Canada's national periodical for journalists — indeed, a periodical for those in related communications endeavors and for the critically-minded news consumer.

Unlike many other publications and their ways of observing special occasions, we're taking a rather different approach. We decided to express our appreciation to those advertisers who've supported the magazine since its revival in May-June, 1984, by opening up this space (at no charge) to list them by name, accompanied by corporate logos where available.

Apart from subscriptions, and other limited sources of income, the presence of these advertisers in our pages has assured the magazine's continued operations.

Some of the organizations which use *content* as an advertising vehicle look on the magazine as an effective means of promoting and potentially selling products and services. At least as

many, if not more, appear in the publication because they believe in the work it is trying to do on behalf of better journalism in Canada. Many have told us they are convinced that a journalistic community which strives for high principles and more professional practices can only benefit the public-at-large. In which case we're all better off.

So this is our modest way of saying thank-you for your understanding, cooperation, and support. We look forward to a continuing — indeed, expanding — relationship.

*Dick MacDonald*  
Editor  
for Friends of Content Inc.

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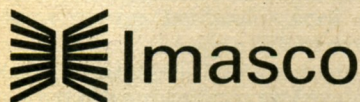
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# Gordon Fisher remembered: Principles and wide credibility

by John Marshall

**C**ontent lost a valued supporter — and a respected opponent in some senses — when Gordon Fisher, president of Southam Inc., died of cancer in mid-summer in his 57th year.

He supported the concept of a free press about the press by personally deciding there should be a substantial Southam grant to buy *content* advertising space, most of it to be donated to schools of journalism in Canada.

He was an opponent, in that he definitely did not agree with all the opinions of the kind of people involved in the administration, editing, or writing of *content*. I guess we're part of what he tagged as the "critics in the Toronto media mafia" when, in Winnipeg five years ago, he was publicly defending the decision to close the *Tribune*. It was typical of him that he agreed to face a questioning Winnipeg audience at that time, just as, after the Royal Commission on Newspapers reported, he was prepared to publicly debate its recommendations at the Toronto Press Club. As one of the panelists, generally critical of his stand, I welcomed his participation and voiced my regrets that Ken Thomson — typically — had declined to take part.

I first met Fisher when I was covering the Kent Commission for Thomson's *Globe and Mail* (from which I later resigned to protest the misleading post-Kent hysteria displayed by it and other newspapers — including some Southam ones). I was impressed by the fact that Fisher and Southam's chairman, St. Clair Balfour, attended a good number of the hearings, listening intently to the submissions. (The only other senior newspaper executive who did that was the late Walter Blackburn of the London *Free Press*.)

I was also impressed by the fact that the two men made a point of coming to me and introducing themselves. I didn't miss the contrast in corporate-style symbolism when neither Thomson, my employer, nor his senior executives displayed the same kind of courtesy when they finally were compelled to show up.

I have lengthy notes of interviews with Fisher. He was always available and ready to go on the record. The only time he ever sparred with me was when I was trying to establish responsibility for cutbacks in Canadian Press serv-

ices. He wasn't going to accept any blame for Southam, nor would he finger Thomson. ("I can't answer specifically.") I have lengthy notes of exchanges with Thomson, too; not of substantive interviews, but of convoluted reasons for refusing interviews. ("It's all so downish, there's no upish.")

Fisher did, in a sense, back off during the Press Club debate, in that he didn't disown the most outrageous anti-Kent statements I cited, made by a couple of his own publishers. But he didn't endorse them, either. After all, he once had told me, "It's good for the industry about every 10 years to be held up for scrutiny. I've no objection to criticism . . . Up to now it's a matter of the conscience of the owners. I've no objection to the public's right to bring pressure to bear on owners to have more conscience in the matter."



Gordon Fisher

So, more than a year and a half ago when the then-ad hoc Friends of Content began to look for some solid funding to assist its so-called rebirth, Fisher was an obvious hope. On my first visit to his spacious office — large uncluttered desk, his favorite sailing-scene paintings on the wall — I solicited his thoughts for *content* as well as his money. He was generous with the former, and he said he would "look reasonably generously" on a request for financial support. But he voiced a reservation. It would look bad for both Southam and for *content*, he said, if Southam was seen as the sole media-corporation supporter. I agreed.

When another media supporter, the Gannett Foundation, confirmed a grant

for the magazine, I returned. It was square-jawed Fisher, still courteous, still friendly, but now with the tougher business edge on display. "Reasonably generous? I'm not sure those were my exact words." I wasn't sure if the glint in his eyes reflected humor or board-room bite, but he was going to make this amateur solicitor work. He examined our rate card. He bargained for special display at straight rates. And then decided — on the spot — that most of those inside back pages would be donated to journalism schools.

As I shook hands on the deal, I felt good about having met the man on his own ground, if only in such a very small way. It also renewed my contention that he had been dissimulating somewhat before the Kent Commission when he had said Southam Inc. did not control the Selkirk broadcast group even though it held 30 per cent of the shares and he was on its board. I had always had the impression that if this man was in any room, he was in charge of it.

The last time I wanted to talk to Fisher, early this past summer, I discovered how seriously ill he was — lamentably, at a time when Canadian newspaper readers needed him most. The warning cloud that had been pictured at the Kent hearings was finally taking a real and ominous shape. Until the deal with Torstar took place in August, Southam was open for a takeover by a conglomerate and its profitable newspapers were ripe targets for stripping for even more profits. In monopoly situations, editorial budgets, including that of the news service, could easily be slashed. (See story on the Torstar-Southam agreement elsewhere in this issue.)

I had wanted to talk to Fisher because I was organizing this fall's ethics-in-the-media course at Ryerson's School of Journalism. Many of the lecturers, including myself, are being critical of newspaper corporate ethics. Fisher was the logical lecturer to speak for the owners, the publishers. He was a man with broad shoulders — and wide credibility. 30

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*John Marshall, a Toronto-based freelance writer, is chairman of the Board of Directors of Friends of Content Inc.*



## Books

# News women in Canada worthy of more than anecdotes

by Katie FitzRandolph

**N**ewsworthy is a frustrating book. It has a fine subject — the lives of media women in Canada. The research has been extensive, and the author has used well-chosen quotations from dozens of interviews to liven the text.

The writing is competent.

But, and this is where the frustration comes in, it doesn't come together the way one would want it to.

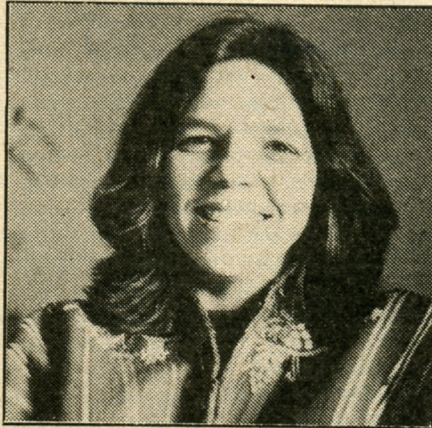
There are many illuminating anecdotes defining discriminatory practices:

\* June Callwood's lengthy harassment from *Globe and Mail* owner George McCullagh which extended to the point where the switchboard operator, managing editor, and others were actively protecting her from the advances. In Callwood's words:

"Once McCullagh asked me out to his house and, thinking everybody was going, I agreed and found myself alone in his chauffeured car. He thought it would be much more convenient if I just stayed the night; his wife wasn't home so I could have the room down the hall, and the chauffeur would take me back in the morning. I invented some reason why I absolutely had to be back at my apartment and fled. But the day finally came when there were no more places to hide from George McCullagh. I told him I had a date with a man. 'I'll give you a lot more fun than he will!' was his response. I reminded him that he was the same age as my mother. He called me a fool and instructed (the managing editor) to fire me." (The managing editor refused.)

\* Employment policies at the CBC, as described by Helen James, head of "Women's Interests" at the corporation:

"I remember the shocking thing that the CBC would not employ married women, so that Marjorie McEnaney had no sick leave and no pension. One of the things I spent a lot of time on during my first two years there (1946-48) was circulating a petition that married women should be eligible for permanent employee status. Even though Andrew Allen (the renowned drama producer) told me it was the best



Susan Crean

worded petition he'd ever read, it didn't succeed! And there was no change until after I left (in the late '60s)."

\* Pay levels at CTV, as described by Dodi Robb, now head of children's television at CBC:

"I had never resigned in a huff, but one day I did just that. Within half an hour, John Bassett was on the phone booming, 'What's all this about your leaving. We think you have a big future with this company and we want you to stay.' So I reconsidered and I stayed. Six months later, nothing had changed. I had been there four-and-a-half years with the same salary I had when I walked through the door. So I wrote Bassett to remind him of what he had said and asked for a raise. He wrote back to say he wouldn't think of it, that he felt I was overpaid when he hired me and if he did raise my pay that would mean I'd be making as much as the senior men in the company. He probably didn't realize what he was saying." (Robb quit.)

This is good material, but what *Newsworthy* gives us is only the anecdotes, if you will, the profiles of the women who succeeded in the high hurdles. There is no analysis of how these barriers have been taken down — not that all of them have.

There is no credit given, for instance, to media unions which negotiated equal pay for the reporters on the "women's pages" and surely that eco-

nomie change had its part to play in the changing content of the "family" and "lifestyles" sections. An employer paying the full rate is going to demand more than social notes.

There is nothing that ties together the struggles of women in the media.

Brief biography follows brief biography. They are interesting as far as they go, but rarely do they bring the women alive. It takes more powerful writing than Susan Crean has produced to define a character in a page and a half, and fit it into a living history.

And that's frustrating, too.

*Newsworthy* misses the mark in biography. There just isn't enough there about the women it covers. And it misses the mark as social history, because the links and connections, the causes and effects are missing.

And what adds to the frustration is the effort that has gone into producing *Newsworthy* will probably ensure that the book it could have been will not be written for a long time to come. Publishers will assume it has been done.

30

*Katie FitzRandolph is public relations officer for the Ontario Public Service Employees Union in Toronto. She has spent 15 years working in newsrooms in Vancouver, Regina, Winnipeg, and Ottawa and is a member of the Board of Directors of Friends of Content Inc.*

## MOVING?

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# Mailbox

*Editor:*

The July-August issue dealing with Relations in the Workplace is one of the best issues of the magazine I have read.

It held my interest from cover to cover.

This responsible treatment of the important matter of trade unionism in journalism is both valuable and timely. It has helped put the whole subject into perspective for Canadian journalists.

The writing was immensely readable and informative, the editing first-class.

*Paul Kidd  
President  
Canadian Wire Service Guild  
Toronto*

*Editor:*

Once again the magazine looks great, and is getting better issue by issue.

*Jim Cherrier  
Manager  
Toronto Star Syndicate  
Toronto*

*Editor:*

The press is one of many organizations in our society in the business of peddling illusions to a public perhaps too eager for same.

Given this, it is hard to take too seriously the self-image many reporters seem to have of what their role is (could be).

Perhaps as graduation gifts all reporters-to-be should be shown one version of The Front Page to be followed by a lecture whose point would be that if at the end of their careers they have had as much fun in the job as reporters in movies had and done as little harm, they can decamp into the real world with head high and the warm feeling that comes from the knowledge that they had served themselves, their employers, and the public well.

*G. Hendry  
Highland Creek, Ont.*

*Editor:*

Now that I've a daughter-in-law in the communications business, I'd like to make sure she has your magazine to keep her in touch.

So here's a cheque for a subscription for her. I can't think of a better birthday present.

I was one of the original subscribers years ago in Montreal. It's great to know you're continuing.

*Florence King Blackwell  
Toronto*

*Editor:*

I like the 'new' magazine. Keep up the good work.

*Kathryn Fowler  
Freelance  
Vancouver*

*Editor:*

Congratulations are certainly in order for the *content* crew, which has brought your publication such a long distance forward. I enjoy reading it very much.


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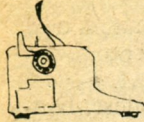
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# Short takes



**Bob Sarti** called from Vancouver to fill in a few details in a matter briefly mentioned here last time out. He is indeed taking his paper, the *Vancouver Sun*, to arbitration over a headline put on a story of his two years ago. The story quoted a woman denying she was a terrorist; the headline labelled her as one.

But it is not accurate to say that the Guild "refused" to take the paper to arbitration. "We've been describing this arbitration by saying we're doing it ourselves," said Sarti, "but by that we mean we won't be using the union's lawyers."

It is an official union grievance, but they — Sarti, fellow union activist **Jan O'Brien** of the *Province*, and Guild man **Roy Tubbs** — want to handle it on their own, by way of bringing the grievance procedure down to a more human level. No lawyers. At least not unless a job is at stake. "We want to reclaim what was set up originally as an informal procedure," was how Sarti put it. The hearing is slated for Dec. 12.

More interesting still is the fact that this represents a union move into editorial content: professional concerns rather than just working conditions, or pay. It's the beginning of a trend, then it gives the lie to my wind-up comments at the end of the labor story elsewhere in this issue. But I think I'll wait to see if the unions ever go to the mat on professional issues before I eat my words . . .

There is not much movement in the nation's newsrooms, due no doubt to heavy intakes of summer students. But there is a bit. At the *Calgary Sun*, former assistant sports editor **Peter Menzies** was appointed sports editor. The man who was sports editor, **Pat Doyle**, was reportedly moving "back east." **John Colebourne** leaves city-side reporting for the sports department, as a ski writer/deskman.

The *Brandon Sun* signed its first union contract with something called the Media Union of Manitoba, after five months of bargaining talks. Three-year deal. Now a five-year reporter there will make \$455 a week.

At the *Calgary Herald*, city deskman **Peter Bakogeorge** was to leave early in September, heading for Southam News in Ottawa. Speaking of Southam, the *Herald* takes on reporter **Brenda Southam**, one of the continuing line of media Southams. Also new to the *Herald* is deskman **Anthony McAuley**.

At the *Regina Leader-Post*, **Carolyn Saunders**, formerly of the *Halifax Daily News*, joins as a general reporter. Financial editor **John Twigg** resigned to move to Vancouver, there to set up his own media consulting firm in October. Replacing him is former business reporter **Bruce Johnstone**.

A few leavings at the *Hamilton Spectator*: Assistant managing editor **Phil Gaitens** left to return to St. Louis, Missouri (whence he originally came) where he will work the homicide beat for the paper there. Reporter **Flo Sicoli** left to further her education toward an M.A. Former drama critic **Lyle Slack** left to write movie scripts and be criticized by other critics. Reporter **Doreen Pitkeathly** went freelance.

**Chris Nixon**, former copy chief at the *Windsor Star*, was last seen headed for the copy desk at the *London Free Press*. **Terry England** replaces him. Replacing England as night news editor is **Doug Firby**, who was the night wire editor. The new night wire editor is **Dave Whitaker**, who was formerly titled copy editor. Two new copy editors were to start at the *Star* in September: **Tracy Higgins** of the *Sault Ste. Marie Star* (and once a summer student at the *Windsor Star*), and **Larry O'Connor**, now a deskman at the *Owen Sound Sun-Times*.

At the *Toronto Star*, **Liane Heller**, who was on a leave of absence to write poetry, etc., has now formally left the paper to write poetry, etc. And zones reporter **Malcolm Johnson** is promoted to suburban editor.

Also in Toronto, **Robert Stephens** leaves the *Globe and Mail* to work for Ontario Health Minister Murray Elstone. **Matt Fisher**

moves to Edmonton to head up the *Globe's* bureau there. And Travel writer **Robert Martin** becomes the new Atlantic bureau chief in Halifax.

*Short takes'* agent in Saint John says **Elizabeth Hanton** of the *Miramichi Leader* has joined the *Citizen* newsroom, as has **Cathy O'Connell**. Leaving the *Citizen* are **Bev Stairs**, to get married, and **Joanne Jefferson**, for personal reasons. The new publisher of the *Citizen*, replacing **Michael Lucas**, is **Tim Tempest**. His background is with Hamilton-area weeklies and as a Toronto management consultant. The new associate editor is **Carla Mastromattei**, also formerly of Southern Ontario weeklies.

At the Saint John *Telegraph-Journal* and *Evening Times-Globe*, **Judith Kellock-Heward** is the new lifestyles editor; **Sandra Allan** returns to general reporting.

Southam Communications launched *Verve*, a whole-earth sort of health magazine, and *Halcyon*, an outdoorsy leisure magazine, last spring. Both were edited by **Eric LeBourdais**. In August, Southam announced it had "parted ways" with LeBourdais and would no longer publish *Halcyon*. LeBourdais was last seen seeking ways to resurrect *Halcyon* independently. Meanwhile, Southam will "reposition" *Verve* for young health-conscious women. If I read their new focus right, it will cover some of the same territory now held by *Chatelaine*, *Canadian Living*, and maybe *Ms.* Southam vice-president Wallace Wood was quoted in the *Globe and Mail*, saying ". . . it's essential to have high-quality editorial product to attract paid circulation and high-quality advertising." To that end, the new editor of *Verve*, **Ylva Van Buuren** (formerly editor of *Canadian Footwear Journal*) has reduced freelance rates to 30 cents a word, and instituted a payment-on-publication policy.

The Southam Inc. ship lost its captain August 8. **Gordon Fisher**, whose more complete obituary appears elsewhere in this issue, died of liver cancer at age 56. The next day, Canadian Press business columnist **Ken Smith** died of undisclosed causes at the age of 53. His column, called *It's Your Business*, ran in more than 100 papers.

Also, **Barney McKinley** died Aug. 6, age 72. He was one of the group that launched the *Toronto Sun* in the wake of the closing of the *Telegram* in 1971. He had also worked variously for the *Vancouver Sun*, the *Vancouver Province*, the *Victoria Colonist*, and the now-defunct *Edmonton Bulletin*.

**Albert Boothe**, formerly managing editor of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, died July 14. He was 72. Started as a copy boy in 1930, retired as a consulting editor in 1976. Total career at the same paper: 46 years.

But enough sad news. Here is some good news: science journalist **Erich Hoyt**, author of the book, *Orca: The Whale Called Killer*, has been named a Vannevar Bush Fellow in 1985/86 at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. These fellowships go to eight science writers around the world each year. Hoyt is noted for his writing in *Equinox*.

The *Toronto Star* won some big awards for design. The Society of Newspaper Designers gave its Gold award to the paper's Friday *What's On* section. The *Star* also won a silver award for its TV magazine. Its Saturday magazine section took a silver award and an Award of Excellence. The *Star* also took 16 Awards of Excellence in other categories. I have no information of other winners in the competition besides the *Toronto Star*; my information comes from a clipping from the *Star*.

Dateline, Orillia: The Muskoka Community Newspapers group of weeklies will merge with rival Muskoka Publications Ltd. Sale of the *Bracebridge News*, *Gravenhurst News*, *Huntsville News*, *Muskoka Life*, and *Muskoka Weekend News* was effective Sept. 3. Cost: 50 jobs.

**Wilfred Chabun**, provincial editor of the *Regina Leader-Post*, won the annual S.I. Newhouse Canadian Fellowship at Syracuse



University. His career at the *Leader-Post* has included positions as reporter, feature writer, and assistant city editor.

The Toronto *Sun* got its wrist slapped by the Ontario Press Council in July for using deception to get a story. Seems a reporter posed as a psychology student to get a story about the Queen Street Mental Health Centre in Toronto, and Sister Janet Murray of the centre did not approve. Sister Janet was represented before the council by former *Globe and Mail* medical writer **Joan Hollobon**, who said the *Sun* story was superficial, misleading in part, and that it was not necessary to use flimflammy to get the story. She said the story was well written, but nothing of substance.

Another complaint against the *Sun* came from C.R. Dolmer of Toronto, who accused the paper of deliberately misleading the public in a March 29 item about a petition organized by the widow of a murdered policeman. Ruth Ross, widow of Ontario Provincial Police Constable Jack Ross, had launched a petition calling for a free House of Commons vote on capital punishment. Cst. Ross was killed in a big shoot-out in Woodstock. The paper noted this, but failed to mention that he was killed by a round from another cop's gun, and not by a suspect who should therefore be executed. Dolmer said the story was deliberately misleading, to give more weight to the call for capital punishment. That is a strong accusation, impossible to prove. The council rejected it, but still chided the *Sun* for running a misleading story.

In other Ontario Press Council action, a split decision in complaints against the *Globe and Mail* by the United Steelworkers of America, over a story published back in January. The story was headlined, "Sudbury labor hall a house divided," and that's exactly what it was about. Unionists Ron MacDonald and Homer Seguin claimed the story was deliberately skewed to promote dissension, was in part inaccurate, biased, and unbalanced. The *Globe* said nonsense. The council said the story was neither an attempt to sow dissension nor was it biased. It said there were some omissions of material that might have changed the thrust of the story, and that it could have been more balanced.

I'm picking and choosing here, because there's so much press council stuff and no room for it all . . . Here's a judgment against the Toronto *Sun*. A complaint against it by Rashad Saleh, president of the Canadian Arab Federation, and by Michael Lynk, a Canadian of Arab descent, was upheld. A *Sun* headline read, "Arabs threaten to kill more Americans." Lynk and Saleh condemned the use of the word Arab, saying it was part of a general trend to bad-rap and stereotype Arabs. The *Sun* pointed out that major news services routinely use the thoroughly accurate phrases "Arab gunmen" or "Arabic-speaking hijackers" and said there was nothing wrong with saying someone was an Arab if they were in fact an

Arab. But the council agreed that the word should not have been used, and upheld the complaint.

The British Columbia Press Council upheld a reader's complaint of a biased story in the *North Shore News*, but also said if the piece had been labelled as a column or analysis, the complaint would have been dismissed. The story was by editor **Noel Wright**, and dealt with a closed press council hearing into an earlier beef by UBC professor Philip Pinkus against the *News* and columnist **Doug Collins**. The complainant on this one: Fiona McQuarrie of North Vancouver. Complaint: story biased in presentation. Too sarcastic. News general manager **Roger McAfee's** response: How could McQuarrie know anything about the accuracy of a story from a closed meeting? She wasn't there. Wright had written a report of his own trial because he was the only one in a position to. The council's decision: If the story has a personal slant to it, say so right up front.

Note from the Centre for Investigative Journalism: CIJ announces the creation of a Committee to Protect Journalists, to defend the rights of reporters around the globe, and especially in the Third World. The news release says that when reporters are hassled, detained, or disappear in the course of their duties, the committee will "take appropriate action."

Journalist **Peter Calamai** has been appointed to the University of Regina's Max Bell Chair of Journalism. His career since 1969 at Southam News included reporting CIA brainwashing of Canadians at the Allen Memorial Institute, foreign correspondent duties, and sundry high-profile investigative stuff.

— Dave Silburt



Right off the top, let me state that this is not a bash-the-CBC instalment of the broadcast portion of *Short takes*. But . . .

If ever there was a time for news people to admit that they are performers before the camera and on-mike, this is it. Legislators and regulators love performers and always demand more opportunity for them to provide Canadian content. Who is more Canadian than the reporters, announcers, and camerapersons of our radio and television stations? What could be more of a community service

than good news coverage?

In Toronto, *CITY-TV* boasts the most-watched news show at 6 p.m. In Vancouver, *CKVU-TV's* audience rivals the CBC's share at 13 per cent of the market.

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In radio, *CKAC* Montreal's Sunday morning public affairs program reaches 125,000 in the city and 200,000 more elsewhere in Quebec. Telemedia is interested in offering Quebec City and Ottawa listeners the weekday **Pierre Pascau** show which already visits with 435,000 people.

Demands for Canadian content sometimes are a joke. The CTV flagship, *CFTO*, provides children who get up at 6 a.m. with the Uncle Bobby show; if my kid woke me at 6, he's not going to be watching much television. One of the Global network's most popular programs is a half-hour on the Wintario lottery, proceeds from which help finance Ontario's TVO, a network that doesn't even provide regular newscasts. (Yes, yes, I'll admit I'm sounding a trifle touchy here this issue.)

Once a staunch opponent of monopoly and concentrated ownership, the CRTC (with the blessing of the federal Cabinet) has allowed CHUM Ltd. to buy Windsor and Montreal radio stations providing it develops a fund to produce francophone records, plays at least 15 per cent Canadian music, and keeps on-air 33 per cent spoken word.

Perhaps the spoken word requirement has a lot of merit, if the spoken word is news, sports, and public affairs. But, what if one of the largest non-government broadcasters in the world (heaven forbid) took its cue from CBC Radio? Yes, Virginia, quite possibly CHUM Ltd. is moving in that direction with 13 radio and six television stations, radio systems in Newfoundland and Alberta, the MuchMusic pay-TV channel, and the Atlantic satellite network. For comparison, CBC owns 57 AM stations and relies on 103 privately-owned affiliates to reach all of Canada.

What's been called the "lame duck" English-language CBC Radio networks exist on \$40 million this year. Among all of Canada's 577 private AM and FM radio stations, Statistics Canada reports there was a 1984 profit (before taxes) of \$25.4 million.

But, then, the public-backed networks produce these "marvelous" spoken word broadcasts. In recent program announcements, they included *State of the Arts Sundays*, *Parka Patrol*, and *Day Shift*, handled, respectively, by three "print people" — *Globe and Mail* columnist **Sandra Martin**, Toronto *Sun* columnist **Gary Dunford**, and magazine/play writer **Erika Ritter**.

I acknowledge I'm editorializing and being sarcastic, but it seems to me there's something wrong there within the context of developing a distinctive, national broadcasting service.

And CBC Radio does provide all Canadians with something distinctive at the same time. There are five network-wide lifestyle features on sports, food, medicine, business, and drama at 7.30 p.m. each weekday (much like those provided an hour earlier by *CKO*, though the latter reaches fewer people) and a 10-minute newscast called *Canada at Five* (similar in some ways to what CHUM-owned stations provide nation-wide at noon).

But **Danny Finkleman** will be heard on *Finkleman's 45s*. Uh huh. How does that compare to Telemedia's live, 90-minute *Rockline* where listeners can call in and talk directly to popular musicians?

All of which is my not-so-subtle way of suggesting that much of what the public-funded service seems now to be trying to do, the private sector can do as well, as some of this issue's items demonstrate. Let me give the parting word, specifically on Canadian content regulations, to **Pierre Nadeau**, vice-president of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters: "These regulations were introduced in the 1960s by intellectual gargoyles."

No doubt the foregoing will disturb some readers, please others. Well, as has been said in other arenas, and to paraphrase, we're not here only to comfort the comfortable.

Maybe the task force on broadcasting policy chaired by **Gerry Caplan** and **Florian Sauvageau** will tell us not only a blunt story, but will produce a new chapter we rather desperately need for the years ahead.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Share your news

*Short takes* is compiled by long-time broadcaster Bob Carr and freelance print journalist Dave Silburt, both based in Toronto. They're both used to using the telephone to assemble the nuggets of information contained in this regular *content* feature. They cannot do the whole task, largely for reasons of time, yet we want to be as comprehensive and current as possible, within the confines of publishing deadlines. So your contributions will be welcomed. Other than items about people on the move — historically a popular element of this magazine — *Short takes* consists of information that might not, or not yet, justify longer treatment. With broadcast tidbits, contact Bob Carr, 494 Richmond St. East, Toronto, Ont. M5A 1R3, telephone (416) 366-6306. With print news of any kind, contact Dave Silburt, 1154 Alexandra Ave., Mississauga, Ont., L5E 2A5, telephone (416) 271-5448.

"None of our stations went into a loss position (in the recent recession)," says **Randall Moffatt**, president of the Winnipeg-based company that owns and operates eight AM and FM stations there, in Vancouver, and Calgary, and AM's in Edmonton, Moose Jaw, and Hamilton, but he describes economic recovery in Western Canada as "sluggish." . . .

"They (broadcasters) are starting to turn it around," says **Peter Flemming**, acting director of CRTC radio policy, planning, and analysis. "The outlook has brightened," says **CHIN** Radio's **Johnny Lombardi**, president of the Canadian Association of Ethnic Broadcasters in Toronto, Montreal, Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Vancouver . . .

"Channel 47 boasts the strongest private signal of all television stations in Ontario, broadcasting from the CN Tower with over 1,200,000 watts," reads a news release from the multi-ethnic station in Toronto, and yet the CRTC has granted priority coverage on all Ontario cable services "in an area bounded by Orillia to the North, Buffalo and Niagara Falls to the South, Port Hope to the East, and Kitchener-Waterloo to the West." . . .

CBC Radio program director **Donna Logan** said at a Toronto news conference hooked up by video to 10 cities across Canada that the corporation's average listener is over 50 years of age. The Bureau of Broadcast Measurement (BBM), meanwhile, has promised a comprehensive study of what Canadians 12 to 24 listen to on radio . . .

"Technological changes are cumulative, interactive, and synergistic and the pace of change accelerates every year, seeming sometimes to outrun the capacity of public policy makers to adapt," wrote **Andre Bureau** in the annual report of the CRTC . . .

"By 1995, 90 per cent of all American organs of mass communication will be in the hands of 15 companies." That was a key thrust of remarks by **Charles Kinsolving** to a Milwaukee sales conference this summer. He is vice-president of the Newspaper Advertising Bureau and claims that groups already own more than 70 per cent of U.S. newspapers, broadcast stations, cable systems, telephone lines, relays, and satellites, largely as a result of corporate mergers. As part of his forecast, 85 per cent of all daily newspapers would be owned by these 15 companies by 1995 . . .

In 1973, the CBC became the first broadcaster in the world to make use of a domestic satellite to distribute its programming. Today, the CBC relies on more than 100 earth stations scattered across the Canadian countryside. The Anik D satellite has 24 channels. CBC leases nine of these, three for full-time network distribution, three for news-gathering, two for House of Commons feeds, and one for distributing English-language network programming to stations in Quebec . . .

**Claude Blain**, president of Quebec's TVA network, is the third member of The Canadian Press broadcast committee, with **Jack Schoone** of Eastern Broadcasting, Moncton, and committee chair-



man **Fred Sherratt**, vice-president of programming and operations for CHUM Ltd. . . .

\*\*\*\*\*

Up and down the Broadcast News (BN) service are several changes:

The new Calgary staff position is filled by **Anna Geddes** of BN Edmonton. Toronto sports editor **Gerald Weseen** has moved to BN Halifax, replaced by **Abe Hefter**. When **Rick Gibbons** became European correspondent, based in London, he was replaced on Ottawa's Parliament Hill by **Norman Jack** of Toronto. Gone from Toronto to BN Fredericton is **Will MacKenzie**, replacing **Heather Boyd**, who now is in Edmonton. Ontario regional editor in Toronto is **Richard Neff**, while moving over from Newsradio is **Rose Jansen** . . .

Moving from the Queen's Park Press Gallery and Newsradio in Toronto is **Sam Borenstein**, now at the ministry of community and social services, replaced by **Michael Kurtz**. Leaving the ministry of citizenship and culture, **Rob Williams** now is in program promotion at TVO, otherwise known as TV Ontario . . .

When news director **Peter Ferguson** left **CKCO-TV** in Kitchener, **Ron Johnson** moved up a notch. He'll still co-anchor the 6 p.m. news with **Pamela MacKenzie**, but her partner at 11 p.m. is **Jim Haskins**. He's replaced as weekend anchor by **Brent Hanson**. New to the station is **Brenda Irving** of **CKCY/CHBX-TV** in Sault Ste. Marie which hired **Joy Malbon** of **CKCO**. Part-time reporter **Frank Lynn** now collects a full-time salary, **Mark Dailey** has gone to CBC-TV Charlottetown, and cameraman **Brian Magee**, who went to CTV Ottawa, has been replaced in Toronto by **John Johnston** . . .

New reporter at Toronto's **CITY-TV** is **Michelle Gibson** of the radically-altered **Vancouver Show** on **CKVU-TV**. Her boss, **Steve Hurlbut**, replaced news director **Gord Haines**, now general manager of First Choice Pay-TV . . .

The changes may be modest but they're interesting at **CKWS-TV** Kingston where news director **Dave Lewington** has injected more entertainment and business features from his Eastern Ontario coverage area between Belleville, Brockville, and Smith's Falls. "We haven't become Good News Reporters," he says, "but we know that there's a lot more good news to be reported on Newshour." From **CHRO** Pembroke, **Donna Skelly** is the latest **CKWS** news voice on-camera. She replaced **Julie Sandiland**, who moved to **CFPL-TV** London . . . **CFPL** Radio's news director, meantime, is

**Gary Ennett**, who replaced **Jeff Gilhooly** who decided on university over broadcasting . . . Still in London, since every other AM radio station there has an FM counterpart, **CKSL** (established in 1956) is about to ask the CRTC for an FM license . . .

**CKO** Radio in Toronto has added two open-line hosts, sort of. In addition to the perennial **John Gilbert**, veteran **Don Gauthier** does a talk show between 11 p.m. and 3 in the morning . . . Out West, the moderator of **Action Line** at **CKCK** Radio in Regina, **Peter Varley**, now is reading news . . . Not that there's any shortage of action in the Saskatchewan capital. At **CJME**, **Deborah Yarmie** anchors FM Afternoon news, **Drew Snider** FM Morning, **Ruth Blakely** **CJME's** afternoons. Gone to **CBR** Calgary is **Barb Hanson** . . . At **CKRM**, **Marion Barschel** left for **CJWW** Saskatoon and legislative reporter **Carol Bose** went to the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool . . . Part-time weather-person **Sherri Coffey** of **CKCK-TV** now is studying law at the University of Saskatchewan, while the co-host of **Live at Nine**, **Ken Neufeld**, is wearing a police badge. News director Frank Flegel, meanwhile, drafted Carol Adams from **CJWW** Saskatoon as weekend co-anchor . . . In Saskatoon, **Janice Laliberte** has given up radio news after 10 years, although **CFQC** replaced her with **Brian Wood** of **CKBI-TV** Prince Albert . . . General manager now of **CKCK/CKIT** Radio in Regina is **Con Stevenson**, who was replaced as news director of **CKOC** Hamilton by **Pauline Mitchell** . . .

If you want more input into BN wire copy, here's a list of new faces on the national editorial committee. Elected to fill out the term of **Warren Beck**, who left **CHML** Hamilton to teach at Mohawk College, was **Steve Madely**, **CFRA** Ottawa, alongside other Central Canada members **Clancy MacDonald**, **CFCH** North Bay, and **Serge Bellerose**, **Tele-Metropole** Montreal. In the West, approach **Ross Wotten**, **CKCK** Regina, or **Art Kennard**, **CFRN** Edmonton. Regional chairmen remaining for another year are **Con Stevenson** (national), **Geoff DeGannes**, **CKDH** Amherst (Atlantic), **Ron Hill**, **CJOB** Winnipeg (Prairies), and **Mike Woodworth**, **CKPG** Prince George (British Columbia) . . .

New host of the popular CBC Radio show **As It Happens** is **Dennis Trudeau**, who'd been handling **Daybreak**, CBC Montreal's morning information program. He's done other broadcast work, and previously had been in print with the Montreal **Gazette** and the late Montreal **Star**. His appointment ended weeks of speculation about a successor to **Elizabeth Gray**, who'd been dropped in CBC Radio's programming shakeup. Program director Donna Logan said the show with Gray as host had become, according to reports, too serious with its concentration on political issues. (30)

— Bob Carr

## SOURCES UPDATES

**SOURCES** directory contains the names, addresses and telephone numbers of 2,855 contact persons ready to help you gather facts, background material and informed comment.

**SOURCES** is specifically published for reporters, editors and researchers in the Canadian news media. Keep your copy handy and use it.

The following are updates to the most recent edition of **SOURCES** (Summer 85):

(page 79, columns 1 & 2)

### CAE INDUSTRIES LTD.

Correction of an error appearing in the descriptive paragraph.

Text should read:

CAE Industries Ltd. is a Canadian holding

and management company employing 4,200 (not 14,000) people in diverse industries across Canada and in West Germany. Principal fields of endeavour are electronics, aerospace and metal products manufacturing; and auto parts manufacturing.

(page 94, column 2)

### CANADIAN CO-ORDINATING COUNCIL ON DEAFNESS

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(page 119, column 2)

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**Manitoba:**

**Jerry Brown**

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Winnipeg, MB R3T 3Y5

Office: (204) 475-9120

(page 165, columns 2 & 3)

### XV OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Correction of an error appearing in the heading:

XV (not XI) Olympic Winter Games Organizing Committee.



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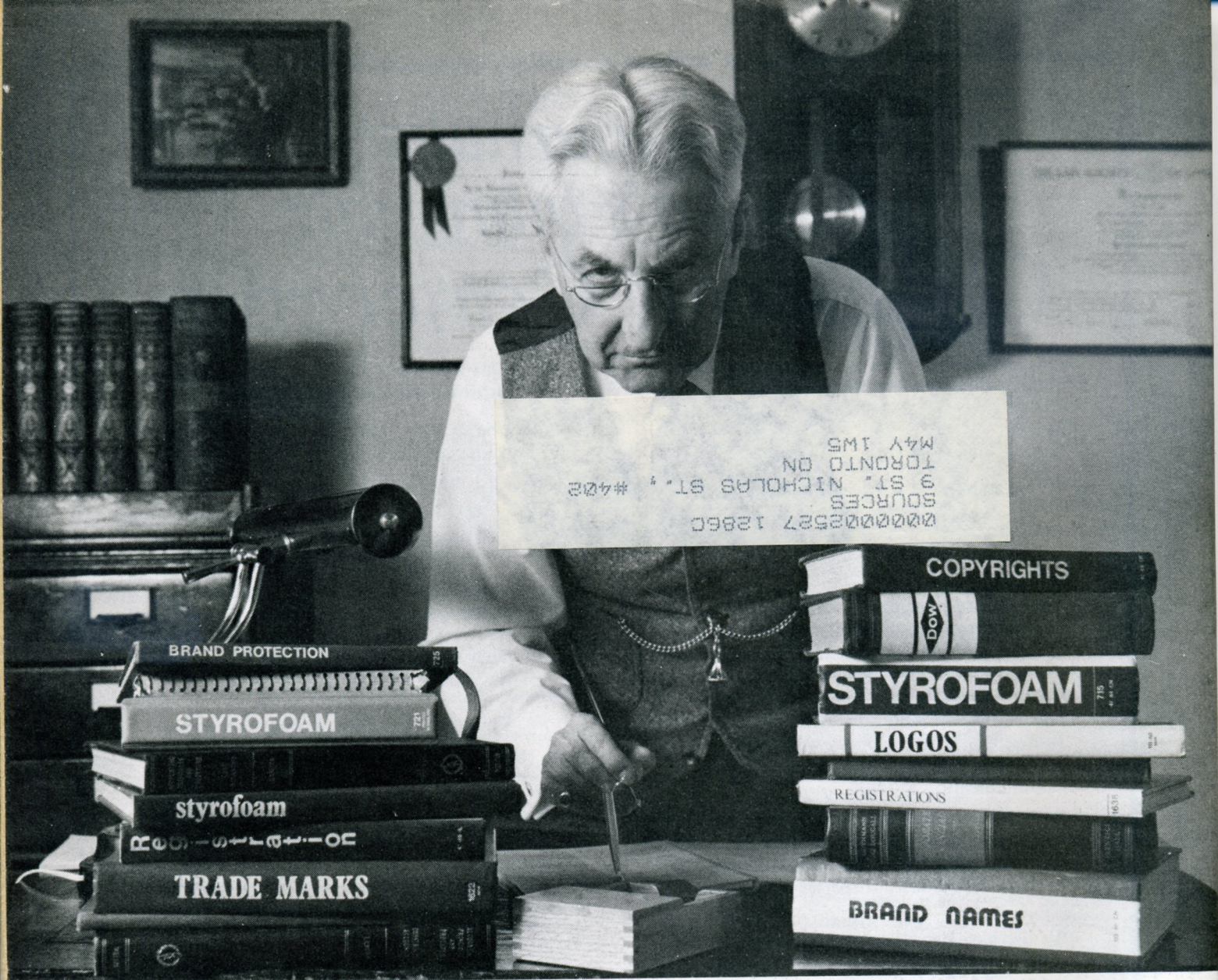
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