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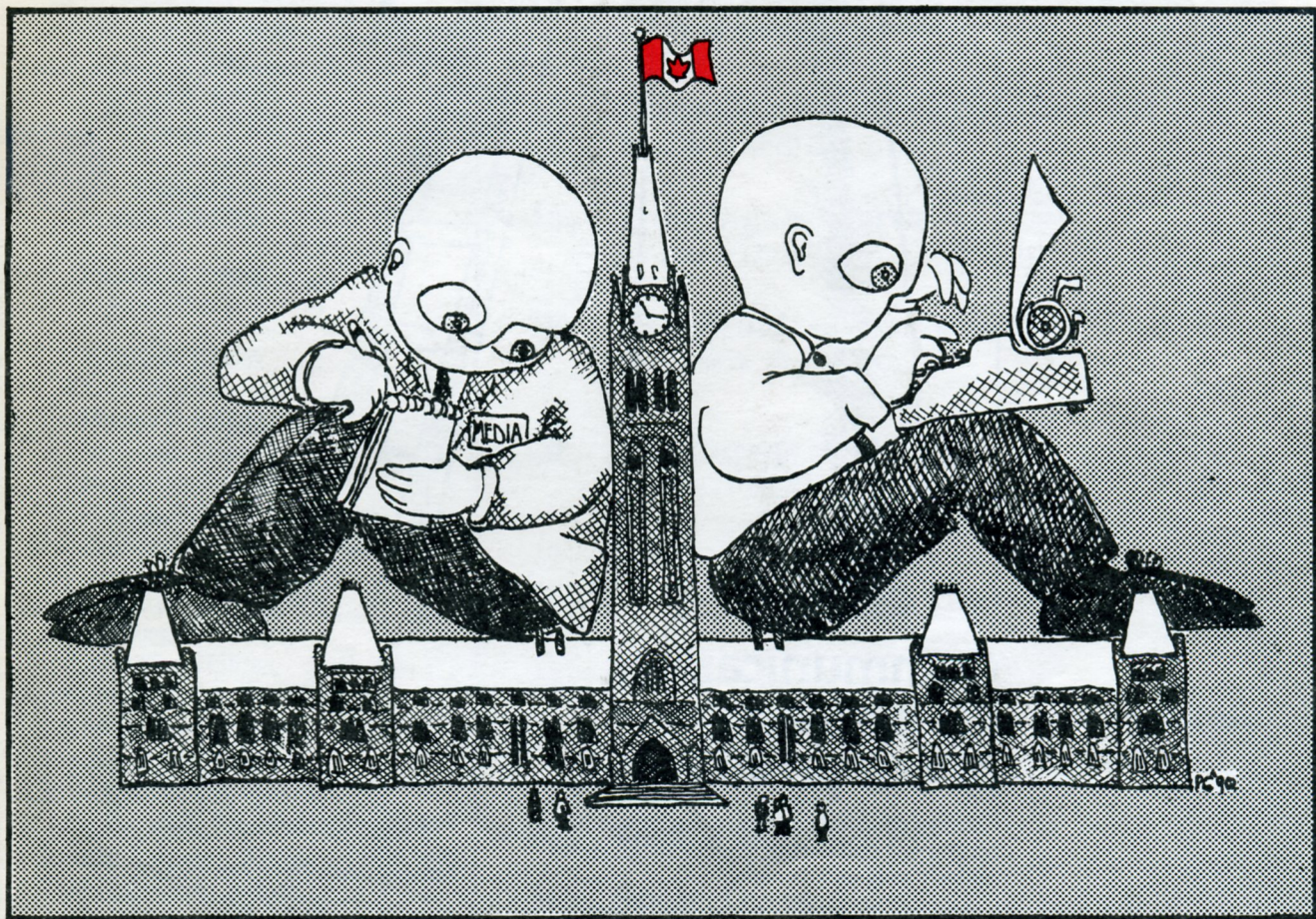
for Canadian journalists

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January/February 1990

Hardcovering the Hill



Fotheringham, Fraser, Lee and Hoy on pols and polls

• All-news
radio

• The media,
Meech Lake
and the North

• Recollections
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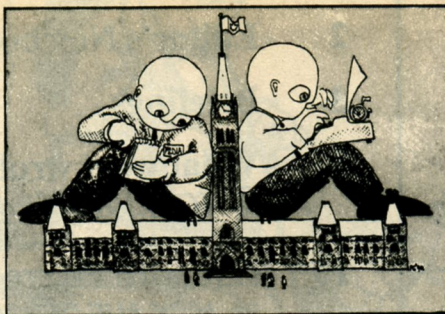
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Content has highlighted its major book review by making it the basis of its cover. Professor Patrick MacFadden in his distinctive style that is sometimes wry and sometimes acerbic dissects three current books by journalists on Canadian politics and the media. The three writers are Graham Fraser, Robert Lee and Allan Fotheringham.

There are two commentaries on deaths in the journalism world. One is the demise of CKO all-news radio network. The other is the collapse of the *Montreal Daily News*, the much-debated product of the tabloid domain of Quebec media baron Pierre Peladeau.

Professor Nick Russell offers his reflections on the difference between reporters and journalists.

Revisions to the Broadcast Act, currently before

the Commons, are assessed by media specialist Tim Creery.

The shadowy sphere of plagiarism, an increasingly prevalent phenomenon, is analyzed by Verne Clemence of the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*.

The new-look High Definition TV is described in terms of its operations and its impact on journalists.

Barriers to freedom of information are discussed in the latest report on the federal access legislation.

Jim Butler, editor of the *Whitehorse Star*, laments the short shrift the North is getting both from the media and the Meech Lake accord.

Ron Verzuh keeps tabs on weeklies in Montreal. □

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(This issue released for distribution in February 1990)

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Magazine defies extinction

The *Idler* is once again scrambling for funds, but there seems to be no shortage of valor among its editorial staff. The right-leaning magazine for intellectuals found itself in financial peril in October, after proprietor Manny Drukier said he could no longer pay the bills. But even with empty coffers, David Warren and the five others who put together *The Idler* are ready to defy extinction.

"We are unkillable," Warren declares in the most recent issue.

Warren's faith in the bimonthly magazine's ability to survive may be related to the fact that *The Idler* has been in the same position before -- less than a year after its January, 1985, premier issue.

The Idler was named after a periodical published 230 years ago by the 18th-century Tory journalist Samuel Johnson. Warren's idea was to resurrect the spirit of the conservative journal and fill it with an eclectic mix of erudite prose. (An interview with philosopher Charles Taylor, a dismantling of John Le Carre, and a review about current bicycle fashion all appear in the most recent issue.)

There was no decent magazine in Canada," Warren says. "(The *Idler*) is the only magazine that will publish discussions at large without the usual accompanying ideological neuroses."

The experiment was a success -- at least in terms of reviews from the critics. Journalist Robert Fulford, *Saturday Night* editor John Fraser and even American journalism icon Tom Wolfe have all signaled their approval of the magazine at one time or another.

The only problem with his "intelligent press," Warren admits, is that it's not financially self-sufficient. *The Idler* is elitist in tone and content and it does not carry much advertising. It needs help to survive for any length of time. (Financial trouble also plagued the original *Idler*; Johnson's journal only lasted two years.)

revenue brought in by subscriptions and advertising.

Drukier was responsible for moving the magazine out of Warren's home and into a real office on Davenport Avenue. He also helped set up a restaurant and bar, The *Idler* Pub, downstairs from the editorial offices, and encouraged Warren to find other sources of capital.

In 1987, Warren and his managing editor, David Owen, applied for grants from the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council but were turned down. The Canada Council's rejection letter called the editing and writing "very uneven." In a 1987 column, Barbara Amiel of *Maclean's* speculated that the decisions represented a deliberate, politically-oriented snub of the magazine.

In spite of these setbacks, Warren and the editorial staff continued to produce *The Idler*. The Ontario Arts Council recently came up with a much-needed \$7,000 boost, but Drukier's deep pockets have subsidized the magazine for four years.

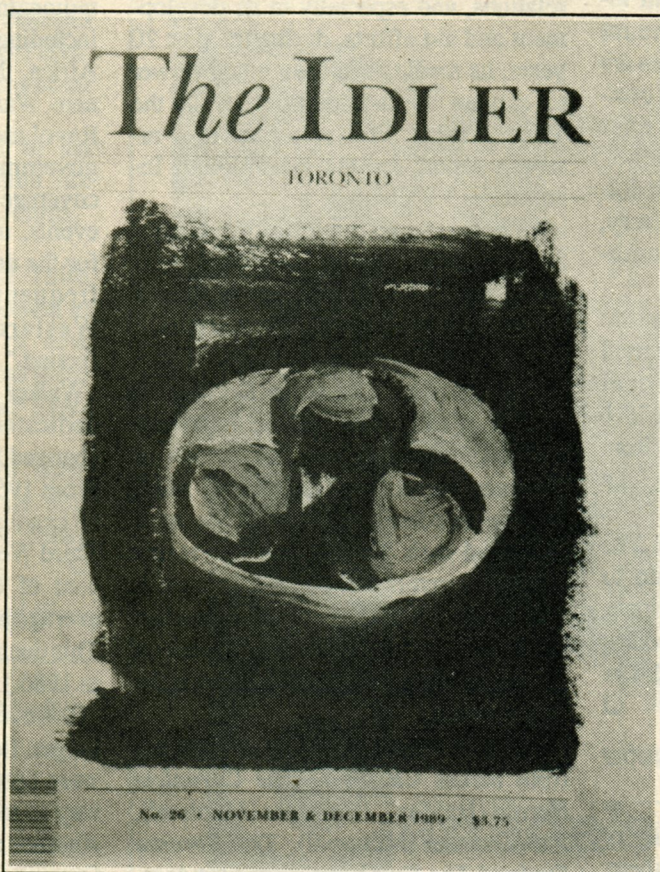
Now things have changed.

Publisher Alexander Szemberg says Drukier, who is estimated to have spent more than \$250,000 keeping Warren's journalistic vision

alive, can no longer afford to support the 7,000-circulation magazine.

In November the staff at *The Idler* paid Drukier \$1 to buy back the publication. Szemberg says they need to find investors who will help them raise an additional \$625,000 over the next four years to keep the magazine going.

"Our belts are squeezing us tightly and right now we have limited resources," Szemberg says. "But it's a period of transition and all of us are hoping to get



After the first six issues, Warren found he had given the magazine all he could afford.

Then along came Manny Drukier.

Drukier, a Toronto furniture manufacturer and literary patron who had a subscription to *The Idler*, called Warren before Christmas in 1985 to find out why the last issue was late. Learning of the money problems, Drukier rescued the magazine and, for four years, continued to make up the considerable difference between the costs of production and the

through it without losing too much weight."

While eager to find support, Szemberg makes it clear that the magazine's editorial control is not for sale. Content and style, he says, will remain under the control of editor David Warren.

"We are very proud of the magazine and, therefore, we do not make it an issue for discussion."

Szemberg says the magazine's editors are sure they can find the money to produce the magazine. So far they have managed to get commitments from investors for almost half the amount needed. While some of these pledges are conditional on finding other contributors, Szemberg expects *The Idler* will survive.

"I won't jump for joy until the last dollar is found," he says. "But we're very, very optimistic about getting a commitment for the remainder."

Warren, in the meantime, is optimistic from a distance. In January he started writing a new, "unusual" political column for Kingston's *Whig-Standard*. "I'm trying to retreat somewhat from editing and to advance on writing," he says.

He intends to continue to direct *The Idler* from Kingston and commute to Toronto some weekdays. He still hopes to develop the magazine to its full potential. He is even more hopeful that *The Idler* will find the means to do it. □

-- Peter Christie

Peter Christie is finishing his Master of Journalism degree at Carleton University.

Canadian Third World coverage outpaced by expanding trade

The level of news coverage of the Third World in Canadian newspapers has changed little over the last 20 years, says a recent study by journalist John Walker.

"While Canada has become more international-minded in its trade and foreign relations, and especially in its development and aid efforts, during the past 20 years, its media have been much slower to expand abroad, particularly in the Third World," Walker writes in a research report for the North-South Institute.

Walker, a former foreign affairs analyst for Southam News and National Newspaper Award winner, is now a freelance columnist on foreign affairs.

In *Third World News Coverage: A Survey of Leading Canadian Dailies*, he notes that while some of the larger and wealthier Canadian media -- such as Southam News, *The Globe and Mail*, *The Toronto Star*, CBC and CTV -- have expanded their foreign staffs in recent years, the number of foreign bureaus is still small. Walker says all Canadian media have an "excessive dependence on American correspondents to interpret the Third World."

Walker surveyed five daily newspapers from across Canada -- *The Chronicle Herald* (Halifax), *La Presse* (Montreal), *The Gazette* (Montreal), *The Toronto Star* and *The Sun* (Vancouver), randomly selecting one day a month in each of

the years 1966, 1976 and 1986. He also looked at three selected editions of the *The Globe and Mail*, which has one of the most extensive networks of foreign correspondents among Canadian media.

The 20-year time span was a period of momentous change in the Third World, including independence movements in Africa, the Arab-Israeli wars, the Vietnam War, the outcome of the Cultural Revolution in China, and changes in governments in Latin America. "The coverage in the Canadian media of these events, momentous as they often were for the developing world, was episodic, frequently cursory, and generally Western-oriented and politically fixated."

Walker says the amount of coverage dedicated to Third World news has changed little over the last two decades. From 1966 to 1986, the five newspapers he examined published an average of 11 Third World items a day, filling 5.27 per cent of the newshole available. (The average printed in 1966 was 11.24 items. This declined to 10.73 in 1976 and 10.58 in 1986.)

However, the later articles tend to be longer. Items of three to four paragraphs were common in 1966, but these gave way to more substantial pieces in 1986. Another trend was the growth in travel features. But hard news still accounted for more than three-quarters of Third World coverage in 1986, as it did in 1966.

"It is very difficult for anyone, foreign affairs expert or ordinary uninformed reader, to get much information about a foreign culture, its background, its political, social or economic problems, from articles that are anywhere from one paragraph to four or five in length."

Walker says he is disturbed to find that while there is coverage of foreign relations, such as meetings between political

Our faces are red. . . .

We'd like to proclaim our innocence but the evidence is there in black and white for all to see: the proofreading of the November/December issue was not what it might have been. Typos in articles and a headline were compounded by misspelling a contributor's name not once, but twice. Our apologies to Philip Jalsevac of the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*.

leaders, there is relatively little news on development aid, culture or customs, social measures, human rights education and religion.

It is often assumed that *The Globe and Mail*, with its network of foreign bureaus, provides more space for Third World coverage than the average newspaper. To test this, Walker selected a date from each of the years studied that had a significant amount of Third World coverage in the other papers. On the 1966 date, *The Globe and Mail* ran 14 items, taking up 3.8 per cent of the news hole. In 1976, 18 items took up 9.8 per cent and in 1986, 20 items made up 11.5 per cent. Two of these were half-page features on Sri Lankan cuisine.

"Adding *The Globe and Mail* to the original survey of the five would not have greatly changed the overall results," he concludes.

In an interview, Walker said Third World news is increasingly important to Canadian audiences. "A lot of new people are coming to Canada from these countries who will be a lot more interested in Third World events."

He added that the importance of "solid reporting, thoughtful analysis and forthright editorializing" for these people should not be minimized. □

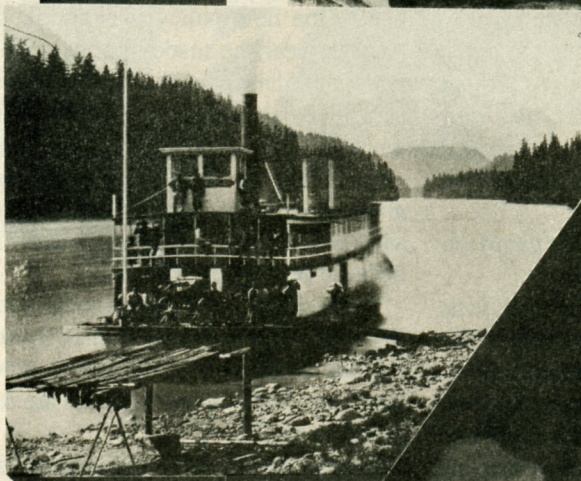
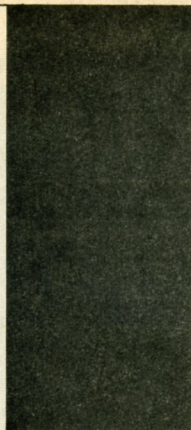
-- Doni Eve

Doni Eve is an Ottawa freelance writer.

New editor bans anonymous news sources

The perennial journalistic issue of when -- or whether -- reporters may quote unnamed sources is being debated around the newsroom at the *Ottawa Citizen*.

The reason is the arrival of a new editor, Gordon Fisher, former managing editor of the *Vancouver Sun*. During his tenure at *The Sun*, Fisher banned the use of anonymous sources in most news copy. He has decided to bring the same policy



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to Ottawa, a city that supplies more news reports attributed to sources and unnamed government officials than any other place in Canada.

The new, unwritten *Citizen* policy says that stories must have full attribution "in all cases unless there are extremely good reasons not to do it," Fisher says. Exceptions to the rule must be approved by a senior editor.

The policy is meant to rid the newspaper of what Fisher sees as a serious problem: promising anonymity to sources "gives these people too much rein in determining coverage without having the courage to identify themselves," he says.

The rule is also intended to improve the newspaper's credibility.

But not everyone believes the use of unnamed sources is a problem.

"I think the importance of a story is its content," says Greg Weston, *The Citizen's* senior national correspondent.

Weston believes that a blanket prohibition on using anonymous sources would limit journalists and the public to hearing only the official government line.

"The truth may be elsewhere," he says. But the chances of a reporter finding a bureaucrat to criticize government policy or operations on the record are slim. "It's not going to happen," he says.

"This is a government that tried to put the lid on the bureaucracy by telling them you can talk to the media as long as you're named," says Weston. "Fortunately, we have people who work in the public service who have consciences and a sense of morality."

Weston says about half his story leads come from anonymous sources. But information given to him by sources is confirmed through other sources and documents. Weston adds that even before the new policy was announced late last year, he made sure his editors knew the identity of his unnamed sources. "They're ultimately responsible for what goes in the paper."

Fisher agrees there are times when anonymous sources are necessary, but says sources are too often unidentified because of lazy reporting.

"It gets down to interviews on the street. We read, 'one man, one woman thinks.' I'd like to know how old she is, where she lives. That's what reporters are supposed to do."

Several other news organizations have their own policies on the use of unnamed sources. At *The Canadian Press* and *The Globe and Mail*, for example, reporters must tell their editor before making any deals with sources.

Paul Palango, *The Globe and Mail's* na-

tional editor, says it's naive to believe a newspaper can operate without using some material from anonymous sources.

"There are certain instances -- especially if you're dealing with crime, corruption -- where you may be required to use 'sources say.' Not to do this would be a crime against the public interest," says Palango.

Canadian law offers no guarantee of confidentiality for unnamed sources, since a journalist may be required to identify a source in a courtroom. Palango, Fisher and Weston agree that a source should never be given the impression there is absolute protection.

This may damage a journalist's relationship with present or future contacts, but Palango says the use of unnamed sources is often in the public's best interest.

"For a journalist to hide behind the wonderful notion of 'I can use someone only if he's on the record and anything otherwise isn't ethical' -- I think they're being unethical and cowardly." □

-- Chethan Lakshman

Chethan Lakshman is a student in the Carleton University School of Journalism.

Content 'foster parent' dies at 57

Eleanor Wright Pelrine, who died in December at the age of 57, was known nationally as a *Toronto Star* columnist and author of two books on abortion, *Abortion in Canada* and *Morgentaler -- The Doctor who Couldn't Turn Away*. *Content* readers knew her in a different capacity: as the editor who brought *content* to Humber College in 1982.

After more than six years of nurturing the magazine and trying to build up circulation and advertising, publisher Barrie Zwicker decided in 1981 to suspend publication and sell *content*. Wright Pelrine, who was on the faculty of the creative and communications arts department at Humber, came up with the idea of buying the magazine and running it from the college.

The move to Humber was a mixed success. Publication

was sporadic and revenue a problem, but the magazine survived. In 1984 a new group, Friends of *content*, took over the magazine after Humber decided it could no longer afford to run it. Dick MacDonald, the magazine's founder, became editor, a job he held until his death in 1988.

"Eleanor Wright Pelrine provided a temporary haven for *content* when it needed a home, for which *content* is grateful," says Katie FitzRandolph of Friends of *content*.

At the time of her death Wright Pelrine was director of the Ontario New Home Warranty Program. In addition to her work as a journalist, she was a teacher, labor negotiator, script writer and public speaker. She served for a time as vice-president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and ran for the NDP against Liberal Mitchell Sharp in 1972. □



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Requiem for a
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All-news radio got off on wrong foot and never recovered

by Tony Van Alphen

CKO Radio sounded like a "ding-dong school" at one time, in the words of a former boss, but more than programming problems contributed to the all-news network's death.

Two critical components -- its mandate from government and a lack of listener profiles -- dogged the company from the moment the network hit the air waves in 1976 until the owners finally pulled the plug last November after \$55 million in losses.

A combination of factors, which were out of its control, resulted in a classic financial squeeze. On one hand, CKO had to spend a lot of money to fulfill its mandate to open new stations. On the other, the network couldn't generate adequate revenue because of what it called woefully inaccurate listenership reports by the industry's Bureau of Broadcast Measurement (BBM). Low listenership numbers meant it couldn't charge as much for advertising.

"It was flawed from the start," says Tayler Parnaby, the network's president from 1981-86.

Parnaby says he believes the Canadian

Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) did not have the technical ability to properly evaluate the original CKO application.

And he adds the people who made the application had little experience in understanding the difficulties CKO would face in setting up a national network.

"CKO was the most complex form of radio broadcasting I've ever seen in 35 years in the business," says Parnaby, current news director at Toronto's CFRB, the country's largest radio station.

For example, the network aired in four different time zones. It meant the break-fast period stretched until noon and the drive-home slot extended to 9 p.m.

Addressing those problems cost money and the expenses climbed as CKO filled in the network with more stations under its mandate from the CRTC, which required more regional content.

"It's one thing to set up an all-news station in one local market. But to do it on FM in many cities compounded everything. It sapped their financial resources in a very short period of time," says Parnaby.

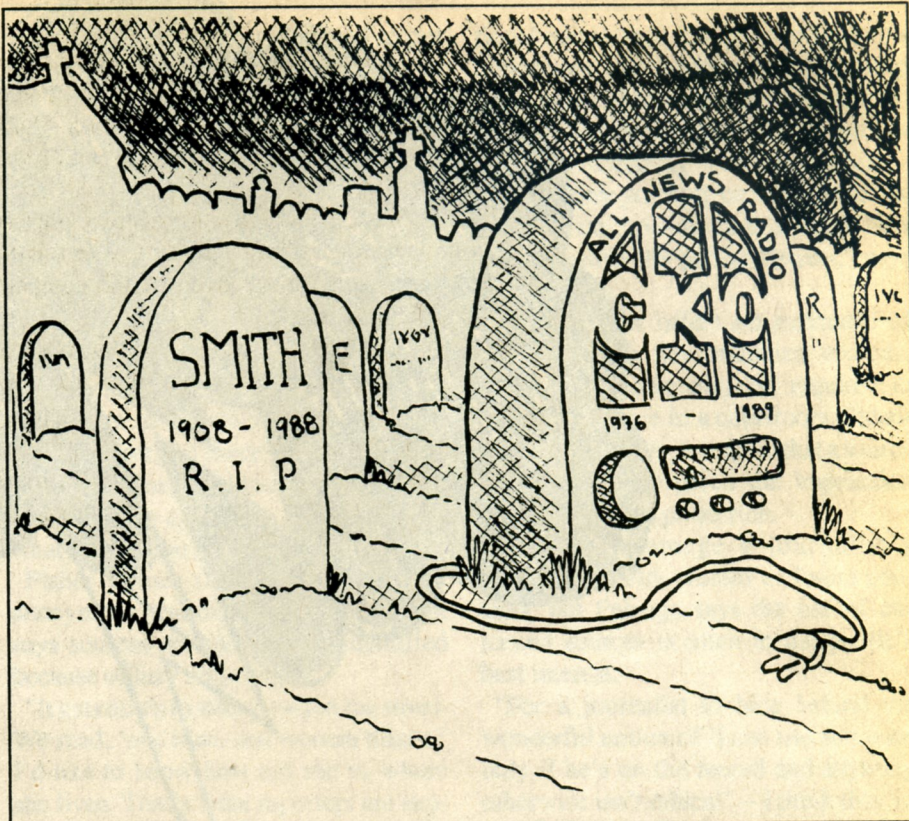
Industry officials note CKO had no chance of success because of CRTC's insistence on holding the network to the mandate of adding stations even as the 1982 recession adversely affected CKO's advertising revenues.

"Canada might have been able to support all-news stations in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver and could later have filled in other spots in Canada by affiliation as the economy matured," says Toronto broadcaster Jeremy Brown.

At the same time, CKO said it couldn't generate enough advertising revenue. But network officials argued that it wasn't because of low listenership. They blamed the BBM's system of measurement for not adequately reflecting listener levels.

Parnaby says CKO's audience had better than average education, used news information and were always busy.

"The propensity of our listeners to be involved in a radio survey was the least of any station because they were just too busy doing other things to fill them out. Our listeners were also more likely to have unlisted numbers so they couldn't



be contacted for the surveys."

CKO's listeners also tended to get news bites from the network, turn to something else and forget they had tuned in. Later recall studies by CKO found that the CKO audience was quite large but no one used them because they weren't numbers from an independent source, says Parnaby.

Advertising agencies said getting reliable audience figures for the station posed problems. Clients usually rely on the BBM numbers and that made it difficult for them to justify buying time on CKO.

"The reach according to...(the BBM)...survey was very low," says Judy Goddard, associate media director for McKim Advertising in Toronto. "But the listening trend was that people were tuning in and out. When filling out the diary at the end of the week, it was hard for people to remember that they had listened 15 minutes during the week."

Parnaby says managers at higher-rated all-news stations in the U.S. were also scratching their heads at BBM's low numbers for CKO, because their population concentration and income level demographics for markets similar to Toronto were the same.

"They couldn't figure it out," he says.

CKO, which was controlled through a unit of Agra Industries Ltd. of Saskatoon, said it spent millions of dollars on product improvement in recent years but

critics say programming was still inconsistent and lacked overall quality.

CKO never understood the national audience's need for depth, color, objectivity and background, says Greg Quill, who covers broadcasting for the *Toronto Star*.

"CKO's bits and pieces were often very good, occasionally perceptive and on the ball, sometimes ahead of the competition.

"But they were never more than bits and pieces, thrown together with little concern for the demands of breaking news or sports stories. They were info-bits disguised as 'news magazine format,' and Canadians simply wanted more."

Parnaby acknowledges CKO also started badly with varying degrees of quality in programming which hurt a lot.

"There is a truism in broadcasting, that I'm sure is the same in publishing. If you get off on the wrong foot, it's virtually impossible to recover. When the system came on the air, it was like a ding-dong school."

Michael Vaughan, who led a group which expressed an interest in buying CKO in its dying days, called the network's programming "awful."

Some media watchers say CBC radio, which has a similar upscale and educated audience but no commercials, was too much competition. They add the advent of CBC's Newsworld on television will kill any rejuvenation of the all-news con-

cept for radio.

But Vaughan, president of Tier One Communications, a Toronto-based corporate communications firm, says his group will apply for the licences that CKO gave up because it believes the idea can work. The group won't ask for any alterations to the licences, he adds. "We believe a coast-to-coast network can be commercially viable," Vaughan says.

He adds other broadcasters have also expressed interest to the CRTC about acquiring the licences.

Agra sold Cybermedix Inc., the subsidiary that controlled CKO, last September to Cogeco Inc. for \$255 million.

The CKO shutdown of stations in Toronto, London, Ottawa, Montreal, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg and Halifax came as regulators considered approval of the sale to Cogeco, a Montreal-based media company.

The CRTC is still considering the sale. There was some speculation that the broadcast regulator might have forced Cogeco to retain CKO in order to win approval for licences to the cable systems, but the CRTC has not commented on that possibility. □

Tony Van Alphen, a business reporter at the Toronto Star, specializes in media and entertainment companies, marketing, advertising and sports properties.

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MADCAP!

Life with Pierre one long sitcom: tab scribe

by Nick Auf der Maur

The *Montreal Daily News* was a quirky, sometimes manic experience, a peculiar and failed attempt to create a second English-language newspaper in Montreal.

The *Daily News* adventure can be characterized as "madcap," an apt reflection of the personality of owner Pierre Peladeau, head of Quebecor, the giant (well in excess of \$1 billion annual sales) newspaper, printing and paper empire he started from scratch on a \$2,000 loan from his mother in the 1950s.

As a columnist at the *Daily News* I often wondered if I was living through a sitcom, or a grubby soap opera.

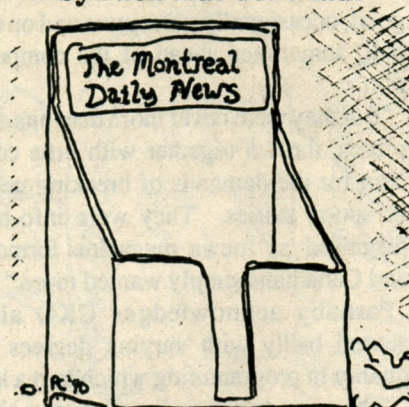
But it was wonderful, even during the long, agonizing death watch as the Quebecor board mulled killing the little tabloid that was staining the balance sheets with red ink. It was wonderful because inevitably we all knew that some day we would sit back and laugh at our two-year saga of futility.

Yet despite the almost shoestring operation, there was an underdog zest and vitality to the paper that was sometimes reminiscent of a college paper.

It was apt that the *Montreal Daily News* was launched on a whim, partially because of the mercurial owner's desire for revenge against *The Gazette*, Southam's English-language daily monopoly in Montreal.

In 1986, then *Gazette* publisher Clarke Davey got the newspaper involved in backing a short-lived French tabloid, *Le Matin*, in competition with Montreal's three French dailies, one of which (*Journal de Montreal*) Quebecor owned, and one of which (*Le Devoir*) Quebecor prints, distributes and subsidizes.

Le Matin, which was printed by *The Gazette*, folded after a month but Peladeau didn't forget Southam's ef-



frontery in encroaching on his turf.

In the summer of 1987, Peladeau mused before a Canadian Club audience in Montreal that perhaps *The Gazette* needed some competition. He always had ambitions of expanding his newspaper empire into the English language, despite a ruinous and costly effort in Philadelphia a decade ago.

Early that fall, Peladeau invited me for lunch to discuss the project, asking if I'd be interested in running it. I wasn't, but suggested Mark Starowicz, creator of CBC's "As It Happens," "Sunday Morning" and "The Journal," as the ideal candidate to create an upscale, middle-class tabloid capable of challenging *The Gazette*.

Peladeau called up George MacLaren, owner and publisher of *The Sherbrooke Record*, the only other English daily in Quebec, and asked him if he'd like to be publisher of the forthcoming *Montreal Daily News*. MacLaren, who had bought his paper from Conrad Black in 1977, said he was busy running his own paper. "I'll buy it from you," Peladeau said.

And so, in late fall of 1987, MacLaren was named publisher and assigned the task of building a staff.

Meanwhile, Peladeau got the equally flamboyant British newspaper tycoon, Robert Maxwell, to take a 25 per cent share of the *Daily News*. Maxwell was

grateful to Peladeau for helping him acquire a 49 per cent interest in Donahue Paper when the two of them bought the newsprint giant from Quebec's Caisse de Depot pension fund., thus bypassing any foreign investment review problems.

MacLaren signed on James Duff, a CBC morning man who had worked for him at the *Record*, as editor. Soon they had a core of about 10 people, including executive editor Don Foley from Ottawa, and John Elder, the New Zealand news editor with London tabloid experience who was wooed away from the *Gazette*.

Under constant pressure from Peladeau to start production "tomorrow," the staff madly ran around looking for office space and qualified staff, while MacLaren purchased a complicated Harris computer pagination system.

No extensive market survey was done and no research was undertaken to discover what potential readers would like to see in a newspaper.

Everything was done by the seat of the pants and gut instinct, largely Peladeau's feeling that the new paper would survive by appealing primarily to "ethnics" rather than the *Gazette*'s traditional client base in the English middle class, represented by the West Island.

A designer was engaged to create a logo and mockup of the paper, a design that was elegant and appealing. Unfortunately, the design was never really followed. When the paper first came out on March 15, 1988 it appeared to be what it was -- a last-minute, slap-dash affair, appealing alternately to a middle class audience and a mythical non-existent blue collar crowd eager for a low market tabloid.

The *Montreal Daily News* never developed a consistent "look" aside from the general dog's breakfast appearance it immediately assumed.

News editor Elder, because of admira-

tion for the British tabloid look, had a penchant for writing snappy headlines, many of which read like cryptic crossword puzzle clues. (e.g. "Out!" or "Disgrace!")

One of the problems was the Harris computer system, and the set up in which the paper was prepared in editorial offices downtown and printed in a Quebecor plant in a Montreal suburb. Unbeknownst to MacLaren, the system had never before been used to produce a paper remote.

In the first three or four months of its existence, the paper only managed to meet its 12:30 a.m. production deadline about three times.

Distribution, handled by another Quebecor subsidiary, Les Messagers Dynamique, which had no other English titles, was an ongoing disaster.

The *Gazette* circulation is roughly 70 per cent home delivery and 30 per cent newsstand sales, while the *Journal de Montreal* is roughly the reverse, reflecting different habits and lifestyles between the English and French market, a factor that was never taken into consideration. A proper home delivery system never was set up.

Les Messagers Dynamique didn't seem to have any idea where to place newsboxes. For example, when after over a month into publication it finally gave MacLaren a list of where the boxes were located, he found seven were located on the campus of the Universite de Montreal (next to *Journal de Montreal* boxes) and not a single one at McGill or Concordia universities or any English CEGEP (junior college.)

Another major mistake was setting the price at 50 cents a copy, instead of undercutting the *Gazette* which also sells for 50 cents.

Back in the editorial offices, feuding and office politics reigned supreme, with the first firings occurring two weeks in. And within eight months of launch, eight of the original 10 core staff were fired, producing unexpected costly settlements on top of unexpectedly low ad revenue.

Battle royals were the rule, with fierce arguments -- often punctuated by the hurling of telephones and other office

equipment -- over the paper's direction. Circulation quickly set in at an abysmal 11,000, sometimes rising to 17,000 if deadlines were met and the distributors managed to locate outlets in English parts of the city.

In terms of local news content, the paper did quite well, often scooping rivals, often distinguishing itself with spot news coverage such as the St. Basile le Grand PCB fire.

It also had a fair assortment of columns and features, but since they were often done on a freelance basis, when budget cuts came they were the first to go, followed by whole sections, such as business and lifestyles.

Last year MacLaren was removed as publisher and made Quebecor vice-president for English newspapers (which included the *Record* and *Winnipeg Sun*). Managing editor Duff was made publisher, and later both were fired separately.

For a time, Peladeau put his son, Pierre-Karl, in charge of the paper, along with a *Journal de Montreal* editor, Robert Lablondie, the same man he put in charge of Montreal's old *Sunday Express* after he bought the paper only to fold it six months later.

Everyone knew the end was coming, since Peladeau hinted broadly at throwing in the towel at least six months before he finally did so.

Most of the Quebecor board had been unenthusiastic about the *Montreal Daily News* adventure from the outset, but went along with Peladeau's whims.

However, Quebecor's management kept the paper under a tight financial reign and never allowed the paper all the resources it required to survive, such as developing its own distribution system or escaping from the *Journal de Montreal* blue collar tabloid look.

Toward the end, staff morale was sustained by gallows humor.

As Christmas and Peladeau's Dec. 15 deadline for finding a buyer approached, a Christmas tree was erected in the editorial office, decorated with pink slips bearing the names of the remaining staff.

If there is a market for a second English paper in Montreal, it is doubtful anyone

will ever try to fill the void after the experience of the *Daily News*. □

Nick Auf der Maur has been a columnist with The Montreal Gazette and Montreal Daily News. He is returning to the Gazette as a columnist.

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Reluctant embrace

The federal government and access to information

by Tom Onyshko

Television journalist Kirk Lapointe had decided to use the federal government's *Access to Information Act* to get some background on the abortion controversy. "I asked for all the records that both the Justice and Health and Welfare departments had that would give me a view on how available abortions are in this country," says Lapointe, a reporter with CBC Newsworld.

But Lapointe's request ran up against a "stone wall" at Justice. Officials there "costed out" what he was after: to search through the department's holdings for relevant records would require a fee of \$1,100. And most, if not all, of the records would be exempt from access anyway, they told him.

Health and Welfare seemed to deal with the request differently. Officials there didn't have the same trouble assembling the information, but the material they gathered went to the minister's office. "It's been hung up in the minister's office for about two weeks," Lapointe says, adding he no longer is optimistic it will be released.

Stories like Lapointe's are common among journalists who make frequent use of the federal access law. Journalists and access experts complain of increasing delays and say the government has grown more sophisticated in its ability to block the release of information.

Perhaps this explains why fewer and fewer access requests are coming from journalists. According to statistics supplied by the Treasury Board, the government body which co-ordinates the administration of the access law, only 609 access requests were made by the media in the one-year period from April 1, 1988 to March 31, 1989.

That's the lowest number of requests from the media since it began to collect

statistics on the sources of access requests in 1985-86. The statistics also show that while the total number of access requests has been steadily increasing, requests from the media have been falling since a peak of 1,088 in 1986-87.

"The stuff you get most of the time is so filled with white spots [i.e., deletions], you ask yourself why the hell you bother," says David Vienneau, of the *Toronto Star* who has filed more than

with the operations of the institution, and second, where the request requires consultation with another government institution or a third party.

These extensions have become routine, Vienneau says. It takes 60 to 90 days for him to see the results of an average access request. To get information within the 30-day limit is an exception.

Others report the same problems.

Iain Hunter, the reporter who co-ordinates access requests for the *Ottawa Citizen*, gives the example of a request to the Department of Finance for government financial forecasts made before the 1988 election.

Hunter wanted the forecasts to see if the government had predicted future economic problems while, on the campaign trail, it was boasting that it had the deficit under control.

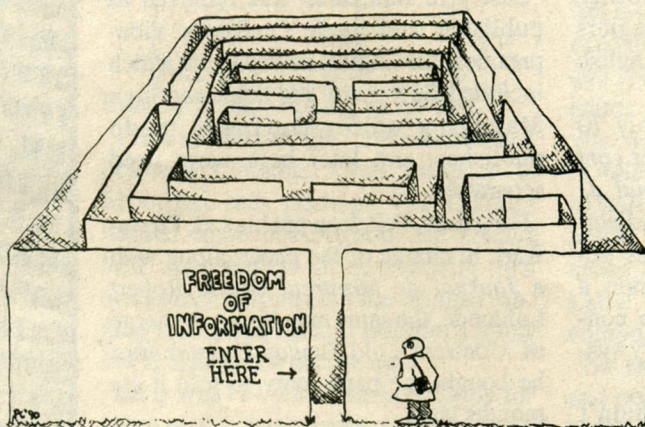
When Hunter requested the forecasts in March, Finance officials immediately requested a 90-day extension. The extension expired, "then everything went dead." Hunter kept calling the department, but they made no progress on his request. "It was pure stone-walling," he says.

In July, Hunter complained to the office of the Information Commissioner (the ombudsman charged with investigating complaints under the access law). The Information Commissioner investigated the complaint and, in August, recommended Finance release the documents.

Finance Minister Michael Wilson is still refusing to release, claiming that the documents fall within one of the access law's exemptions.

In its 1987-88 annual report on the access law, the Treasury Board reported that more than 30 per cent of all access requests in 1987-88 took longer than 30 days. In fact, 15 per cent of all requests took longer than 61 days.

And Information Commissioner Inger



300 access requests. He has requested information about the presence of alleged war criminals in Canada, travel expenses of government officials and studies on sexual assault law reform.

The biggest problem, Vienneau says, is delay. For a journalist functioning on deadlines it can be fatal. And delays have become more and more common.

Ken Rubin, an access to information expert, agrees. Rubin has used the access law several hundred times and has compiled studies on the effectiveness of the law. He found government departments now take long time extensions before releasing information.

The act says officials must release information (or provide reasons why it will not be released) within 30 days after the access request is received. However, the law allows officials to extend the limit by a "reasonable time" in two circumstances: first, where meeting the original limit would "unreasonably interfere"

Hansen has expressed concern about the growing delays. "This increasing failure of government institutions to meet legislated response deadlines leaves users wondering whether problems are operational or attitudinal," she wrote in her 1988-89 annual report on the access law.

Hansen's office conducted a special study of delays for the annual report. The study concluded that "delays are largely systemic in nature." It pointed to a lack of staff committed to access to information work and the presence of complex procedures for the approval of releases of information.

Some government institutions have refused to delegate the discretion to release information so that the minister in charge must approve all releases, the report noted. This results in lengthy and complex procedures which must be followed to obtain the minister's signature.

At External Affairs, the department's annual access report shows that of the 264 access requests processed in 1988-89, 154 took more than 30 days. And almost a quarter of the requests took longer than 121 days.

But delays in access are not the only complaints made by journalists and access experts. They say the government has grown much more proficient at denying access -- by one means or another.

"It was much easier to get information when the government wasn't so well versed in how to block the release of information," Vienneau says.

He notes that although the law permits access to cabinet discussion papers if the decisions they relate to have been made public or are more than four years old, he has not succeeded in obtaining discussion papers dated later than January of 1986. Officials respond that the documents do not exist. Vienneau surmises that cabinet discussion papers are no longer produced, and cabinet ministers receive oral briefings instead.

The Information Commission has also noticed the change. In a background paper on the access law, Hansen wrote that, since the law came into force, "the keeping of verbatim minutes of meetings has virtually disappeared... . Officials

confirm less is committed to writing."

Journalists and access experts also agree that the bureaucracy has grown more sophisticated in its responses to access requests.

"They've become more adept at citing exemptions," says Michael Dagg, an access to information consultant who makes access requests for businesses and individuals. "At finance they always cite three or four exemptions for each cut."

Vienneau says "they've learned to claim everything. When in doubt, claim everything."

The Information Commissioner is also concerned. In her latest annual report she wrote that "the large number of valid complaints of refusals to grant access makes it clear that many requestors do not initially receive all the information to which they are entitled."

And the "steady increase" in the number of court applications brought to review denials of access shows that "public perception of the intent of Parliament and the meaning of the law differs considerably from that of the government institutions."

Hansen's annual report shows that from February 1988 to February 1989 the Information Commissioner's office applied to federal court 11 times on behalf of people who had experienced delays or denials of access. In four cases, the government released the disputed information almost immediately after Hansen applied to the court.

The root of the problems, Hansen suggests, is the government's attitude toward access to information. While the government might have embraced access to information principles when it enacted the access law in 1982, "the embrace remains cool and reluctant."

Hansen has spoken more bluntly elsewhere. "Unfortunately, investigations often reveal a picture of a government that uses every opportunity to say no, or if that fails, to delay the process," she wrote in a paper released last February.

And a paper from September, 1988, contains her harshest criticism. "With few exceptions, there is no longer any clear message from the government,

whether from the politicians or the bureaucracy, that Canadians have a legislated right to access and that the law ought to be obeyed in a willing, forthright and timely fashion."

But the declining use of the access law by the media may also have other roots.

"Not every journalist likes the act because it's frustrating and time consuming," Rubin says. "Few journalists use it to generate stories. Some use it for confirmation. Most don't use it."

A report that takes months to get might only be worth a few paragraphs in a news story, Hunter says.

"Perhaps journalists thought when the act first came out they could meet deadlines with it," says Assistant Information Commissioner Bill McGibbon. "But it doesn't work when you get information three or four months down the line."

Lapointe agrees. He's used the access law about 65 times in the last 10 weeks to get information on everything from the expenses of running 24 Sussex Drive to airport security and public opinion polls. He says using the access law requires following up access requests with phone calls to government access workers and, sometimes, complaining to the Information Commissioner.

Though journalists may be discouraged by delays and refusals, more should use the access law, Lapointe says. "It's an important tool."

Hunter says the reason people are encountering more refusals is that they're asking for records more damaging to government. Rather than write trivial stories, "I'm being more selective in what I use it for."

Lapointe points out that the law is a good way to get background for big stories. He calls it more a "tool of history" than a tool of the media.

But he says it can also be used to generate front page stories. "You just have to think about what you want to go after. And be patient." □

Tom Onyshko, a graduate in law who specializes in access to information issues, is enrolled in the Master of Journalism program at Carleton University.

More state intrusion?

New Broadcast Act expands government powers

by Tim Creery

Bill C-40, the proposed legislation to replace the 1968 Broadcasting Act, increases state cultural controls in Canada in four important ways.

1. The bill broadens the definition of broadcasting, placing a wider range of culture under the regulation and supervision of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission.

2. The prescriptive section of the legislation, laying down the objectives of broadcasting, is more detailed and demanding.

3. The bill equips the CRTC with a kind of taxing authority to give it more power over broadcasters.

4. The government of the day receives broad authority to issue policy directives to the CRTC, ending the arm's length relationship between the government and the regulatory and supervisory body.

The government party -- and the other parties, too -- seem to find this kind of cultural tutelage "demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society," to borrow the language of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Otherwise, they would have to find it inconsistent with the Charter's guarantee of "freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication."

Let us look at the four prongs of state intrusion in the studio.

Definition of Broadcasting

The act's definition of broadcasting is critical, since it determines the ambit of CRTC regulation and supervision. The new bill expands the definition to cover transmissions, not only by radio waves, but also by "other means of telecommunication." That means "wire, visual or other electromagnetic system or any optical or technical system."

Until Bill C-40, broadcasting legislation made some pretence of confining its

scope to radiocommunication -- that is, transmissions over the airwaves intended for the general public -- and networks that supplied broadcasting stations with programming. Cable distribution was dragged in by its hind leg in the 1968 Broadcasting Act on the grounds that a cable operator is a "broadcasting receiving undertaking." This clause enabled the CRTC to regulate cable operators as though they were radio or TV stations.

In Bill C-40, however, broadcast regulation and supervision simply takes leave of the main reason for its existence: the scarcity of over-the-air frequencies. The Broadcasting Act becomes, as government spokesmen like to euphemistically say, "technology neutral," meaning technologically all-inclusive.

Broadcasting is further defined to mean transmission of "programs," and a wedge is driven between freedom of the press and freedom of broadcasting by excluding transmissions "predominantly of alphanumeric text" from the definition of programs. Say it in electronic print, and you have more freedom than if you say it in electronic sound or pictures.

Bill C-40, introduced by Communications Minister Marcel Masse in the fall of 1989, casts the broadcasting net even wider than former Communications Minister Flora MacDonald's predecessor Bill C-136 in 1988. In the meantime, the Supreme Court affirmed federal jurisdiction over telephone communication. The new bill no longer exempts transmission of programs "made on the demand of a particular person for reception only by that person" from the definition of broadcasting. Point-to-point communication is thus brought under the act for the first time. Pay-per-program services, such as videos ordered by phone and perhaps distributed on fibre-optic phone lines, will come under the Broadcasting Act.

Prescribed Viewing and Listening

Although broadcasting is now to include all electronic and photonic means of transmission, the "radio frequencies" of yore are still cited in the opening of the prescriptive subsection of the act, 3(1). Radio frequencies, described as "public property," are the pretext for declaring that broadcasting, whether from public or private sources, is "a public service essential to the maintenance and enhancement of national identity and cultural sovereignty."

(Under section 36 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Ottawa and the provinces are committed to "providing essential public services of reasonable quality to all Canadians.")

Having subsumed broadcasting to patriotic purposes, Bill C-40 tells broadcasters what they should broadcast.

The Canadian broadcasting system should "serve to safeguard, enrich and strengthen the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of Canada." Broadcasting should encourage the development of Canadian expression by providing a wide range of programming that reflects Canadian attitudes, opinions, ideas, values, and artistic creativity. It should serve the needs and interests, and reflect the circumstances and aspirations of Canadians.

Each element in Canadian broadcasting "shall" contribute appropriately to the whole. Programming should be predominantly Canadian, of high standard, varied and comprehensive. It should provide a balance of information, enlightenment and entertainment for men and women of all ages, interests and tastes. It should provide a reasonable opportunity for the public to be exposed to the expression of differing views on matters of public concern.

There is more, much more. This part of

the act has been expanded from about 400 words in the 1968 act to more than 1,000 in Bill C-40. The mechanism for bringing broadcasters into line remains the same. Subsection 3(2) declares once more that Canadian broadcasting -- radio, TV; public, private, community; by airwaves, cable, telephone, satellite; from whatever production source -- is a "single system" best regulated and supervised by a "single independent public authority."

Power of the CRTC

Sections 5 to 32 set out the manner in which the CRTC "shall regulate and supervise all aspects of the Canadian broadcasting system with a view to implementing the broadcasting policy set out in subsection 3(1)."

Advocates of freedom of broadcasting have taken some small comfort in the past from the fact that the CRTC's powers to be as intrusive as the prescriptive section would like it to be were limited. Enthusiasts for putting the boots to the broadcasters, on the other hand, felt the CRTC was weak-kneed in exercising the powers it had, and in any case needed more. Bill C-40 gives it more.

The Commission has always been able to set licence fees in consultation with the Treasury Board. In future, under section 11, it will be able to vary fees according to the performance of broadcasters in meeting "criteria that the Commission deems appropriate," including "objectives for the broadcasting of Canadian programs". In other words, the CRTC gets a kind of punitive taxing power, uncontrolled by Parliament, to force its programming will on the broadcasters.

Power of the Government

Until now, the government of the day has been quite limited in its power to give orders to the CRTC, as befits its relationship with a quasi-judicial regulatory agency. Cabinet can, for example, direct the Commission to the types of applicants who qualify for licenses, but cannot determine which licences are issued to particular applicants. It can require the CRTC to re-hear a case and can set aside a CRTC licensing decision.

Bill C-40, however, empowers the government to go much further. Cabinet can direct the CRTC on broad policy matters connected with the objectives of broadcasting in subsection 3(1) and the objectives of regulatory policy. The new provision requires consultation with the CRTC, an opportunity for public submissions, and consideration by a parliamentary committee before the directive goes into effect. The government order can become binding regardless of the outcome of this process.

The Supervisory State

The extraordinary intrusiveness of the state under the proposed broadcasting legislation comes at a time when one might expect the state to retreat from the studio. After all, we normally think of freedom of expression as entitling the public to a free flow of information, entertainment and opinion from the widest possible variety of sources. We don't think of it as a bunch of government appointees, or the government itself, regulating and supervising the content of programming to see that it holds the social fabric together, provides high standards, ensures comprehensiveness, reflects attitudes and opinions, gives reasonable coverage of different points of view, and so on.

What we should expect is strong provision against concentration of ownership, and media cross-ownership, that would tend to limit the diversity of sources of programming. But there is not a word about this. The CRTC is able to continue its recent trend of allowing concentration of broadcasting licences in fewer hands in return for promised "benefit packages" of programming meeting the criteria of section 3(1).

The CRTC's 1989 annual report shows that -- in what the broadcasting legislation pretends is a "single system" -- there are 385 program-originating AM radio stations, 305 FM stations, 135 television stations. A vast number of networks link stations and often, as in the case of the CBC, CTV, TVA, TVOntario, Radio Quebec, Global, Quatre-Saisons and so on, originate programming. There are 17 pay-tv and specialty services. Many

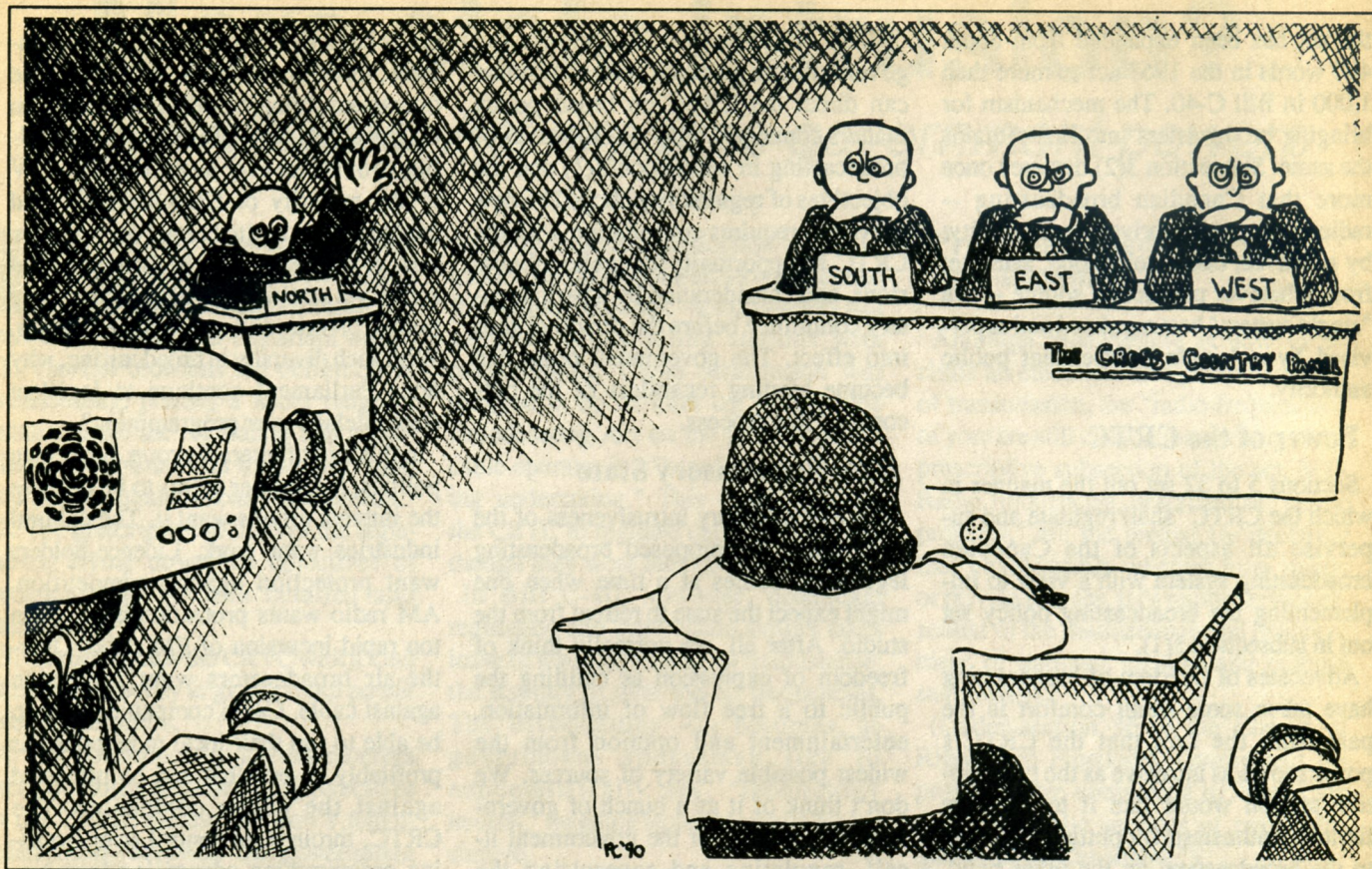
cities have more than a dozen radio stations, three or more TV stations. Cable operations, bringing off-air signals from distant points, as well as signals via satellite, provide an ever larger choice of TV to the majority of Canadians. Beyond cabled areas, multichannel services are now available directly to the home consumer via satellite. We have a mixture of public, private, and community services. With such diversity in broadcasting, why does Parliament continue to legislate state tutelage over programming?

In this age of interest-group, brokerage politics, the answer seems to be because the interest groups want it. The cultural industries want work. Licence-holders want protection against competition. AM radio wants protection against the too rapid incursion of FM radio. Over-the-air broadcasters want protection against cable. Cable companies want to be able to run their local monopolies as profitably as possible and be protected against the phone companies. The CRTC, through its control over licensing, programming, advertising, introduction of new services based on innovative technology, and so on is a powerful protector of the favored.

The new broadcasting act is a lobbied law, representing a consensus of special interests, brokered by the politicians, who have plenty of reasons to seek the favour of the media and avoid their disfavour. The legislation is largely designed by cultural bureaucrats, with an eye to expanding their jurisdiction and administrative role. The public interest in freedom of broadcasting is forgotten.

Freedom of broadcasting, meanwhile, is interpreted in subsection 3(3) of Bill C-40: "This Act shall be construed and applied in a manner that is consistent with the freedom of expression and journalistic creative and programming independence enjoyed by broadcasting undertakings." The broadcasters will enjoy what they enjoy. Lucky them. □

Tim Creery was director of research for the Kent Commission and a senior consultant to the Caplan-Sauvageau Task Force on Broadcasting Policy.



Lament for a region

*Not only does
Meech Lake accord
ignore the North,
but so do
the media*

by Jim Butler

If the first ministers had tried to impose on mainstream Canada the exclusions that the Meech Lake accord has on the North, there would have been deafening political hell to pay.

Because the region whose political evolution has suffered the most is thinly-populated, the startling political implications received only sporadic and limited attention in the southern press.

The story lies not only in the discrimination the Yukon and Northwest Territories faced under the accord, but in the explosion of bitterness that Meech Lake has detonated among northerners.

The territories' greatest consternation is rooted in the unanimity clause. Under it, the creation of a new province requires the consent of the territory involved, the federal government and all 10 provincial governments.

In other words, the maturation of the Northwest Territories (population 53,000) and the Yukon (population 30,000) into provinces could theoretically be held hostage by tiny Prince Edward Island for instance, denying consent

pending the federal government's concession on another, unrelated issue, whether it be regional development programs or dairy product quotas.

Prior to the 1982 patriation of the Constitution, the carving out of a new province was a matter solely between the federal government and the relevant territory. Under the 1982 amending formula, a new province required the blessing of the territory, Ottawa and seven provinces having at least 50 per cent of the population of Canada.

As well, in staunch contrast to provinces, the Meech Lake accord denies territories the right to nominate senators and Supreme Court judges. It fails to entrench the concept of self-government for aboriginal peoples. Finally, the 11 first ministers made these decisions behind closed doors in the spring of 1987 without the two territorial government leaders being permitted entry to plead their cases.

New Democratic Party Leader Audrey McLaughlin proposed a private member's bill in the House of Commons

in July, 1988, requesting that territorial leaders be included in future constitutional conferences. Adding to northerners' resentment, the Conservatives talked it out before a near-empty House of Commons on a Friday afternoon.

During the first few months after the accord was initialled, journalists who would have travelled to the North would have unearthed a hotbed of sentiments ranging from fury to shock, both among politicians and average citizens. Angry governments in both territories launched court actions against the accord. These actions climaxed in the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in June, 1988 to refuse to hear their case.

But that wasn't the end of the stories for the taking. The July, 1987 federal byelection that gave McLaughlin her first taste of Parliament was marked by the astoundingly naive declaration of David Leverton, her Conservative opponent, that the accord's effects on the Yukon were not consequential. Yukon Premier Tony Penikett even mused about the birth of a northern separatist movement, with the Yukon making representation for closer ties to the neighboring state of Alaska.

The southern media's coverage of all this was largely limited to occasions when northern politicians thrust themselves into major southern spotlights habitually patrolled by the media. These ranged from the Supreme Court of Canada to Penikett's memorable blast of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney on live television at the first ministers' conference of the fall of 1987, and Penikett's appearance before an Ontario legislative committee to argue his case against the accord.

Overall, the slim amount of coverage given this story is rooted in the generally-held sentiment that the North is irrelevant in the Canadian mosaic. The North sprawls across more than a third of Canada's land mass and the N.W.T. boasts 30 per cent of Canada's fresh water. The territories are home to 85,000 people -- a figure that may surprise southern Canadians who consider the top of their country to be dominated by polar bears, tundra, igloos and dog sleds.

The accord doesn't affect 25 million other Canadians the same ways it does a tiny number of northerners. This is a disincentive for sustained and high-profile coverage of the northern perspective.

The limited coverage of the North's fate under the accord can also be attributed to a vast dearth of knowledge about the region among reporters and editors who have never visited it. Many reporters from southern news organizations who do visit express surprise at the fact that the Yukon has a 16-member legislature and powers of responsible government that resemble any province's.

Though the Yukon's NDP government was elected in May, 1985, it took the 1988 death of the NDP government in Manitoba for the *Globe and Mail* to stop calling Howard Pauley's crew "Canada's only NDP government."

When the New Brunswick Conservative Party elected a woman leader in the fall of 1989, the *Globe* and many other news outlets called it the first time a woman had led a Conservative Party in Canada. Sharper memories and more thorough research would have informed them that Hilda Watson has that honor, having been elected leader of the Yukon Conservative Party, the equivalent to any other provincial party, in 1978.

Examples of the media's general ignorance about northern politics go on. CBC television commentators at the federal NDP leadership convention in Winnipeg declared that leadership candidate Ian Waddell had been the only candidate to have voted against the Meech accord. They failed to mention that McLaughlin had received special permission to vote against the accord from then NDP leader Ed Broadbent.

Part of the difficulties journalists have in assembling their knowledge of northern affairs is the limited information from northern news outlets trickling south. The daily *Whitehorse Star* is the only Yukon newspaper to file stories to Canadian Press. The *Star* is hardly on the mailing list of Canada's major newsrooms, and most reporters and news editors probably wouldn't have the time to read it if it was. CBC radio reporters in the North occasionally get regional

stories on the national network.

Northern visits by representatives of major news outlets are rare, usually occurring around such major political developments as territorial elections or a prime ministerial visit, when the pack-journalism phenomenon sets in.

The Canadian Press briefly experimented with a Yellowknife, N.W.T. bureau in the early 1980s, but it dissolved amidst the recession and budgetary constraints. The column from the Yukon that formerly appeared on the *Globe's* Nation page every second Saturday was axed five years ago, along with columns from other remote areas of Canada, as a cost-cutting measure.

As well, the North has only a limited number of politicians who can command media attention in the south. In the Yukon, for example, they are limited to one premier, one MP and one senator.

Yet another reason for sparse coverage of the North is economics.

Suppose a news organization sends a reporter to the Yukon to interview politicians, business leaders and other citizens about Meech Lake. The outlet may want to balance the hard news story by having the reporter fly to the remote northern Loucheux Indian village of Old Crow, for example, to profile the lifestyles of the most northwesterly settlement in Canada.

Estimated costs would include \$1,000 for airfare from the south to Whitehorse to Old Crow, \$200 for a rented car, and \$150 a day for food and accommodation. That's a \$2,000 outlay for two reasonable-length stories and perhaps a smattering of tips for the next trip north, maybe a year or two down the line. Entertaining but costly yarns!

McLaughlin's ascension to the NDP leadership has already resulted in a brighter spotlight being swivelled onto northern politics by newspapers, magazines and television alike. As the Meech Lake experience has shown, it's long over due. □

Jim Butler is editor of the Whitehorse Star.

Plagiarism....

....the cancer that destroys the very soul of journalism

by Verne Clemence

Plagiarism is to journalism what illicit sex is to TV evangelism. It's the unforgivable act, because it destroys trust.

Yet strangely, in one sense both are victimless crimes. If, for example, I steal the words of another to express an opinion, readers aren't necessarily harmed (at least not by my act of theft).

After all, wouldn't I be certain to steal only material with which I agreed? My readers would have gotten the same thing from me anyway, only in different words.

And couldn't the TV preacher's views on heaven and hell be valid even though he or she couldn't resist sins of the flesh?

Logic, perhaps, but fatally flawed. For both acts bespeak the very pinnacle of human hypocrisy.

The perpetrator, in righteous public utterances, accords the highest virtue to a certain kind of behavior, only to secretly do the opposite.

In reality, it's foolish to say plagiarism is a victimless crime. The real writer of the stolen words is the foremost victim. All those to whom the thief lies about the origin are close behind.

In the same way, the philandering TV preacher does egregious harm to a spouse, paramour or both. (Did we not see evidence of this very thing on the stricken faces of Tammy Faye and Jes-

sica Hahn?)

As is the case with racial or other kinds of discrimination, even acquiescence by the victims cannot sanction the behavior.

It all comes back to trust.

This point was once thrust upon me rudely a few years ago when I was

in Toronto.

A check with the paper's lawyer provided an outline of the options, which of course, were singularly unhelpful at that late date. Apologizing to all concerned and making a suitable payment seemed so inadequate.

The most satisfying response was to immediately contact the man who had sold me the piece -- a freelancer whose material I used occasionally -- and vent my feelings of betrayal by telling him to never darken our door again.

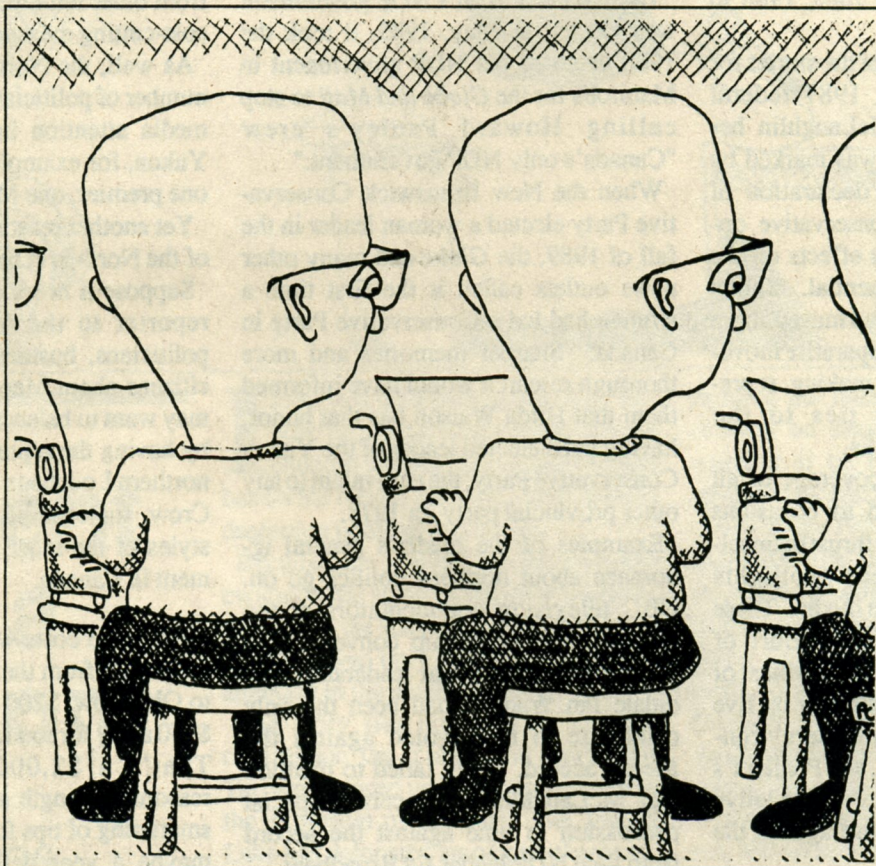
I was also most concerned to shore up my defenses against any recurrence, though that is easier said than done. For example, I had never even heard of the Toronto publication we had wronged, let alone had any knowledge of an article it published half a year earlier.

A case such as this, of course, is far more straightforward than what I commonly

think of as the plagiarism problem in newspapers.

Indeed, most of the high-profile examples from 1989, a particularly bad year in Canada for journalists getting caught plagiarizing, were of the cut-and-dried variety. In the main, only the consequences for the perpetrators provided much drama.

Most celebrated was the sad case of *Toronto Star* book editor Ken Adachi



editorial page editor at the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. I was contacted by a graduate student at the University of Saskatchewan who said she had disturbing information to impart.

Minutes later she was in my office with documented evidence that an op-ed piece I had published the previous day by one of her classmates was lifted almost entirely from a six-month-old, obscure (in Saskatoon, at least) magazine published

who committed suicide after it was revealed he had plagiarized a *Time* magazine essay.

Toronto Star Washington correspondent Bob Hepburn dined on crow and gave up his weekly column after admitting he had used, without attribution, passages from a magazine in a piece he had written on Washington civic politics. He said it was just a case of inadvertence.

At my own paper, shock waves lasted for days after sports columnist Dave Komosky was fired for plagiarizing on at least two occasions from sports columns which had appeared in the *Globe and Mail*.

All three papers confessed freely, indulged in varying degrees of self-flagellation and carried on.

But doubtless some erosion of public trust occurred.

Intellectual integrity is the only real coin of journalism. But is preservation of this priceless commodity given a sufficiently high priority in the competitive media world of the so-called information age?

I believe the answer is no.

It's interesting, even if inconclusive, to note the common thread in so many cases of journalistic plagiarism, including at least two of those cited above.

The perpetrators say a major contributing factor is pressure to produce quickly

and consistently to unrealistically high standards.

Maybe this is a self-imposed problem; maybe not. Maybe they were rationalizing; maybe not.

But newsroom managers of the '90s should start looking more closely at the whole area of ethics.

How clean are they keeping their own acts, not just when it comes to journalism's original sin, plagiarism, but its companion pieces, conflict of interest and the more pedestrian violations of proper journalistic practice?

These would include misuse of quotes, sloppiness in checking sources and facts, and the forsaking of accuracy in the interests of fluffy leads or clever prose.

These are the small cracks in journalistic credibility which sneak insidiously into daily work habits. Their combined effect can be a chasm.

It is, after all, a form of plagiarism when stressed-out reporters and editors, or those who simply don't care or don't know better, play too much follow the leader.

This malpractice has spawned the pack journalism that has become all too familiar. It's a cover-your-ass ethos which ill serves consumers or the profession.

And how much attention is anyone paying to the growing numbers of in-

fluent journalists who slip back and forth between careers in politics and reporting?

Veteran Canadian columnist Allan Fotheringham, in his latest book *Birds of a Feather*, raises disturbing questions about increasing coziness between journalists and the politicians they are supposed to be "objectively" covering.

A thought-provoking outgrowth of the whole plagiarism issue is a point raised in a 1984 *Los Angeles Times* series. Based on interviews with writers, editors and readers, *Times* staff writer David Shaw reported that confidence was lost across the board in newsrooms where plagiarism had come to light.

Plagiarism is one of those areas where attitudes cannot be legislated. Vigilance can be practiced, however, and strict policies written and enforced.

In many newsrooms, for example, it is understood that a clearly-established case of plagiarism means firing.

Whether firing is too harsh is debatable. But one thing isn't. Nothing so destroys trust as this hypocritical practice.

Whatever else that truth inspires, it should be reason for the most scrupulous soul-searching any journalist ever undertakes. □

Verne Clemence is news features editor of the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix.

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Hi-tech journalism

Content may actually be winning out over style

by Mary Gooderham

It will either produce a big-money, information technology revolution or an illusionary, flash-in-the-pan flop. But one of the biggest questions to be answered about high-definition television is how it will change the face of TV and what will be presented on it.

Most importantly for journalists, the advance of HDTV could dictate the role that television news programming will play in the 1990s and into the next century. And there are early indications that if there is a revolution, the news could be left behind.

HDTV, also known as advanced television, is expected by proponents to be one of the most powerful consumer technology developments since television was born 50 years ago and color was introduced in the 1960s.

It uses a combination of video, computer and telecommunications technology to provide a clearer, brighter picture -- as sharp as in movies -- that does not lose its resolution in larger screens. The range of special effects and electronic imaging is limitless and through a six-track digital sound system it has the fidelity of a compact disc recording.

"The change in television will be dramatic," says Keith Field, an expert in advanced television who was a technical consultant for *Chasing Rainbows*, a television series shot in HDTV by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation three years ago.

Field says that HDTV presents five times as much information on the screen, which is wider than current monitors. It has twice as many scanning lines and five times as many pixels (dots of color) as conventional TV.

However, while Field and others sing the praises of the new technology, they acknowledge that it will not be used for everything on the air, especially in its

early stages -- and may not take in news programming for some time.

"I'm afraid it's going to be content over technical quality," Field says.

Ironically, while television news is improving through a number of technological factors, concerns about quality are outweighed by demands for immediacy and content.

The last 10 years have seen a revolution in "electronic news gathering" around the world. Betacam-format equipment, which first hit the newsroom in 1983 and is now used in more than 90 per cent of television news in Canada, allowed for greater immediacy, portability, better picture quality and light sensitivity at a lower cost than film systems.

The next generation of television news promises an even greater emphasis on these factors, with increased use of tiny, consumer-level comcorders, which can be used on the battlefield or by small stringer operations.

Images recorded on these devices and used in television news, while not great in quality, show how important content is: the landing of illegal immigrants on the shores of Nova Scotia, an airplane splitting apart on an Iowa runway, a car flying over a shattered bridge platform in the San Francisco earthquake.

The high cost of switching to high-definition equipment combined with this current emphasis in electronic news gathering leads experts to say that there may not be a place for HDTV in news for some time.

"If you ask, 'Do we need the extra quality that high-definition provides for news?', the answer is no," says Patrick Whittingham, vice-president of sales and marketing for Sony of Canada Ltd. "I'd say that there is a tremendous opportunity for improvement in the current television systems that we have."

Perhaps the most depressing view of the implications of HDTV for news gathering comes from David Niles, a film and television producer at Captain of America/1125 Productions Inc., a New York-based high-definition production house.

Niles says that HDTV will become a high-quality entertainment medium for those who can afford to pay for it. Conventional "free" television, which he says has sunk to the lowest common denominator level of consumers, will remain as a separate entity. News will continue to be broadcast on the latter indefinitely, he says.

"I don't believe HDTV is television at all -- it's a different language," he says. "Its future is not even remotely tied to what television is right now."

The impact of the images presented in news programming is "content-focused" and there is not a demand for higher quality, he says. As well, the cost of HDTV production will be astronomical. Currently the most expensive studio camera is about \$110,000 and news cameras cost as much as \$25,000, while the least expensive HDTV camera costs more than \$500,000.

Niles describes a future where news is relegated to the world of prime-time game-shows. However, Whittingham denies that conventional television, with the inclusion of news programming, will be a "second-class medium," and says that improvements to bring about more immediacy will increase its impact.

He and others, such as Janet West-Cyr, a manager of strategic engineering at the CBC department of engineering in Montreal, say that HDTV will eventually come to journalism, and will bring about changes in the way news is gathered.

"It's more like looking at real life," says

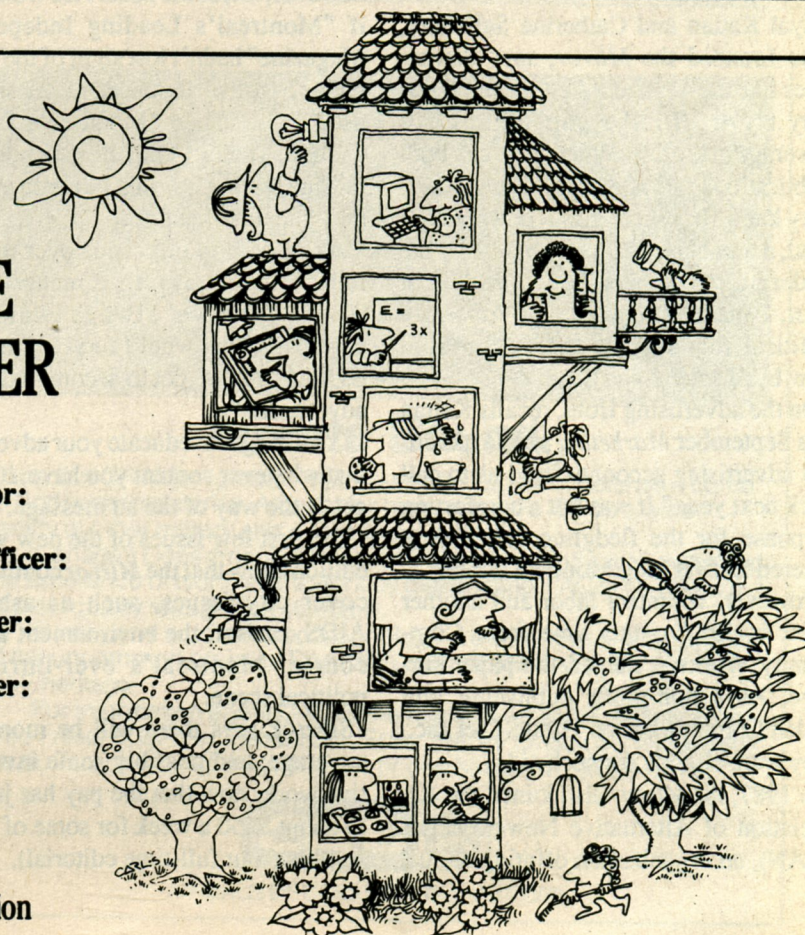
Meanwhile, HDTV productions and the

Recently, two studies in the U.S. -- where money for research and development has increased to \$30 billion -- have

"This technology is going to make a difference in our lives," says West-Cyr. "What that difference will look like is still to be decided." □

Mary Gooderham writes about applied science issues for The Globe and Mail.

Ontario Public Service Employees Union



Uptown Downtown

Montreal alternative weekly tries to crack English market

by Ron Verzuh

Montreal's only English alternative newsweekly may have moved downtown to the old city last fall, but the Montreal *Mirror* is definitely trying to go uptown in the hard-to-crack English media market.

When the *Mirror* began in June 1985 as a biweekly, it didn't even publish a mission statement. The paper came together with the help of a \$36,000 grant from, of all places, the Quebec Ministry of Leisure, Fish and Game. The staff came from the *McGill Daily*, the *Link* at Concordia University, and a punk fanzine called *Red She Said*.

"We just wanted to fill an English-language void and give an alternative voice to what was going on in the city," said Martin Siberok, the tabloid's film review editor and a member of the five-person editorial board.

Eyal Kattan and Catherine Salisbury, who founded the *Mirror*, saw alternatives like the *Montreal Review* and *Open City* try to fill the gap of English coverage in the city. When they saw both publications fail after only a few years, they knew they were going down a hard road, a trail blazed 20 years before by the underground papers *Logos* and *Last Post*, Canada's answer to the American political monthly *Ramparts* (survived now by *Mother Jones*).

On the advertising front, recalls Kattan in a September *Marketing* article, potential advertising accounts "told us to call back next year." It was not a comforting response for the fledgling paper as it entered its first long Montreal winter.

However, volunteer labor and another grant in 1987 -- this time from Community Works -- helped the paper survive. As a non-profit publishing unit called Communication Gratte-Ciel Inc., they were eligible for such aid.

In 1987, the *Mirror* also joined the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies (AAN), an organization offering annual

conferences and information exchanges.

Siberok says the AAN "helped us a lot and some of the members were models for us." He was referring to such publications as Toronto's *Now*, the Boston *Phoenix*, and the famed *Village Voice*.

By 1989, the *Mirror's* circulation had climbed from an initial press run of 16,000 every two weeks to 45,000 papers given out free every week. A professional readership survey impressed advertisers who said they would increase their space purchase if the *Mirror* went weekly, so the paper took the plunge.

On Sept. 14, a 40-page tabloid hit the streets jammed with ads, including a glossy pull-out on yuppie clothes and a 16-page fashion section.

The *Mirror's* new, glossy tone, however, left some observers wondering if "Montreal's Leading Independent Magazine" hadn't lost sight of the "alternative" part of its unstated mission. (It used to be called "Montreal's Premier Cultural Tabloid," but the paper dropped the line fearing it would be confused with racy supermarket tabs.

In response to criticisms over the new look, Siberok says it's a matter of survival. "We've always wanted a newspaper that would survive," he said, adding, "you've got to accommodate the advertisers."

"You've got to educate your advertisers that whatever content you have, it won't get in the way of the ad message."

The first few issues of the new weekly edition show that the *Mirror* continues to cover city issues, such as asbestos, AIDS, racism, the environment and, of course, Montreal's ever-intriguing political scene.

Siberok says there will be more such coverage, and possibly some investigative work, now that the pay has jumped to about \$250 a week for some of the 22 staffers (four full-time editorial).

However, there are readers who complain about the quality of writing and editing in the paper.

Despite such criticisms, the demise of the Montreal *Daily News* coupled with the *Gazette's* traditional inability to appeal to readers in the 18-35 age bracket, may spell good times for the *Mirror*. The editors also remain confident they are attracting young francophone readers who want to consult both the weekly *Voir*, and the *Mirror*.

(*Voir*, which has a circulation of 65,000, started about four years ago and has grown ever since. Its success led *Now* editor Michael Hollett to consider launching a head-on competitor called *Ici* a few years back, but the deal fell through.)

For those readers dissatisfied with the new upscale appeal of the *Mirror*, there isn't much they can do short of switching to *Voir*.

As well, a monthly called *L'aut journal* (press run: 20,000) and *L'humeur*, a "satirical" bi-monthly, were both publishing in 1989. The former is a left-wing political tabloid geared to trade unionists and social activists. The broadsheet *L'humeur* is styled after France's *Le Canard Enchaîné*.

Both *L'aut journal* and *L'humeur* borrow elements from *Le Temps Fou*, a well-read French-language alternative of the late 1970's. Curiously, neither Siberok nor some of the other editors at the *Mirror* had heard of either paper. This kind of ignorance of the French press may mean nothing, but it may speak volumes about future "alternative" issues coverage in the *Mirror*. □

Ron Verzuh is content's Little Media columnist. He is also the author of a new book called *Underground Times--Canada's Flowerchild Revolutionaries*.

Journalism needs more journalists

by Nick Russell

Just gimme the facts," growled the editor. "Reporters are nothing but fact gatherers. Don't give me 'style.' This isn't literature. This is a newspaper. You're not writing the Great Canadian Novel. I don't want it good: I want it yesterday."

Sound like the script for a very old movie? It could be. But actually these are the sentiments of a senior editor of a large and respected eastern daily -- sentiments expressed loudly and frequently around his newsroom, not in 1949, but in 1989.

Is this editor simply an interesting latter day specimen to be pointed out to the next grade-school tour, a relic to be patted paternally on the head? Or does this person speak for

line. The story is a pleasure to read. The journalist cares enough about the subject to think about it and to write well; reaching for the right work, striving for the best structure, orchestrating tone and pace and rhythm.

The journalistic world certainly needs reporters. Somebody has to do the grunt-work. Sometimes we all have to grind out stories about high school hoopsters, two-car fender-benders, and the world's biggest zucchini.

Every aspiring Woodstein at some point covers the meetings of the Septic Tank Committee. Some of "tomorrow's history" is pretty prosaic, and the "newspaper of record" sometimes needs mere recorders.

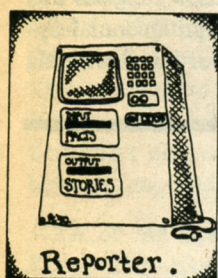
But good editors know that's not all they need. Good editors know they

must nurture readers, seducing them not only with a fine looking product, but one that is pleasing to the mind.

Good journalists will write well despite the cranky editors who fear "style." Journalists can comfort themselves with the thought that those editors may be included in the next school tour of the newsroom.

"Now over there, boys and girls, in the far corner, is an editor -- the one with the green eyeshield, the suspenders and the stogie -- who missed an opportunity. Newspapers changed. But that editor didn't."

Nick Russell is an associate professor in the School of Journalism and Communications, at the University of Regina.

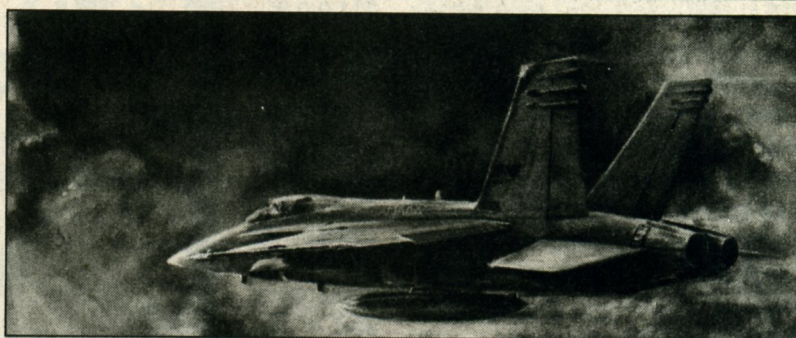


a substantial number of newspaper and broadcast editors?

Perhaps this editor's declaration obliquely defines the difference between reporters and journalists. This editor's staff may be only paid enough to be mere reporters. But surely the expectations of today's readers and the aspirations of many of today's news writers are much higher than what a reporter produces.

The reporter reports. Maybe he or she is a good interviewer, a good researcher, able to gather material, stir in a few quotes, and toss the stew to the readers to pick over and chew on.

The journalist, I believe, does all that and more: He or she does it with style and insight. The journalist brings to the raw data experience, maturity, education, and even sometimes, passion. The journalist *weaves* a story even on a dead-



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A WORLD OF CANADIAN TECHNOLOGY.

Primates, plumage and panjandra

Playing for Keeps: The Making of the Prime Minister

by *Graham Fraser; McClelland and Stewart*, 491 pp., \$28.95

One Hundred Monkeys: The Triumph of Popular Wisdom In Canadian Politics

by *Robert Mason Lee; MacFarlane, Walter and Ross*, 285 pp., \$26.95

Birds of a Feather: The Press and the Politicians

by *Allan Fotheringham; Key Porter Books*, 272 pp., \$24.95

Reviewed by Patrick MacFadden

The persuasion methods of the promoters and their publicity staffs are aided by the feeling of economic interdependence between promoters and sportswriters that permeates this milieu. This feeling of interdependence is at the heart of the body of beliefs, myths and folklore that makes up the ideology of the sports promotional world.

-- Bruce McFarlane,
The Sociology of Sports Promotion,
McGill University, 1955

The oldest professions seem always to have known that to sell a thing which in itself is of no great consequence or indeed aesthetic attraction, it needs mightily to be tarted up. And so it is with all three works under review, the thing here being politicians and their spin-offs, tartology taking the form of chapter epigraphs.

Mason Lee is the most catholic epigraphist: he deploys Randy Newman (no relation to the Cardinal), Thoreau,

C.S. Lewis, Yu Ch'i-Hwan (perhaps like myself the reader may have to look this one up), Machiavelli, Spike Milligan, Kant, Neil Postman (like Mason Lee, a McLuhan epigone), Mazzini, Hitler and a Mr. Michael Kavanagh, he of *A Complete Guide to Monkeys, Apes, and Other Primates*.

With Graham Fraser, the home team gets a fairer shake: we hear epigraphistically from Blair Fraser, T.C. Haliburton, MacKenzie King, Harold Innis and John W. Dafoe, as well as from the Bible (once), Machiavelli (twice), and Von Clausewitz (thrice).

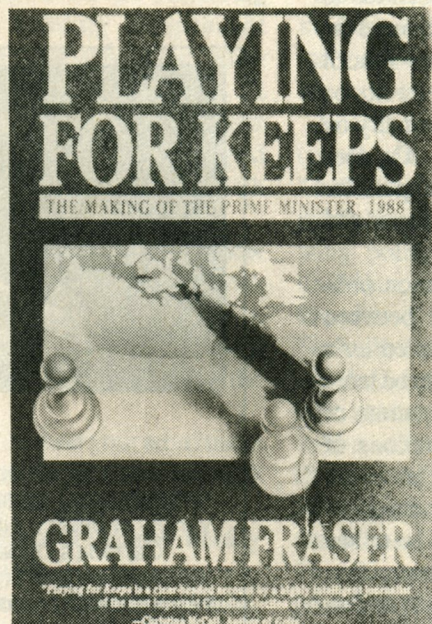
Allan Fotheringham makes do with William Faulkner, Lester Pearson, V.I. Lenin, Thomson of Fleet, the well-known self-flagellant G. Orwell, some ass-kicking from Matthew XXIII (in fine form as always), tee-vee mavens Reuven Frank and Newton Minow, warlords Haig and Nixon, Rudyard Kipling, Warren Beatty, the mayor of Vancouver and a certain Diana McLellan.

In my view, J. L. Goddard -- maestro of intertinting -- has a lot to answer for.

None of these books has much in common except that all three are written by well-informed journalists who also write well and all of them deal with the behaviour of politicians and political parties, these latter often referred to in civics

textbooks targeting the unwary as "hand-maidens of democracy." And in varying degrees, all subscribe to Auden's dyspeptic view that "Private faces in public places/Are wiser and nicer than public faces in private places." But there the resemblance ends. Two of them do use animals in the title: Mordecai Richler once observed to me that this ploy can result in a windfall for a threadbare scribbler during last-minute holiday impulse-buying when guilt-ridden parents seek out something-that-will-be-good-for-the-kids. But I don't think this is the case here. And in any event, as Fotheringham would say, I digress.

The nod to the late Theodore H. White in the title of Fraser's account of the 1988 Canadian general election suggests this may henceforth be a quinquennial appearance. White did very well with his



**History
on the run
does not
lend itself
to certitude.**

interpretive narratives of the U.S. presidential elections even though subsequent deconstructionists have thought him rather a suckhole.

Fraser begins with a disarming quotation from Fraser père: "Such pattern as the tale may have is largely imposed by

hindsight..." This disclaimer is judicious: the Austrian playwright Richard Beer-Hoffman once penned a wicked aphorism: "All 'form' will forever be a 'truce' with 'chaos' -- whether after a victory or a defeat can scarcely be determined." Thus not all of Fraser's readers may be entirely persuaded that "(The election) was a turning point for Canada: an end of an era, and a parting of the ways...." or even allowing for M and S's blurb writers that "the shape of Canadian politics has changed," not to mention "the result has affected the way Canadians are governed." Assent is even more reluctant when Fraser in his year-end summary in *The Globe and Mail* distances himself from these verities: he writes that the election changed nothing; in fact he insists that "plus ça change..." Perhaps in the light of eternity these two positions are compatible. More likely is that history-on-the-run does not lend itself to certitude, while at the same time the contemporary temper, or at least that of publishers, demands some kind of meaning, however imposed.

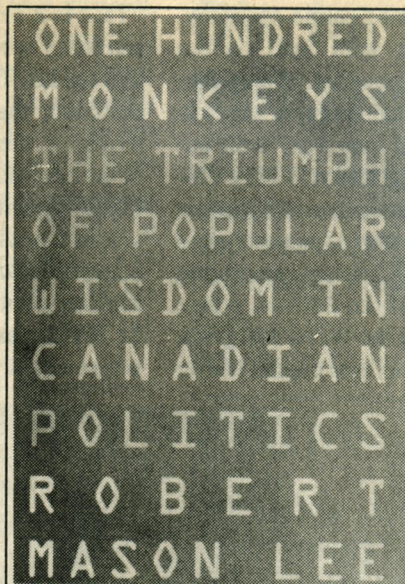
One of the strengths of *Playing for Keeps* is its account of the Liberal party campaign and its leader John Turner. Perhaps understandably, Fraser and Turner feel kind to each other. But this leads to an undeniably fascinating tension. (Readers of Fraser are advised to master a facility for between-the-lines). Was free trade for Turner merely a question of political survival?

An assured and funny guide to the antics of pollsters

"...at lunch with two old friends, he had observed that in a time of prosperity it was difficult to campaign against the government, and without free trade it would be extremely difficult. However, he felt that with the free trade issue, he could prevent the Tories from getting their majority, form a minority government, with the support of the NDP, and have a second election to get a majority."

(When Broadbent pointed out during the television debate that he, Turner, had been absent from the House during two of the three votes on free trade, the media did not think the matter worth even a bite or a byte.)

The private Turner, in discussion with Fraser, uses the purgative language of the confessional: "I will be able to look



myself in the mirror for the rest of my life." And again: "Frankly, one way or the other, I can live with myself for the rest of my life, you know? One way or the other." From whence does this need to be shriven derive? What unspoken agonies, what

Furies, what half-seen harpies swoop low over this desolate plain? Alas, it is not vouchsafed to us to know...

For this metaphysic to work, even the public Turner must be given a Moment, that one time when the Rod descends. Here Fraser has to depend on the faithful *amanuensis*, Friar Axworthy:

"Lloyd Axworthy could pinpoint the day Turner acquired a sense of genuine outrage about the trade deal. It was on January 1, 1988....Turner had just come back from a holiday with a group of Toronto business friends, and he was stunned by their reaction to the trade deal....'Jesus, Lloyd -- I've just come back from Collingwood,' Turner said. 'They don't believe in Canada anymore!'"

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Lennoxville Freelancer	Acquisitions and Mergers	Sackville Freelancer	Biopharmaceuticals
Montreal Business Weekly	Office Leasing	Toronto Radio Feature	Property Boundaries
National Business Television	Government Advertising	Vernon Radio Talk Show	Homelessness
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National Family Magazine	Ultra-Violet Rays	Winnipeg Freelancer	Goods and Services Tax

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New Testament highbrows may be sniffily dismissive of this firesale epiphany, preferring to stick with Saul on the donkey towards Damascus. Nevertheless it's at least arguable that in times to come, Collingwood may very well become a place of pilgrimage, a holy destination for woodhewers, waterdrawers bearing candles, simple peasant girls with sherbet for all I know, stumbling toward Collingwood the Blessed, where on New Year's Day the Word was given to John Napier Turner that capital has no home.

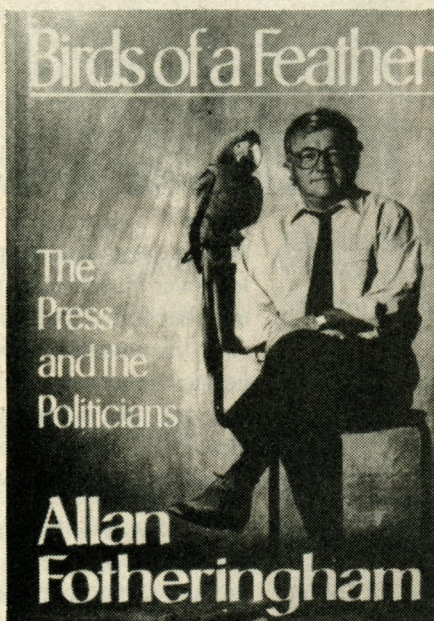
This is a fine book. Graham Fraser credits his brother John with the proof-reading. John gets a demerit from me for the various spellings of Rae Murphy's name, the various titles of *The Contenders* and the complete bollocks he makes of the admittedly over-excitable Senator Pietro

Rizzuto. Also two sections of the book came away in my hand when I cracked it open; M and S needs better sticky stuff.

Mason Lee's trope -- the triumph of popular wisdom in Canadian politics -- announces its theme: just as some monkeys were taught to wash their sweet potatoes and then many monkeys started to do the same and then all the monkeys on other islands were suddenly scrubbing away, so did the Canadian electorate come to its senses and somehow did the right thing. As a McLuhan man, Mason Lee has to come up with some sort of imperative to explain all this. He opts variously for the hidden hand of the market (a visit to the Chicago Mercantile Exchange here) and also for Teilhard de Chardin's notion of the *nöosphere*, a sort of Jung-on-his-head collective con-

scious.

This is a lot more fun than my rough summary would suggest. I merely note that the last Teilhardian I knew was later certified, that there were no hundred monkeys, the thing being the brain-child of the crazed Brit Rupert Sheldrake -- the Colin Wilson of New Age biology -- for whom Darwinism had not, so to speak, come up to scratch and who has, since his monkey period, spent a year and a half in a *Christian* ashram in Pakistan, or somewhere equally awful.



Like Doctor Johnson, he believes it better to remind men than to inform them.

As to what free trade really meant in the campaign, Mason Lee puts his money on the results of a think-in among political scientists, again, oddly, in Chicago. The profs noted that "households with incomes of more than \$50,000 were more than twice as likely to support free trade as households with incomes below \$50,000." They further note (or Mason Lee notes for them, the text being ambiguous here) that "the lesson of the campaign wasn't that one social group, such as high-income earners, felt a particular way about free trade." Thought would seem to be awry here; perhaps it's the *nöosphere* acting up.

Mason has many things to say that as a democrat he may find make him despondent. He reminds us of the results of a Gallup Poll: only one in six found politics an "absorbing interest, 40 per

cent finding the matter too complicated." Another Gallup through the tundra finds one in three completely ignorant of the cabinet, not able to name a single member; seven in eight couldn't come up with Finance Minister Wilson's name, while poor Mazankowski was hit by only one in 20.

He's also very good on the Magic Paragraph. In fact on the antics of pollsters and related entrail gazers he's a wonderfully assured and funny guide. The Magic Paragraph comes at the bottom of a letter purporting to be from Himself:

"We need your help...I want to start by hearing from you...Please write to me at the address shown on the envelope...I know that you and your family, etc."

Sent to selected ridings, this phantom letter elicits replies in the hundreds of thousands to the P.M. He never reads them. Then the punters get a call from a flack. "Hello, I'm calling from the Prime Minister. Did you receive his letter? Great!" Then follows another letter from the P.M. And then more phone calls, all from the campaign headquarters of the local candidate.

There is a word for people who think they're getting letters from people when they're not. The Victorians quite properly kept them off the electoral rolls. Of course, in what Mason Lee calls postliterate politics, it may not matter. His own *pointilliste* approach is appropriately postliterate: Maureen McTeer's adventures with rod and gun through darkest Gloucester-Carleton is a small spleen-filled gem. I wish he'd done more to answer some of the more obvious questions about polls and media, though. For example, when Allan Gregg does lunch with the Mansbridges, do they deduct one another?

The media are much on Fotheringham's mind. His thesis is stated trenchantly:

"What is reality is that in addition to their upper-middle-class incomes, the media -- especially in Canada and the

United States -- reflect the values of the established order....The public senses that it is being shut out, in effect, by the collaboration implicit in the press-political process."

Much of what follows are examples of this state of affairs, laced with Fotheringham's patented digressions. He's a wit and is therefore serious. (Like Doctor Johnson, he believes it better to remind men than to inform them.) But up here in Calvinattica, where solemnity is taken for seriousness and where wit flickers only fitfully, he's at a disadvantage.

As to his thesis, what is in question is not its validity so much as its significance. As the quotation from Bruce McFarlane at the beginning of this review suggests, the notion of collusion between promoters and scribblers is a longstanding one. What is less clear from Fotheringham's analysis -- much of it hilarious, since hypocrisy is available by the shovelful -- is whether he's calling for a return to a kind of populist pastoral infoscapes peopled with many contending voices, or merely for a stricter appraisal of relationships between politicians and the press.

Certainly, the sense of being "shut out," or being let in every five years only to make an X, will have to be addressed. The depoliticization of mass societies has paralleled the proliferation of "the second job," as more and more people need to work to keep up. Thus work becomes the only ideology. This is what was known in Hungary, another country with a "mixed" economy, as "the Kádarian compromise," in which mass participation in private entrepreneurialism, second careers, etc. had the gratifying result, from the government's point of view, of keeping people's minds off the kinds of lives they were living.

This withdrawal from the public project has now reached lemming proportions in Canada. As long as the economy whirs along, things will be fine if a bit yawny. When the economy breaks down, as it

has in Hungary, life gets more difficult. It's significant to note that the political decision resulting from bureaucratic/managerial fixing rather than from democratic involvement (Meech Lake) is the poisoned well from which the current ugly vapors wafting over the country emanate. There is a price to be paid for political exclusionism. Political illiteracy, for example. This, in part, is what Fotheringham is saying.

To what degree the party system itself silently colludes in the production of political entropy awaits study. Fotheringham might well embark upon it. Should he do so, I have an epigraph readily to hand: James Robinson, Chief Executive Officer of American Express: "Out chief competition is not Visa or MasterCard. It's cash." □

Patrick MacFadden is an associate professor in the Carleton University School of Journalism.

Oh, for a time that never was

Margin of Error: Pollsters and the Manipulation of the Canadian Media

by *Claire Hoy*,
Key Porter Books Ltd. , 234 pp.

Reviewed by Allan Frizzell

To those who feel that the world of Canadian politics is in a woeful state there are many scapegoats: corrupt or uncaring politicians, a pusillanimous press and single interest groups are all blamed. To this list of miscreants HoyHoy adds an increasingly disliked group: pollsters. These intruders into the political scene have facilitated the victory of methodology over ideology, of ex-

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The International Development Research Centre (IDRC), in co-operation with the Canadian Science Writers' Association (CSWA), is hosting this seminar for media representatives.

pediency over principle.

At this point the reader might wonder when in this century Canadian politics have been typified by ideology or principle. It is hardly surprising that politicians covet popularity and re-election. If polling information advances success they will, of course, use it. But this is different from the claim that we have government by polls, and Hoy comes dangerously close to this conclusion. Capital punishment and abortion are areas where many politicians have ignored public opinion and acted on their beliefs, and one could hardly argue that the Tories were seeking public adulation when introducing Via cuts. Moreover, a party that slavishly follows, rather than leads, public opinion will often come to grief when faced with a public that is often fickle and uninformed.

If Hoy's main criticism of polls is less than credible, his other condemnations carry more weight. He claims that pollsters have an unwarranted presence in the media, that they often use sloppy methodology, that their behavior sometimes borders on the unethical and that their conclusions and predictions are, in many instances, just plain wrong. Though Hoy is not known for his reticence he could have been much more

critical than he is. For example, he points out some errors in analysis, but a consistent reading of the copy and statements that accompanied polling data between the elections of 1984 and 1988 would have revealed interpretations, particularly those from Gallup, of quite staggering banality. He is right to be concerned about the fact that pollsters commonly work for both political parties and the news media, but surely this is the fault of the media.

Indeed, it is the media who escape the most damning criticisms he could have made. While it is obvious the media use polls in the most trivial way, there are alternatives. In both the U.S. and Britain polls are used regularly to examine opinions on a wide range of social and political topics that may, or may not, be part of the current political agenda. He does, however, examine the cosy relationship between the press and pollsters; the former get cheap, if superficial, copy which gives them status in the business, while the latter underprice their product to advertise their services.

The first part of the book is a description of the development of polling in Canada and polling data from the last few elections. Ironically, this will be of interest to, primarily, pollsters and those who

use their data. He then attempts to explain the methodology of polling in terms a layman can understand. If he succeeded, we have very clever laymen. For the average reader the most useful information will be found in the profiles of the leading pollsters. They appear to be a particularly nasty and brutish lot. It is clear there is about as much solidarity in the polling business as there is among a pack of Pit Bull terriers.

The implication is that these less than edifying creatures debase our politics. This, however, could only be true if those authorities in politics and the media permitted them so to do, and may well be an overestimate of the pollsters' power and the value of their contribution.

Despite these pessimistic conclusions Hoy feels that the banning of polls is not a solution. The resulting loss of freedom of speech would render the cure worse than the disease. Hoy's book is a lament for a time in politics free from manipulation, expediency and political cowardice. It might well be a lament for a time that never was. □

Allan Frizzell is co-author, along with Anthony Westell and Jon Pammett, of The Canadian General Election of 1988.

Noted in brief....

Both Canadian Press and Broadcast News have issued new style guides. There are no major revisions in the new *CP Stylebook*, although there are a number of minor changes desk editors should be aware of. The section on metric usage has been modified to reflect the fact that Imperial measurement refuses to die; Nazism is now capitalized; and the courtesy titles Mr. and Madame have been dropped from the names of superior and appeals court justices. The *Stylebook* contains a tiny error on page 195: a citizen of Bermuda is a Bermudian, not a Bermudan, as listed.

The Graduate School of Journalism at the University of Western Ontario continues its publication series with *Media Freedom and Development: Comparing Experiences*. Edited by Andrew MacFarlane and Robert Henderson, the book is a compilation of papers and commentary delivered at the School's *Encounter '88* conference, which brought together

journalists and academics from Canada and the Third World. Chapters include papers on journalism education, the role of the media in the "drug wars," and reporting on ethnic minorities in Canada and elsewhere.

The second in the Mackenzie Institute Media Report series is *Reflections of a Moscow Correspondent* by David Levy, the CBC's first permanent correspondent in the Soviet Union. Levy argues that lack of fluency in Russian has hampered the reporting efforts of his successors.

Indiana University has published the provocatively-titled *How Do Journalists Think?*, a volume by S. Holly Stocking and Paget Gross subtitled *A Proposal for the Study of Cognitive Bias in Newsmaking*. Working from a social-cognitive perspective, the authors attempt to spell out the various "biases and errors" that infect the work of reporters and editors. □

Advice is 'ill-informed'

To the Editor: Ross Perigoe's article in the November/December issue of *content* about the management, future and finances of the CBC contained at least one ill-informed suggestion for CBC budget cutting. I refer to his suggestion to "Review the value of CBC Northern Service now that Inuit Broadcasting is firmly in place and broadcasting to their people."

Clearly, Mr. Perigoe does not have an accurate picture of Northern broadcasting. CBC Northern Service provides CBC national and regional radio and television programming, not just to the Inuit, but also to Native and non-Native audiences in the rest of the Northwest Territories as well as the Yukon and much of northern Quebec.

In recent years, CBC programming has been complemented by the estab-

lishment of independent Native broadcasting societies which produce modest amounts of programming targeted at specific Native language audiences within specific regions of the North. One of these societies is the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation which produces several hours of Inuktitut language television programming each week distributed on the CBC Northern Service channel. IBC's efforts are important in helping to balance the massive influx of southern television which has become the latest colonial force at work in northern Canada. But IBC's commendable efforts to produce several hours per week of mainly cultural Inuktitut television programming can hardly justify disbandment of CBC's Northern Service.

CBC Northern Service is providing extensive information programming on

radio and television to all northern peoples at a time of unprecedented political, social and economic change. These people have very few sources of information about the issues and events which are profoundly affecting their lives. Is this a time to suggest that their primary source of information be removed?

Each weekday, the CBC provides the arctic regions of the North with about ten hours of regional radio programming produced in Iqaluit and Rankin Inlet -- six hours produced in Inuktitut and four hours in English. As well, CBC's Northern Service provides regional radio programming to the Yukon from Whitehorse, the Western Arctic from Inuvik, the Mackenzie Region from Yellowknife, and James Bay from Montreal. Every day we program in English and seven Aboriginal languages. Northern

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Back Talk

Service also links the North with the rest of Canada and the world.

The CBC has not been able to develop a comparable television service for the North. We do produce several weekly northern program series which are well received in the North. But unlike the rest of Canada, 15 years after the introduction of satellite television to the North, northern Canadians still do not receive a daily news and information program which recognizes and reflects the region in which they live. The CBC has long sought funding for this basic service and the CRTC has described the need for a CBC-produced daily news program in the North as "urgent." The CBC will continue to seek the resources to provide this service to the North given that the Northern Service appears to be the only agency able to produce daily information programming which can serve all geographic regions and cultural groups across the North.

Indeed, a thoughtful analysis of northern broadcasting leads one to suggest, not a reduction, but rather an expansion of CBC television service to the region, so that northern Canadians might be better served by this culturally intrusive medium. □

Brian Cousins,
Regional Director,
CBC Northern Service, Ottawa

Letters welcome

We welcome letters to the editor about articles that have appeared in *content* or journalism issues in general.

Letters should be typed, double-spaced and contain name, address and telephone number of the author. Anonymous letters will not be considered for publication. We reserve the right to edit letters for length, style, libel and good taste.

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The *Toronto Star* is establishing an Eastern European Bureau, which will monitor the changes sweeping East Bloc nations. The *Star's* former assistant managing editor (news), **Alan Ferguson**, will head the new office. **David Ellis**, who has worked on the *Star's* news desk for the past ten years, is replacing Ferguson.

Also at the *Star*, **Matt Maychak**, former Queen's Park reporter, was named the Queen's Park bureau chief. **Vivian Macdonald** was made deputy foreign editor, leaving her post as Ontario desk editor. Other new appointments at the *Star* are **Chris Dafoe** as a music critic, coming from *The Globe and Mail*; and **Philip DeMont**, joining the news staff from the *Financial Times*.

Rebecca Bragg has been transferred from the fashion section to the travel section, and her position was taken over by **Barbara Aarsteinson** from the *Globe and Mail*. Also joining the staff is **Lisa Priest**, from the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

The Globe and Mail has seen a few additions to its staff. **Tony Sutton**, from Johannesburg, South Africa, has become Art Director. **Rheal Seguin**, previously the provincial affairs reporter for CBC radio, has joined the paper's Quebec City bureau. **Isabelle Vincent**, a summer student in 1989, has joined the features section as an arts reporter, and **Greg**

McMillan from the *Hamilton Spectator* is a new copy editor.

Joining the staff at the *Report on Business* are **Deirdre McMurdy** and **Brian Christmas**. McMurdy is from the *Financial Post*, and Christmas was a copy editor at the *Hamilton Spectator*.

Miro Cernetig has returned to the *Globe* as national correspondent in Edmonton. Leaving the paper is **Vianney (Sam) Carriere**, formerly with the *Globe's* editorial department. Carriere has left to become editor of the *Anglican Journal*.

The Daily News in Nelson, British Columbia, has appointed a new managing editor. **Morrie Zaitlin** has taken the place of **Ryon Guedes**.

In Victoria, **Hudson Mack** has been promoted to assistant news director at CHEK-TV. He will also host the 5:30 evening news. **Lee Mackenzie**, from CBC-TV in Edmonton, is replacing Mack as host of the 11:30 p.m. news.

Mark Jan Vrem, former assistant news director at CHEK, is going to ITV in Edmonton, as vice-president of news and public affairs.

At C-FOX FM in Vancouver, **Mannie Buzunis** has replaced **Valerie Ambrose** as afternoon newscaster. Buzunis is from CITI-FM in Winnipeg, and was morning newscaster.

The Vancouver Sun has a new executive editor. **Mike McRanor**, a former assis-

tant managing editor, has taken over the position. Also at the *Sun*, **Gary Mason** has been transferred from his post as bureau chief in Victoria to city editor in Vancouver.

In Alberta, **Mark Tremblay** was named the new entertainment editor at the *Calgary Herald*. **Susan Rutton** replaced him as lifestyle editor, moving from her position as reporter on the news desk. Also at the *Herald*, **Margaret Sharp** has become travel editor, replacing **Ron Nowell** who moves to business editor.

Columnist **Paul Jackson** has left the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix* for the *Calgary Sun*. He will not be replaced.

Three new reporters have also joined the *Calgary Sun*: **Marg Leguilloux** as city reporter, **Dan Rogers** as a business reporter and **Mike Fisher** as an environment reporter. Former associate city editor at the *Toronto Sun*, **Sean McCann**, is now city editor of the *Calgary Sun*.

CBC television in Winnipeg has hired a new executive producer. **Jane Chalmers** replaced **Don Young**, who went to "The Journal" in Toronto. **John Drabble's** position as senior news producer has been taken over by **Gloria Lowen**, and Drabble has moved to the executive producer post at CBC in Calgary.

Also at CBC in Winnipeg, **Linda Nelson** became senior current affairs producer, **John Marshall** became chase producer, and the new field producer is **Frank Coyle**. **Bernie Charney** has moved to 24 hours late night producer, replacing **Heaton Dwer**, who is leaving CBC.

At CBC Television in Calgary, **Kathy Daley** is a new co-host of "The Calgary News Hour." **Lavonne Boutcher** takes over Daley's former position as current affairs writer and broadcaster.

Sydney Swissa has joined CBC in Calgary as senior producer of current affairs. Swissa left his position as producer of "Midday" in Toronto. A new reporter at the station is **Michael Oughtred**.

The London Free Press has seen two staffers leave. **Wendy McCann** has

-30-

Bruce Larsen, 62, former editor of the *Vancouver Sun*, died of stomach cancer in January. Larsen had retired in 1988 after 43 years in newspapers. In addition to the *Sun*, Larsen had worked at the *Winnipeg Tribune* and the *Vancouver Province*. In 1956, Larsen mediated a prison hostage-taking settlement and later won a National Newspaper Award for his story on the incident.

William H. Metcalfe, a former managing editor of the *Winnipeg Free Press* and the *Ottawa Journal*, has died at the age of 83. Metcalfe began his career as a reporter and copy editor with *The Free Press*, then moved to the CBC in 1940. In 1948 he became managing editor of the *Winnipeg Citizen*, Canada's first co-operative newspaper. *The Citizen*, which was owned by 13,000 member-shareholders, lasted about a year before going bankrupt. Metcalfe rejoined *The Free Press* and became managing editor in 1952. He became managing editor of *The Journal* in 1960. In 1985 he published his autobiography, *The View from Thirty*. □

gone to CP in Toronto, while **Brent Jang** has left for CP in Vancouver.

Craig Swayze at the *St. Catharine's Standard* has shifted responsibilities from assistant managing editor to Centennial editor.

The *Financial Post's* Toronto office has had some changes. **Bernard Simon** is no longer managing editor. He has moved to the *Financial Times* as new Canadian affairs correspondent. **Jill Vardy** is leaving the Toronto office for a position in Ottawa. Two staff members have left to pursue writing ventures. **Andrew Cohen**, former international editor, and **Andrew Coyne**, assistant editorial page editor, have both left to write books. Cohen's book will be on Meech Lake.

CBC affiliate CBL-FM in Toronto has seen **Bob Bishop** move from supervisor for Ontario regional news to supervisor for national news. **Jennifer Westaway**, CBL-FM's provincial affairs reporter, has moved to Parliament Hill.

Donna McElligott has moved from editor of CBC national radio in Toronto to Ontario provincial affairs.

Larry Sanders, a long time staffer at the CBC affiliate CBQ-FM in Thunder Bay, has left to set up his own business.

The *Windsor Star* has made a number of new appointments and internal changes. Former Metro editor **Kevin McIntosh** is taking over the position of assistant managing editor. **Bill Hickey**, assistant metro editor (district) is succeeding McIntosh. **Doug Firby** will be responsible for news coverage in the Essex County area as new assistant metro editor (district). **Rob Van Nie** and **Tom McMahon** have also been named assistant metro editors, and **Linda Mondoux** has been named night news editor. **Harry van Vust** has been appointed the new entertainment editor.

Agricultural reporter **Janice Vansickle** left the *Windsor Star* to write speeches for agriculture and deputy prime minister Don Mazankowski. She was replaced by general assignment reporter **Alisa Pridle**. Editor of the editorial page, **John Coleman**, will retire in the spring to be replaced by **Pat Whaelen**, former editorial writer.

Two new reporters have been hired: **Craig Pearson** from the *Montreal Daily News* and **Ray Ford**. Pearson will be a general assignment reporter, and Ford will work at a county bureau. They are replacing **Alan Abrams**, who went to the *Toledo Blade*, and **Brad Honywill**, who is now at the *Hamilton Spectator*.

Ian Timberlake has joined the staff at the *Star* as night police reporter from the *Ottawa Citizen*, and **Ellen Wageningen** has joined as a general assignment reporter.

At the *Toronto Sun*, **Del Bell** has been replaced by **Lorrie Goldstein** as associate editor. Goldstein's position as city editor has been filled by **Jane Van der Voort**, and **Allan Cairns** has become assistant city editor.

At the *Sun* in Ottawa, two new reporters, **Nancy Gummow** and **Adam Brown**, have been hired.

The *Ottawa Citizen* has a new lifestyles reporter. **Janice Kennedy** has joined the staff from the *Gazette* in Montreal.

At *Le Devoir* in Montreal, **Josee Boileau**, formerly with Canadian Press, has become a labor and business reporter. **Pierre Cayouette**, former science reporter, is now the paper's news desk editor. **Pierre Gondin** left the paper for Radio Canada.

The *Halifax Chronicle Herald* has had a couple of changes. **Dennis Wood** moved to a new position as social editor from travel editor, replacing **Nancy MacDonald**. MacDonald is now the religion editor.

In Newfoundland, **Janice Clancey**, **Peter Gullage**, and **Simone Sweeney** have joined the staff at *St. John's Evening Telegram*.

Alan Millar, co-host of CBC radio's "Fresh Air," will be leaving the show to pursue interests in music and documentary. **Bill McNeil** will continue alone as host. □

Awards

For the fifth time in the 19-year history of the Michener Award, *The Globe and Mail* has won the award for meritorious and disinterested public service in journalism. CJOH-TV received an honorable mention. The remaining finalists in the 1988 competition were *The Calgary Herald*, CJMO-FM Moncton, *The Moosomin World-Spectator*, *The Vancouver Sun*, and *The Winnipeg Free Press*.

The Asia Pacific Foundation is sending three journalists on working visits to Japan. **John Mason**, editor of *Commercial News* in Halifax, **Francine Osborne**, managing editor of the financial pages of *La Presse* and **Anne Shortell**, a senior writer at *The Financial Times* are recipients of the first Japan Assignment award for business and economic writers. They will spend two weeks living and working in Japan. □

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