

# Maclet MAGAZINE

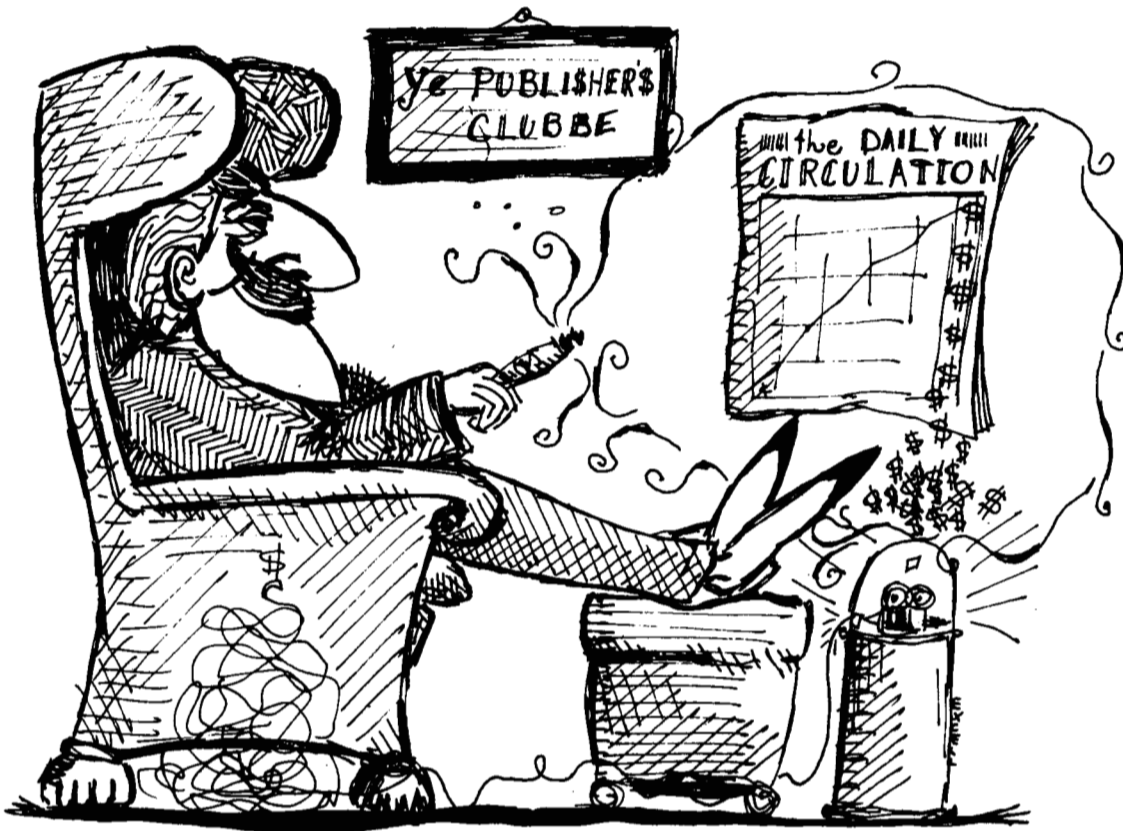
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SPECIAL

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"Publishers almost by definition are members of the establishment in this country."

## Who's Responsible - Publishers, Reporters, You!

By PETER GZOWSKI

(Excerpts from an address to members of Canadian University Press at their annual national conference in Calgary last December.)

The daily press is a veritable treasure trove of material for anyone who pretends to the role of critic — and not only because so few other people are looking into it. From the women's pages to the sports pages, from the editorials to the comics, the daily press in this country and in the countries whose press we emulate, presents every day a truly inexhaustible supply of wrong facts, useless information, fatuous comment, misleading rumors, typographical errors, demeaning advice, unfunny jokes and columns about people's Christmas trees falling down. And the periodical press, especially in this country, is scarcely any better. The press is, I am trying to say, a particularly easy mark for anyone who wants to criticize it, and the answer to the question that I was asked to address myself to here is the press doing what it should do, is quite patently: no.

Mr. Gzowski, a free lance writer and frequent critic of the press in Canada, is former managing editor of Maclean's for which he now writes a TV column.

Why it isn't doing that job, why it isn't performing the role or roles we would like to see it perform is quite another matter. Who's fault is it? Who do we blame? And how, if it is possible, ought we to go about improving it."

### NOT ENOUGH

Excellence is not enough in itself, not by a long shot. So long as successful publishing has to rely on advertising for survival — and since the only alternative to advertising I can see is public, or government, support (either that or a very small and expensive circulation indeed), then I for one hope to heaven it does for a long time yet—so long as

"There's very little wrong with Canadian journalism that a whole generation of good journalists could not repair."

that condition prevails, people who publish things are going to have to know precisely who they're talking to.

And if there is one message I can bring you from my many years in the journalism business, I'm afraid, it is that the public is pretty dumb. Fur-

thermore, the public rather likes being dumb. I don't think anyone who has ever worked on a mass publication from a newspaper to a magazine, would really argue with me on that point, although I imagine quite a lot of them would fight to

"And if there is one message I can bring you . . . it is that the public is pretty dumb. Furthermore, the public rather likes being dumb."

the death about whether or not I ought to say it in public.

But I think that's too easy.

### THE PUBLISHER

I want to return to the journalist and his reader in a moment. But there is one other party I want to look at first, the arbiter of the dialogue that ought to be taking place: the publisher.

I believe, and I guess I always have believed, that there is quite a lot more evil done in the world by stupidity than cupidity, where the average conspiracy-theory man sees it the other way around.

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## Editorial

### The Press

One of the least understood means of communication is that of the press, and out of this lack of understanding arises a great variety of criticism and comments.

The problem of presenting news to the public, however, is no longer the sole domain of the newspaper. Television and radio have attempted to play a part in keeping persons informed of world happenings, important comments and analyses of events.

Although some radio stations do attempt to relay news and opinion in large doses, the medium of sound still lags desperately short of rivaling the impact of newspapers on the general public. Perhaps this is due to the fact that radio is still looked upon primarily as a source of entertainment. Television, in the main, is still further in the background than radio as a news distributing source.

### NO CHALLENGE

Without entering into a discussion of the reasons for the supremacy of newspaper in the dissemination of news, it can probably be stated that no serious challenge has yet been offered the daily press in its field.

Among the primary criticism of the press are those of yellow journalism (a much misunderstood term), sensationalism and lack of a truly free press. All these criticisms, and the sundry others which occur, generally boil down to one thing: the press does not entirely suit the needs of any given individual or comply to what any given individual feels is good for the public.

With these problems in mind, we approached various persons to give us their opinions on the press, radio and television.

The results have been interesting but hardly illuminating. We feel the articles serve further to illustrate the problems of presenting news and opinion rather than offering some hitherto unknown or untried formula. We suggest you judge for yourself, and while you are so doing, realize that this is exactly what everyone else is doing.

—Peter Bower

# PRESS NUMBER

# Truth and Editing, Printing Realities

By IAN ARROL



Ian Arrol

The failure of those with a cause to influence the public is often rationalized by blaming the press for not printing the truth.

"You can't believe what you read in the newspapers. Press reports are superficial, sensational, distorted, biased," are remarks typically in the tradition.

"A daily newspaper is as much a matter of despair for those who work on it, as for those who merely read it — from the cub reporter through to the editor."

Much of such criticism seems to suggest that "truth" is something forever knocking at the door of the

Mr. Arrol is a writer for the *Victoria Daily Colonist*.

editor, and forever refused admittance; that if truth were once admitted and presented on the pages of the daily newspaper, society and the world would be changed overnight.

Before presenting a defence of the daily newspaper, here is a "truth" probably not recognized by the general readership of the press.

## MATTER OF DESPAIR

A daily newspaper is as much a matter of despair for those who work on it, as for those who merely read it — from the cub reporter through to the editor.

No one person on staff can be completely satisfied with any one day's paper because each publication is the reflection of a multitude of personalities and prejudices with varied shades of understanding and misunderstanding.

The people involved are just as enlightened or reactionary as you find various of your fellow students or members of the faculty to be.

Then, the very production of a 20 or 40-or-more page publication each day involves so many people, so many opportunities for error, distortion, personal prejudice and lack of understanding to enter that it would require a miracle, rather than mere dedication and professionalism, to produce an accurate reflection of the community, the nation and the world.

Take a typical story.

Someone gives a speech.

The speech lasts one hour. This particular talk could be reported truthfully only if it were reproduced in full and, hence, only to the exclusion of most every other speech in the world that day. What can be reported is only something that is either "new" or freshly stated or particularly pertinent for the times.

## FIRST DISTORTION

Here entereth the first distortion. Each person, including each reporter, if asked to summarize in two minutes the special import of the speech, would present a different report.

Any reporter with pride in his profession will, in his summation, suspend his own prejudices as far as possible to summarize in the name of value or interest (unfortunately not always synonymous) what the speaker is attempting to convey. And he must do this in the very short time he has before deadline or other assignments.

"Each person if asked to summarize in two minutes the special import of the speech would present a different report."

The copy is given to the city editor, who then subjects the report to his judgment of what is of value and interest. If the story is too long for space available he must exercise arbitrary judgment in cutting it down. The copy editor writes a heading,

which may be distorting, illuminating or prosaic.

"No one person on staff can be completely satisfied with any one day's paper because each publication is the reflection of a multitude of personalities and prejudices with varied shades of understanding and misunderstanding."

## FURTHER CUTS

New, more important stories may break and the news editor may ask that the story may be cut further, a task that might be performed by a person fourth removed from the source.

Then the story moves on to the plant for typesetting and printing, with further opportunities for desecration of original thoughts.

The actual appearance of the story on the printed page can be as much a matter for dismay for reporter, city editor, copy editor, re-write man, news editor, managing editor, overall editor and publisher as for the speaker who made the original report.

"Well, that was yesterday's paper," is a litany a newspaperman has to recite often, in order to maintain sanity and a fresh approach to the paper that must be put out today.

There is no substitute for actually attending a speech; for reading at least two or three or more books on a particular subject; for going to primary sources. The papers can act as tip-offs on new developments and thoughts, as stimulators to the private paths of research and meditation each of us must take to be a responsible member of a democracy.

## BACKGROUND ARTICLES

Particularly helpful as mid-wives between news stories and books are the background articles. On the editorial page and "page five" and elsewhere of each *Victoria* newspaper appear viewpoints on every important issue locally, nationally and internationally as presented by writers of every hue and cry, including the letters-to-the-editor section. Some of such material is fluff — Richard Jackson writing from Ottawa or James Nesbitt from Victoria — but also represented are such writers as Arnold Toynbee and Walter Lippmann.

No one "line" is pursued. Certainly, in the past two weeks, every possible way of looking at the war in Viet Nam has been reflected in some detail and depth on pages four and five of both *Victoria* papers.

"The people involved are just as enlightened or reactionary as you find various of your fellow students or members of the faculty to be."

But it is good that a certain dissatisfaction be maintained with the daily press, as it is good that a certain dissatisfaction be maintained with ourselves in order to remind ourselves constantly of our responsibility to search out and understand as best we can the complexities, if not the truth, of today's issues.

The day when a newspaper or a person is established as the bearer of "the" truth" will be the day when democracy has ceased to exist.

## A 'Bear' Named Trotsky: Serious Sports Never!

By JIM TAYLOR

Personally, I consider payment for sports writing stolen money.

The sports writer gets in free to events he would pay to see anyway; he sits in the best seat in the house, and has his ego boosted by fans who rate him expert, not realizing he is just another fan who happens to own a pencil.

### DRAWBACKS

There are drawbacks, of course. The national image of a sports writer pictures a creep in loud clothes and a crummy trenchcoat who can't say anything more significant than "Great game, Willie" and refers all words of five letters or more to the editorial board for translation.

But it's my business, and I love it. I just wish everybody would stop taking it so seriously.

Sure, I like football, baseball and the rest. They're great. But (and pay attention, now, because here comes the commercial), we tend to forget that sport is entertainment.

On a graph of important world events, a B.C. Lion's game ranks right up there with Gunsmoke, yet with millions starving we manage to

Mr. Taylor's sports writing for the *Victoria Daily Colonist* includes a weekly column, *From Left Field*.

justify the fact that Milton Thugg of Embraceable U has signed for \$1,000,000 to throw an inflated pig bladder.

There are many fine sports writers. My argument is that most of them take their work too seriously.

How can anyone be serious about a wrestling bear named Trotsky, a Cassius Clay interview, or a 28-inch dissertation on What Is Wrong With B.C. Lions? I've used a column to poke fun at all of them, and caught hell from all directions from the great mass of Believers outside.

"The national image of a sports writer pictures a creep in loud clothes and a crummy trenchcoat who . . . refers all words of five letters or more to the editorial board for translation."

### NEVER IMPORTANT

Sport can be exciting, dramatic and downright thrilling. But never, never can it be important. The only difference between sport and television is that with sports you don't know the ending, unless you're on the inside of a fixed wrestling card. (There's another kind?)

But this was supposed to be serious, wasn't it, Mr. Editor? "Write something about what's wrong with sports pages," you said. All right, but keep in mind these are MY opinions, not



Jim Taylor

necessarily those of the men who sign my cheques.

• Sports pages are too cliché ridden.

A game is a game, damnit, it is not a tilt or a clash. A baseball is a baseball, not a horsehide or an aspirin tablet. But somehow sports writers, who have as good a command of the English language as anyone, have the clichés so deeply rooted in their heads they're lost without them.

• Sports pages don't report, they bleed.

This complaint applies only when the home team is involved, or when Canada's national hockey team is whipped by Russia. Somehow, between the lines, you always get the idea what they really say is "Dirty Filthy Communists Outluck Clean-cut Canadians, 7-0."

### IMPARTIALITY NEEDED

Some day we'll all learn to report the outcome of games with complete impartiality. And we'll probably lose all our subscribers.

• Sports pages pay too much attention to minor sport.

(continued on page four)

# A Student Comments

## Press Preaches Perversion, Politics

By RALPH PETTIE

That any criticism will meet with the approval of everybody is not to be expected, especially when we live in a free society where divergance of opinion is expected. In making the following comments, I am not claiming to be an expert, but if anyone should be offended, I justify my right to comment by pointing out that I do subsidize the various media, either directly or indirectly. Also, as a consumer I feel justified in the same sense as any other consumer of any other product.

### SENSATIONALISM

**NEWSPAPER:** The newspapers have found that freedom of the press is a wonderful slogan to use in order to counter any criticisms, so I will ignore this defence. The reliance on exploitation of sensationalism is both objectionable and harmful. Sensationalism, when used responsibly, can be a master's tool, but when it is used irresponsibly, it can be a formidable virus. In the October 20 issue of The Victoria Times there appeared, on the front page, a headline; **MANIAC RECORDED DYING SCREAMS.** On page three of the same issue, there appeared another headline; **CANADA VETOES SOVIET N-PLAN.** Federal government policy takes a poor second place to a deranged psychopathic killer who, incidentally, was operating in England.

The publishers defend this practice by saying that it sells papers and is what the readers want. That it sells newspapers, I find hard to believe, particularly here in Victoria.

**"The reliance on exploitation of sensationalism is both objectionable and harmful. Sensationalism, when used responsibly, can be a master's tool, but when it is used irresponsibly, it can be a formidable virus."**

First of all, I would imagine that the majority of people receive their papers at home, so the on-street sales would not account for a very large percentage of the total production. Secondly, the small number of extra copies sold would not offset the added cost of production or the diminished per copy return from advertising, which would be priced on an average circulation basis. Finally, if sensationalism were assumed to sell papers in Victoria, how would a publisher arrive at the new production figure? Possibly he would allocate 10 production points for a hideous murder and one point for humanely conducted poisoning.

*Mr. Pettie, a fourth-year Arts student at the University of Victoria, is majoring in Economics and Political Science.*

Admittedly, there is an element in any society which craves this type of news, but surely this is a small minority. Besides, Flash, etc., are published expressly for this group. But even if I were to concede that a large percentage of readers preferred murder and mayhem, I still feel the publisher has some degree of moral obligation at least to attempt to improve the reading preferences of his public.

I also have my doubts concerning any newspaper which publicly professes a particular political faith. I am concerned about the quality of reporting offered those stories about a rival political faith. I have no objection to a publisher wishing to follow a particular philosophy, but only so long as he restricts this

extent that very few radio stations have made the attempt to break from this format.

### HOT-LINES

Of all the innovations in the radio industry, the Open-line or Hot-line show has the greatest potential. Despite what may be said of Pat Burns, he accomplished something: he started a lot of apathetic individuals "thinking" for the first time in a long time. He challenged them. Of all the interviews which I have read, seen, or heard, Mr. Burns' interview with Linus Pauling has to go down as a classic. Here is the potential of this type of show; informative and stimulating. Pat Burns was far from the ideal personality for this show, and he showed what the dangers can be of having the wrong man. He had enormous influ-

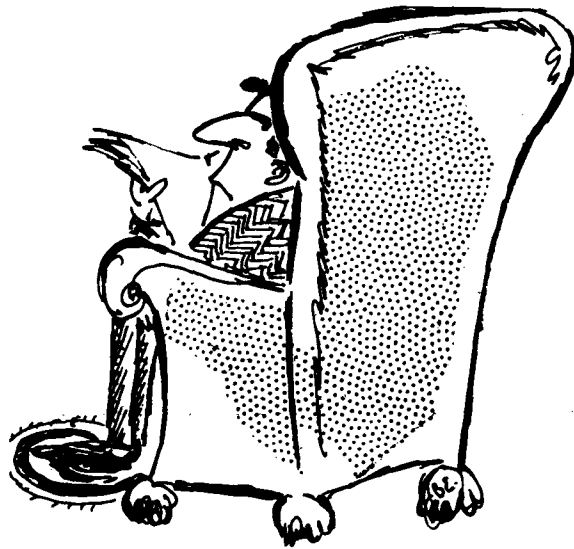
in real life, because at the very least his colleagues would disown him, and at the very worst one of his patients would break his neck. War stories are popular, they say, but surely they should be believable.

### FOREIGN DOMINATION

I have one particular shortcoming; I am intensely Canadian. Why does our television have to be dominated by foreign programming? The powers that be tell us we can not afford to produce programs the Americans offer, but surely there must be ways around this problem.

We have a history of our own which can stand unashamed beside that of any country. Why can we not develop it into television shows. The expeditions of Mackenzie and Fraser are groups of

**"... there is a need in our society for a fighting press; one which will stand and fight for a principle."**



*"... I would like to see a more vibrant press; ..."*

philosophy to the editorial page. The patrons of a newspaper want to read news, among other things, and they have a right to expect to be able to read a factual and objective treatment of the news.

### MORE VIBRANT

My final observation in this area is not intended as a criticism as such, but rather as a suggestion. I may be accused of being old fashioned, but I would like to see a more vibrant press; one which tackles an issue in the old tradition of the crusading press. I realize that much of the myth we hold in this regard was born of the Humphrey Bogart et. al. but I do feel there is a need in our society for a fighting press; one which will stand and fight for a principle. Lord only knows, there are enough such causes to go around.

**"The publishers defend this practice [sensationalism] by saying that it sells papers and is what the readers want."**

**RADIO:** The next area for comment is radio. Although the same criticism regarding sensationalism can be made here, to some extent I feel that, while still objectionable, it might be more successfully defended as necessary to the maintenance of their audience. I am here referring to the sensational headlining of such news as traffic mishaps. Even this I criticize to the

ence on a large number of people, the implications of which are by now apparent to all.

Too many of these open-line hosts set themselves up as jacks of all trades, and unfortunately show themselves to be masters of none. Because of the tremendous potential benefits which are available, these shows must be handled by a man who is intelligent, educated, rational, disciplined, objective, and magnetic. He must have Pat Burns' enthusiasm and interest in everything around him, minus Pat Burns' shortcomings. I realize these qualifications sound rather Utopian, but I am sure each of us can think of at least one person who comes quite close to them.

### PROGRAMMING

**TELEVISION:** Television has been described as commercials with bits of entertainment interspersed to break the monotony. Of all the devices given to man, I find it difficult to think of any that has been as perverted as television.

Television has been shown to be an unparalleled method of reaching the people. My complaint is that it is not being used to its maximum potential. Surely the slipper and curler set have enough soap operas in the afternoon without fouling the airways with three nights of **Peyton Place**. **Perry Mason** proves nothing except that he knows nothing about the law. **Ben Casey** would be looking for patients around the North Pole

boring facts to most Canadians, which had to be learned at school. These men's stories could be made exciting and inspiring. The exploits of the Canadian fighter group in England during the war, of the Canadian Scottish, of the Black Watch, of RCN groups, all could be made into exciting programmes. Stories of the war of 1812 would make good viewing, and also point out the dominant role played by the French-Canadians in preserving the independence of this country.

We have had the actors, directors, and writers necessary for such endeavours, but they have gone to the United States because of the lack of opportunity here. Comedians, singers, all are available if only we can find a way of employing them. Nationalism might be a questionable trait, but it exists, so why not feed it.

### TRIAL BY MEDIA

My final comment is levelled at all three areas—radio, television, newspapers, and is something which is of constant concern to me. By law, a man is presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, but he seldom has the opportunity of clearing himself completely, because the news media publicize his name, address, his family, and the charge. In the minds of many, the fact that a charge has been laid is sufficient evidence of the man's guilt. If, as the result of a trial, the man is acquitted, he still has the public stigma of criminal attached to him, and both he and his family will suffer the rest of their lives from the publicity.

**"Of all the devices given to man, I find it difficult to think of any that has been as perverted as television."**

What is even worse, in my mind, is the hardship imposed upon the family of a man who is convicted, particularly if the crime was murder. Radio, television, and the newspapers, gave out the man's name, his wife's name, their children's names, and the address of their home. Where is the morality of the news media? We condemned the Nazis for killing women and children but what about the torture the news media are subjecting the

*(continued on page four)*



## Who's Responsible

(continued from page one)

I suppose I've tended to make a principle out of this sort of idea for some time now, to the extent that I've resisted any conspiracy theories as strongly as my opponents are willing to prove they exist everywhere, while the truth, I guess, lies somewhere between. Anyway, my adherence to the anti-conspiracy school for a long time led me to believe there was no such thing as a publishers' club in Canada.

"If the public were crying for the kind of honest and fearless coverage of the local news that I'm sure any one of us in this room could imagine, then . . . new local papers could survive on honest and fearless coverage of the local news alone."

### THE MOTTO

Well, that's not true. I was wrong, and to the extent at least I was naive. There is a publishers' club in Canada, and I suggest their motto is an extension of a motto that comes from academe—publish according to the club's rules, or perish. The most obvious proofs of this contention come from the failure, even the inability, of anyone to start a new daily newspaper in this country. One of the main reasons you can't do it is that you can't get Canadian Press. The owners of CP — who are, of

## Sports

(continued from page two)

This is the pet beef, because I detest everything that organized sport for children has become.

"It's fine to teach kids to play games, but who in the hell decided the outcome was important? Who got the great idea that the doings of a bunch of kids 10-16 years old rate publicity?"

Over-emphasizing and over-publicizing minor sport has done more damage and created more big-headed little kids than anything this side of a doting mother, and the newspapers are going right along with it.

My own theory is that the people who want the ink are the people who are running the teams. Eventually, we may get up the guts to tell them, gently but firmly, that we aren't running minor hockey, baseball or football scores any more. But I doubt it. Too many people in this business are ready to fall over backward every time somebody comes in with a complain, right or wrong, and whines "I'm a subscriber to your paper and . . ."

### JUNK

• Sports pages run too much junk. By this I mean golf draws, bowling draws, curling draws, and similar items telling people things they should know in the first place.

Any adult human being who is entered in a competition, doesn't know when he's supposed to play, and lacks the initiative to phone the club to find out, doesn't deserve any consideration. Yet we throw out good stories of general interest to make room for this nonsense.

### RADICAL IDEAS

Those are the main beefs. I don't know that the corrections will ever be made, because the idea of a sports page that uses basic English, runs

course, the publishers of the daily papers in this country—have simply said that it's a closed shop now, boys. You vote against letting anyone new into my territory and I'll vote against letting anyone new into your territory. As a result, almost no one gets as far as getting about a new paper, and those who do—the Hamilton News, Toronto News Observer, the Winnipeg Citizen, perish. But the public is not crying for such courage, and the publishers are not going to ram it down the public's throat. If they did, they'd be thrown out of their club.

But I don't think these obvious facts are getting to the heart of the matter at all. I can't think of any city in Canada to which the addition of another paper bringing in the CP news would automatically mean an enlightened press. If the public were crying for the kind of honest and fearless coverage of the local news that I'm sure any one of us in this room could imagine, then — theoretically, if not quite in practice, new local papers could survive on honest and fearless coverage of the local news alone.

### FREEDOM?

. . . the central question here, is surely whether in the face of the existence of this publishers' club you can write what you want to say or whether in the Canadian Press you are going to be asked to write what the publisher wants you to say. That's a very subtle question, and I'm afraid that from my own experience I can't give you an answer. I could go on for hours explaining my own personal integrity — I've never done anything dictated by the advertising department. But that's only one part of the answer. What about the implicit prohibitions? Why has Maclean's, even during the time that men like Ken Lefoli or Ralph Allen were running it, never done a really tough profile of Samuel Bronfman — a really honest one? Because Maclean's knows it would lose the Seagram's account and quite likely go out of business? I don't know. Why has no publication in

only what rates running, and treats sport as games instead of world-shattering crises is pretty radical.

But if we could convince every sports writer to put a little fun in his work, it would be a start. And who knows, maybe it would catch on and we'd all get more money.

Which brings us to the final beef. How come the athletes get more money than the writers? They made the touchdowns, but we make them famous.

"A game is a game, damnit, it is not a tilt or a clash. A baseball is a baseball, not a horsehide or an aspirin tablet."

Maybe the day will come when newspapers will scout for reporters the way teams do for athletes. Maybe some day there'll be a conference in Chicago:

"Great news, chief. There's a sports writer in Victoria we can get for a lousy hundred grand. Writes clichés with either hand, knocks out a column in 10 flat, and is such a liar he could make an All-American out of Whistler's Mother. Better hurry, though. His paper's about to transfer him to the mail room . . ."

this country ever run a really tough account of how the Rideau Club works in Ottawa, where half the decisions that govern Canada are made? Because the paper that does knows that instantly its Ottawa man will be cut off and become worthless? I don't know. Why has no one ever done a really tough profile of Maclean's advertising agency—an institution that governs everything from Saturday night hockey to the publicity for government pension plans? Well, I do know the answer to that; Maclean's is the biggest advertising agency in this country. The pressures are implicit, and they exist because of the publishers' club.

### THE ESTABLISHMENT

Publishers almost by definition are members of the establishment in this country. You can't own a newspaper or a magazine unless you have a lot of money. Furthermore, men who own newspapers or magazines tend to have a particularly useful entree into the drawing rooms of men who influence public policy, from prime ministers to company presidents. However smart those men are, they tend per se to become part of the elite. The elite, by the large protect, their own. And their underlings know it. No one has to tell the financial editor of the Globe & Mail that this is not a propitious time to do a real hard-knocking profile of Max Bell. He just knows it. And almost by reverse osmosis, that knowledge filters down to the man who might have written that profile. No one has forbidden him to do it; he just doesn't do it.

"Yet both Newman and Fraser are in someone's pocket in Ottawa . . . by writing down what they really know, what they really think, both these fine journalists would close doors on themselves forever."

Well, now having proven that the press is not doing what you and I think it ought to be doing because 1) the public couldn't care less and 2) the publishers who stand in between journalists and the press exert a kind of implicit pressure that prevents any meaningful dialogue taking place anyway, I now come to the crux of what I want to say to you: the real villains of the piece are the journalists. There's very little wrong with Canadian journalism that a whole generation of good journalists couldn't repair.

### TO LEGITIMIZE POWER

Let me be specific about that. The most common target — and rightly so — for anyone who wants to do a critical analysis of Canadian reporting is the press gallery in Ottawa. The press gallery is a perfect ex-

## Press Preaches

(continued from page three)

family of this man to for the rest of their lives? A few years ago there was a murder-suicide involving a veteran suffering from shell-shock. Not only were the names of the surviving family publicized, but these poor people were pestered for stories and interviews. "How did you feel when you found about it?" "Do you hate your father for doing such a dastardly thing?"

The families of criminals must not be expected to suffer the punishment of public opinion. If there was collusion, the law will punish. If there was not collusion, they will still suffer enough simply from the fact that one of their number is in prison. Morals, scruples, and fair-play gentlemen! This is supposed to be a Christian democracy!

ample of what George Grant had to say in *Lament for a Nation*: "The news," Grant wrote, "now functions to legitimize power, not to convey information." If anyone were to ask me who the best reporter in Ottawa is, I think I'd say, and I don't think my judgment would be clouded by personal association — Peter C. Newman. Newman knows what's going on, and he puts quite a lot of it into the paper. He probes, he analyzes, he reports. But does he? I can't recall a visit to Ottawa when I have called on him when he hasn't been able to tell me in conversation at least five facts that interest me about thirty times as much as what I've seen him write in the paper — and please remember I am talking about the man I consider the best reporter in Ottawa.

Or let me just take one more case involving both Ottawa and Maclean's Blair Fraser. Blair Fraser is one of the most admirable men I know—men and journalists. He simply oozes everything I have been brought up in journalism to believe—and I include integrity, in the sense that integrity has become defined in Canadian journalism.

### SOMEONE'S POCKET

Yet both Newman and Fraser are in someone's pocket in Ottawa. Newman speaks for Maurice Sauvé: Sauvé speaks things to him and Newman, after thinking through the explanation for himself, explains it to his readers. (By Sauvé, of course, I mean only to represent a type.) And Fraser speaks for Mike Pearson. And yet there are things that they know that I don't know. What does Sauvé really think of Pearson? Newman doesn't tell me — at least not in the paper. What does Pearson think of Sauvé? Fraser doesn't tell me. And worse, Newman doesn't tell me what Fraser thinks of Sauvé. And the reason why is not hard to discern. Because by writing down what they really know, what they really

"No one has to tell the financial editor of the Globe and Mail that this is not a propitious time to do a real hard-knocking profile of Max Bell. He just knows it."

think, both these fine journalists would close doors on themselves forever. The public hasn't made that decision, and neither have their publishers; they have made it themselves. They have both become such intimates of the establishment that they have built for themselves a barrier between what they know and what they can print. And they are therefore, in George Grant's phrase, "legitimizing power" rather than "conveying information."

If this situation pertained only in Ottawa it would be serious enough. But it doesn't. The hockey writers, for example, like the Ottawa men and every reporter in between, have become not reporters of, but part of what they're writing about.

The solution? I think the answer lies with you.

66

## Martlet Magazine

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