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# content

Canada's media magazine

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IT!...**



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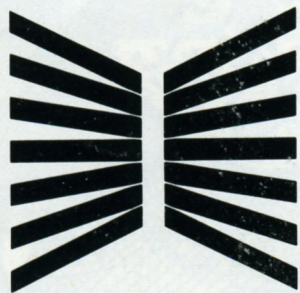
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## content

Canada's Media Magazine

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Dick MacDonald

May/June 1992

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**W**henever media rights are threatened either by the courts or by government, journalists are quick to invoke freedom of the press and the important role it plays in a democratic society. That role sees the media as an important player in the free and unhindered discussion and debate of public issues of all kinds. The public interest served by that discussion is the basis for the important position that freedom of the press occupies in liberal democracies. By appealing to the public interest when their rights are threatened, it would appear that the media has accepted its role as purveyor of ideas in the marketplace of ideas.

What is one to make then of the pronouncement elsewhere in this issue by Doug Bassett, president of Baton Broadcasting, that where the unity of Canada is concerned there is no such thing as editorial neutrality. Fair enough. Journalism that advocates a point of view is common enough. However, he went further, declaring that those who support a separatist viewpoint would not get onto the air of any his stations. The reason? A united Canada is better for business, it brings in advertising dollars. In other words, a free press is not defined in terms of what it can do to facilitate discussion of public affairs but



in terms of the crass commercial interests of those who control the media. It is one thing to support and promote a cause, it is quite another to deny access to the news media to those with whom we may not agree. Especially, about an issue as important and fundamental as national unity. Where is the public interest in that? Freedom of the press supposes access to all viewpoints. Not just those that Mr.

Bassett and other media barons with similar views wish us to hear.

The issue is not whether separatism is good or bad. It is a given that it will have profoundly negative effects on Canadian society. The issue is rather the public's right to hear, discuss and debate all points of view, surrounding this issue, however unpleasant or unpalatable they may be. That is what the constitutional protection of freedom of the press is supposed to be all about.

If Mr. Bassett means what he says, it is a disservice to Canadians and makes a mockery of the freedom of the press and its attendant role in a democracy. Freedom of the press indeed belongs to those who own one.

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## Please send in your renewals!

We have been sending out subscription renewals recently. For those who have replied, we thank you. However, we have yet to hear from many of you. We need our subscription revenues in order to survive and we do not have the funds to keep sending out reminder notices. If you care about the quality of journalism in this country, please keep *Content* alive by sending in your subscription fee.

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## A 'great lady' forgets her past

A fearful thing has happened to the newspaper once called the Grand Old Lady of Carlton Street. It may be Alzheimer's disease.

"It forgot how it stayed great," says Barry Mullin, the paper's ombudsman until May 1, and the most recent in a flock of Winnipeg *Free Press* employees who have either quit or been fired.

"The *Free Press* ranked as one of the great newspapers of the world, and quite frankly, I don't think I could find a list that would go deep enough to put the *Free Press* on now, as a result of what has been winnowed away from a once proud lady."

Mullin is bitter about his recent split from a paper to which he devoted 21 years of his life and he's not alone.

The Canadian Association of Journalists condemned Mullin's forced exit from the paper, stating "a newspaper that stifles criticism damages not only its own credibility ... but tarnishes the reputation of all journalists and the industry in which (they) work."

Mullin, the CAJ and inside sources say writers at the paper are being censored.

Mullin believes the paper's fall from profitable respectability began about two years ago, when the *Free Press* went to morning delivery, probably in answer to pressure from the Winnipeg *Sun*, its tabloid competitor.

Delivery problems led to customer dissatisfaction. The recession hit, but the newspaper completed a move last year, amidst much fanfare, to a new, multi-million-dollar plant in an industrial park in a gray corner of Winnipeg.

The famous downtown Carlton Street landmark was gone and so was prompt delivery. The paper was losing money, Mullin says, while costs continued to rise.

And that, he says, is when the real crunch came.

"When Thomson took over years ago, the *Free Press* was a cash cow ... it's really

## The TV alternative

Imagine this: a series of TV ads produced by a daily newspaper that promotes the paper as a perfect alternative for those who miss the late TV newscast.

It's a promotional campaign by a newspaper that frankly concedes victory to television in the battle for audiences.

And guess what — the ads were such a hit they're now on the big screen.

The two award-winning television ads were produced by the promotions department at Minneapolis-St. Paul's *Star-Tribune* and are making their way around North America's repertory theatres as part of the international advertising film festival.

The two 30-second spots are based on the idea that whenever you miss the 10 p.m. news, you can always count on the next morning's *Star-Tribune* to keep you informed.

In one commercial, an elderly couple is sitting quietly one evening when the woman notices it's 10 o'clock: time for the news. The old fellow gets up to turn on the TV but moves so slowly it takes him a full hour to cross the living room — mock time-lapse photography creates the effect. He switches on the TV just in time for the 11 o'clock sign-off. Fade to black for the pitch:

**Don't Worry.**

**We'll Tell You**

**What You Missed Tomorrow.**

*The Star-Tribune.*

Newspaper of the Twin Cities.

In the other ad, a man is shown lying in bed about to watch the news. His mate emerges from the bathroom with better

ideas and the fellow flicks off the tube. Fade to black, same pitch.

"We were really happy not to get people phoning in to complain about that one," says Terrie Robbins, promotion manager at the *Star-Trib.* "But we weren't using sex to sell the newspaper. It was just a slice of life and people enjoyed the humor."

The two commercials were awarded Bronze Lions, a third-prize category, at the Cannes Advertising Film Festival. They were aired during the winter of 1990-

91 and cost the newspaper \$40,000 each to produce, not including air time.

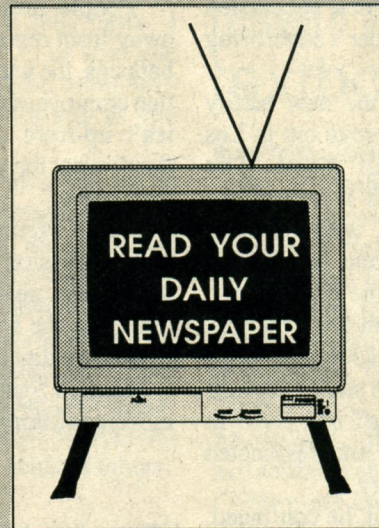
"I think newspapers have now done enough research to know that people with an interest in the news will have more than one source," says Robbins. "There's a definite correlation between someone who watches the TV news and someone who buys a paper."

"But the 10 o'clock news can't substitute for the newspaper," she adds quickly. "Each of them serves a purpose."

*The Star-Tribune* is America's 19th largest daily newspaper on weekdays with a circulation of 407,000, and 13th largest on Sundays when 666,000 readers pick it up.

Robbins said the ads "have a serious message" about the value of newspapers. "Newspapers do tend to take themselves so seriously," she says. "This shows there's some panache there, too." □

—Randy Boswell





very simple: Thomson has started losing money, and Thomson does not like to lose money."

The firings started in the spring.

Publisher Bruce Rudd, under whom Mullin's often-critical column ran, was chopped in March to make way for Maurice Switzer, former publisher of the *Sudbury Star*.

General Manager Ken Jones promptly resigned, and then in quick succession came the firings of the paper's advertising director and ombudsman.

Mullin's run-in with the new reality came shortly after riots broke out in Los Angeles at the end of April. The newspaper's first edition relegated the story to the back pages, while features about edible golf tees and some local children were placed on the front page.

Mullin's May 1 column cited the predictable complaints of readers who were miffed they didn't see the story front and centre. He stated the staff had erred in news judgement and had underestimated the importance of the story.

Those who complained, he continued, were "among a growing number of readers who have noticed a not-so-subtle shift in the news focus of the FP ..." One subscriber called it "McNews."

Mullin says he was told he must publicly apologize for the criticism, and abide by a set of conditions which included management's right to censor his column. That, or resign.

He resigned, under protest.

And while rampant lay-off rumors may have silenced reporters, at least for now, Mullin predicts the censorship issue won't go away.

He charges that one of the paper's best-known columnists, Gordon Sinclair, is regularly censored.

Sinclair did not return several phone messages asking for his comments.

In fact, none of the half-dozen *Free Press* employees contacted for comment would do so on the record. One talked off the record and confirmed several of Mullin's complaints, including the "obvious change in news coverage policy."

Adolphe Setek, local representative for the Media Union of Manitoba, says the

number of complaints from the rank and file has risen since Switzer's arrival. The problem, he says, seems to be the new style of employer-employee relations.

"It's management by intimidation," he said.

While he's had no specific complaints about censorship from any member, he says, the shift in news focus is "obvious in the way the paper looks."

"People aren't happy about getting away from reporting the news the way it happens, the way it falls," he says, adding that employees won't respect anyone who isn't up-front with them, "not even if they've got the word publisher in front of their name."

Mullin agrees. "If there is censorship and repression and attempts to fudge legitimate news stories, then all the money in the world won't buy you journalistic quality and integrity."

Maurice Switzer did not return phone messages asking for his comments. □

—Lisa Keller

## Committee doors creak open

Television and radio journalists have won at least a small victory in their long fight to record the proceedings of Parliamentary committees.

Although television cameras have been recording the House of Commons for 15 years, they are still not normally permitted to record Commons committees. Some meetings have been televised in the past, such as those of the constitutional committees, but only because the House passed a special motion to allow the cameras in. Broadcast journalists have long been calling for greater access.

Now, the House management committee has finally agreed to allow regular television coverage of standing and special committees. The largest meeting room on Parliament Hill, known as the

Railway Committee room, will be equipped to provide a continuous television feed. New standing orders have been passed to allow for House-operated cameras if the committee chooses, and House leaders consent.

The new rules are an attempt to find middle ground between those journalists who want control over the coverage of Committees and those parliamentarians — and even some journalists — who feel television has lowered the dignity of Parliament and now fear it will trivialize the work of Committees.

Craig Oliver, CTV News Ottawa bureau chief, says the change is a slight offering at best, and calls it a "bureaucratic number" by the House management.

Oliver rejects charges by critics such as Michel Vastel, Ottawa bureau chief for *Le Soleil*, that televising the proceedings will lead to more political showmanship. Committees that are not now televised are often fiercely partisan, says Oliver, and histrionics were familiar in the House long before the television cameras arrived.

"I saw the House of Commons before cameras and the debate was savage," says Oliver, "Diefenbaker didn't need a camera to grandstand."

The Parliamentary Press Gallery has long been lobbying to open up committee meetings. The executive has mixed feelings about the latest developments.

"We're pleased we have access, but we're not pleased with the arrangements. We would have preferred something more flexible," says Manon Cornellier, the gallery president.

The gallery executive wants members to handle the coverage themselves, a procedure which Cornellier says would be cheaper for the House and more convenient for journalists. The gallery had been prepared to set up two cameras in pre-determined positions, providing pool coverage for all members.

Elly Alboim, CBC-TV's Ottawa bureau chief, says the latest decision still leaves control of the coverage of Committees in the hands of the politicians, not the journalists. Alboim, who over the



years has appeared before four separate House committees to push for more television coverage, says a committee that eschews publicity can still choose to avoid the Railway room. Coverage of various committees rotating through that room will only confuse viewers, Alboim says.

The cost of televising meetings in the Railway room is disputed. Figures as high as \$150,000 were quoted by the press gallery, but the House secretary, Albert Cooper, estimates the price to be less than a third of that. Cooper points out the room is already wired for electronic coverage and existing House of Commons equipment can be used.

Cooper says the House wants to maintain control over coverage to balance decorum with openness. He says it's all part of a larger plan to allow cameras in the House to show different angles, allowing viewers to have a better idea of each speaker's location in the House.

"We want to give people a fair flavor of what goes on, to open it up a bit," says Cooper. □

—Steve Rheault-Kihara

## Magazine focuses on 'ordinary' Canadians

**P**assionate Canadians fed up with reading about regional squabbles and constitutional rhetoric can take comfort this Canada Day. Along with the celebration of Canada's 125th birthday, July 1 will mark the ice-breaking issue of *This Country Canada*, a new magazine that, according to publisher Bob Huggins, will live by the motto of "no politicians, no politics."

It's certainly a risky time to be starting a magazine about Canada, with the economic recovery and Canada's future both in doubt. But Huggins and editor Wayne Grady (former editor of *Har-*

*rowsmith* and *Saturday Night*) have high expectations for the *Life*-magazine-format quarterly and its ability to carve out a niche of its own in Canada's magazine market.

"Magazines tend to be dealing more with the power structure of the country," says Grady, who will base his editorial offices in Kingston. "What you don't see are the stories about the country and the people that live in it on a daily basis. I would like this magazine to be seen and savored as a showcase for the finest writing and photography talent in the country."

Grady says the emphasis will be on creative non-fiction writing rather than hard reporting. Stories will be about everyday people and events that don't fit under traditional news headlines.

"Instead of sending someone to the world chess championships I'd send someone to the Canadian national checkers championships. It's just a slightly different skew on the same kinds of things," he says.

The Canada Day issue will include contributions from six native writers on what Canada means to them. The result of their labors, Grady says, is a radically different portrayal of Canada than people are accustomed to reading.

The federal government is providing funding for the first issue, but most of the initial investment is coming from Huggins' own pocket and private backers. Huggins has arranged a contract with Black's Photography to sell the premiere issue in its stores, but after that the magazine will only go to subscribers. Projections are for a print run of between 50,000 and 75,000 for Canada Day and around 30,000 for subsequent issues. If all goes well, Huggins' long term-goal is the creation of a new Canadian publishing house.

The magazine will have a relatively low proportion of advertisements to editorial space, with stories and photographs outweighing ads by three to one. Low advertising revenue means the annual subscription price for four issues will be \$29.91 before GST.

This Country Publishing Inc. is based

in the tiny town of Dunrobin, Ontario, just northwest of Ottawa. It is an appropriate setting for a publication that Grady says will be dedicated to "the smaller things in life." □

—Mark Brender

## Globe sees itself as textbook

**T**he *Globe and Mail* as a classroom textbook? Well, maybe not exactly a textbook, but the people at "Canada's National Newspaper" think they've got a wealthy source of information for high school students. Beginning this September, the *Globe* plans to sell a re-packaged, tabloid version of itself to high school teachers of business, economics, and international affairs across the country.

They got this bright idea after being approached by the Canadian Foundation for Economic Education. The people at the foundation feel that high school students aren't reaping the full benefit of the business, economic and international news that graces the pages of newspapers every day.

Hence "The Classroom Edition."

Steven Petherbridge, a former instructor at the School of Journalism at Ryerson Polytechnic and former executive editor of *The Financial Post* says the tabloid will contain lots of extra graphs, charts, and tables of information — as a way of elaborating on articles contained in the tabloid. It won't contain "written-down" versions of *Globe* stories, but reprints of stories as they originally appeared.

But, in addition, the *Globe* has hired teachers to work as consultants in preparing teacher's guides, which will be included with each copy of the classroom edition. The teacher's guides contain suggestions for discussions based on articles in the tabloid. For example, a prototype of the classroom edition contains an article by *Globe* Parliament Hill reporter Geoffrey York, called "Where's the peace



dividend?" A box titled "What You Should Know" appears at the top of the article. It says: "The Cold War is over. The Berlin Wall has tumbled and the Soviet Union has broken up. Surely there is a peace dividend to be reaped by Western nationals — money saved from military spending to be used for other constructive purposes. But Canada's defence budget has doubled in the past decade and keeps on rising." The teacher's guide then suggests teachers engage students in a discussion of the meaning of the word "lobby" and what lobbying has to do with the size of military spending.

But, what if Geoffrey York is wrong? What if it's specious to think Canada should be reaping a peace dividend? Petherbridge says "anything in any of the articles is open to debate, and it's up to the teachers how they want to discuss these things."

But Barrie Duncan, president of the Ontario Association of Media Literacy —

a group of teachers bringing media criticism to the classroom — says he would object to a project which sees a newspaper "as a vehicle to teach something else," rather than something that is itself open to criticism. Duncan says while the *Globe* carries some good media analysis, "The *Globe* has been the most critical of the work [our association] has done." He argues the *Globe* "would likely see it as stabbing themselves in the back" to include issues such as the media control and ownership in its study guides.

Mary Jane Pickup, a teacher involved in preparing the study guides for the tabloid, says she "can't imagine the newspaper becoming a vehicle for any one point of view," and adds that critical thinking "is a skill [teachers] emphasize with students." She also says a high school teacher of economics "often doesn't have a degree in economics. They've maybe taken a few courses. A newspaper can be a real source of

guidance for them. It gives living examples of abstract economic concepts."

As for the *Globe and Mail*, what's in this for them? Michael Ryan, head of Globe Information Services and publisher of the classroom edition, says the project "is not going to be a winfall. The central mission is to reach a community with an identified need. A newspaper today has to be looking for new ways to market and package information for lots of different audiences."

And, if all goes as planned, the news tabloid will help boost the *Globe's* relations with the business community. The *Globe* is looking for ten sponsors to cover the approximately \$1 million annual cost of the project. In return for this sponsorship, the *Globe* is offering sponsors a chance to have their names associated with the project, in addition to advertising in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Report on Business*, and press coverage. □

—Frances Misutka

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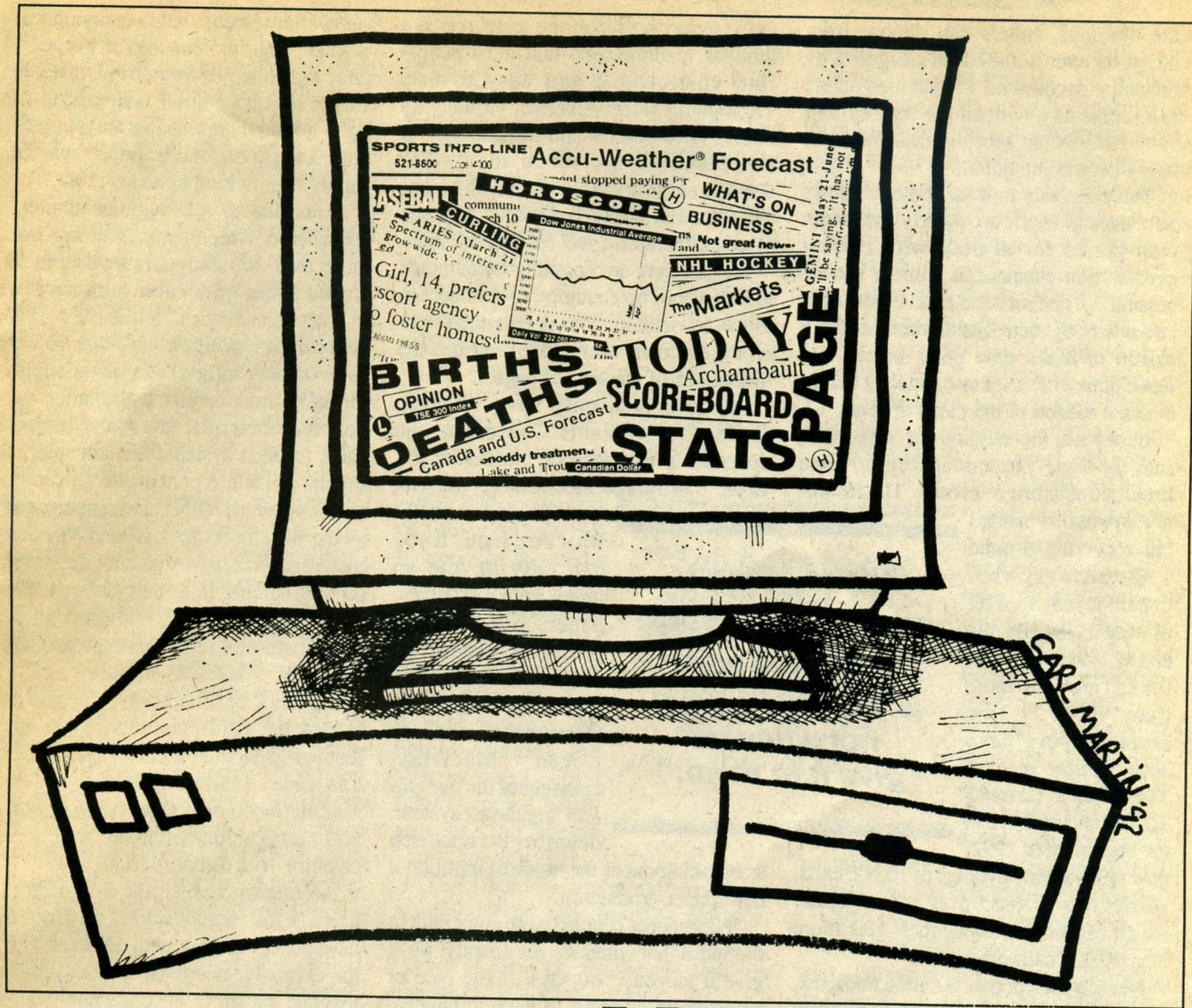
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Audiotex  
***Giving people  
more of what  
they want***

**By Tim Lougheed**

Newspapers have embraced all kinds of new technology to compete in the information marketplace. Satellite dishes have sprouted on rooftops, word processors and fax machines have shown up in newsrooms, pagination equipment has made its way into back shops and fibre optic lines have begun carrying copy to printing plants. But for many publishers, one of the most welcome developments has come in an all too familiar form — the telephone.

Several Canadian newspapers now invite their readers to call up and listen to pre-recorded messages ranging from sports scores and stock quotations to soap opera updates and wine reviews. Depending on



the offerings, callers can choose from dozens or even hundreds of categories by punching in codes on a touch tone phone and accessing a switching system similar to the electronic receptionists found in many large companies.

This relatively new technology allows new lines to be set up quickly, making it well suited for dealing with current events. For example, a number can be created to announce the outcome of a strike vote by local bus drivers, enabling callers to make new plans before any television or radio update and long before the next edition of the paper appears.

Based on the number of responses, each of these systems appears to have been an unqualified success. The *Hamilton Spectator* started

out receiving around 1,200 calls a day when it introduced SpecTel in May 1989. By the end of 1991, that number had grown to more than 4,300. Two larger papers have seen similar results: The *Ottawa Citizen's* Touchline, launched at the beginning of 1990,

now fields a daily average of 10,000 calls, while the *Toronto Star's* StarPhone, which began last September, gets more than 20,000 calls every day.

News by telephone is called audiotex, the transference of a newspaper's contents to a different medium. The title and concept are reminiscent of videotex, which tried to reformat newspapers for screen viewing. Videotex turned out to be one of the major marketing flops of the last 10 years, largely because there was no ready audience. Too few people possessed the appropriate equipment, essentially a desktop computer hooked up to a modem. Among the biggest losers was the American newspaper giant Knight-Ridder, which tried to sell such equipment to establish its own videotex service and wound up losing more than \$50 million by the mid-1980s.

Today's proponents of audiotex are sure to skirt such a catastrophe. Unlike

the videotex terminal, the telephone is a familiar medium, one that most people find comfortable and easy to use. Throughout North America, virtually all homes have phones and the majority of those phones are touch tone. For Canadians there is usually no cash outlay, even though some American audiotex systems operate on 900-number toll lines.

Newspapers are counting on audiotex to help shore up changing — and declining — readership. This open-ended technology allows users to overcome the limitations of the printed page.

"In print you only have so much space," says Dennis Concordia, the *Spectator's* manager of electronic services. "Through electronics, you can

give people more of what they want. If you can only devote so many columns in the paper, you can lead people to audiotex or videotex and have information available to them *ad nauseum*."

Ken MacGray, manager of the *Toronto Star's* audiotex system, describes the approach

as breaking out of the mode of traditional newspaper production.

"Newspaper deadlines are autocratic in the sense that when we get it ready, we'll give it to you," he says. "The face of newspapers is going to have to change. We're going to have to give people what they want when they want it — not when we give it to them."

Audiotex is meant to improve on the fast turnaround and frequent updates offered by radio or television news operations such as CNN or Newsworld. With audiotex, "news when you want it" does not mean every half hour — it means whenever you want to dial the phone. The number of people choosing this option would seem to verify its appeal.

"Information hits — that's what people are looking for," says Gerry Orban, who co-ordinates the *Ottawa Citizen's* Touchline. "The factor that keeps coming up in paper after paper and research

study after research study is time. If this is what people are looking for, then we're more than happy to provide it. If they're able to stop at a point in their busy day to go to a more comprehensive format like our newspaper, that's great. We can supply them with that, too."

According to the Audiotex Group, a specialized American consulting firm, more than 100 daily newspapers in the United States offer some form of news by telephone service. Some, such as the *Atlanta Constitution* and the *Atlanta Journal*, have turned their operations into virtually autonomous subsidiaries supported by their own advertising revenue. Calls to these systems are still free, but regular items are punctuated by promotional material. Other newspapers, such as the *Wall Street Journal* and *Newsday*, make audiotex pay by placing the service on 900-number lines that charge callers by the minute. In fact, *Journal* publisher Dow Jones pioneered this approach with its New York 976-number and 17 categories of business information. During the 1980s, that service was augmented to include a subscription stock-and-investment consulting line, a satellite-feed voice news network and a 900-number JournalPhone, with news from the *Wall Street Journal*.

According to Orban, the issue of advertising or toll charges is a sensitive one for newspapers dealing with audiotex. "It's too expensive not to expect some kind of revenue stream from it. It's how you go about it that's the interesting part."

After raising the matter with people at different newspapers, he concludes the strategy will be as individual as the publication itself. "They all have a different approach, because they all have a different philosophy about why they're using it," he says. "They all read their markets differently — their markets are different. It just depends on how you want to go about it, and nobody really knows how to do it perfectly."

Orban adds that the comments he receives on Touchline — he has a special voice mailbox for such input — continue to express pleasant surprise at the absence of advertising or any associated charge.

**"We're going to  
have to give people  
what they want  
when they want it,  
not when we  
give it to them."**



Such feedback turned decidedly negative once messages began including short promotional announcements for the paper itself, which were subsequently abandoned. He remains very cautious about the prospect of embedding paid advertising within the regular message categories.

The *Toronto Star*, in contrast, planned to court advertisers from the very beginning. Besides plugs for some of the paper's features and columnists, callers will also hear short ads for companies like Smoke Enders or Weight Watchers.

The *Hamilton Spectator*, during its two-and-a-half years with audiotex, has some categories with advertising but has also acquired contracts with local services. City and regional governments now use the paper's system to promote local recreational and cultural activities.

The *Spectator's* equipment enabled these departments to replace a single answering-machine-style phone line — containing one long message — with a variety of categories such as museums, festivals and performing arts. Callers can choose the categories they want, a convenience that led to a tripling of the number of calls on these lines after three months. Concordia credits this increase not only to the efficiency of the technology but to the public profile of the system which has become an established source of information.

Maintaining that profile is the key purpose of audiotex. "We want to strengthen the franchise and just be the number one information provider in our market," says the *Citizen's* Orban. "We know that the trend in consumer behavior is toward choice and convenience. That's why we're not necessarily restricting ourselves to a newspaper format in terms of providing information to our readers."

This same sentiment is echoed by other audiotex managers. The system is meant to be an extension of the paper that spawned it, reinforcing and enhancing the function of the paper for its readership. But determining how well audiotex serves that purpose can be difficult.

Direct benefits are sometimes apparent. The *New York Village Voice*, for example, dramatically increased its clas-

sified advertising by offering voice mail boxes. People seemed to prefer responding to an ad by phone, rather than by mail. Similarly, specialized publisher Dow Jones has cultivated a lucrative market for what amounts to technical data.

In most cases, however, a newspaper might only be investing in a free service with limited advertising potential. The attendant costs could be hard to justify. Although most papers are shy about revealing what those costs are, a survey by the Audiotex Group revealed startup can require \$35,000 to \$60,000 depending on the size of the newspaper and the range of services.

The hardware, which is about the size of a filing cabinet, can be operated by one or two people. Since questions about advertising, circulation and readership have surrounded the development of audiotex, the people running the systems usually come from such backgrounds. The *Toronto Star* is an exception.

"The whole system is driven by the newsroom," he says, pointing out he is also one of the paper's senior editors. "We're one of the few where that has happened."

Besides staff salaries, newspapers must also pay for some of the most popular audiotex services -- items such as horoscopes and soap opera updates which are regularly beamed in by satellite. Beyond that, the paper can take advantage of its local talent having its sonorous sports reporter make good recordings of the overnight scores, for example.

Whether or not a paper earns a profit from audiotex, there is at least one other good reason for publishers to consider this technology: The competition are increasingly capable of doing the same thing. In the United States, the most significant competition could come from the regional telephone companies created by the breakup of American Telephone and

Telegraph Co. in 1984. While the Canadian government is still mulling over the distribution rights controlling a rapidly expanding communications network, legal ruling in the United States last year paved the way for the seven Baby Bells to buy and sell information. These carriers are now free to fashion themselves as brokers — a tempting prospect for companies whose customer lists include most homes and businesses.

The implications of such freedom are wide ranging. Telephone companies could manage databases full of practical consumer information, so that a phone call could tell a customer the location of

the nearest garage or television repair outlet. Such databases could include many of the same things provided by newspaper audiotex: Winning lottery numbers, sports scores and stock quotations.

Even more important could be the management of computer databases, the reincarnation of videotex. The

potential for such services appears to be more promising now than 10 years ago.

Cost, regulatory complications and other technical obstacles will delay the start of many of these services. But as the presence of audiotex indicates, newspapers are already confronting considerable technological challenges and decisions. *Los Angeles Times* columnist Michael Schrage warns editors and publishers not to miss the opportunities presented by this confrontation. The waning of print, he suggests, should lead newspapers to reflect on their enterprise.

"It's not enough to publish all the news that's fit to print," he says. "You have to use all the tools you can to build and serve a community of people who want to do more than just read what you've written ... and then turn the page." □

*Tim Loughheed is an Ottawa-based freelance writer who specializes in the sciences.*

**"You have to use all the tools you can to build and serve...people who want to do more than just read what you've written."**



He leans over the table and grins his "I'm-telling-you-so" grin. "So I'm wandering around the hotel, thinking how can I stall. I have to slow down the tour, I gotta play for time."

It's pub talk, a former operative telling the story of a political campaign with a problem.

The party's leader was about to be on time but the local organizers were not. The man who had been racing across the province trying to look like a winner was about to step off his bus and into an empty room.

"We were in big trouble. I mean front page trouble. Everybody would have run it. The pictures would have been brutal." He laughs because he is getting to the part where even he can't quite believe what he did.

If there were a training school for campaign organizers, the first lesson would be to always, always fill the room and if in doubt book a hall just a little too small to give the appearance of overflowing support. A crowded campaign stop is best, a full room is a minimum and an empty hall a disaster. A campaign in search of momentum or its appearance can have one bad stop and never get started again.

"I wanted time, right? So I invent a filing break. The print types are happy, they whip into the hotel we stop at and whip out their computers."

"Fine. The locals are out looking for warm bodies, phoning all their relatives to get down to the hall and fill it. The break gets me 20, maybe 30 minutes," he says. "But it's not enough."

The print types have hooked up their computers to telephones and are linking up with their newspapers, filing their stories.

"So I'm wandering around, desperate. We're in big trouble, and I end up in the switchboard room."

He leans in closer.

"So I say to the woman, 'For 50 bucks, could you kill the phones?'"

# Technology

## *Journalism's curse and blessing*

By Havard Gould

He laughs again, almost embarrassed at this because he was once a reporter fighting deadlines.

"I don't have change, so I give her 60 ... and she crashes the system. All the phones go dead, all the computers are out and I get another half hour!"

To him it's a story of a necessary dirty trick, a move that avoided a very public disaster for his candidate. It is also an illustration of the potholes along the road of technological progress for journalists, print types and others.

Television reporters have been hurtled down the highway of change in recent years. When I put together my first television reports in 1979, I used chemicals, glue and adhesive tape. Today, I depend upon electronic cameras, microwaves and satellites. With new equipment and processes, reporters today can do more and do it faster. However, it does not necessarily follow that they do it better.

The old technology I began my career with had limitations. A dozen years ago, most local television items in Canada were shot on film. Time was measured in precious feet, 16-millimetre wide. Reporters who regularly returned with more than 400 feet of exposed film were often gently reminded that 12 minutes of film for a 90-second item was likely to bust the budget.

The deadlines were earlier, because you had to allow for processing time, and night came sooner, because the cameras needed more light. You couldn't keep asking questions until you got the perfect clip and you couldn't shoot a lot of pictures you didn't need because the longer you shot, the longer you waited for those pictures. Somewhere in the list of limits, however, was an advantage.

The look of film was not its advantage. But the discipline the technology imposed on crews was an enormous benefit. Knowing they couldn't shoot endless rolls of film, reporters

knew their interviews had to be more pointed, their directions to their photographers more precise.

Simply put, reporters and shooters needed to know exactly what they were after. Rarely did we start the camera rolling for an interview without a detailed "pre-interview." Photographers would often ask a reporter if he or she wanted a certain shot, a specific sequence, or whether the tilt should start from the top of the building or the other way around.

It was good training. There was less spontaneity in our interviews and it was a nightmare covering public meetings where you couldn't tell who was about to say what. However, from the moment you left the office to the moment you dropped the film at the lab — which wasn't always at the station, causing further delay — reporters and photographers talked to each other. We discussed structure, opening shots and closing visuals. We always asked each other whether we had what we needed, whether we could safely shut down the camera and try to beat the deadline.

To the best of my memory, no film photographer ever turned to me and said, "You got lots of shots." Lots wasn't much help. In fact it could be an enormous hinderance. So, we always were under pressure to get what we needed, and nothing else. Reporters and photographers alike had to have a firm grasp of the story as early as possible, and had to keep thinking as it developed through the day.

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"So you know where Oka is?" the bureau chief asked.

"Yes," I said. Two hours later I was there, part of an *ad hoc* team sent from several CBC bureaus. The main story



was the property of others. I was to help.

One day, the help constituted no fewer than 26 live reports. The day the Quebec police officer was shot, a team dashed to the scene, unloaded a couple of trucks and assembled an editing suite and satellite uplink. In a few hours they built a television station, searched the heavens for the right satellite and launched news into space and around the world. We were live, the time lag so short to be of interest to only technical trivialists.

Every now and then, I run into one particular member of that crew, someone who worked very hard on all those live "hits" in the first days.

"Okay Havard," he'll mimic. "Another hit coming. Don't know who you'll be talking to. You're up."

We were up almost as much as we were down, providing updates and background for local CBC stations across the country as well as CBC Newsworld. Any movement, any development was available instantly. It was an extraordinary story of conflict unresolved, an extraordinary example of news gathering technology at its best. We did always know who we were talking to, and the CBC team made very sure we knew what we were talking about. However, the "you're live — to somewhere" line points to one of the concerns that has developed along with television technology.

The cameras can see and hear better and are more likely to pick up the unplanned. On the positive side, interviews can be more searching, and the edits don't usually fly apart on the air. Breaking stories can be assigned after five o'clock and broadcast less than 90 minutes later. Live reports are part of almost every newscast.

No one waits for film to come back from the lab any more. In one sense, however, that is unfortunate. The 45-minute or hour wait while the chemicals did their work was a mandatory pause in every reporter's day, one that was best used to think and weigh all aspects of the story, to search for perspective. The

electronic age has pushed deadlines back farther, which allows reporters to go farther, ask more questions and see more people. However, the period of time available for reflection after the facts are gathered has been compressed, and in the case of live television, virtually eliminated.

The burden falls on the reporter to be able to, quite literally, think on his or her feet, to understand and put into context events and information. Fortunately, technology helps share the load in some ways. Just as reporters can instantly link



**Reporting from just about anywhere**

up with stations across the nation, so can they reach equally important points closer to home: places such as assignment desks, research libraries or producers' offices. For example, I offer my experiences on the campaign trail.

Cellular telephones existed in 1985, but their range was limited, their prices not. That was the year I climbed into my first campaign bus in the first of three consecutive Ontario elections.

It was unbelievably difficult. Our crews on the buses did not have cellular telephones. The frenzied campaign pace of NDP Leader Bob Rae made for short stops, periods of usually less than an hour to telephone Toronto to obtain script approval, record a voice track, do an on-camera, arrange shipment of the tape and

keep an eye on the campaign event. Our three reporters on the three leaders' buses were often out of touch for hours, unable to tell the desk in Toronto what was going on, and the producers were equally unable to contact us to discuss anything from the day's developments to issues that had arisen that had to be put to the leaders.

Five years later, my assignment was Premier David Peterson. Not only did I have my own cellular, but the Liberals provided a backup unit on their bus. The cellular network had expanded to the point where there were rarely "dead spots" during the day, which meant the three reporters on the three buses had the support of the entire CBC election team. In 1985, the reporters often felt like foreign correspondents from another time, distant from their editors, sent far afield with infrequent words from "home office." In 1990, the technology brought us back almost into the newsroom, with all the advantages that teamwork can provide.

One dozen years after completing my first television report, there are still few typical days in television journalism. It remains one of the most attractive aspects of reporting. However, almost everything else has changed.

There is no doubt that reports can be better, that reporters and crews can do more. There is also no doubt that they are doing more, that technology is being used to increase quality and productivity.

The day still starts with a morning assignment meeting, but it carries on much differently and ends much later. I can remember sitting at home, watching my early reports on the six o'clock news. I can't do that any more. I shoot and edit until the last minute, and even when I finish editing, I rarely go home. Usually, I'm going live on the *CBC at Six*, CBC Toronto's supper hour newscast. When that's done, sometimes I do hits for CBC Ottawa ... or CBC Winnipeg ... or CBC Newsworld.... □

*Havard Gould is the Ontario legislature*



John Sawatsky admits he's a bit embarrassed by the introduction in his best-selling book, *Mulroney: The Politics of Ambition*. Amid the debts of gratitude and a gentle reminder that Mulroney himself refused to be interviewed, Sawatsky pays homage to technology that helped him unravel the well-connected life of one of Canada's least-loved prime ministers: "This book has proved to me what a wonderful journalistic tool the computer has become. Without a database, I would have drowned in the morass of names of Brian Mulroney's legion of friends.... Without an electronic indexing program, many important developments in the story would have been lost in the thousands of transcript pages."

Reclining in a semi-dilapidated couch in his modest, semi-detached home in downtown Ottawa, Sawatsky waves his hands and insists that he hadn't even mentioned computers in his original introduction — his publisher insisted on it after witnessing some of the author's computer calisthenics.

"It's not something I would naturally blow my horn about," he says, leaning back and crossing his legs in a way that only tall, gangly men can. "The tools are not the important thing — it's the concept, the vision to look beyond."

Sawatsky doesn't want to talk about his computer just yet. He wants to talk about his "System" — a meticulous method of interviewing and compiling information he developed long before there were databases and indexing programs for personal computers. The System, he explains, has been the foundation for all five of his books, including the first two, which were written on a — gasp! — typewriter.

"I've always had a fairly defined methodology. You need some kind of a system. A computer will not create a system for you. A computer is just a bunch of hardware."

Like Sun Tzu, the ancient Chinese author of *The Art of War*, Sawatsky relies on a patient, thorough strategy that calls for painstaking organization. At the centre of that organization is the interview, what Sawatsky calls the engine of journalism.

"You need a strategy to go in. You need to live by certain rules as to what sort of types of questions are hard-working, what are the lazy questions, what are the suppressive questions. The whole key is to get more."

For his first two books — *Men in the Shadows* in 1980 and *For Services Rendered* in 1982 — both of which explore RCMP espionage and counter-intelligence, Sawatsky conducted hundreds of interviews. The text of each interview was then carefully broken down by category, labelled for later reference and indexed on a separate file.

"Back then I had high school loose-leaf scribblers. I would leave lots of space in between so that I could put entries in. It was a very simple index."

A similar index was used in 1983-84 to put together his third book *Gouzenko*. An oral history that explores the tangled tale of the Soviet cipher clerk who defected to Canada in 1945, *Gouzenko* was the first book Sawatsky wrote using a computer. At the time, few journalists were using their own computers. In fact, Sawatsky says, he was the first freelance reporter in the Parliamentary Press Gallery to use a so-called portable machine. A primitive beast by today's standards, it weighed in at a hefty 11 kilograms. "You would almost tear your arm off carrying it down the street," he says, pointing to one of the forlorn Osborne computers heaped in the corner of his spartan living room. "That was a revolutionary computer back in 1982." Equipped with two disk drives and a small memory — 64K of RAM — this was the machine Sawatsky used to begin working on *The Insiders*, his fourth book, published in 1987. Three-ring binders replaced the scribblers used to index his interviews, and an IBM XT personal computer was eventually brought in to complete the book, which deals with the lucrative, shadowy branch of Ottawa's lobbying community known as public affairs consulting.

Harvey Cashore, then a journalism student in a class Sawatsky teaches at Ottawa's Carleton University, was brought in to help complete research on *The Insiders* in 1986. "I would have to go through these big binders to cross reference everything," he says. "It took forever." Although he would log thousands of hours on the Osborne and the XT, Cashore says the strength of the Sawatsky System does not depend on the computer — organizing and interviewing supply the real horsepower.

"The computer is just one of the tools to use in the system," says Cashore, who now works in Ottawa for CTV's the "Fifth Estate."

"John puts most of his emphasis on interview research. I think most journalists put their emphasis on document research. If you use documents to base most of your research or stories, you're missing out on most of what is going on out there," says Cashore.

Before embarking on the 3 1/2-year odyssey that would result in the Mulroney biography, Sawatsky says he made a technological "quantum leap" when he bought new software to help him tackle his most ambitious project. Database and indexing programs were loaded onto the XT, and the Sawatsky system was given new life. The database was used to compile the names, addresses and descriptive notes about people who might be willing to say something revealing about Mulroney. Armed with a list of 3,000 possible sources, the database was used to disentangle the elaborate web of contacts Mulroney had spun over the years and, most importantly, it was used to assign a ranking to potential interviewees. In all, more than 600 people were interviewed.

"Once you get beyond 100 (people to interview) you



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# MULRONEY POLITICS CRITICISM JOHN SAWATSKY

## THE SAWATSKY SYSTEM

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McDonald

are totally lost," Sawatsky says. "It's tough to decide who to interview next if you want some strategy to it."

Sawatsky bristles at the suggestion that the 33 journalism students he recruited from his class at Carleton did most of the legwork for his book. "They were quite valuable, but the book does not rest or stand on them. They worked under very carefully controlled conditions. They would do some junior interviews that I would never get around to doing."

The students were coached on how to conduct an interview within the Sawatsky System and each was given a comprehensive list of open-ended questions to ask their subjects.

"Ninety-five per cent of the journalists working in the profession cannot do a professionally competent interview," says Sawatsky, who now spends much of his time travelling the country holding seminars on interviewing techniques. "Give me any 20-year professional journalist and have them go out and do an interview. I can have one of my students go out and I will take the results of my student; there will be twice as much, twice as good. I'm pretty high on that."

Thousands of pages of interviews— enough to fill a dozen three-inch binders — were transcribed onto computer disk and the indexing began.

"Once you've got all that in, it's an incredibly powerful tool," he says. "I was amazed."

Each paragraph was tagged with brief labels to keep track of Mulroney's traits, connections, ideas and experiences. His life was also broken down into 16 chronological periods — his boyhood in Baie-Comeau, Que., was the first period and his second term as prime minister was the last.

Sawatsky says the indexing program ZyIndex Professional, produced by Chicago-based ZyLab Inc., was set up in such a way that the chronological periods could be cross-referenced with labels on each paragraph in the transcripts. In other words, Sawatsky says, if you can imagine a huge chart, the time element runs along a horizontal axis while Mulroney's traits and connections were lined up along the vertical axis. The result is a complex system for electronic cross-referencing — a system that can, for example, track Mulroney's need to use rhetoric, his insecurity, his ability as a conciliator and what Sawatsky calls the B.S. factor. As another example, Sawatsky says sections of interviews dealing with the women Mulroney dated would fall under a number of index labels, such as "women," "relationship with women," "attitudes towards women" and "women dated." If Sawatsky wanted to look up all the women Mulroney dated, or just the women he dated during law school at Laval, the program could easily supply that information.

"This index is what made this book," he says, finally revealing his enthusiasm for the technology that tur-

bocharged the Sawatsky System. "This was my bible."

And although the biography consumed almost four years of his life, Sawatsky says the process wasn't nearly as time-consuming as his previous, manual methods.

Cashore, who conducted many of the interviews with Mulroney's close friends, echoes Sawatsky's reverential tone. "I know more about Brian Mulroney than I do about my own family," he says.

The indexing program became the linchpin of Sawatsky's credibility. His policy of assuring anonymity to all sources meant the book lived or died on his ability to corroborate information from hundreds of interviewees.

"There's no one person that the book relies on. There is no foundation like Mulroney. I couldn't have done it without the computer."

But Sawatsky wasn't as confident once a year's worth of research had jammed the computer's limited memory. "The amount of research got so big, and this was a crisis that we had to find a way around." It took a couple weeks for Ralph Curtis, Sawatsky's computer programmer, to fix it. "After that it worked beautifully," Sawatsky says, adding that his 8088 IBM clone, outfitted with two hard drives, performed well. "Everything about the book actually worked the way I had envisaged it."

Those who work in daily journalism can probably learn something from the Sawatsky System.

"Journalists have what I call a 24-hour outlook," Sawatsky says. "You should really be able to keep track of your information — not only the stuff you use, but the stuff you don't use. You don't have to continue this hand-to-mouth existence of relying on only one person to tell you a story."

Although there are many inexpensive programs on the market, Sawatsky says most reporters' legendary disdain for technology has thwarted the acceptance of computer-assisted journalism in the newsroom. "A lot of people don't like that word, having a *system*. But most people have a system for the way they eat their Corn flakes in the morning. You might as well be enlightened about it," he says. "There is an administrative science to the whole thing, which I'm still learning."

The learning will continue with Sawatsky's next book, an examination of international debt. For that weighty project he will use the latest in personal computer technology — an ultra-quick IBM-class machine with 486 microprocessor and 300-Megabyte hard drive.

"I'm getting all the bells and whistles put on it," he says from behind a wide, bearded grin.

As for the software, Sawatsky says programmers at Lotus Development Corp. have suggested an application of their Lotus Agenda program that he can't wait to plug into the System. □

*Michael McDonald is a freelance writer based in Ottawa.*



# Into Prime Time

## *The CBC's revolution in the making*

By Lionel Lumb

**T**o the people at CBC's *The National* it must seem as if they have covered one revolution after another in the past four or five years, interrupted by one near-world war and two domestic upheavals.

Unknown to almost everyone at *The National* last May 13, the seeds of another revolution were being sown right there, amongst them.

Decisions had been taken at the corporation's head office in Ottawa. The details were secret, known to very few people. But now the news was about to break, and it was suspected that one Ottawa newspaper's television reporter had already sniffed out the story.

That's a heck of a way to learn about major change within your own news operation, so the boss of *The National* and chief news editor of CBC TV News, Tony Burman, rushed to tell staff.

In a memo circulated later that day, he told them the CBC would be announcing important programming changes that would take effect in the autumn. "As part of CBC's 'repositioning' exercise, they represent a major initiative in the reshaping of prime-time television."

One of these changes, in Burman's words, is a tribute to the national news service. "*The National* (with *The Journal*) will be broadcast at the peak of prime time — making it even more accessible to Canadians." The information hour would start at 9 p.m. instead of 10.

The other change was a blow. After only a year of life, the service's newest venture, *Newsmagazine*, will be off the air as of this autumn.

People at *The National* have since described Burman as "a man in grieving." He tried to ease everyone's pain in his note to staff by explaining that *Newsmagazine* has been squeezed out for "revenue reasons" and not programming

considerations.

Burman explained that with *The National* moving up to 9, that would bring it too close to the end of *Newsmagazine*, too close for two news programs to co-exist. For a while, Burman wrote, CBC programmers gave serious consideration to moving the half-hour *Newsmagazine* ahead of the supper-hours, in place of an American sitcom. But that would have meant less advertising revenue, and so the CBC decided "very reluctantly" to drop the news show.

Quality of content aside, the revenue factor is probably tied to the fact that *Newsmagazine* has not done well in the ratings. It draws a disappointing 400,000 viewers an evening, about half the number who tune in to CBC regional supper-hour newscasts. *Newsmagazine's* average market share — the percentage of people watching television — is seven per cent,

less than the supper-hours' 14 per cent, *Midday's* 13 per cent and *The National's* 19-20 per cent.

The show carries on for now, under a death sentence that takes effect at the end of September. But its staff will survive, and be given new roles that will allow them to share in the revolution of which *The National* may be the catalyst.

Moving *The National/Journal* hour into the peak of weekday prime time would barely twitch an eyebrow in Europe. The BBC has its main news at 9 p.m., and all across Europe many news programs are prime-time.

But in the North American context this is a bold stroke running counter to programming patterns which are as old as commercial radio. When television came along in the 50's, it inherited the American radio notion enshrining prime time between 8 and 11 in the evening. News was permitted to exist before 7 p.m. and again at 11. Canadian networks bought into that pattern, scheduling their national newscasts at 11 for three decades.

Then in 1982, CBC launched *The Journal*, attached it to *The National* and moved this Monday-to-Friday news hour to 10 p.m. — against, it must be said, the advice of many doubters and tough opposition from its affiliated, privately owned stations which feared they might lose advertising revenue. (They didn't, and after the success of 1982, which actually saw Canadians switching away from U.S. channels, the affiliates have expressed satisfaction with the proposed changes for the autumn.)

In effect, the CBC has advanced prime time an hour, saying it runs from 7 to 10 p.m., with the 9 o'clock *National/Journal* as the lynchpin of the new schedule.

Trina McQueen, CBC vice-president of news, current affairs and *Newsworld*, says the overall plan is geared to two

### **The changes**

- **MOVING** *The National/Journal* hour to 9 p.m., plus the option of 90 minutes on occasion.
- **EXPANDING** *Sunday Report* to 60 minutes once a month; adding a foreign correspondent special every year; ongoing specials, town hall forums etc.
- **DROPPING** *Newsmagazine* and late regional news from October, *Saturday Report* from Jan. 1993.
- **INCREASING** supper-hour regional news to 90 minutes, 5:30-7 p.m., and giving Saturday 60-minute slot to regional news.
- **CREATING** viewing blocks:
  - 5:30-7 regional news
  - 7-9 mainstream, populist
  - 9-10 *National/Journal*
  - 10-12 alternative, adult



principles: that Canadians want their public broadcaster to be distinctive, offering choices different from those on commercial television; and that there is no single audience through the evening.

"So rather than create one evening of programming, and go head-to-head with other broadcasters with similar programs, we decided to go with four different 'evenings' between 5:30 and midnight," McQueen says. This is how McQueen breaks down the schedule:

**1. REGIONAL — 5:30-7:** 90 minutes of information (that's up from one hour) produced by the regions and offering a major reflection of what's happening provincially. This builds on the past 18 months of provincialization of the CBC. After the CBC cut 11 stations in December 1990, the remaining supper-hour programs broadened their mandate from being "obsessively local" to becoming regional or provincial. What makes this block distinctive, the CBC hopes, is its greater emphasis on current affairs and long-form journalism. **While the regions gained a half-hour here, they lost their late-night news at 11, to make room for the fourth 'evening.'**

**2. MAINSTREAM — 7-9:** Two hours of populist entertainment and current affairs. This is where you can see traditional CBC fare such as the *fifth estate*, *Market Place*, *Street Legal*, and series such as *Road to Avonlea*. Although this is broad-appeal stuff it will be almost entirely Canadian.

**3. NATIONAL-JOURNAL — 9-10:** As McQueen puts it with audible pride, "No commercial broadcaster has an hour of information programming in the prime time. It's when the greatest number of Canadians are at home and have access to television."

**4. ALTERNATIVE — 10-MIDNIGHT:** Innovative and more specialized programming for adults which also manages to be different from competing commercial offerings: *Man Alive*, *Life - The Program*, *Kids in the Hall*, a new variety show in the development stage, Canadian movies and documentaries.

The Canadian television market is just about the most competitive in the world.

With the American production giant next door, with a plenitude of specialty channels available on cable, with 73 per cent of Canadians hooked to cable, preserving a niche in such a fragmented market is very tough, especially when you're a public broadcaster committed to almost total Canadian content.

CBC's overall share of viewers has fallen to 14 or 15 per cent from 22 per cent in the 1984-85 season. CTV's share is around 23 per cent, largely because of its popular American programs, many of which are simulcast (aired simultaneously) with the U.S. network of origin.

Despite this, McQueen says the new schedule is not a chase after ratings but "a service strategy — we're not interested in becoming a PBS, offering marginal programming to small interest groups. Between seven and 10 in the evening we are broadcasting to a wide range of Canadians, and from ten to midnight we're aiming at our 'loyalty audience' — who have specialized likes and have been devoted to the CBC for years.

"Journalists at *The National* have generally welcomed the move to 9. They see the slot as a vote of confidence, that the CBC sees their program as being worthy of prime time. People feel good about it."

McQueen acknowledges there is a risk involved. *The National/Journal* will be going up against much stiffer competition from the 10 other main networks.

"I'm not sure *The National* can expect big gains. But at the moment *The Journal* suffers from a drop-off in audience — with the move to 9, viewers will be more wideawake, and more likely to want to stay with it."

In fact, depending on the night and the kind of stories it's doing, *The Journal* can lose up to half its viewers between the time it signs on and 11 p.m.

That's not limited to *The Journal*: there's a huge general decline in potential viewers for all stations between 10 and 11 — from 40 per cent of all Canadians at 10, to 20 per cent at 11.

In fact, with even more potential viewers at 9 p.m. — 45 per cent of all Canadians — *The National/Journal*-led

new schedule may be on the cutting edge of a social revolution in Canada. That revolution reflects changes in Canadians' working habits.

Says McQueen: "We know that people who watch news are mostly between 45 and 80, and that's where the bulk of Canada's population is. That population is going to bed earlier — it's the hardest-working group we've known. A reflection of that can be seen in the fact that in California television stations have moved prime time up an hour, from 7-10 instead of 8-11."

While the CBC feels *The National* will hold its audience and *The Journal* may actually increase its share, others aren't so sure. Al McKay, vice-president and station manager of CTV's Ottawa affiliate, CJOH, is one who is skeptical.

"My first reaction was one of surprise. I belong to the school which says, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.' Two or three nights a week *The National* is beating entertainment programs in this market. This town may be unique — you probably have more news junkies here. But even so, it's doing very well."

McKay points out that with its present 10 p.m. start, *The National* might capture viewers becoming bored halfway through a movie or a mini-series, and who tune out in favor of news before bedtime.

"But at 9 o'clock, when big entertainment programs are just beginning, it might be harder to lure away viewers."

CJOH experimented with a 90-minute supper-hour eight years ago, but gave up after one season. "Our viewers didn't like the 90-minute show. They called and wrote us, and the message was, 'I can't give you 90 minutes, I've got things to do; have dinner, play with the kids, whatever.'"

McKay wonders whether *The National*'s move to 9 might, in fact, hurt CBC's supper-hour programs — with only two hours in between, viewers might well choose to wait for *The National*.

He also wonders if regional CBC stations can fill 90 minutes with quality information. "A 90-minute supperhour news show is asking a lot. I've been there. We built a solid show, didn't repeat



items — and it was hard."

But Peter McNelly, executive producer of *Newsday*, CBC's regional news in Ottawa, welcomes the 90 minutes as "a creative challenge. We're not bothered about filling the extra airtime. *Newsday* routinely has more stories than it needs, we're always throwing stuff out."

McNelly will be working out the details this summer but he already knows some of the ways in which he'll use the extra time. He will segment the 90 minutes into two shows: at 5:30, CBC viewers will get a news package, weather, news about sports rather than sports highlights, columns such as health or entertainment, and longer features or interviews. Then the show starts again at 6, with its traditional mix of news, features, interviews and special reports or long-form journalism.

"I'm excited about this new flexibility. People will recognize that the CBC is providing a different kind of information program."

But the price tag for the extra half-hour was the loss of the late news at 11. "It's hard to lose a program — there's no way around that — it's never good to see a program die," McNelly says.

That's echoed by McNelly's boss, Ron Crocker, CBC's director of regional news and current affairs who oversees the provincial news programs.

"No one's happy about losing the late news shows," Crocker says. "They had status and standing and, in fact, a slightly higher audience in recent months. But everyone sees why that service has to be sacrificed for a scheduling revolution."

"And it does mean a concentration of time and opportunity for the supper hours. It would have been far worse to contemplate putting on a late news at midnight. This way I'm optimistic we can achieve something worthwhile."

Crocker says the new drive for distinctiveness reinforces where the supper-hours were going with provincialization. "We've had a good year, with our concentration on current affairs and long-form journalism, and the objectives remain the same."

It will be up to regional executive producers to format their new 90-minute programs because there are differences between one market and another.

He sees lots of opportunities for inter-regional co-productions, which essentially are designed to replace *News magazine's* ability to reflect any region's interests and concerns to all of Canada. But he admits it won't be easy to replace the vision of that program.

In the past, regional executive producers have behaved like feudal barons, jealously guarding their own fiefdoms. But, Crocker says, provincializa-

tion and an experiment begun this past season for inter-regional projects, have both gone well.

And when *Saturday Report* gives way to a regional show, that, too, will be a chance to get a country-wide feel on air.

For her part, McQueen says "there is grief and pain at *News magazine*. It's been daring and wacky, and it's just coming into its own."

"(In its place) there's a new breed of regional producer, given to the co-production ethic. And there's more cash, which is a great motivator."

That extra cash is intended for long-form journalism, co-productions and for programs lending themselves to a distinctive image for the CBC.

And that's the bottom line at the CBC these days — distinctiveness, the CBC hopes, will encourage the government to give it stable funding.

Stable funding would allow the CBC to plan ahead, and drive away the almost-annual nightmare of budget cuts over the past seven years. If that happens soon, then the CBC will add a second small revolution to its present adventure of shaking up the prime time schedule. □

*Lionel Lumb is a television journalist who has worked for the BBC, CTV and CBC. He now teaches journalism at Carleton University in Ottawa.*

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# O, Canada!

## Media stand on guard for thee

By Randy Boswell

As the 125th annual constitutional crisis heats to a summer boil, two of Canada's major media organizations have turned the complex, contentious and eternal quest for national unity into the ultimate moo — a sacred cow off limits to critical journalism.

To understate the obvious, this is a problem in a country where the struggle for national unity is roughly synonymous with politics itself. It's never as simple as declaring yourself for or against it. But that's exactly the leap of faith that the *Sun* family of newspapers, including *The Financial Post*, and Baton Broadcasting have taken this spring.

They're all for national unity. They're big on Canada, v-e-r-y big.

On Sunday, May 24, the *Post* and the *Suns* in Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa and Toronto ran the same front page editorial, signed in each case by chairman Douglas Creighton, president Paul Godfrey, and the respective publishers, to launch their unity bid.

With prose so awful and metaphors so mixed it could make the stones on the back of your neck gather moss, the editorial laments that the constitutional debate has become "tarnished to the point of boredom" but warns that "separation will touch every person and every cranny in the land. To deny that is to whistle bravely past the graveyard of the hopes of the greatest country in the world."

At this point, the editorial is already a success: it is impossible to whistle, gag and guffaw at the same time.

It goes on to explain that, "The *Sun* family is speaking out with a rare united voice because this Canada must not die. Although our publishers, editors and columnists may disagree on some issues, there is no disagreement on this most

Exactly what the papers' position means in detail is impossible to discern, since the goal of this brand of journalism is to overpower the mind with "bold" declarations and eye-grabbing imagery while glossing over the complexities of public debate.

And that's what all this politics stuff is about. But those complexities, like the bid for aboriginal sovereignty or Quebec's efforts to formally establish its unique presence on this continent, was dismissed in the editorial as nothing more "nationalistic hunger."

Readers in those papers could simply turn the page to escape such troubling matters. In Ottawa, *Sun* subscribers got plenty of hope for a united Canada on Page 3. There, with a grin as big as Alberta's sky, the Peace Tower over her shoulder and one of the 49 Canadian flags pictured in this edition poised in her hand, is Alyson. And, as the *SUNshine* Girl writer pants, "Alyson is ready to fly the flag for Canada..."

Hope, embarrassment, then back to despair. In a story under the headline "SUNS STANDING ON GUARD," we learn from interviews with Creighton and Godfrey they're preparing *four more*

front-page editorials.

Well, enough cheap shots. The *Sun's* an easy target, but the issue here isn't really about whether this kind of ra-ra reporting has been done well or (as in this case) very badly. The real concern is with the



crucial issue of all, that this Canada must not fail."

If the editorial becomes part of this Canada's history, the controversy will be over which of the signatories is forced to claim authorship.



role of all news media during a time of national crisis, and with the temptation to suspend critical judgement in favor of conjuring an instant public consensus, the Faustian deal of jingo-journalism.

The key point is that a public consensus won this way doesn't last. Based as it is on bombast and wilful blindness to the real problems faced by diverse societies, the hyperbolizing of a nation actually diminishes it — and avoids the hard work of building a country great enough to accommodate those who now dissent.

The jingoists should remember that the loudest braggarts are the most insecure.

But that point is also lost on Doug Bassett, who heads Baton Broadcasting, the parent company of CFTO-TV in Toronto, CJOH-TV in Ottawa and CHRO-TV in Pembroke.

Bassett is "fiercely and proudly" arraying the resources of Baton in support of Canadian unity. His stations have produced and are airing a series of 13 public service announcements promoting Canadian unity, with one declaring "My Canada Includes Quebec."

And Bassett says his campaign for Canada extends to Baton's newsrooms.

"When it comes to Canada, there's no editorial neutrality," said Bassett in an interview about the unity promotion. "I don't want to support the people who support separation," he said, stressing they "won't get on the air" at his stations.

Bassett says a strong, unified Canada is what keeps people working, makes businesses profitable, and "generates advertising dollars" for his company.

"I'm proud to wear my Order of Canada, just like (CJOH news anchor) Max Keeping," said Bassett. "Canada is the key."

He added that the *Sun-Post* editorial was "Great stuff!" and urged all Canadians to "Fight for Canada, help (Joe) Clark and the P.M."

♥♥♥

Every newspaper and broadcaster in Canada treads the thin line between careful reporting and analysis and complete immersion in the cause at hand. That was apparent everywhere during the Gulf

War. And now, nearly every media outlet in Canada is stacking its deck to get just the right mix of hearts and clubs — patriotic sob stories and hard-hitting news — to satisfy its critically-minded readers without blowing the whole constitutional game.

Last December, before a House of Commons committee studying the implications of communications and culture on Canadian unity, *Ottawa Citizen* publisher Clark Davey said newspaper reporters were not writing some major stories that could have had a negative impact on Canadian unity.

"The press is showing restraint," he was quoted as saying. "(It is) withholding some stories that would be seen as throwing gasoline on the fire."

While the *Citizen* has carried a thoughtful series of folklore features tagged "Canadian Pride," and prints a Canadian flag on its banner, there isn't nearly the degree of nation-touting as in *Ottawa's* rival daily.

And of all Canada's media organizations, none is as familiar with the conundrum surrounding journalistic integrity and national unity than the CBC. With the promotion of national unity written explicitly into its parliamentary mandate, the corporation's journalistic policy on the matter is an impressive tightrope walk:

*"CBC's current and public affairs programs, in short, must reflect Canada as a nation and evoke the social, economic, cultural and political benefits of nationhood to individual Canadians over the years. At the same time, they must describe the tensions of Canadian society, and the arguments for changes in the political and constitutional arrangements designed to reduce those tensions, and explore as well the costs and consequences of the changes being proposed."*

Such an artful guideline has not saved

the CBC from grief over its coverage of constitutional affairs. After the death of the Meech Lake Accord, for example, media observers on both sides of that issue took shots at the public broadcaster. Queen's University political scientist John Meisel suggested that "the CBC, perhaps like other media, contributed to the process that ultimately scuppered constitutional reform by seeking out and encouraging attacks against the Meech project by people who could be expected to attract a lot of public attention."

On the other hand, a Nov. 1990 essay in *Saturday Night* magazine by Rick Salutin painted the CBC, in tandem with *The Globe and Mail*, as nothing less than a propagandist on behalf of the Mulroney government's Meech Lake campaign.

The problem faced by most reporters — imbued from birth with the ideals of

national unity and with antipathy for the American way — is that we *do* want the country to hold together. The danger is in imagining that good journalism must be sacrificed to accomplish this goal.

In another May 24 article headlined "Impartial media short-change Canadian unity," *Ottawa Citizen* columnist Charles Lynch writes: "My own view is that it is not a violation of journalistic

ethics to defend Canada as a nation.

"The best argument is not the jingoist one, but simply that the freedom journalists enjoy in Canada exists within the national framework. Take that framework away, and it is unlikely that present freedoms of the press would be sustained."

Whether the motivation for supporting national unity is media self-interest or something greater, it isn't won by chucking journalistic integrity any more than it is by slavish devotion to bare-bones, objective reporting. Journalists, as much as any poet, painter or politician, *constitute*

***"When it comes to Canada, there's no editorial neutrality ... I don't want to support the people who support separatism."***



the nation they inhabit. Exploring the beauty of that place is one role of the writer; unearthing the tension and conflict that underlie it, is another.

When the Toronto *Globe* reported on July 1, 1867: "With the first dawn of this gladsome morn we hail the birthday of a new nationality," it described an event but also contributed to the creation of its subject, Canada. The nation was not fully served by the writer, however, who, perhaps excusably, failed to convey the friction between French and English which must have clouded that dawn, or the simmering tension among native people in the west which exploded in war a few years later.

Hindsight allows us to see that denying such problems doesn't solve them.

Besides predictions of suffering throughout the land if Quebec separates, the *Sun-Post* editorial and Doug Bassett don't bother much with solutions, with argument. And really, who *can* argue with national unity, with the vital importance

of *this* Canada, when such ideas are conveyed using only the broad brushstrokes of propaganda.

It takes a sharper focus to reveal that the struggles of people in Quebec, aboriginal groups, and others in this country are all about redefining terms like "national unity" and "Canada", so that the ideas grow large enough to encompass their experiences and aspirations.

And even their geography.

When *The Financial Post* illustrated its front-page unity pitch with the flags of Canada and only the 10 provinces, its subtle snub of the northern territories was a telling oversight for a paper so hot-trot for One Big Happy Canada. It's as if the *Post* editors don't appreciate why "coast to coast to coast" is now, yes, the correct way of describing the country. It's politics, but it's also the kind of simple gesture that makes Canada big enough to accommodate everyone here — even if it means stretching an outmoded motto: *A mari usque ad Mare atque ad Mare*.

Constituting a country is a more artful — and compromising — process than composing the front page of a newspaper. The Conservative government's last crack at striking a bargain with the premiers and native leaders will carry on at its own predetermined pace and according to its own political calculus. While it's true that a few of the country's media heavies have joined in the final push for unity, it's hard to imagine even Joe Clark appreciating the kind of help he's getting from these sources.

If there's something refreshing about the *Sun's* or *Baton's* approach to Canadian unity, it's that it can't be misinterpreted. Unfortunately, it can't be understood as a meaningful contribution to the debate about Canada's future, either, and worse, is likely to promote the kind of ignorance about the nation that will always threaten its unity. □

Randy Boswell is an Ottawa-based journalist and observer of the media.

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# Ethics and the student

By Nancy Payne

**P**rofessional journalists run into ethical dilemmas constantly in the course of their work: protection of a source's identity, use of unchecked or unattributed information, and the acceptability of freebies, for example. But, professionals aren't the only ones who have to face these problems. Nearly two-thirds of Canadian university journalism students run into something they consider to be an ethical dilemma by the time they reach their final year, and may face greater ethical pressures because of their student status.

In response to a recent questionnaire, 62 per cent of final-year graduate and undergraduate respondents in journalism programs at seven Canadian universities and one technical institute, said they had been in a difficult ethical position, whether working on a class assignment, on an apprenticeship, at a summer job or as a full-time journalist. When asked to describe the situations they had faced, the students listed such things as pressure from sources to review stories, offers of free tickets or meals, and the decision to use anonymous sources. Several

responded that ethical questions arose constantly in the course of their work as journalists or students.

Some of the quandaries that respondents listed were as difficult to resolve as any a working journalist might encounter: one student had to decide whether or not to write a story about unfounded accusations of child abuse. The student decided not to on the basis that it might discourage other victims from reporting for fear of not being believed. Another watched while a senior reporter and photographer staged a supposedly candid picture. Another student thought he had found a hospitalized child-killer under virtually no supervision. His editors published the story despite the lack of corroborating evidence.

Respondents most frequently reported problems of not knowing when to use information in their stories, an issue familiar to many journalists. Sources retracted statements, asked for material to be off-the-record, or, as in one case, admonished the student to use discretion when reporting what he was about to say. Other students had to decide

most frequently mentioned issue was sensitivity to a source's feelings or reputation. Students reported uneasiness at having to interview families of hit-and-run victims and at probing sources about the lasting effects of a childhood disease.

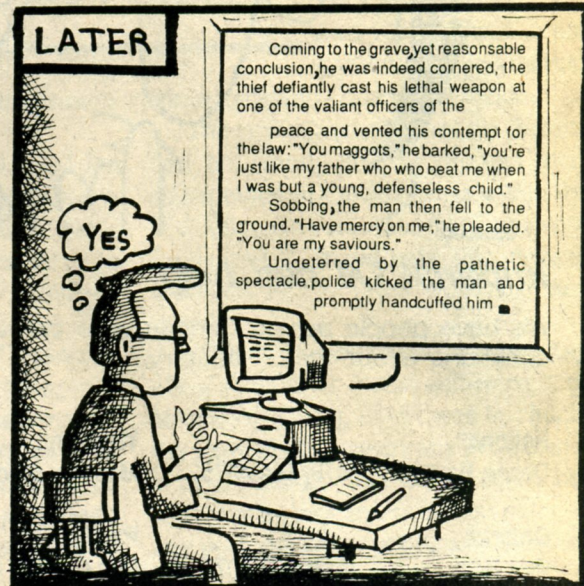
Professional reporters can at least be secure in the knowledge that the full clout of their news organizations is available to back up their decisions. Students, however, often face special difficulties precisely because they are students. They are frequently uncertain of their ethical or legal footing, and as a result, sources attempt to bully or cajole them when they would not risk offending an established reporter. For example, after finding out a pressure group's plans to disrupt the Toronto economic summit, a student called a city official for a reaction. She said the official badgered her to reveal the identity of her source, which she eventually did, adding, "I still wake up in a sweat about it."

Another student allowed the supervisor of a mental institution to read his story, only to face her wrath at his use of words such as "drooling" and "unnerv-



the propriety of using information they obtained using ethically debatable tactics. One took notes from an incoming FAX while her source was out of the office, while another went ahead with a story based on information from a confidential briefing.

The second



CARL MARTIN '92



ing" to describe the patients.

Several students reported the opposite case where they used their unclear status as student/reporter — whichever way seemed advantageous at the time. While on a work term, a student called a competing newspaper to get a source's telephone number, identifying herself not as a rival employee, but as a student. Another respondent simply didn't reveal his identity as a reporter at a meeting for fear of losing the story.

Students also mentioned difficulties dealing with freebies, pressure from editors or publishers, conflicts of interest, potential impact of stories on small communities, recording without the source's knowledge, and editing or rearranging direct quotations.

Respondents reported varying levels of encounters with ethical problems depending on factors such as language, work experience and religious feeling. Not surprisingly, two-thirds of the students who said they had some work experience reported having run into ethical dilemmas, versus only a third of students without work experience. Length of work experience made no difference — students with just a few weeks in the workforce were almost as likely to report dilemmas as students who had worked as journalists for a year or more.

Forty-three per cent of third-year students, 60 per cent of fourth-year students,

## How it was done

*The questionnaire was conducted by the author in the spring of 1991 under the supervision of Prof. Alan Frizzell. Response rate was approximately 34 per cent. The universities included in the study were: 1- Université de Québec à Montréal, 1- University of Western Ontario, 1- Université Laval, Concordia University, University of King's College, Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, University of Regina and Carleton University. Laval was under-represented due to a low response rate. Carleton was over-represented.*

and 75 per cent second-year masters students encountered ethical quandaries. Again, exposure to the field increases the likelihood of encountering such problems.

However, it is interesting to note that 82 per cent of first-year masters students indicated having ethical difficulties at some point. Possibly, this reaction is due to unfamiliarity or discomfort with the norms of journalism since most first-year graduate students enter from another field of study, without exposure to those norms that a fourth-year undergraduate has been

exposed to. To the recent graduate of an English or history program, something as basic as choosing a lead may present ethical questions about fairness or manipulation that no longer occur to the more experienced students.

Anglophones were much more likely to say they had encountered an ethical problem than were francophones. Of English-speaking students, 66 per cent answered positively versus 52 per cent of those who speak French. Whether this result is due to a lack of work experience among francophones or a genuine cultural difference is impossible to say.

Of students who considered religion in some form to be important, 65 per cent had run into an ethical problem on the job, compared with 60 per cent who said religion was unimportant to them.

Finally, it appears men and women either have very similar experiences with ethical problems or they are picking up virtually identical standards from journalism schools. Of female students, 61 per cent reported having encountered an ethical problem, compared with 61.8 per cent of male students. □

*Nancy Payne recently successfully completed her master's thesis in journalism at Carleton University on ethics education in Canadian university schools of journalism.*

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# The retreat from Watergate

*The lustre is off investigative reporting — and we're the losers*

By Lynne Cohen

**F**ive bumbling Richard Nixon zealots were seized at gunpoint 20 years ago in the Democratic National Committee headquarters in Washington's Watergate apartment complex. "Don't shoot, we give up" marked the classic surrender of an amateur heist.

The Watergate break-in — a botched crime that resembled a bad suspense drama more than a high-stakes theft — marked the beginning of a series of historic events that would drastically alter the way everyday journalism was practised in Canada and the United States. With Watergate dawned the era of popular investigative journalism. Young *Washington Post* police reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein — who wrote the first simple news stories that led to the president's resignation more than two years later — inspired a generation of journalists wanting to make a name for themselves by destroying the names of others.

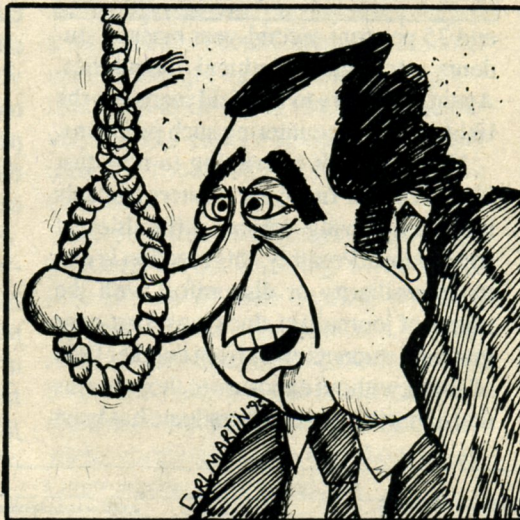
Among journalists today, it is obvious this goal has lost its luster. In many ways, press-government relations are becoming less strained. And many people on both sides of the waning adversarial relationship are relieved by the press's retreat. Others, including this journalist, lament it.

Of course, some extremely important and difficult political and business stories are still being pursued. And many journalists and editors still want only the story behind the story. What is occurring is a slow and dangerous erosion of the values that Watergate instilled.

Much of the evidence is symbolic. When the Centre for Investigative Journalism changed its name to the Canadian Association of Journalists, in order to stop scaring off potential members, it seemed, to some, a sell out of the ideals

implicit in the original name. The *Winnipeg Free Press* fired its ombudsman in May for his criticism of the paper's concentration of fluff stories. Newspapers that had set up special investigative reporting teams disbanded them, in part because of petty jealousy in the newsroom. At times it seems *Frank* magazine's anonymously written articles are the most probing in the capital, and that journalists berate them with as much vehemence as politicians.

Often, news reports critical of the



status quo either aren't followed up or they don't become front-page headlines until the issue is of vital importance to the community or the nation. The savings and loan crisis in the United States is only one example where journalists clearly fell down on the job. In Canada, the complex health care spending crisis has been looming and discussed by experts for more than a decade, during which time the mainstream press was focusing primarily on those who simply blamed the government for underfunding.

And as Rick Salutin recently pointed out in the *Globe and Mail*, there is virtually no critical analysis of the official line on economic priorities.

Investigative journalism is bound to lose appeal when well-known journalists themselves come out railing against some forms of adversarial reporting. Note Eric Malling's measured attack against press hounds who go after the most exhilarating, conflict-oriented story. The charge is that, in the process, the press itself inspires and promotes controversy. But investigative journalism does nothing if it doesn't promote controversy.

In the United States, investigative journalism is now a bad word. The guilt among press members for the way they treated vice presidential candidate Dan Quayle is palpable. The leniency with which former president Ronald Reagan was treated during the Iran-Contra affair — despite incontrovertible evidence of his involvement in the scandal — makes Watergate look like a witch hunt. University of Virginia professor Larry Sabato perhaps epitomizes current attitudes. In his 1991 book *Feeding Frenzies*, he refers to Watergate-style reporting as "junkyard journalism."

Laziness is perhaps one reason why such reporting has receded. It's much easier to simply report what someone says. But there is a myriad other reasons: increasing savvy of government officials who have learned to master the television sound byte, thus leap frogging the probing press and landing directly in the living rooms of constituents; decreasing resources and willingness of media groups to invest in expensive, time-consuming investigations; heightened sensitivity of editors and reporters to unrestrained official lambasting of the press by the rich and powerful, which by the way, Watergate pursuers in the media tolerated in historic proportions; and public opinion.

It's disheartening to sense the growing frustration, even disgust, among mem-



bers of the public who often view journalists as cynical sensationalists. A recent issue of the *Columbia Journalism Review* bemoans the results of its own random survey, which categorically places journalists at the bottom of the public trust scale, well below police, funeral directors, even bankers.

To be sure, Woodward, Bernstein and their daring *Washington Post* editors — the first media group to relentlessly pursue the president, despite harassment and threats from the White House — didn't invent investigative journalism. Indeed, America's press has always been conspicuous for powerful secrets, as Sabato recalls in his book. In 1690, a colonial newspaper reported France's king "lying with his son's wife." Alex de Tocqueville complained of the press's salaciousness in the early 19th century.

Some modern pre-Watergate reporters even made careers from exposing the immoral and illegal behavior of the power elite. However, such investigative journalists as I.F. Stone and Jessica Mitford were considered more eccentrics than models.

Generally, the press showed ardent respect for officialdom. Remember John Kennedy's extramarital affairs? That reporters knew about them but never revealed them in print is the stuff of jour-

nalism folklore, the era of reverence. Sabato calls it the period of "lapdog" journalism.

Contrast that attitude with the press' Watergate hound mentality. Whatever opinion one might have regarding such ferocious reporting, Watergate remains the unprecedented example of the power of a free press.

What had begun as a trickle of information appearing on the pages of the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times* and irregularly on the newscasts of the major networks, ended in a massive flood of material that destroyed the presidency.

Nixon's downfall, the egregious result of every major Washington power block turning against him — including Congress, the intelligence community and the enormous and threatened bureaucracy — could never have happened without the press. As H.R. Haldeman, Nixon's pitbull chief of staff who resigned in an attempt to wrest the noose from Nixon's neck, wrote, "When the press did move massively into Watergate, all other power blocks were seen as frail in comparison. In the end it was the press that did the most to bring Nixon down."

Since then, Watergate-style reporting has wrecked the political lives of such well-known politicians as Jim Durrell,

Ottawa's former mayor, former Tory defense minister Robert Coates, Democratic presidential candidate Gary Hart, former American secretary-treasurer Don Regan, former U.S. chief of staff John Sununu and former B.C. premier Bill Vander Zalm. Sabato writes about 36 "feeding frenzies" since 1952, most occurring after Watergate. Had the press left these public figures alone, their careers might well have advanced unabated, and the losers would have been the unsuspecting public.

It was the tenacity and audacity of the early Nixon pursuers that made Watergate an event at all. And though cynicism abounds today regarding the motives and needs of the press in Watergate, the fact remains that it had an enormous and positive impact on journalism. Reporters and editors came to view themselves romantically, as truthseekers, expositors of wrongdoing, protectors of the public good. Post-Watergate rules have said, "What you discover as true and newsworthy, you print or broadcast. Damn the results for the rich and mighty."

The challenge today is to embrace and enhance these values. □

*Lynne Cohen is an Ottawa-based freelance writer and passionate advocate of investigative journalism.*

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A host of journalism awards were handed out recently by a variety of media organizations and related institutions.

Winners in the annual newspaper competitions sponsored by the Ontario Reporters' Association are as follows:

**Features, daily newspapers:** winner **Chip Martin**, London *Free Press*, for a piece on a crooked London lawyer; runner-up **Don LaJoie**, Windsor *Star*, for a story on a sick, broke man preparing to die.

**Features, community newspapers:** winner **Chris Hornsey**, Iroquois Falls *Enterprise*, for a feature on the high incidence of chronic fatigue syndrome; runner-up **Joy Dockter**, East York *Observer*, for an article on ambulance workers.

**News, daily newspapers:** winner **Jim Holt**, Hamilton *Spectator*, for a piece on an abusive police officer who received lenient punishment from his force; runner-up **Debra Ann Yeo**, St. Catharines *Standard*, for an article on dangers for tourists in Buffalo.

**News, community newspapers:** winner **Joy Dockter**, East York *Observer*, for a story showing links between a municipal candidate and fascists.

**Opinion, daily newspapers:** winner **Don LaJoie**, Windsor *Star*, for a column looking back at the city bus strike; honorable mention to **Joe Hornyak**, Lindsay *Daily Post*, for an editorial against feeding ducks.

**Opinion, community newspapers:** winner **Bob Roth**, Seaway *News*, for a column critical of "political correctness" and reverse racism against white people.

**Student Category:** winner **Dan Falk**, Ryerson *Review of Journalism* for an article on showtime for science; honorable mention to **Melanie Bannister**, Canadore College *Quest*, for a feature from the morgue, "Dead men do tell tales."

This year's annual awards were sponsored by the Brantford *Expositor*, Hamilton *Spectator*, London *Free Press*, Kitchener-Waterloo *Record* and the Windsor *Star*.

Judges were **Doug Firby** of the Windsor *Star*, **Peter Edwards** of Cones-

toga College and **Don Gibb** of the Ryerson School of Journalism.

In other award competition, Toronto's 'CBC at Six' and the 'I-Team' from CBC-TV Winnipeg were named winners of the 1991 Michener Award for meritorious public service in journalism.

The package of six stories from the 'I-Team,' the investigative unit of CBC Manitoba, and a documentary from 'CBC at Six,' were combined as a single entry representing robust, penetrating journalism with a public service impact.

The 'CBC at Six' story exposed widespread abuse of OHIP by Ontario drug addicts in American treatment centres. The 'I-Team' package exposed corrupt Winnipeg police, fraud in battery and furnace repairs, seamy immigration practices, a federal tax loophole and abuse of Indian band funds.

The judges combined the entries after being unable to decide which had the winning edge.

Honorable mention went to *The Globe and Mail* for reporter **Paul Taylor's** articles on patient abuse by psychiatrists and therapists.

Certificates of merit went to CKSL-AM/Q 103 FM in London, Ont., *L'Actualite* in Montreal, The Prince Albert (Saskatchewan) *Daily Herald* and the Winnipeg *Free Press*.

The judging panel was headed by **Sen. Finlay MacDonald**, a former Nova Scotia broadcaster. Other members were **Sandy Baird**, former publisher of the Kitchener-Waterloo *Record*; **Emmanuelle Gattuso**, senior vice-president for public affairs with the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, Ottawa; **Huguette Laprise**, executive assistant with La Presse Canadienne, Montreal; and **Guy Rondeau**, retired chief of the Quebec service of La Presse Canadienne, Montreal.

Meanwhile, journalists **Ruth Teichroeb** of the Winnipeg *Free Press* and **John Nowlan** of CBC, Halifax, were named as winners of the Michener Award Foundation's \$20,000 four-month study-leave fellowships.

Teichroeb will be examining Manitoba's emerging aboriginal child-

welfare system, and specifically the increasing tension between native child welfare agencies and mainstream authorities as native groups press for more autonomy. Incidentally, Teichroeb's work on adolescent homes took the *Free Press* to the finalist level in the public service awards competitions.

Nowlan will pursue his interest in children's TV programming by studying youth TV in Malaysia and surrounding countries.

In other competitions, **Julie Bristow**, producer for CBC's 'Venture,' is one of 12 international winners of William Benton Fellowships in Broadcast Journalism at the University of Chicago.

Bristow will join three of Europe's leading television reporters and several U.S. journalists at the university during the 1992-93 academic year.

The Benton Fellowship program is designed to advance the work of mid-career radio and television professionals by enabling them to bring more depth and understanding to their work. The six men and six women chosen this year average 13 years broadcast journalism experience.

*Masthead* magazine reports some good news and some bad news for 1991. The good news: Canadian publishers launched 69 new magazines. The bad news: 59 magazines shut down. Also, newsstand sales last year dropped 10-to-15 per cent.

Another blossom for multi-culturalism appeared this spring. *Ireland's Eye* is a new quarterly magazine focusing on the Irish Canadian community. The magazine enters the market with two older publications, *The Celtic Connection* and *The Toronto Irish News*. □

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# Let's not just talk about quality

**S**elf-doubt and self-examination are the twin trademarks of today's media — from the executive level to the reporter on the street.

Will daily, door-to-door newspapers fade to an insignificant component of the media world? Will television news networks, once the darling of the public, continue to lose their audience to specialty channels? Will cutbacks, dilution of quality and fragmentation of the market continue to be the order of the day? Will CBC and CTV adopt the forbidding agenda of the American networks in terms of cutbacks and erosion of quality programming? No one has answers to these questions. But media executives, media specialists, pollsters and participants in the print, radio and TV persist in meeting to agonize over them.

In recent months, there has been Carleton School of Journalism's Roundtable '92 on the future of Canada's daily newspapers, Ryerson Polytechnical Institute's Seminar on the Content Revolution, the annual meeting of Canadian Press and the annual convention of the Canadian Association of Journalists which concentrated this year on the future of the media. Major news organizations will discuss the future of CP in the next couple of months.

The general mood is one of unease, fear about next year and the next decade.

At Carleton's Roundtable, 1991 statistics on declining advertising revenue and circulation were not as grim as those in 1990, but daily newspaper performance in 1992 and the first quarter of this year was still far from healthy.

Prescriptions constituted a cluster of familiar-sounding initiatives: get closer to readers, concentrate on target audiences and be prepared to provide day-to-day news in different forms — tabloids, specialized papers and papers delivered to homes by electronic methods.

The talk was not about survival, but

regaining a more traditional share of the market.

At the sessions of the Canadian Association of Journalists, Arthur Kent, a leading NBC-TV correspondent based in Rome, voiced concern about developments at the major U.S. networks, and by implication, at their Canadian counterparts. Kent zeroed in on TV networks' foreign news coverage and the state of foreign affairs reporting.

In the past five years, resources have been trimmed, staff cut back and ideas, in terms of innovative journalism, are in short supply. The commitment to excellence has frayed. There is a resort to cheap-and-easy alternatives instead of thorough coverage and competent analysis.

Kent urged a return to emphasis on content and quality.

Robert McKeown, a Canadian-born television journalist with CBS, echoed Kent about the state of TV news.

McKeown said budgets have been cut, money-making guidelines seem to be in the forefront, and there is a "dangerous trend" toward sensationalism.

One of the few voices to display optimism — even enthusiasm — was CTV's Tim Kotcheff, the network's vice-president. Kotcheff suggested that technological change — the pint-sized computer, the miniaturization of news gathering equipment — would usher in an era of higher quality journalism tailored to move to different individual tastes. He said there would be more channels, easier access to stories, greater demand for stories of substance, more layers of information in the long run despite the short-term prospect of cutbacks, and he said all-news cable channels would proliferate.

In a similar optimistic vein, Linda Hughes, publisher of the *Edmonton Journal*, saw a great future for daily newspapers. She said there would be

more kinds of information produced, more reader participation, and newspapers could thrive if they were more challenging to readers, more interesting, more informative, more interpretive, more "compelling."

Where does this leave today's journalism? Probably struggling for the next five years. But in the long term, journalism still has the potential to do a more credible, more effective job in the next two decades.

However, management as well as staff will have to make it happen. Lip service to quality won't do. *Dedication* needs to be the watchword of the industry. □

*Murray Goldblatt is a journalist and broadcaster who spent 18 years teaching journalism at Carleton University.*

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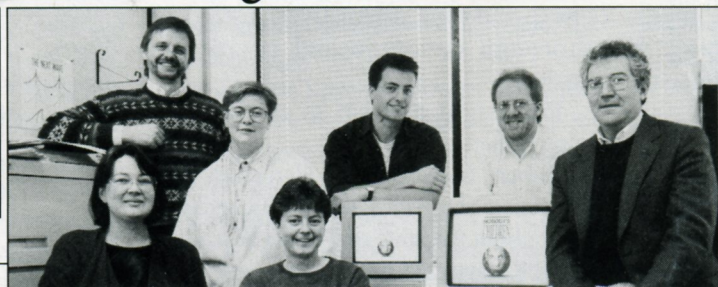
## Southam wins in 9 of 15 categories at The National Newspaper Awards



Mark Kennedy  
The Citizen  
Enterprise Reporting

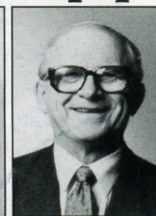


Linda Goyetto  
The Edmonton Journal  
Column Writing



Special Projects – Southam News

Left to right: Joan Ramsay, Rob Ludlow, Kirsten Smith, Kelly Braithwaite, Paul Perreault, Trevor Johnston, Dave Todd.



Red Fisher  
The Montreal Gazette  
Sports Writing



Mike Trickey  
Southam News  
Spot News Reporting



Joan Frazer  
The Gazette, Montreal  
Editorial Writing



Barry Gray  
The Hamilton Spectator  
Sports Photography



Stephen Bindman



Norma Greenaway



Bertrand Marotte



Elaine Flaherty



Ben Tierney



Nick Brancaccio  
The Windsor Star  
Spot News Photo



John Lucas  
The Edmonton Journal  
Feature Photo

The level of excellence provided by the editorial staff throughout all the Southam Newspaper Group was once again demonstrated on April 4th at the 1991 National Newspaper Awards.

This is getting to be a nice little piece of tradition. In 1989 we felt very proud after winning in 6 of 12 categories.

Then, in 1990, we won in 9 of 15. Again, this year, a repeat performance – 9 out of 15. It's really no surprise that Southam readers are among the best-informed with people like these contributing.

Although it does make one wonder if they have ever heard of "recession", doesn't it?

- The Gazette, Montreal
- The Ottawa Citizen
- The Whig-Standard, Kingston
- The Nugget, North Bay

- The Hamilton Spectator
- The Expositor, Brantford
- Kitchener-Waterloo Record
- The Sun Times, Owen Sound

- The Windsor Star
- The Sault Star, Sault Ste Marie
- Medicine Hat News
- The Edmonton Journal

- Calgary Herald
- The Kamloops Daily News
- The Prince George Citizen
- The Vancouver Sun & Province



The  
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Newspaper  
Group