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"Endangered Weeklies: A Case Study of Three Maritime Weekly Newspapers"

By

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Abstract

ENDANGERED WEEKLIES:
A Case Study of Three Maritime Community Newspapers

Kim Kierans
September 28, 2004

The role of the community newspaper in rural communities is crucial. It is an important vehicle by which people from various communities and with varied interests communicate with one another. It is the way communities come to know about issues that affect them as citizens. At its best the community newspaper is not only a mirror to reflect the good and bad, but also a catalyst for change. The ideal model is an independent weekly because its owner is connected to and interested in the welfare of the community. As corporate consolidation takes over, this model is changing.

The thesis examines three enterprising weeklies in the Maritimes: the *Inverness Oran* in NS, the *Eastern Graphic* in PEI and the *Miramichi Leader* in NB. It explores their relations with their communities, their roles as advocates of change, and the effects of corporate ownership and how that limits democratic debate.

Chapter I: Introduction

The 2001 Statistics Canada census figures tell the sad story of rural Canada.[1] The physical and economic exodus from rural to urban areas continues with little more than 20 per cent of the country's population living in rural and small town Canada.[2] The Maritimes, a substantially rural region, is swept up in this trend.[3] Small towns are losing basic services. Banks, post offices, service stations, grocery stories and even schools are moving to centralized areas to cash in on a bigger population base and wider margins of profit.[4] People in rural areas now have to travel to centres such as Port Hawkesbury, Moncton and Charlottetown to conduct everyday business. Rural areas still export their most valuable resource – young people who are moving to bigger centres such as Halifax, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver in search of jobs. This trend poses a problem for people in rural communities and for their means of mass communication. Local radio stations have a limited presence as they downsize staff and move to pre-recorded music and

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[1] Statistics Canada, "2001 Census of Canada," <http://www.statcan.ca/english/census01/home/index.cfm> Also David Bruce, "Rural Communities An Important Part of Nation's Fabric," *Sackville Tribune-Post*, Sept. 25, 2002, p. 7. Bruce, director of Rural and Small Town Programme at Mount Allison University, sets out a strategy for revitalizing rural Canada and one component is a strong weekly press. His research is part of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation's New Rural Economy Study. See <www.crrf.ca>. Also Christopher Gooding, "Rural Study Praises Community Newspapers," *Springhill/Parrsboro Record*, April 14, 2004.

[2] Serge Lavoie, "Desperately seeking rural supporters," *The Publisher*, May 2002, p. 4. Also, Derek Dunn, "Mayor cites causes for population decline," *Miramichi Leader*, Mar. 14, 2002. The article is based on Statistics Canada 2001 Census of Canada figures.

[3] *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, Mar. 12, 2002; *Miramichi Leader*, Mar. 14, 2002; *Inverness Oran*, Mar. 20, 2002; the *Eastern Graphic*, Mar. 19, 2002. These papers are just a sampling of this view coming from rural press in Canada. For the rest of this thesis I may also refer to the papers as the *Oran*, the *Graphic* and the *Leader*.

[4] Rankin MacDonald, "The Royal Treatment," Editorial, *Inverness Oran*, May 8. 2002, p 5; and Rankin MacDonald, "Port Hood trying to come to grips with bank closure," *Inverness Oran*, May 8, 2002, p. 1; Editorial, *Spectator*, Jan. 15, 2001; and many other community newspapers. Douglas Blanks Hindman, "Community Newspapers, Community Structural Pluralism, and Local Conflict with Nonlocal Groups," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, (Autumn 1996), p. 708, writes that the growth of outside influences over communities such as "factory shut downs, reduction in governmental aid and the regional consolidation of services," is a natural outcome from growth in bureaucracy and centralization of control in both public and private sectors.

satellite programming from afar.[5] That leaves community newspapers as one of the last vehicles for people in communities to talk to one another.[6] The function of these papers is often compared to the conversation over the back fence.[7] It is where people share what is happening politically, culturally and socially.

In the book *Community Journalism: the Personal Approach*, Jock Lauterer defines community as people with certain things in common: "a common frame of reference, common knowledge about infrastructures and people and systems. It also implies certain interactiveness, and accessibility to all."[8] All across Atlantic Canada we have communities made up of residents who belong to institutional groups such as municipal council, schools, the artistic communities, religious and athletic organizations and so on. These separate and diverse communities come to know and understand themselves and each other through their weekly community newspaper.[9] It can "act as a glue to bind people

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[5] Community Media Canada, "ComBase sheds light on local radio," April 14, 2004, <http://www.communitymediacanada.ca/news/>.

[6] ComBase, the Canadian community Newspaper Database Corporation found that 71.5% of English speaking Canadians read community papers. Atlantic Canada has the highest exclusive readership rate with 56% of Atlantic Canadians reading weekly papers as compared to 50% for daily newspapers. Also, Leo Jeffres, Jean Dobos, and Mary Sweeny, "Communication and Commitment to Community," *Communication Research*, (Dec. 1987), p. 639, found neighbourhood residents "hungry" for local news and information because metro media devote relatively little attention to neighbourhood news. The same can be said for local coverage in provincial newspapers.

[7] Fred McGuinness, "Community newspapers just like backyard chat," the *Register* (Berwick, NS), June 13, 2001. Excerpt from McGuinness' book, *Letters from Section 17*. Patricia Moy, Jack M. MacLeod, and Dietram A. Scheufele, "Community Communication, and Participation: The Role of Mass Media and Interpersonal Discussion in Local Political Participation," *Political Communication*, (1999), p. 316-21, discuss how communication is a mediator where citizens acquire information about issues and problems in the community and learn of opportunities and ways to participate, pp. 316-21.

[8] Jock Lauterer, *Community Journalism: the Personal Approach,* (Aimes: Iowa State UP, 2002), p. 8, quotes communications theorist James Carey who writes, "A ritual view of communication is not directed toward the extension of messages in space, but the maintenance of society in time; not the act of importing information, but the representation of shared beliefs." Also see Harold A. Innis, *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971) for a criticism of the communication in which he disputes the value of freedom of the press and says it has "become the great bulwark of monopolies of the press." p. 139.

[9] Cornelia Butler Flora, Jan L. Flora, Jacqueline D. Spears, and Louise E. Swanson, *Rural Communities Legacy & Change*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 6-15. The authors say size, isolation, homogeneous cultures, economics and social character all make up the rural landscape. The authors limit community to mean place or location because improvements in transportation make people less socially attached to their communities.

together, as oil to lubricate social and economic relations, and as a web to mark lines of influence and interaction.[10] The weekly is a "community spark."[11]

At its best the community newspaper provides a forum for residents to discuss local issues such as offshore exploration for oil and gas off the coast of Cape Breton, big box development in the Miramichi or the funding of golf courses in eastern Prince Edward Island. It provides a public forum to celebrate as a community sports victories and milestones such as birthdays and awards. Journalism professor and author John Miller describes what community newspapers do well:

> News that binds readers to their community, and therefore to their newspaper, is not necessarily news that surprises them. It's often news that confirms what they already know, but explains why or how it happened, what it means and what may be coming next. It's news that spotlights their achievements, not just their tragedies. It's news that encourages them to participate in finding solutions, not just to sit back and let someone else deal with it. In these ways and others, community papers tend to activate their readers' social consciousness.[12]

Community newspapers give people a voice that they do not have in a national, regional or even a provincial mass media. Local editors know what is important to people

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[10] David Bruce, Ivan Emke, and Derek Wilkinson, "Social Cohesion and Communications," in *Social Cohesion in Rural Canada*, Eds. Bill Reimer, Derek Wilkinson, and Anna Woodrow, (Montreal: McGill-Queens UP, forthcoming), p. 27 of manuscript. Research by the authors has also found a connection between the strength of a community and its communication system, p 6-8 of the manuscript.

[11] Kenneth R. Byerly, *Community Journalism*, (Philadelphia: Chilton Co., 1961), p 5.

[12] John Miller, *Yesterday's News: Why Canada's Daily Newspapers are Failing Us,* (Halifax: Fernwood, 1998), p. 164. Also Ivan Emke, "Community Newspapers and Community Identity," submitted to *Journal of Rural Studies*, Feb. 2003. Presented at Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association annual meeting, May 2001. Emke outlines the three functions of community papers: "(i) providing local information (the mirror of the community); (ii) offering a space for advertising support (focused on local commerce); and (iii) evaluating options for the community's future (a pro-active stance, sometimes bordering on normative reportage, which is focused on alternatives and options for a community)," p. 13.

living in their communities and the papers use that knowledge to examine important issues with the aim of finding solutions to the problems. It is something that quality community newspapers have done from the beginning. Many of these qualities became part of the "public" or "civic" journalism movement of the 1980s. Public journalism was a response to the crisis of declining readers of daily newspapers. Jay Rosen, a journalism professor at New York University, one of the founders of the movement, notes that public or civic journalism starts from the realization that journalists and citizens have a common interest in finding solutions to society's problems and that means more than being a mirror. It means getting involved.[13] There is no doubt Rosen and others' interpretation and practice of civic or public journalism in the daily media go much further than what happens in community newspapers, but the model is one that many community-minded weekly newspaper publishers would recognize in the pages of their own papers. "Public journalism is nothing new. It's what good papers have always done. Good reporters and editors know what matters to their readers. They're in touch with their communities."[14]

That civic or public aspect of community newspapers is traditionally tied to ownership.[15] Owning a newspaper is not a regular business. It is not like a factory that

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[13] Miller, *Yesterday's News,* p. 217. Gerald Friesen, *Citizens and Nation: An Essay on History and Communication and Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) p. 210-11, in which he quotes Harold A. Innis who worried that concentrated media had a monopoly over information that is necessary to one's life as a citizen in a community.

[14] Jay Rosen, *What are Journalists for?* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 179 in which Rosen is quoting Rem Rieder, editor of the *American Journalism* Review who is a critic of public journalism; Also, Lauterer, *Community Journalism*, pp. 307-314; J. Sheppard, "Why Weeklies Work: the strength of weeklies," *American Journalism Review*, (July-Aug 1996), pp. 32-38; Byerly, *Community Journalism*, pp. 3-7; David Burton, "Community building through strong community journalism," Editorial, *The Marshfield Mail*, Marshfield, Missouri, US, Oct. 8, 2003.

[15] Friesen, *Citizens and Nation*, p. 266-68, quotes Raymond Williams *Communications* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966) p. 20 in which he writes that before newspaper mergers of the 1920s "newspapers could be catalysts for radical change by one or two energetic individuals." I would argue that in 2004 independent publishers can fulfill this role.

produces widgets.[16] The newspaper is a public service and the main role of journalists is to serve the public good. Newspapers print information necessary to a democratic and civil society. But the newspaper is also a private money-making venture. This creates a certain tension depending on who owns the paper. All publishers need to make money. If they do not they sell the paper or cease publishing. The local independent owner has always been the ideal for civic-minded journalism for good reasons as Ben H. Bagdikian explains in *The Media Monopoly*: "A single owner concentrates energies, skills and managerial and journalistic resources on one newspaper and has the power (and often the economic motivation) to reinvest surplus profits in the long-term strength of that paper and its relationship to that one community. A chain owner does the opposite."[17] When one lives in a community the financial bottom line is not so deep because an owner tends to put profits back into the business in the form of reporters and equipment. However, that loyalty is less likely to be found among chain-owned newspapers managed from afar. What rules is the bottom line and a profit formula based on a business model. The problem these days is that independent publishers are dwindling like the population of the rural areas they serve.

The trend towards centralization of community services has affected the ownership of community newspapers. As economic bases move to regional centres, so do advertising

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[16] Senate Committee on Mass Media, *Mass Media Volume I: The Uncertain Mirror,* (Ottawa: Queens Printer, 1970), p. 75. This is also the main point of Rosen, *What are Journalists for?*

[17] Ben H. Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p. 26-27. Also, James V. Risser, "Endangered Species," *American Journalism Review*, (June 1998), p. 20, for a discussion of quality versus mediocre newspapers. Risser rightly argues that independent ownership is not the only criterion for a wonderful newspaper. However, I would add that evidence will show that the climate is more conducive to a journalistically solid newspaper under independent ownership.

dollars and the revenues necessary to keep the printing press running. As a result the face of community newspapers is changing from locally owned to corporately managed.[18]

Since 2000, media concentration and convergence in print, broadcast and Internet have been happening at breakneck speed. Here in Atlantic Canada chains are swallowing up independently owned newspapers.[19] Newspaper chains now control more than two-thirds of the community press in the region. Of the approximately 60 community newspapers with paid circulation in the region, less than 20 remain independently owned.[20] The latest corporate takeover happened in January 2004 when Transcontinental Media bought the 25 weeklies and nine printing presses in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia owned by Optipress Inc.[21] These acquisitions may make business sense in that a corporate body can woo advertisers with a larger buying market. But the rise of newspaper chains

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[18] For a historical discussion of media concentration see: Peter Desbarats, "Structure of Canadian Media," Chapter 3 in *Guide to Canadian News Media*, (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jananovich, 1990), pp. 53-79; and Mary Vipond, "The Economics of Mass Media," Chapter 4 in *Mass Media in Canada*, Third Edition, (Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 2000), pp. 64-86. For a wider view see: Harold A. Innis *Empire and Communication* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972) in which he argues that effective government depends on the efficiency of communications.

[19] Independents in Atlantic Canada fell like dominoes. Advocate Publishing of NS moved into NB with the purchase of the *Saint Croix Courier* in St. Stephen. See: "Advocate adds to family," *Pictou Advocate*, May 8, 2002, p. 3; Jim Cornall, "*Courier* changes hands," *Saint Croix Courier*, May 7, 2002, p.1. The Cameron Publications/Robertson Blackmore merger of June 7, 2002 was front page news in most of the 11 Cameron publications in NS, including the "Newfoundland Capital and Cameron Publications plan to sell their publishing and printing business in an initial public offering," *Hants Journal*, June 12, 2002, p.1; "Newfoundland Capital and Cameron plan to sell their publishing and printing businesses," *Vanguard*, June 11, 2002, p. 1; and Leonard Pace, "Combining Newspapers in new, public company," *Coast Guard*, June 11, 2002, p 1; Patrick Moore, "Newfoundland Capital and Cameron Publications Create Optipress," Community Media Canada, June 7, 2002, <www.communitycanadamedia.ca/news>. Optipress was gobbled up by Montreal based Transcontinental Media in Jan. 2004. In Nov. 2002, Brunswick News started buying weeklies in NB including *Miramichi Leader*. "Irving group acquires interest in Cadogan Publishing Ltd.," *Miramichi Leader*, Jan. 22, 2002; and David Cadogan, "Nostalgia," Column, *Miramichi Leader*, Feb. 1, 2002.

[20] The Atlantic Community Newspapers Association (ACNA) represents 51 newspapers. There are other weeklies that are not members of ACNA. The Canadian Community Newspaper Association defines corporate ownership as one company owning more than 10 papers. The other categories are individual owners with more than one newspaper and individual owners with up to 10 newspapers. See also, Byerly, *Community Journalism*, p. 9, which notes that in 1960 there were 42 weeklies in the Maritimes: 16 in New Brunswick, 26 in Nova Scotia and none in Prince Edward Island.

[21] Kim Kierans, "A new and powerful kid on the block," *Media*, (Spring 2004), pp. 25-27.

raises questions for the future of the remaining independent community newspapers, the people they serve and the future of rural communities.

The Three Case Studies

This thesis looks at the role of the community newspaper and the issues affecting it through the microscope of three quality weekly newspapers in the Maritimes: The *Inverness Oran* in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, the *Eastern Graphic* in Montague, Prince Edward Island and the *Miramichi Leader* in Miramichi, New Brunswick.

Over the years each paper cooked up its own – but nonetheless recognized – recipe for success as outlined by Jock Lauterer in *Community Journalism*. He writes that it takes a varying combination of positive publishing; people who revel in their work; owners dedicated to quality journalism and community-building; willingness to take risks for the good of the community regardless of financial gain; and visionary leaders who work longer hours than anybody while keeping their eye on the big picture and location.[22] That definition describes all three weeklies, though it must be pointed out that each paper combines the ingredients in different measure so that each newspaper is unique.

Each newspaper is intensely local. Each newspaper knows its readers. Each newspaper listens to its readers, but does not pander to them.[23] Each newspaper goes beyond the limited role of just "telling the news." Each newspaper sees its readers as more

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[22] Lauterer, *Community Journalism*, p. 282.

[23] Geneva Overholser, "In the Age of Public Ownership, the Importance of Being Local," *Columbia Journalism Review*, (Nov/Dec. 1999), on p. 64 she writes that papers must understand "the franchise is local, local, local" and goes on to add that, "No amount of planning, no level of market research can make up for the 10 years of living in a town – not to mention growing up there, putting your kids through school there, watching your folks grow old there." This view is contested by Melissa Eckert, and John J. Pauly, "The Myth of "The Local" in American Journalism," *Mass Communication Quarterly*, (Summer 2002), p. 314, who argue that local is a myth because newspapers and readers can't say what makes a paper local. However as the following three case studies will show, there is much to define local and each paper defines local differently.

than just consumers, but rather as "potential actors arriving at democratic solutions to public problems."[24] These community papers are businesses that fulfill an important mission in a democratic society. When they do it right, community newspapers help readers understand the issues and convince them that they have the ability to make decisions that affect their lives.[25] Here in Canada, the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media chaired by Keith Davey in 1970 praised the role of community newspapers, noting that no one else seems able to meet or fulfill this need.[26] More than 30 years later this remains true. However, in 2004, independent community newspapers are in crisis and under threat from economic pressures that have led to consolidation and concentration.

This thesis looks at how each newspaper developed and how each independent publisher balanced the business side with the desire to use the paper as a vehicle for change and to project the diverse voices of the people in the community. The thesis also examines how each business reacted to turbulent economic times and technological changes. Two of the papers remain independently owned. A third does not. During the research and writing of this thesis, the reality of corporate concentration hit close to home. The *Miramichi Leader* was sold to Brunswick News, a division of New Brunswick's Irving family business interests, which include pulp and paper, oil and transportation. This raises the issue of the future of community journalism in a corporate world, which will be discussed in Chapter Four and the Conclusion. These weekly papers face internal and

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[24] Lauterer, *Community Journalism*, p. 311-12; For similar views see, Byerly, *Community Journalism*, p. 337-352; and Davis Merritt, *Public Journalism & Public Life: Why Telling News is Not Enough*, (NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc. Ltd., 1995), p. 13-14.
[25] Bernard L. Stein, "Image – An Ordinary Mission," *Media Studies Journal*, (New York: Freedom Forum, Spring Summer/1999), p. 96.
[26] Senate Committee on Mass Media, *The Uncertain Mirror*, p. 143.

external pressures – the internal pressure of succession and the external pressure of economic survival.

Chapter Two will tell the story of the *Inverness Oran* in rural Cape Breton. By all demographics, the *Inverness Oran* should not exist. The area lacks an established advertising base. Its founders, a group of self-professed unemployed hippies, had no business or journalism training. They wanted to make a life for themselves in their hometown. They may have lacked journalism experience, but they had all the right instincts[27] and defied the odds. They wooed the readers with their passion for the county and its culture. They presented a clear and consistent vision about community development.

The *Oran's* story starts with a snapshot of 1976: declining population and high unemployment. Mining and farming had collapsed. Fishing, forestry and tourism were not well developed. Young people were leaving. Federal development money was going to big projects. Faced with regional disparity and rural underdevelopment, homegrown community development started to make a comeback. This was the mission of the founders of the *Oran*. The paper was started to let the community talk to one another and to bring about development so that young people could choose whether they wanted to stay home or go down the road. The paper was not started as a business, but rather as a civic duty, a tool for democracy,[28] and it was not alone.[29]

The chapter will examine the founding of the newspaper; its transformation into a business; growing pains; its popularity in the community; how the founders balanced

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[27] Lauterer, *Community Journalism,* p. 37-52; Byerly, *Community Journalism*, p. 5, 21, 404-06.
[28] Miller, *Yesterday's News*, p. 217 in which he quotes Jay Rosen.
[29] John Reid, "The 1970s – Sharpening the Sceptical Edge," in *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, Eds. E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 460.

idealism and business while dealing with controversial issues; and how it continues to be a voice for community development. This is a story of a newspaper driven by the passion and hard work of its founders and adopted by the community. Its future is by no means clear. It must meet two challenges – succession and rising printing costs.

Media concentration has put the ownership of printing presses in fewer, but bigger hands. This small paper with a circulation of less than 5,000 is at the mercy of corporate printers. The second challenge will be to keep the momentum once the founders retire. Is it the passion and idealism of these people that account for the success of the *Oran* or is the newspaper larger than that? Is the *Oran* now mature enough to be a community driven and supported institution?

In Chapter Three we move from Cape Breton and first generation owners to the *Eastern Graphic* in Montague, Prince Edward Island. Unlike the *Oran* founders, Jim MacNeill was an outsider from Scotland, a "come from away." He did share some of the attributes of the *Oran* founders. He was not a good businessman. He was passionate about community. He saw his paper as a tool for fostering democratic debate.

This chapter will explore the founding of the paper, its transformation into a business, growing pains and balancing idealism and business. It will also discuss MacNeill's broader vision. He believed information was power and the people should know about the powerful. He routinely questioned the actions of municipal, provincial and federally elected officials. For example, each year he published the salaries of provincial government workers long before the Freedom of Information Act. This was unheard of in insular Prince Edward Island. He won the respect of his readers and politicians. MacNeill

died in 1998, but his children Paul and Jan MacNeill continue the tradition of "The Lively One," as the *Graphic's* masthead boasts.

The transition to second generation, the newspaper's deep relationship with the community and its continuing watchdog role not only for Montague and Prince County, but for all of Prince Edward Island, will also be examined. We have a family business whose members are committed to producing a newspaper that's more than "just the news."

But the *Oran* founders and the MacNeill family are part of an endangered species. Corporate news companies are gobbling up small independents in the search for so-called synergies. It is something that Paul MacNeill is determined to resist, but as we will see in Chapter Four, that was not a choice for another independent publisher.

The Miramichi area of New Brunswick has had a lively history of newspaper publishing that dates back to 1826 and *The Mercury*.[30] George Cadogan bought the *North Shore Leader* in 1973. His son David took over the paper in 1978, and the following year the paper was renamed *Miramichi Leader*. As publisher, David Cadogan tackled issues involving the community, whether it was the location of the Wal-Mart store or the financial accountability of the local hospital board. It won Cadogan loyal supporters and made some bitter enemies. He lost advertisers over some stories, but as an independent publisher he absorbed losses and put it down to the cost of business. The *Miramichi Leader* was not only there to print advertisements and provide local information. It was also there to stimulate debate and be a tool of progress and community development.

As David Cadogan approached retirement he looked to the third generation of

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[30] Doug Underhill, *Proud Stories from the Miramichi,* (Saint John: Neptune Publishing, 2001), pp. 45-90.

Cadogans to take over the family business -- his daughter Joanne Cadogan, the co-editor of the bi-weekly paper. She refused to take on the role of publisher. Her heart and talents were in the editorial side of the newspaper, not the administrative side. She also recognized that the landscape of community news was changing rapidly and that the heyday of the independent publisher was over. Meanwhile, the Irving family was anxious to grow and add weekly newspapers to its three English-language dailies in New Brunswick. It looked to the *Miramichi Leader*. Editorially and financially the *Leader* was strong. No independent could afford to buy the paper with its multi-million dollar state-of-the-art printing press. So David Cadogan sold to the Irvings.[31]

The sale raised the question of how a newspaper can be editorially independent when its owners are involved in most every facet of economic life in the province of New Brunswick. It raised the question of what a community can expect when the owners are in a boardroom in Saint John. Tom Kent, chair of the Kent Commission into media concentration (1980), maintains reporters and editors at the newspapers are not free to report fully and comment editorially on Irving-related industries. Jamie Irving, general manger of the community newspaper division of Brunswick News, disagrees. Furthermore, he argues that community papers could be better because of the increased resources of a corporate owner.

This chapter discusses the history of the *Miramichi Leader* under the ownership of the Cadogan family; its drive to be the best in the country; the effect of industry changes in the 1990s; the sale to the Irving newspaper chain; and the implications for the family,

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[31] David Cadogan, "The brilliant future of community newspapers," Column, *Community Canada* Media, June 15, 2003, in which he writes "Independents can last for years as long as there is someone in the family to take over and as long as the giants don't concentrate on taking on a particular market. The odds are that, when the family decides to sell, the best offer will come from a chain."

the community and the industry. This discussion leads naturally to the conclusion. With the wave of corporate concentration in the media it would appear that the prognosis for independently-owned newspapers in Atlantic Canada is poor. At stake are fewer choices at the newsstands for readers and a lack of diversity in news coverage and editorial opinion.

Methodology

The three case studies, Chapters Two, Three and Four are presented as a narrative with footnotes that point to a larger literature about community newspapers, their contribution and relation to the community and their future in a corporately concentrated media. The chapters are written using direct quotations taken from extensive personal interviews with publishers, editors, readers, observers and critics from the three communities. These interviews were conducted with the permission of St. Mary's Research and Ethics Board. All participants signed an approved consent form.[32]

This thesis does not aim to provide extensive analysis of content in the three newspapers. Instead, the narrative technique aims to document through lived-experience the realities of day-to-day media operations, the relationship of each newspaper with its community, the changes occurring in community newspapers and their importance to civic life. A shorter version of each case study was written and presented as half-hour radio documentaries for Maritime Magazine on CBC Radio.[33] What is presented in the following

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[32] See Appendix A: Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Human Subjects and Appendix B: Atlantic Canada Studies Program – Interview Consent Form.

[33] Kim Kierans, "The Song of Inverness," July 6, 2002; "Media Concentration and the Irvings," Jan. 12, 2003; and "The *Eastern Graphic*: the Political Conscience of PEI," Jan 11, 2004, radio documentaries produced for *Maritime Magazine*, CBC Radio.

chapters is a fuller, more developed examination of each newspaper. Audio CDs of Chapters Two, Three and Four have been deposited in the Saint Mary's University Archives and are available in the hopes that the richness of the stories and passion for community journalism from the first-person voices will enhance understanding of weekly newspapers and their importance to the people they serve.

In setting out to do the research, one could chose from among approximately 60 community newspapers in Atlantic Canada. This thesis looks at three independently owned newspapers. Each newspaper had a strong reputation in the industry as innovative, editorially independent and community-minded. While they shared those qualities, the differences among the three newspapers were also of interest to this study – geographic, demographic, and economic. For example, each newspaper publishes in a different province and the demographics and economics of each area are unique.

The *Inverness Oran* is first generation owner, in a sparsely populated and economically depressed rural area of Cape Breton. The *Eastern Graphic* is second generation owner in Montague, Prince Edward Island, not far from Charlottetown. It is a service centre for the fishing and farming communities in eastern PEI. The Miramichi in northern New Brunswick is a larger community with resource- based industries such as mining and pulp and paper plants as well as traditional fishing. When research for this thesis started the *Miramichi Leader* could boast three generations at the newspaper. The owner, however, sold his publishing interests to Brunswick News, a division of the Irving company of New Brunswick, which raised the whole issue of ownership and media concentration.

The following case studies present three community newspapers that have taken the public service role involved in publishing seriously. As the reader will discover, there

is no "cookie cutter" model for editorial and business success. The relationship between owners and community makes each weekly paper unique. This relationship also determines how the newspaper builds on its strengths, deals with its weaknesses and meets its challenges, including what appears to be an unstoppable trend toward chain ownership.

The conclusion will return to a more formal analysis of what these three case studies mean for the future of community journalism. While the thesis uses examples from the Maritimes, the conclusions have national scope. This thesis paints a grim picture for the future of independently owned newspapers. The trend is toward fewer owners with more papers who have a larger and concentrated voice in the media world. In Atlantic Canada, Transcontinental Media became a virtual monopoly in Newfoundland in 2003. It owns all the dailies and most weeklies. In PEI, it owns both daily newspapers, and in Nova Scotia it now owns nine weeklies and all but one daily newspaper.[34] In New Brunswick the Irvings have bought much of the weekly press in the province. The ownership of community newspapers is much smaller than it was four years ago.[35] As corporate entities, will they sing the sweet tune of community journalism as described by Lauterer?

> We are also cheerleader, encourager, adviser, booster, support, advocate – and above all, an accurate, unflinching yet benevolent mirror to the community. At times the papers must function as "tough love" counselor and say things the community may not want to hear but needs to be exposed to. That is where, as they say, the rubber meets the road.[36]

The conclusion will also point to some measures to deal with media concentration,

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[34] The Halifax *Chronicle-Herald* is the remaining independent English speaking daily newspaper in Canada.
[35] As of February 2004, the Canadian Community Newspapers Association (CCNA) said that eight major corporations with 10 or more community newspapers dominate the industry. See: <www.ccna.ca>.
[36] Lauterer, *Community Journalism,* p. 230.

albeit modest ones and mostly coming from alternative sources. The Senate Transport and Communications Committee started hearings in April 2003 to examine and report on "the current state of Canadian media industries; emerging trends and developments in these industries; the media's roles, rights and responsibilities in Canadian society; and current and future policies."[37] It has yet to visit Atlantic Canada to hear people's concerns. Media critics who have appeared before the Committee have revived the suggestion that the federal government regulate the industry in a way that would ensure businesses can be profitable, and give readers a diverse and lively debate in the press. Chances are that it will not happen without a public outcry as in the United States with the Federal Communications Commission over media ownership rules.[38] New alternative publications such as *Here* in Saint John and *The Current* in St. John's are rising. They face many challenges such as developing a solid and loyal readership and advertising base and finding affordable printers, most of whom are owned by the corporate publishers. Cable television and the Internet are emerging as alternatives to mainstream means of communications.[39] They have a way to go. Most citizens rely upon mainstream media to get the information they need to be active members of their community and outside urban areas and that vehicle is often the community newspapers.

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[37] Laurier Lapierre, "We need an inquiry into state of Canadian media: Grit Senator," *Hill Times*, Dec. 12, 2002; "Media Study in Limbo," *Hill Times*, Feb 10, 2003; Joan Fraser, "Why the Senate is taking on the Canadian media," *Globe and Mail*, April 29, 2003. For activities of the Senate Transportation and Communications Committee see Senate of Canada, "Standing Committee on Transport and Communications Activity Update," *Senate Reports*, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/commons/committee_senActivity>. For media stories on testimony see Friends of Canadian Broadcasting website, <http://friendscb.ca/articles>.

[38] The U.S. Federal Communications Commission, (FCC), similar to the Canadian Radio-Television Telecommunications Commission, (CRTC) regulates broadcast licences. Unlike Canada, in the U.S. a vocal grass roots opposition has been actively lobbying against media ownership concentration. Among the many news stories see, Bonnie Pfister, "FCC boss to get an earful at S.A. hearing today," *Express-News*, San Antonio, Jan. 28, 2004.

[39] Dru Oja Jay started publishing the national alternative online paper *Dominion* from Halifax in May, 2003. He has launched a national public appeal to raise $60,000 to expand the national version and introduce local editions of the paper in Ottawa, Halifax, Vancouver and Montreal. See <http://dominionpaper.ca/>

Chapter II: *Oran Inbhirnis*: The Song of Inverness

Inverness County hugs the Gulf of St. Lawrence, along the western side of Cape Breton. Historian J. L. MacDougall described the county as "long and loose jointed"[1] – all 3,830 square kilometres of it. A series of small communities from Meat Cove in the north down to Port Hawkesbury at the Canso Causeway are connected by a winding road, and by the *Inverness Oran*, the county's weekly newspaper.

A statistical look at Inverness County over the past 30 years shows a shrinking and aging population. In 1981 the county's population hit a high of 22,328, but the 2001 census figures show the population is down to 19,937, a decrease of 4.7 per cent since the 1996 census. The 2001 census recorded fewer families – 5,520 compared with 7,800 in 1996. The county had an unemployment rate of 20.1 per cent, compared with 23.4 per cent in 1996. The top industries were retail, trade, manufacturing (mostly in the Port Hawkesbury area) and service industries such as food and beverage and accommodation.[2] These statistics reflect the county's chronic economic depression.

Back in 1976, the area was in the throes of an economic crisis. Apart from development in the Port Hawkesbury area, people in Inverness County relied on resource-based industries for employment. It was a grim picture. The coal mining

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[1] J. L. MacDougall, *History of Inverness County Nova Scotia*, facsimile edition, (Belleville, Ontario: Mika Publishing, 1972), p. 248. Originally published in Truro, NS, 1922.

[2] Statistics Canada, "2001 Census of Canada". Also, Dr. Wade Locke, and Dr. Stephen G Tomblin, "Good Governance, a Necessary but not Sufficient Condition for Facilitating Economic Visibility in a Peripheral Region: Cape Breton as a Case Study," A discussion paper prepared for The Cape Breton Regional Municipality, Oct. 2003, p. 22 shows between 1975 and 2002 the average unemployment rate for the province was 11.3% while in Cape Breton it was 18.2 %. For full text of report see: <http://www.cbrmns.ca/portal/document/GovernanceStudyReport.pdf>.

industry had collapsed. Small farmers could no longer compete against the conglomerates. Fishing, forestry and tourism were not well developed.[3] Young people faced with the prospect of idleness and welfare headed west to Calgary and the oil patch in Alberta. People lamented that youth were the biggest export of Inverness County and certain economists suggested that was a good thing.[4] Historian and retired professor Jim St. Clair had bucked that trend and returned from the United States to his ancestral home in Inverness County. He found a people demoralized and without any means to change the situation:

> We have to recognize I think that the end of coal mining in this area meant a lot of depression both economic and personal. There was a lot [of, a large] amount of alcoholism and alcohol abuse. I think that alcoholism that abuse of alcohol, was a sign of the feeling of almost worthlessness that many people in this area were feeling as the old small farms slowly declined and came to an end, as the milking stools were cut up for the stove, as very distinguished barns fell down, as people began to look around and say, "What else can we do besides farm?" Fishing was not nearly so prosperous as it is today. The amount of money that a person could gain by working in the woods, particularly in those days before more lightweight and more powerful chainsaws, was very, very small. It could, with a lot of hard work, keep a family going. There was a very small amount of tourism, much more folks from away, relatives coming home for "two weeks" or four weeks in the summer time. Very little in the way of good roads. There was a feeling of helplessness, I think, in the area. Those people who were looking at the schools were looking at the schools as a way in which young people could receive training

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[3] Dr. Jim St. Clair, personal interview, Dec. 5, 2001.
[4] Reid, "The 1970s - Sharpening the Sceptical Edge," p, 460.

> to go away from here rather than to stay here. In the mid-70s there was no voice of Inverness County which brought forth the strengths, and in some ways too the weaknesses, of the community. There was no voice of Inverness. There were songs about Inverness County, but they were old songs mostly in Gaelic and French. And when the *Oran* came along with a Gaelic word for its title, *Oran Inbhirnis,* the song of Inverness, people harked back to the Inverness Victoria Bulletin, which was a weekly newspaper, much read by people.[5]

This was the heyday of the Trudeau era. There was no lack of federal development money, but most Department of Regional Economic Expansion (DREE) dollars were spent on big projects such as the Deuterium heavy-water plant in Glace Bay and the Clairtone television factory in Stellarton.[6] Big was beautiful. In Inverness County many survived on unemployment insurance, social assistance and make-work projects. With regional disparity and rural underdevelopment, people started to look to their Nova Scotian roots – Moses Coady and the Antigonish movement of the 1920s – for inspiration. In Inverness the local Roman Catholic parish priest Father Bob Neville and a group of unemployed young people would meet and talk about what they could do to bring economic development to the county. All their ideas kept returning to one central theme. People didn't have a way to communicate with each other. Out of this, *Oran Inbhirnis* was born.

It was the hangover of the idealism of the 1960s and a frustration with economic conditions. Grassroots initiatives such as this were becoming a trend in communities across the Maritimes. Those who faced geographical, ethnic, gender and social class

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[5] St. Clair interview, Dec. 2001.
[6] Reid, "The 1970s: Sharpening the Sceptical Edge," p. 466.

disparities tended to unite and become self-directed.[7] There is no doubt that Inverness County – isolated on the western side of Cape Breton, away from the industries of the Sydney area – felt cut off and not heard by those who had the power to effect change. The *Oran* then was self-directed to expose the disparities in the county. It had the perfect role model and mentor. In Prince Edward Island, Jim MacNeill had started the *Eastern Graphic* in Montague, a weekly newspaper. He took the young *Oran* staff under his wing, providing editorial guidance and encouragement, and as time went on, even equipment to produce the newspaper.

The first edition of *Oran Inbhirnis*, a Gaelic phrase meaning "Song of Inverness", flew out of the Gestetner in the Inverness parish hall on April 9, 1976. In the first editorial Father Bob Neville explained that the volunteer staff decided to call the newspaper *Oran Inbhirnis*. Neville wrote, "a song is the expression of the talent, the emotions, the economics, the religion and the physical environment of a people … and the staff of this simple homemade newspaper are trying to create a 'song'."[8]

The young people were idealistic and enthusiastic. They wanted to create a new song of self-reliance for the people of Inverness County. Staff at the *Oran* had a mission: to begin discussing issues of underemployment, lack of services and so on. They wanted to bring about development so young people would have a choice about their future. From day one, *Oran* staff knew what was important to people living in the county. They did what author and professor Jay Rosen advocates in "public" journalism. They realized that journalists and citizens have a common interest in finding solutions to problems. That meant more than being a mirror to reflect the good and the bad. It meant getting

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[7] *Ibid*, p. 504.
[8] *Oran Inbhirnis*, April 9, 1976.

involved.[9] The *Oran* got involved. From the beginning it realized that it shared a common interest in the survival of Inverness County. From the beginning it helped readers understand the issues. Its coverage of spraying for the spruce budworm in 1976 helped residents make an informed decision on the issue. More recently its coverage in February 2002 of the proposed exploration for oil and gas off the western coast of Cape Breton looked at all angles of the issue. The roots of the paper went deep early.

The *Oran* Begins: 1976

With high unemployment, young people usually left Inverness County and headed for the city and well-paying jobs. Rankin MacDonald, Eleanor Macdonald and Frank Macdonald were no exception. The three childhood friends left Inverness to work in Calgary, but there were always trips back home, usually in the summer. After a trip through Europe in the fall of 1975, Eleanor and Rankin landed home as newlyweds and without work. Rankin MacDonald says it was January 1976 and the idealistic young people were restless:

> We were on Unemployment Insurance, right, and we were bored silly. What do you do, right? So we started a clothing bank, we started a library. We started these things just to keep us busy, until the summer came and then you decide what you're going to do. But then that wasn't enough. There wasn't enough to do in that. But we're sitting around one day trying to decide what else we're going to do here. We were like products of the '60s. We were I guess

[9] Miller, *Yesterday's News,* p. 217; Rosen, *What Are Journalists For?*, p. 142-43, where he presents the argument of communications theorist John Dewey who believed "the journalist is, at her best, a catalyst of conversation and insiders and citizens alike are active participants and partners in that conversation. The conversation in the end is the medium of democracy, not newspapers."

> optimistic about the world and trying to change it in our own little way and there was nothing you couldn't do. You're in your 20s. Starting a newspaper [snap of finger] piece of cake, right? Nothing to that, eh? Little did we know. But we were sitting around one day. I think there was Lawrence and Jackie and Eleanor and I and Bob, Father Neville and we were trying to decide something else to do and there was a [*Chronicle*] *Herald* on the desk. And I just looked at the *Herald* and said, "Well, let's start a newspaper," not really being serious about it but everybody went, "Newspaper, that's it." We started talking about a newspaper. What does this county need – a newspaper, so why not, eh? So why not. So Neville went and got the Gestetner and we started from there. We started the newspaper. We wanted to give the county a vehicle to see itself and an ability to talk to each other.[10]

Father Bob Neville remembers those discussions well:

> But I particularly remember an evening spent in Lloyd Gillis' house, at that time Lloyd was, he had been principal of the school. We were sitting in his basement, in his rec. room going through this, what seemed this endless and ongoing discussion of what does Inverness need? I remember sitting there and saying, "Well beyond this we can't go because there's no communications, there's no dissemination of information, there's no way for people to have their thoughts made public," and that was it. Once that was said, everybody realized that they were all saying it. Others might have said it in different ways at our gathering there. But in any case, it was very quickly decided that what we could do for Inverness was to provide a vehicle by which the people of Inverness could talk to one another.[11]

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[10] Rankin MacDonald, private interview, Dec. 6, 2001.
[11] Father Bob Neville, private interview, Dec. 3, 2001.

The young people, including Rankin MacDonald, embraced the idea:

> It wasn't the money, it wasn't anything. It was just in the beginning and you were that young. You came up upon this dream, it fell in your lap. You can make a difference, it was wonderful.[12]

With Father Bob Neville as editor, Eleanor and Rankin MacDonald, Jackie and Lawrence Ryan and a dozen other volunteers set out to give the village of Inverness a voice. The first issue of *Oran Inbhirnis* came out on April 9, 1976. It was printed on legal-size paper with a blue cover and cost 20 cents.

Father Bob Neville describes that first newspaper run in the parish office:

> We began to put together a first issue. We didn't know how many to do. So somehow we said we've got to count the number of smokestacks. We figured one for each house and somehow we came up with the number 400. We have 400 smokestacks. So I'll never forget. We gathered that first night at the parish office and began with that manual Gestetner and Donnie Hoss MacLellan, his job was to run the Gestetner with his arm and he ran off 400 copies of two sides of 21 pages. Then when we had the final page, I stapled one book together and I said, "There it is." And I remember Lawrence Ryan and Rankin looking at it, just looking at it and again I'll never forget the look on their faces. It was like they had given birth. There was no prior expectation of what it felt like to hold that in their hand. I don't think they've ever lost it – Rankin and Ellie, Eleanor in particular. There's still magic in it. It's not a job. It's magic and how all of these papers, and all these words, and all this work with

[12] Rankin MacDonald interview, Dec. 2001. They made a difference because from the beginning they did more than "the mere transmission of information," and tended to "focus on news that helps a community solve problems" as discussed in Frank G. Perez, Michael McDevitt, and Bob Gassaway, "The Making and Unmaking of Civic Journalists: Influences of Professional Socialization," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, (Spring 2002), pp. 87-100.

> machines, how it, all of this can come together with the reflections of community members and sketches and poems and out of it come this legible useful tool for the community. I think they, we, were absolutely thrilled to death.[13]

Bob Neville's editorials had the fiery enthusiasm of a southern preacher. His mission was to take the sense of the helplessness among the people of Inverness County and convert it into an action plan. The young idealists wanted to give Inverness County more than hope. They wanted to give the county a roadmap for the future based on sustainable development. The way to start was to get everyone talking and listening through their own weekly newspaper. From day one Neville argued in his editorials that community development had to come from the community and not government grants. He wrote: "Each of us must be willing to give freely whatever is necessary to get this community on its feet."[14] Inverness residents liked what they read. Rankin MacDonald:

> It was amazing. The first week we ran about 400 issues and bang they were gone. They were no sooner in the store and they were gone and people [were] angry [because] there were no more of them. And this was some little thing we ran off with a little bit of news, a little bit of this as best we could, as best we knew. People were hungry for something like that in Inverness County.[15]

Bob Neville was amazed to see that first edition of *Oran Inbhirnis* take off:

> There was no stopping it. If I or anyone else had said at the time, "It's too much we can't do it," they would just throw me out. From

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[13] Neville interview, Dec. 2001. Also, Elizabeth Blanks Hindman, "Community, Democracy, and Neighborhood News," *Journal of Communication*, (Spring 1998), p. 30, writes media should be run by the community, not professions. "Only when local communities take back the ability to communicate among themselves will they begin to take back real democracy. Neighborhood newspaper ideally can provide that opportunity."
[14] Bob Neville, Editorial, *Oran Inbhirnis*, April 17, 1976.
[15] Rankin MacDonald interview, Dec. 2001.

> that moment on it was theirs, it was ours. It was a community thing and it was community. The four o'clock in the morning visits when we would do an all-night shift. Visits from neighbours with tea and coffee and food. We'd stop for a scoff eh? Or the lady next door to the parish office would call and say, "Come down to the house," and we'd go down the house and the place would have enough food for an army … it was very much a community effort from the beginning.[16]

The paper soon became known in the community as the "Blue Book" because of the blue cover. Eleanor Macdonald says they accepted the paper as their own because the people involved came from Inverness County:

> Growing up here was a huge benefit because they knew us. They knew who we were. They knew our parents, our people. They knew that we weren't someone that was just going to come in and be gone in six months. So they had faith in us that we want to stay home, we want to make a living here, we want to grow up here. So they did. They trusted us and certainly advertising is what pays the bills. They were proud of the paper. They, I think, knowing us and talking to us and seeing how hard we worked, I think, and they just responded. Little by little, I think, we all grew together. And now, Wednesday is *Oran* Day.[17]

The paper wrote about issues close to home – the future of coal mining, spraying the spruce budworm, Acadian status for schools in Cheticamp, and the political antics of local politicians such as Billy Joe MacLean. It introduced readers to the writing of Inverness County native Alistair MacLeod. It promoted the Rankin Family when it

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[16] Neville interview, Dec. 2001.
[17] Eleanor Macdonald, private interview Dec. 5, 2001.

started playing in ceilidhs in Mabou. It also had all the necessary survival information – local happenings, births, deaths, weddings. Editor Bob Neville wrote and watched the community as it started to talk and listen to itself:

> I take a great deal of pride in those early issues, when I look at the output of what we did. Even today I'm shocked at some of the stuff we wrote, shocked sometimes at how primitive it was but shocked at how good it was and [it] showed the direction of where we're all going. So why did it explode like it did? It exploded because it was exactly precisely what was being sought, which was the community talking to itself. Miracle of miracles, not only was the community talking to itself, but the community was willing to listen to itself. That's harder. That's harder. And that was an even bigger miracle.[18]

The instant success was a surprise and a scare. No one involved in the paper had any journalism experience, including Frank Macdonald. The paper had just started when he came home from Calgary because his father was ill. Macdonald had a teaching degree, but had never stepped inside a classroom. He started writing columns for the *Oran* in that first year and never left. He recalls his amazement at the power of the printed word. It happened at the Co-op supermarket:

> I was going through the checkout one day and two women behind me were talking about something. I don't know what it was they were talking about. One of the women said, "How do you know that?" The other one said, "I read it in the *Oran*." And in the way she said it was, it is absolutely true because it was in the newspaper. And I thought, Oh my God, they believe us. [Laughter.] They're taking

[18] Neville interview, Dec 2001.

> this serious. We're going to have to start taking ourselves serious here too.[19]

The founders did take their mission seriously. Within two years the paper abandoned part of its Gaelic title and became the *Inverness Oran*. The paper grew more quickly than the founders could have imagined. When the parish's Gestetner wore out, the paper received a $3,000 grant from the Cape Breton Development Corporation to buy a new duplicating machine and its own typewriter. The paper also received a federal grant for one year so that Rankin MacDonald, Eleanor Macdonald and Frank Macdonald could receive a regular salary. The money wasn't much, but it went to good use. Rankin MacDonald wrote that the paper was grateful not only for the money, but also for the "confidence" shown in the business and the community.[20] This was evidence that small could be beautiful as well as a good investment of taxpayers' dollars. After all, the *Oran* has survived while many of the big industrial investments of the time failed and took with them millions of tax dollars. By this point Eleanor Macdonald says they realized the *Oran* had a future:

> I think after the first year when we realized that, yes, this is a good thing that we were working at. I think at that point we said, "Yeah we can make a living at this." And we certainly had the desire and I think that was a big part of it too. We wanted it to work and we were prepared to work very hard to make it work. That's what I find. Every one of us were prepared to put in all the long shifts, the hard shifts, the low pay and everything because we believed in it and I still do.[21]

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[19] Frank Macdonald, private interview Mar. 16, 2002.
[20] Rankin MacDonald, Editorial, *Inverness Oran*, May 21, 1976.
[21] Eleanor Macdonald interview, Dec. 2001.

Frank Macdonald says it wasn't long before the paper grew past the Inverness town limits to cover the county:

> For me one of the huge scary things that happened was, you know, Inverness had its own paper and we were pretty confident we could do this and we got a call from Mabou. Could we do a story from Mabou? Oh well, good God. Rankin and I [are] having a conference about Mabou. Are we going to go to Mabou? This is brave. We don't know Mabou. Mabou's 13 miles away. So that was the first branching out as the *Oran* became a county paper. We managed to be able to grow slow enough so that we didn't panic and abandon it or anything like that. It never got large enough, quick enough that we couldn't learn what we were doing and get ourselves in serious trouble.[22]

Rankin MacDonald says people in the county wanted a paper to fill the gap left from the Victoria Inverness Bulletin:[23]

> Then it just kept going wooh, wooh, wooh, like this. And then Margaree called and Mabou called and they said, "Hey, what about us? It's time for us." We weren't going to move that fast but then we had to move and move and move to cover the whole county. It came so quickly that within a year we had to get printed and go to tabloid.[24]

After 134 issues, the Blue Book was replaced by a professionally printed tabloid newspaper. It is a day that Eleanor Macdonald will never forget:

> I remember Frank and I drove to Port Hawkesbury. We got printed at the Scotia Sun and Rankin was so nervous about the fact what it

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[22] Frank Macdonald interview, Mar. 2002.
[23] The Victoria Inverness Bulletin started publishing Jan 29, 1929 and continued until 1968.
[24] Rankin MacDonald interview, Dec. 2001.

> was going to look like, our paper. I came back and said, "It's fabulous, it's a newspaper" and I held it up. It was so great. We have a newspaper now, an official newspaper. It was really exciting.[25]

It was exciting and busy. Jackie and Lawrence Ryan had left to take paying jobs elsewhere. Father Bob Neville stepped down as editor when he moved to another parish. Rankin MacDonald took over as editor. Frank Macdonald became publisher. The two spent most evenings and weekends on the road covering events for the paper. Eleanor Macdonald became Office Manager. She took care of the business side of the paper while raising a family:

> I took my kids to the office. I had my oldest daughter. I was home for two weeks and I was back to work [laughter]. I took her with me and she was in a little basket while I worked. She was with us through it all. It's so funny. She did the papergirl; she would help in summers. From Grade 9 on she worked with us every summer. Even in university days she'd come back and work with us in the summer. So she knew the business with us.... My children, I have three of them, and they've all been part of the paper at some point whether it's cleaning it [laughter] or Matthew was, he used to do delivery for us, but it was good. We could provide them with some work too.[26]

Success did not mean big bucks or easy days. It still doesn't. Frank Macdonald recalls the sacrifices and growing pains in those early days:

> I had no driver's licence, I never had a driver's licence in my life so I'd have a story in Margaree or Mabou so I'd set out hitchhiking and

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[25] Eleanor Macdonald interview, Dec. 2001.
[26] *Ibid.*

> I'm depending on getting there on time for the story. But there were weeks we were being paid with rolls of pennies. So deciding to get a car was a huge commitment. If I borrow money for the next three years for a second-hand car, is the paper going to be around to do this? So finally I bought a car and Rankin taught me to drive and we've put on about two million miles since then, I guess [chuckle].[27]

Their motto was that if they were called to report on an event they'd go. Frank Macdonald says he learned that lesson the hard way:

> I came into the office and Rankin said, "Listen, I got a call from Whycocomagh and there's a guy with one leg running across Canada. They want us come over there and interview him." He said, "Do you want to do it?" I said, "What am I going to ask a guy with one leg running across Canada?" So we kind of didn't do it. We didn't go over to Whycocomagh and that was probably the biggest failure because that was Terry Fox and I never met him [laughter]. And so we haven't missed many since. You know people have gone through this county on donkeys, on wagon trains, walk and crawl and we're there [laughter] oh, yeah [laughter]. You got a story to tell, buddy, we'll hear it. A bus went through a few weeks ago, burning apples or something. Go over. It's going through Whycocomagh, get to that bus. Yeah, we're not going to miss another Terry Fox [laughter].[28]

The dedication of *Oran* staff to cover every event in the county captured a loyal audience as well as the necessary advertising dollars of small business. Frank Macdonald says there's no doubt the *Oran* has defied demographics:

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[27] Frank Macdonald interview, Mar. 2002.
[28] *Ibid.*

> One of the reasons that was given to us one time for why the Oran succeeded was because we didn't know what we were doing. The point being that if anyone with any newspaper experience had come into Inverness County they would take a look around, there's not a chain store, there's not a shopping mall in the whole place, there's 17 thousand people spread over 150 miles and so a paper doesn't have the advertising base to succeed here. But we managed somehow to do that and I think it was because we had a lot of repetitive advertising.[29]

Those first issues of the *Oran* carried classified ads from all the local businesses in Inverness including MacDonald's Variety Store, FINA gas, Simon P. LeForte General insurance, the Inverness Flower Shop, and the Victoria Theatre.[30] Some of those businesses have survived the 28 years – others have closed and the space in the paper has been taken by new businesses. Rankin MacDonald says businesses support the *Oran* because they see the paper as an important component in the economic growth of the area. He says advertisers also stick with the *Oran* because they know people read the paper:

> In this county they used to ask, "Where do you get most of your news?" and it's always the *Oran*. The parish bulletin is second. We're above the parish bulletin. That's why if you're called [to cover a story] you go. If there's something in the paper every week about each community, we hear about most of the stuff and we go and cover that stuff and people read the paper. And advertisers know people read the *Oran* so this is why we stay in business. If you try to change that, if you become selective of what you put in

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[29] *Ibid.*
[30] *Oran Inbhirnis*, April 17, 1976.

> the paper, if you want to become some grandiose newspaper with all these ideals, you know, stick to the journalism ethics, you're going to fail in this area.[31]

Father Bob Neville admires how the *Oran* has managed to keep the balance between its public service role and the business:

> So it was a very delicate thing. I think I retained this glass house sort of idealism that these men and women were going to grow old and have beards – the men anyway – and do this for nothing until the day they died. And Rankin could see from the very beginning that this had to pay for itself. So certain features, for example, the who visited who last weekend, and Sofie MacLeod motored from Antigonish to Judique to spend the night with her daughter Willena or something. I used to say, "We're not filling up our paper with that crap." And Rankin would say, "If you don't put that crap in you won't sell that paper." He felt that was symbolic of what had to be done with the paper. Now it's 25 years later, I say he was right.[32]

The *Oran* Community

Reading the *Oran* each week is like getting in your car and driving the winding Route 7, from community to community. Stories from Margaree, Waycobah, Judique, Cheticamp and Mabou run throughout the paper. This week a photograph of a young girl welcoming Canada Day with a song greets readers. The story of two piping plovers making a home on the beach in Port Hood makes the headline on the front page. Below that are stories about the financial status of the local school board and the uncertain future

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[31] Rankin MacDonald interview, Dec. 2001.
[32] Neville interview, Dec 2001.

of arenas in the county. That's just the front page of the 40-page tabloid paper.[33] The *Oran* is intensely local and all community. It's the way people in Port Hood know what folks up north in Meat Cove are doing. Sports editor and columnist Bill Dunphy sees the paper's connection to Inverness County when he fills in on delivery day – dropping off more than 4,000 copies in eight communities:[34]

> Say the run was late at the printing plant and you're an hour or two behind in getting to the stores on a Wednesday. My gosh, you'll have six, seven, eight people gathered around or parked outside the store in their cars waiting for you. When you get there [they say], "Where the hell were you?" [Laughter]. Because I'm sure that across this county Wednesday nights there are more people sitting at their kitchen tables reading what's in the *Oran*.[35]

Morag Graham, a teacher at Dalbrae Academy in Mabou, and Mary Janet MacDonald a step dancing teacher, say the *Oran* is a Wednesday tradition across Inverness County. Mary Janet MacDonald:

> I just cannot imagine my week without sitting down with the *Oran*. As a matter of fact a friend of mine gave me a picture one time. It was just a sketch. It was a cup of tea, a biscuit, with some molasses, typically a Scottish treat, some CB tartan on the table and the *Inverness Oran*. And I was saying that's Wednesday evening at anybody's house.[36]

Teacher Morag Graham agrees:

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[33] *Inverness Oran*, July 7, 2004.
[34] Canadian Community Newspapers Association, "Database Inverness (NS) Oran," June 28, 2004 has official circulation figure at 4,757. That includes about 1,500 off-island subscriptions. <http://www.communitynews.ca/database/details>.
[35] Bill Dunphy, personal interview Mar. 17, 2002.
[36] Mary Janet MacDonald, personal interview Dec. 5, 2001.

> I know from my own experience and even members of my family who live not only in different parts of Canada, but in the United States as well, receiving the *Oran* is the highlight of their week. Even though it may be two or three days behind it's the highlight for them. Myself, Wednesday is even special with me because I know I'm going to have time to sit down with the *Oran* on Wednesday when I get home.[37]

Dr. Jim St. Clair says he has lined up to buy a copy of the *Oran* on a Wednesday. If he arrives at the corner store late, the paper might be sold out. He says the *Oran* is part of the cultural life of the county:

> I don't think people worship the *Oran*. I don't think it's held up in that kind of pristine regard. But I think it's a concomitant. It's the importance of the afternoon cup of tea in people's lives. It's sustaining and stimulating in the same way as that afternoon cup of tea is.[38]

Publisher Frank Macdonald says there's a good reason for that connection with the people across the county:

> And I think that probably the *Oran* demonstrates the value of community newspapers because the stories that we're telling. The people who pick up the paper, their lives are on the front page. If we weren't here those stories would not be told, 95 per cent of them would not be told. That's true of every community, whether the owners of the community papers see it that way or not … the paper will tell their lives and we're conscious of that all the time.[39]

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[37] Morag Graham, personal interview Dec. 5, 2001.
[38] St. Clair interview, Dec. 2001.
[39] Frank Macdonald interview, Mar, 2002.

Dr. Jim St. Clair thinks that's why the *Oran* is so successful. *Oran* reporters are everywhere – at the arenas, community and cultural events and in the schools:

> Well, I think we're very fortunate having people in the business side of the paper and as well as people on the editorial side who believe that their undertaking is more than just a commercial effort. The paper has stood by its principles of openness since its very beginning. The people who report for the paper, the editor, the columnists, have travelled many, many miles to be present at birthday parties for people who were 100 years old, have gone to innumerable, hundreds of concerts in schools to see kids perform, have found in the humblest of people extraordinary characteristics which they bring forth as part of the tapestry of this place. It's as though there's one big loom. The warp is there but the woof is woven constantly. And it's the way in which the reporters and writers for the paper put in those colourful threads.[40]

Step dancing teacher Mary Janet MacDonald:

> Well, it definitely sustains our cultural fabric. It's a real lightning rod for anything. That's what keeps everyone informed. We can start in Port Hastings and follow all the way to Inverness and I bet you about 90 per cent of the people we can say who's in every house and that's the way the *Oran* is. They have a good grasp on every single community and what's happening in every single community at all times all the time. They've worked magic in that paper over the years and the people support it 100 per cent.[41]

Statistics Canada's 2001 census information shows the county lost almost five per cent or one thousand people in the past five years – mostly a generation of young people

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[40] St. Clair interview, Dec 2001.
[41] Mary Janet MacDonald interview, Dec. 2001.

between the ages of 20 and 35.[42] Most kids know that at some point they'll have to leave Inverness County to get work. But for now the *Oran* is helping them make a life-long connection to their community.[43] Each week they read stories and see photographs of their classmates and sports teams. Teachers at Dalbrae Academy, including Morag Graham, say this is an important influence:

> The *Oran* really has been very good to the school over the years. I guess I have to speak from my experience. Before I came to Dalbrae in Mabou I was a teacher and in administration in Judique Criegnish Consolidated. It was here that my relationship with the *Oran* first began. It didn't matter when I would call them. Or if I wanted them to do an article or feature on any activity going in the school they were there so promptly.... I think that when the students read something about themselves or their school it certainly gives them a pride in themselves and in the school. If they've written articles in the *Oran* [that] will produce this pride then it will go a long way to having a better school.[44]

Margie Beaton teaches Gaelic at Dalbrae to senior high school students. She says the *Oran* is a window for those in the community who don't get into Dalbrae Academy and other schools:

> There's a lot of people who aren't involved with the youth of the community directly and to see that all these things are going on in our school – they feel that they can be a part of it without actually leaving their homes when they see it in the newspaper. So it's our

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[42] Statistics Canada "2001 Census."
[43] Bruce, Emke, and Wilkinson, "Social Cohesion and Communication," p. 18 in which they suggest out-migration may benefit the home community: "The need for continued interaction does increase the demand for communication technologies which would facilitate keeping in touch with people who are gone. Thus outmigration may have a benefit in that it increases external links."
[44] Graham interview, Dec. 2001.

> way of getting out to a lot of people that don't know a lot of the time what's going on in the schools. So there's a lot of positive things going on. Often there's negative things said about the youth of today, but I find the *Oran* tends to highlight a lot of the good works that our youth do. And it makes them feel important. If they were in a large city they would never make the paper, but probably most of the students here have been featured in the newspaper.[45]

By reflecting the activities of young people in the paper, the *Oran* connects them to Inverness County. Even if they leave for Calgary, Windsor, Vancouver, Boston or whatever boom city has the jobs, they'll take part of the county with them. The people at the *Oran* hope that perhaps some will follow in their footsteps and return and invest back in Inverness County.

The *Oran's* philosophy has won the respect of municipal administrators. John Cotton started to work for the municipality of Inverness about the same time as the *Oran* started publishing. He is the director of tourism and recreation:

> If you want them somewhere they'll be there and if they can't be there they're apologizing. They almost make you feel like you're the most important, you have the most important activity in the whole world and they want to report on it. They want to be there to see it happen. And people feel good about that. I just think they're a good media. They're a good newspaper. They're critical. They reflect the opinion of the community and [when] there's controversy, you probably read it. There's letters to the editor and all that. But in general people accept the fact it is their newspaper and the people there are there to help them.[46]

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[45] Margie Beaton, personal interview, Dec. 5, 2001.
[46] John Cotton, personal interview, Dec. 6, 2001.

The newspaper's moniker, the *Inverness Oran*, denotes the county's Scottish heritage. But the county is multicultural, with the Acadian community in Cheticamp and Mi'kmaq communities in Waycobah and Whycocomagh. Dr. Jim St. Clair says the *Oran* works hard to reflect all cultures in the county:

> The *Oran* with its lack of any strong political or religious bias has been a major, major strength in the development of the willingness to try to be ecumenical and to try to be citizens of a multi-faceted world. And although the title of the newspaper is in Gaelic, the newspaper has been very fair in looking also at the First Nations culture, the Acadian culture in the north and of the county. So I don't see the newspaper as ethnocentric in any way, but rather being the Song of Inverness.[47]

Cheticamp is Frank Macdonald's beat. At first he found it difficult to break into the Acadian community because he doesn't speak French. But he says the *Oran's* blanket coverage of the fight for Acadian status in schools in the 1980s helped to win the trust of the community. He says people started buying the *Oran* for the latest on that issue and found a lot more:

> I had been doing stories in Cheticamp for a long time hoping people would begin to read us. But I think when issues, which is what people tend go to papers to find out about when they're happening, but they discover all kinds of other things in there too like their high school teams or whatever and they choose to keep on buying it.[48]

Raymond Doucet, the general manager of the Cheticamp Co-op, watched the

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[47] St. Clair interview, Dec. 2001.
[48] Frank Macdonald interview, Mar. 2002.

Oran come into existence and grow to be a popular paper in the Acadian community: "It contributes a way of passing the news to the public and it creates employment. If you have any ads or special announcements it's a way of delivering to the people."[49]

While the *Oran's* coverage of Acadian status in schools helped to establish the paper in the French-speaking community, Rankin MacDonald says it took longer to gain the trust of the Mi'kmaq First Nations:

> Waycobah … it was even a little more difficult because it's a totally different culture. You go there and you just think these are white people with brown skin, but they're not; they're a different culture all together, different way of doing things, you know. But start covering the little things, like the graduations in the school, their princess pageant, the little things like that and then the bigger things come. Now we get a lot of letters to the editor and they use us for causes and stuff like this.
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> The thing is with the native community they're very leery of the press because it seems that the press only goes there when there's a controversy. Us, we'll go there anytime and we're there all the time for any story. So we do both stories and they know we're not there just looking for a headline.[50]

Bill Dunphy took over the beat when he started working at the *Oran* 14 years ago. Since then he's become a regular on the reserves:

> I go there weekly or regularly and just walk in doors of people I know and sit down and have tea. I'm not covering any story or anything. I almost make a point of that, just to keep in touch and hear what's happening. [I say,] I don't want to read it in the *Herald*. I

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[49] Raymond Doucet, personal interview Dec. 6, 2001.
[50] Rankin MacDonald interview, Dec. 2001. For an example of the coverage see *Inverness Oran*, Jan. 16, 2002 with the front page story "Police investigate two Whycocomagh break-ins" and "Whycocomagh: pursuing a vision of community economic development," p. 3.

> want you to tell me now. I want to be part of your community too so I know what's going on… I don't think anyone can do that – you walk in and have people tell you what they're feeling or what their community is feeling.[51]

In the editorial for the *Oran's* 25th anniversary Rankin MacDonald wrote, "We look at the people of Inverness County as our 'master's voice.' When they call us about a story we go to do that story whether it be the birth of twin calves, events in the schools or topics which touch on all our lives."[52] The *Oran* remains an important presence because it does its civic duty and focuses on the most important story in Inverness County – its readers and the issues that affect their lives.

That point was clearly made in the fall of 2003 when sports reporter and columnist Bill Dunphy stopped reporting on the news and made the news. Dunphy, the coach of the Inverness Academy Rebel basketball team, admitted to smoking marijuana on a trip in September 2003 with four players. Dunphy was relieved of his coaching duties. Dunphy used his column on page 29 of the *Oran* to explain what happened and apologize. He wrote that he hoped that he could re-earn the trust and respect of the parents, the school and his colleagues at the *Oran*. Editor Rankin MacDonald felt that account in Dunphy's column was good enough and chose not to write a news story. That decision didn't sit well with the community and the readers let the newspaper know. Letters to the editor started to pour in. They criticized MacDonald's editorial decision not to write a news story about the incident involving one of the newspaper's own. The *Oran*

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[51] Dunphy interview, Mar. 2002.
[52] Rankin MacDonald, Editorial, *Inverness Oran*, Aug. 1, 2002, p. 8.

printed all the letters.[53] Then came the editorial in which editor Rankin MacDonald admitted he made a mistake in judgement and said he could have handled the situation better. He wrote he was wrong to let Dunphy handle the story in a column. "I apologize to our readers and advertisers for letting you down" he wrote, and appealed to them for their continued scrutiny,

> ...to make sure an error in judgment like this is not made again; but it will be time for changes to be made at the editor's desk. The paper is too important to this county to let it be injured by terrible decisions or incompetence. The paper must survive. It is more important than one person.[54]

The paper's response to the Dunphy editorial crisis reveals the tight connection the *Oran* has with the community. The paper is willing to listen to and publish criticism and praise about decisions it makes. It is willing to be a forum for discussion. When in the wrong, the paper is willing to admit it made a mistake. In that moment of weakness, Rankin MacDonald exhibited the paper's strength in the way it exhorted the community to continue its responsibility to the community newspaper. This can only happen when there is trust and an established rapport between the newspaper and its community. The *Oran* has survived this crisis. It continues to produce award-winning newspapers, a sign

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[53] Bill Dunphy, "Scuttlebutt," Column, *Inverness Oran*, Oct. 29, 2003, p. 29. Also see *Chronicle-Herald*, Oct. 29, 2003, p. 1; The *Reporter*, Port Hawkesbury, Nov. 4, 2003 pp. 1, 4, 5. For response from editor Rankin MacDonald see Editorial, *Inverness Oran*, Nov. 5, 2003, p. 5. For more comment from Dunphy see *Inverness Oran*, Nov. 5, 2003, p. 32. For a sampling of opinion on this issue see letters to the editor, *Inverness Oran*, Nov. 5, 12, 19, and Dec. 3, 2003.

[54] Rankin MacDonald, Editorial, *Inverness Oran*, Nov. 12, 2003.

that the small family business is indeed providing a vital and necessary public service to its community.[55]

The *Oran* and its Journalism

It is one thing to reflect the communities, to let them sing their songs, but community papers can fall into the trap of pandering to their readers, not facing the tough issues and not taking stands.[56] Rankin MacDonald admits that he struggles with this. As editor he knows that covering the tough issues is part of his job and sometimes the paper makes mistakes, as he admitted concerning the editorial decisions involving the Dunphy marijuana incident. Still, MacDonald says the integrity of the paper is paramount:

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[55] "*Oran* wins national award," *Inverness Oran*, Nov. 12, 2003, p. 3; "*Inverness Oran* leaps to top of class at newspaper awards," *Inverness Oran*, May 19, 2004, p. 6.

[56] A sizeable literature argues that in larger pluralistic communities the press functions as a watchdog, but in smaller homogenous communities, it functions as a guard dog. That is, its role is to promote tranquility, avoid internal social disruption and if necessary report external conflicts or threats to the community. See: Clarice N. Olien, Phillip J. Tichenor, and George A. Donohoe, *Community, Conflict, and the Press*, (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980), pp. 55 and 217-22; Clarice N. Olien, Phillip J. Tichenor & George A. Donohoe, "Conflict, Consensus and Public Opinion," in *Public Opinion and the Communication of Consent*, Eds. Theodore L. Glasser, and Charles T. Salmon, (New York: Gilford Press, 1995), p. 308-09; Clarice N. Olien, Phillip J. Tichenor, and George A. Donohoe, "The Community Editor's Power and the Reporting of Conflict," *Journalism Quarterly*, (1968), pp. 242-43. The authors claim, rather narrowly, that community press does not emphasize controversial aspects of issues and this hurts the community; Flora *et al.*, *Rural Communities*, pp. 242-43; and Hindman, "Community Newspapers, Community Structural Pluralism and Local Conflict in Nonlocal Groups," p. 709-10, notes "internal conflict is treated in a more routine, formal and impersonal way through newspaper accounts of bureaucratic procedure such as open meetings and public hearings. In this type of community, open expression of conflict through newspaper accounts can help to diffuse tensions by 'airing' grievances." Emke, "Community Newspapers and Community Identity," supports the view of community newspapers as guard dogs in as far as they are part of the power relationships in the community and are affected by community conditions. He goes further and adds, "However, the argument that community newspapers function largely as an agent of system maintenance is short sighted. The reporting of conflict, even if it is conflict with outsiders, equalizes the information available to competing interests, and can serve to redistribute power," p. 11. Ivan Emke, "Survey of Community Newspaper Editors in Canada," research report for Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation, *New Rural Economy Study*, (Mar. 2003), p. 20 finds in the survey of 205 community newspaper editors that, "there is still an expectation of many of them that they have responsibilities to report the truth, even if it harms the region." The thesis with its three case studies support Emke's conclusion. These three weeklies may be exceptions to the lap dog and even guard dog model. I would suggest that, not all, but other weeklies in the Maritimes follow the watch dog model of the *Oran*, *Graphic*, and the *Leader*. Further empirical study would be needed to verify this observation.

> After 25 years there's very few people in this county that I don't know. I go into a community and for the first 15 minutes it's, "Hi, how you doing? What's going on? Blah, blah, blah, blah. Well, let's do the story now." You know everybody and when you have to write something negative about people it's tough. You're not anonymous. They know your father and your mother. They know your brothers. You know you go out and they look at you and they say, "Jeez, I thought we were friends, why did you put it in?" You got to. That's the hardest part, really the hardest part of this job is being part of the community and having to write about it.[57]

As illustrated by the Dunphy incident, the problem comes when the story is close to home. Editor Rankin MacDonald:

> I had to write about my son. He was 15 and he did some bad things – broke into a car and stole some stuff. I had to write about him, but if I didn't they would say, "Who else aren't you writing about?"[58]

Rankin MacDonald says the lines are clearer and easier to determine when the issue involves politicians, authorities or people other than one of your own:

> I remember one night I went to Judique. There was a meeting there – amalgamation. They were discussing school amalgamation. It was a public meeting. Thirteen [people] showed up. This was the biggest issue supposedly in the community for years. One of the organizers said, "Why don't you say there was a full house, just to give the powers that be the message." I said, "No, I can't do that," and he went, "All right if that's the way you feel about it." When I'm leaving, he came up to me and said, "You know what, if you had

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[57] Rankin MacDonald interview, Dec. 2001.
[58] *Ibid.*

> done that I would have never believed a word you printed in the *Oran* again." That was it eh? You can't shirk away from that.
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> It's easier for me now. In my younger days it used to bother me a lot. Wednesdays were hell.[59]

Rankin MacDonald says he steers the *Oran* away from what he calls cheap journalism. He doesn't think it is the paper's job to tell people's private secrets:

> I remember I found out that Raylene Rankin had cancer. I said I'm not printing this. If Raylene wants me to know that, she will talk to someone. Maybe it was a bad call on my part, but that's the way I am. A week later it was in the [*Chronicle*] *Herald*, or *Daily News*, one of the papers, that Raylene Rankin had cancer. But that's just the type of thing, you know, did the public really need to know that stuff?[60]

Publisher Frank Macdonald says covering sensitive or controversial issues is a balancing act:

> In terms of finding that balance, in the end we live in the community and we're journalists. The first person I need to live with is myself and that determines the story I'll tell or how I'll tell it.[61]

Sports editor and columnist Bill Dunphy is a Cape Bretoner, but his parents live on the other side of the Island. Maybe that's why he feels fewer pressures when it comes to covering controversy:

> [When] I came I was the guy with the formal training. That was a switch for them – some staff that had actually studied journalism. Nobody liked to do a tough story because they all knew everybody,

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[59] *Ibid.*
[60] *Ibid.*
[61] Frank Macdonald interview, Mar. 2002.

> related to everybody, and so I came on board. I can do the stories they didn't really care to do, you know, the sticky ones, the tough ones. Regardless of it all, not that that has ever swayed them from doing a story or anything else, it's just made it easier. So I give them that, a little bit of toughness I think.[62]

Take for instance, a story Dunphy covered in 2001 about sexual abuse involving a coach of a peewee girls hockey team:

> Our peewee female hockey team was getting ready to host provincials having played throughout the season. I discovered that a person that had been in the *Oran* 11 years ago for sexually assaulting a young girl was one of the coaches of this team. I brought it out into the open at a difficult time and in a difficult set of circumstances. Everybody knew it and nobody was saying anything about it. They knew it at the start of the year. Nobody wanted to find out the truth, it seemed, and once the truth was known nobody wanted to bring it out because the girls [were] hosting the provincials – you're going to ruin their chances and all that stuff. Again, everybody you know and this coach had three girls on this team as well. At the time when the offence happened these girls would have been babies. So, it was kind of difficult in that respect, that you're writing about somebody that you're going to affect his family and his life here and everything else, but the truth has to be told, as hard as it was. I know Rankin and I really agonized over it. We weren't going to run the story. We had a big fight. It was that close to us. We agonize over these things and then as more of the story came out we wondered why we even bothered arguing because this guy was so despicable, everyone

[62] Dunphy interview, Mar. 2002.

> protecting him, lying to us and everything else about it, so I'm glad we did this story.[63]

Dunphy says he gets a lot of reaction to his stories and columns. The County's director of tourism and recreation, John Cotton:

> I think Bill has added a new dimension to the paper while he's been there. He's caused people to think and sometimes they overreact. Sometimes they don't appreciate what he says about them or about a particular situation, but at the very least he gets people thinking and in some cases that's what a newspaper should be doing is getting you thinking.[64]

That's been the aim of the *Oran* from the beginning, to get people thinking and to call political leaders at all levels into account. In his editorials, Rankin MacDonald regularly takes swipes at the local MLA and Minister of Culture and Tourism, Rodney MacDonald, over the province's inattention to local issues such as water treatment for Inverness and tourism development.

Editor Rankin MacDonald remembers the first time the *Oran* took on the local MLA. It was over a favourite issue of the 1970s – road paving. Bill MacEachern had been elected to represent the Inverness riding two years earlier on a promise to pave the streets in Inverness. After two summers of more dusty streets, Rankin MacDonald wrote the editorial, "Promises, Promises." He took MacEachern, minister of Social Services, to task over his broken promise, saying residents and tourists didn't find the ruts on the

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[63] *Ibid.* Also see Olien *et al.*, "Conflict, Consensus and Public Opinion," p. 320, where the authors say the more conflict reported the more information generated and reported, the more knowledgeable the public will be about an issue.
[64] Cotton interview, Dec. 2001.

secondary road quaint. The next week MacEachern was in the *Oran* office and the road was paved that summer.[65]

In an area where patronage is often linked with well-paying or secure jobs, the paper took risks. Publisher Frank Macdonald says in the early days staff received veiled threats that family members might lose their jobs if the paper continued to criticize government action. But in the end, Macdonald says the *Oran* puts the community ahead of partisan politics:

> The thing is that the paper doesn't have a political alliance. We've had difficulties with that sometimes in the past because what we would write wouldn't be consistent with what political representatives would say. But because we were always struggling and there was no single advertiser that could put weight on us. We weren't making enough money for anyone to threaten us. We get to say what we want to say because everything else goes on in the community is in the paper as well.[66]

The newspaper is a healthy mix of community events, information, advertising and when necessary, hard hitting news stories and editorials exhorting the community into action. It strives to be and mostly succeeds in being more than a mirror to the community. Its journalism, especially on the editorial pages of the *Oran*, pokes at residents to keep them informed, interested and involved in the development of the county.

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[65] Rankin MacDonald, telephone interview, Mar. 2002.
[66] Frank Macdonald interview, Mar. 2002.

The *Oran* and Community Development

The *Oran* was founded to encourage community development. In one of the first editorials back in April of 1976, Father Bob Neville wrote that people have the option between dependence on government agencies and programs for the future or taking their destiny into their own hands and shaping their lives according to abilities, resources and generosity.[67] Since then, the *Oran* has tried to keep that discussion going. Rankin MacDonald has stayed true to this goal:

> We wanted to start a paper that would reflect the community, but work with the community for development and promoting our way of life. We were very idealistic about this. We were going to fight for the rights of the people in Inverness County who have been shit on all their lives. That's what we wanted to do. We wanted to give them a voice, the fishermen and the farmers and the miners and the small business people in Inverness County and try to wake the government up and say, "Look, could you please avert your eyes from Halifax and Sydney for once and look at rural Nova Scotia and Inverness County and try to do something to develop this area." I think that the paper itself, with that philosophy working for and with the community, that it has done a lot of good for Inverness County.[68]

For Frank Macdonald that meant stirring the pot:

> We were going to shit-disturb for as long as we could get away with it. I know Bob Neville wanted a newspaper that was going to be a positive reinforcement to the community. That it was going to

[67] Editorial, *Oran Inbhirnis*, April 17, 1976.
[68] Rankin MacDonald interview, Dec. 2001.

> be a vehicle in which discussion and debate would take place and that's what Rankin felt, that's what Lawrence felt, that's what the others that were involved in it felt and wanted and I don't think that's ever been lost. That's still what we want it to be. But it was in the beginning, it was an idea put into action by a bunch of people on unemployment who couldn't find a job and thought that it was wrong that they had to leave here and go to Calgary or go to Windsor or go wherever in order to earn a living and that things should be able to happen here. And that's how we feel now.[69]

Frank Macdonald likes to put a positive spin on the 2001 Statistics Canada figures showing that Inverness County had the smallest drop in population for all of Cape Breton Island. But he can't deny that one of the best exports from Inverness remain its young people:

> The reason the paper was created was to try to see if it could play a role in stopping what's happening, but it's a hemorrhage. When the causeway almost washed out last winter I said, "Great we can't get off anymore, no one can get off [laughter].[70]

Stories published in the *Oran* or the work of 16 community development associations from Meat Cove to St. Joseph du Moine and Margaree can't stop that hemorrhage. Frank Macdonald says what these groups want is the government to invest money to create jobs in Inverness County so that young people can have a choice about whether they stay or leave.

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[69] Frank Macdonald interview, Mar. 2002.
[70] *Ibid.*

As publisher, Macdonald makes no apologies for the paper's activist role in community development. He has watched and reported on all sorts of proposals from Inverness County:

> [Laugher] If it sees itself as a white horse at all, it is to try to stop the kind of bureaucratic offensiveness that burns out small communities where very tiny groups of volunteers spend years and years and years trying to get to first base with organization like Enterprise Cape Breton or ACOA or what have you. Because there are all sorts of questions right now in the kind of society we live in about whether government should be involved in anything. Government absolutely should be involved in things. But it should be. Their development solutions shouldn't be the biggest impediments that we face and that's what we've seen happening in Cape Breton Island. It probably applies right across Atlantic Canada. But the people that are or the agencies that are put there to help just become such huge hurdles that no one can get over them.[71]

Rankin MacDonald says as long as he's editor he will keep promoting development in Inverness County:

> Our responsibility is to promote this county, to fight for this county, to show its blemishes so that we can look at it and say, "Okay, we didn't do too good here and let's back up and start again." You need a mirror. Every county needs a mirror to look at itself.
>
> I would do anything for the people of this county through the paper and that's what you have to have. You have to have a real deep caring and the ideology will follow.[72]

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[71] *Ibid.*
[72] Rankin MacDonald interview, Dec. 2001.

The Warden for the Municipality of Inverness, A.J. MacDougall acknowledges that the *Oran* provides an important role in the progress of the area:

> We all know the local people on the paper. They don't always agree with us, but where they are critical, I think, if we look at it broad enough it can be taken as being constructive criticism because they are just as anxious to see the area prosper as we are.[73]

John Cotton, the county's director of tourism and recreation, says the *Oran* plays an important role in the democratic process – even when politicians don't like the paper's stand on an issue:

> You're always going to have situations where a community may be doing something or the *Oran* may express an opinion that may not be in line with what the municipality is attempting to try to do, but that to me is you gotta look at both sides. If you look at both sides of an issue, hopefully you get to a point where your decision will be a much better decision. That's what the *Oran* has done. When you go into a community, you can't fool the community, you can't say you can't do this, you can't do that. The question is why. You better have your answers. If not, they'll get the answers.[74]

The *Oran* will side with municipal politicians in their fight with provincial and federal policy, especially when it comes to community development.[75] For example, the *Oran* has backed the Inverness Development Association's 12 year battle with federal

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[73] A.J. MacDougall, private interview Dec. 6, 2001.
[74] Cotton interview, Dec. 2001.
[75] Rankin MacDonald, "Attitudes," Editorial, *Inverness Oran,* Oct. 2, 2002, p.8. Jan L. Flora, "Social Capital and Communities of Place," *Rural Sociology*, (1998), p. 498, writes that communities with successful projects "had a newspaper that stimulated information flow regarding local issues."

and provincial development agencies to get funding to build a world-class golf course in Inverness.[76] That was a long fight. Reporter Bill Dunphy says the *Oran* played an important role in keeping the Inverness Links project alive:

> There's 25 golf courses on PEI, a little sandbar out on the gulf. We're struggling to get one here – to make five on the Island. I really think if the *Oran* hadn't taken up this cause and worked with the Inverness Development Association and all the other groups doing that – that the desire to do something other than what we've been doing every year would not be there. I don't think we'd be so close to having that new golf course in Inverness if it wasn't for the *Oran* along with many other things in other communities. The *Oran* helped precipitate or was there to announce it to the world. "It's in the *Oran*, now we've got to go ahead with it." I think that happens quite a bit.[77]

The battle was won in September 2002 when local MLA Rodney MacDonald announced a $4,000,000 commitment to reclaim the abandoned coal mine site.[78] There was great celebration in the community and in pages of the *Oran*. "We can thank our MLA for kick-starting this process built on faith, hope and love," wrote Rankin MacDonald in an editorial.[79] By the end of 2003, the Inverness Development Association assembled the land, finished the studies, finished site remediation and was holding talks with investors to build a golf course. In July 2004, a shorter par three 9-hole Inverness

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[76] Some of the comment, editorials and news stories include: Frank Macdonald "Delay of Inverness Links stinks," Column, *Inverness Oran,* Aug. 7, 2002, p. 8; News stories and editorial, *Inverness Oran*, Aug. 21, 2002, pp. 1 and 8; News stories and editorial, *Inverness Oran*, Sept. 26, 2004; and Rankin MacDonald, "Happy New Year," Editorial, *Inverness Oran*, Dec. 31, 2003, p. 8.
[77] Dunphy interview, Mar. 2002.
[78] Inverness first produced coal in 1865. Mining ceases in the mid 1960s. See NS Department of Natural Resources, <www.gov.ns.ca/natr/meb/is/is08.htm#figures10>
[79] Rankin MacDonald, "Performance," Editorial, *Inverness Oran*, Sept. 26, 2002, p. 8.

Links golf course opened. It is not the much hoped for world-class golf facility, but in the news coverage the *Oran* is quick to call it "a precursor to better things to come."[80]

The Inverness Links battle took 12 years. Others have been a little quicker. Rankin MacDonald remembers how he criticized the federal development agency, Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation (or ECBC) in his editorials for concentrating all its efforts on industrial Cape Breton. He says not long after that, the agency opened offices in Cheticamp and Inverness one day a week. Then there was the debate over seismic testing for oil and gas off the coast of Inverness. In this case, the *Oran* had to put what it saw as the interests of the community ahead of economic development. When Corridor Resources applied to explore for natural gas off the coast of Inverness, local politicians and unions saw the development as a source of jobs and tax dollars. The *Oran* was not so quick to take jobs at any cost. It called on the powers that be for more information so there could be an intelligent discussion before a decision was made. The *Oran* wanted to make sure the coalition of fishermen, native groups, tourist operators and environmentalists would be on the same footing as the petroleum company. It devoted pages and pages of the newspaper to discussing all points of view. It covered the public hearing into the application extensively. "We can't risk the jobs in the fishery and tourism industry, jobs which keep our communities alive, in order to bring other jobs to

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[80] "Inverness Links hold grand opening," *Inverness Oran*, July 7, 2004, p. 17. Cornelia Flora, Jan L. Flora, and Jeff Sharp, "Entrepreneurial Social Infrastructure and Locally Initiated Economic Development in the Nonmetropolitan United States," *The Sociological Quarterly*, (1997), p. 635, write, "An unbiased newspaper that raises issues early, follows them over time, and facilitates consideration of alternative solutions to local problems and issues can set a climate of civil discourse that encourages innovation."

our area. We want the jobs, but we must be sure before we risk what we have in hand," wrote Rankin MacDonald.[81]

In yet another example, the *Oran* called on the Strait Regional School Board, communities and the government to come together to save the performing arts centre, Strathspey Place outside Mabou after the School Board pulled support and funding. The *Oran* went to bat for the cultural institution, citing its importance to students and the cultural life of the area:

> So instead of trying to find things wrong with Strathspey, let's rally behind it and make damn sure we don't lose it.... Strathspey Place should be looked upon as another lure to bring people to our county and an asset that combined with other developments will begin to bring our young people home to Inverness County.[82]

This is what the *Oran* does. It fights for Inverness County. That means providing information so that citizens can make informed decisions. That means prodding politicians and people in positions of authority to take action. It also means stirring up residents to take responsibility for their well-being. It's a slow process, with some, albeit limited successes, such as the Inverness Links golf course.

Publisher Frank Macdonald says the story of the survival of Inverness County and perhaps the *Oran* can be told through its 1,500 off-Island subscriptions:

> When we first started sending papers away we were sending two big postal bags to Calgary. A few years later we were sending a little bundle of 25 papers to Calgary, but there was two big postal

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[81] Rankin MacDonald, "Homework," Editorial, *Inverness Oran*, Oct. 3, 2001, p. 8. Also see other editorials, news stories and extensive letters to the editor on offshore exploration between January and April 2002, particularly editions during the hearings Jan. 9, 16 and 23, 2002 and when the decision was rendered Apr. 10, 2002.
[82] Rankin MacDonald, "Strathspey Place," Editorial, *Inverness Oran*, Mar. 27, 2002, p. 8.

> bags going to Vancouver or BC and then there was big bags going to Windsor and fewer to BC.
>
> We could chart the economy of Canada and where the work is by following where our subscriptions were going. And now it's come full circle. Now we're sending two big bags to Calgary [laughter].
>
> But these are all people who are not able to stay here and make a living. But yet the *Oran* keeps people connected. They're still part of this community. So our community is getting really widespread. But we need to get more people here at home and keep them here at home. How we survive is going to be the story – the story of the *Oran* is probably going to be the story of the county itself economically. [83]

After the 2001 census was released in March 2002, Rankin MacDonald pointed his editorial finger at the community:

> This is our last chance. Once the present generation of leaders have fallen exhausted there will be no one to fight for this county and it will continue to decline, to lose population, more services, more schools, more hospitals and businesses until one will have to take a plane to get goods and services. It's time for the people of Inverness County to step up to the plate, to support their leaders, to let their voices be heard and their energy to be expended. It's up to you. You hold all the cards![84]

If the people hold all the cards, the *Oran* is the dealer that provides the table to begin the debate. Rankin MacDonald never misses an opportunity to make his point as in this editorial when the local co-op opened in September 2001:

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[83] Frank Macdonald interview, Mar. 2002.
[84] Rankin MacDonald, Editorial, *Inverness Oran*, Mar. 20, 2002, p. 8.

> It took almost a decade to reach the lofty level of hope, but community volunteers and business community are turning things around.... We have to forge ahead with initiatives or the spirit of the community will die and the community will soon follow. It takes time, but isn't it worth the effort.... We all have to join together to fight for economic renewal of our communities.[85]

After 28 years of singing the song, Rankin MacDonald is not afraid to point the finger at the community and demand excellence: "We must throw off our cloak of pessimism and negativism and extol the virtues of rural life to anyone and everyone who is willing to listen. This is one of the last, best places, so let's spread the news."[86]

The *Oran's* Future

After 28 years, the *Inverness Oran* is a solid part of the community. Its founders are still at the helm. They continue to weather personal and economic storms, but the paper has managed to keep its vision as outlined in an editorial by Rankin MacDonald back in 1976. In urging people to use the opinion and forum columns he wrote, "I feel we can grow as a community, settle and understand our differences and in the final analysis live more cooperatively by keeping the avenues of communication open."[87] He has hammered away at this theme for the past 27 years invoking every metaphor possible to engage and activate his readers:[88]

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[85] MacDonald, "It's up to you!" Editorial, *Inverness Oran*, Sept. 26, 2001, p. 8.
[86] MacDonald, Editorial, *Inverness Oran*, Feb. 5, 2003, p. 8.
[87] Bob Neville, Editorial, *Oran Inbhirnis*, Nov. 12, 1976.
[88] See Rankin MacDonald Editorials, "The Future," Sept. 17, 2003; "The Best Place," Sept. 6, 2003 and "Happy New Year," Dec. 31, 2003, *Inverness Oran*.

> We're all in this in the same county and we're in the same bed and we have to fight for each other. What the paper has to do is to bring communities together. Like what's good for Cheticamp is good for Inverness. What's good for Inverness is good for Cheticamp. There will always be newspapers because people in the south end of heaven want to know what people in the north end of heaven are doing, right?[89]

Father Bob Neville stepped down as editor of the *Oran* in its second year of publication, but he has continued to keep a close eye on the paper all these years. It sits on his kitchen table in the rectory in New Waterford. He scans it for the latest news and opinions and reflects on the first 25 years:

> Well, with the *Oran* there was that sense sometimes that things were drifting and then things would go back on track. What is the *Oran* I'm asked to judge here by you? It's today's *Oran*. It's the one I'm reading currently dealing with problems with the school board, dealing with the ongoing difficulties to get that golf course, and so on. But at the same time there's the report of the storm wrecking the walk on the beach and then having all the volunteers show up and fix it.
>
> The Oran is everything I ever wanted it to be. It's fulfilling more than I would have expected. I think it's a pretty classy rag. It's come a long way.[90]

The founders have weathered personal and economic ups and downs in producing the *Oran*, but they still have the passion that sparked the enterprise in 1976. You won't hear Rankin MacDonald complain about the night work, long hours or low pay:

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[89] Rankin MacDonald interview, Dec. 2001.
[90] Neville interview, Dec. 2001.

> The biggest thrill in the week, it's doing the stories. That's what I love. I love. I complain that I'm out late at night, but I just love it. I just I don't want to retire. I just want to go on until I fall dead at my desk. Because what better can you have than being there in the community in the middle of everything? Every week if there's something going on in the community you're there. It's like being invited to every great party in the county, eh? Coming home last night at 11:30 when I got home, a school board meeting, great, eh? I love that.[91]

The magic of that first issue 27 years ago also remains with Eleanor Macdonald:

> I think it's the overall feeling that it's a newspaper. It really is. We came here and we lived here and we brought up our children. We started up a business. We made it work, and to have it what it is – it's a good paper, it's a respected paper. We built it and we kept the confidence of the people of the county. I really am, I'm just proud of it. It makes me feel good every day to come in and say this is our business that we created from scratch, through all the years good times and bad times. We didn't have a county paper. We made one. We created it. We helped it grow and I think that's my passion, just that this is something that I hope will never die. It's been here for 25 years and I hope we can pass it on to someone who has the same passion for it that will always keep the same integrity for it. It will always be a county paper. That's what keeps me here. It's just I feel so good about this paper.[92]

For the time being the *Oran* remains firmly in the hands of its founders, Rankin MacDonald, Eleanor Macdonald and Frank Macdonald. They've been producing the

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[91] Rankin MacDonald interview, Dec. 2001.
[92] Eleanor Macdonald interview, Dec. 2001.

paper for 28 years. But now they're covering retirement parties of classmates and they wonder what kind of a retirement they can expect. They don't have a company pension plan. Their investment is the *Oran*. They wonder how they will be able to afford to retire. When they do they wonder how the paper will sustain itself. Rankin and Eleanor's children are following in the footsteps of their parents and returning home to Inverness and the paper they grew up with. Their oldest child, Kelly MacDonald, 27, has taken over as advertising and circulation manager. It's not clear whether she will stay and take over when the time comes. Her father, Rankin MacDonald is clear about what he's looking for in a successor:

> You know the day when I step down and I'm doing interviews to pick a new editor that's what I'm going to be looking for. I don't want someone to come in here to tell me that he's the best journalist in the world. I want someone to come in here and tell me that he really cares about the paper, what he's doing, and the people of the area, the good and the bad. That's so important.[93]

Regardless of who takes over, the founders believe community newspapers have a future. They say provincial media outlets such as the *Cape Breton Post*, *Chronicle-Herald*, *Daily News* and *CBC* only come to tell the big stories. They flocked to the region over the scandal at the Strait Regional School Board and its $800,000 loan guarantee to a former Board superintendent,[94] but few attended the three weeks of hearings about offshore seismic testing for oil and gas. The daily media outlets don't have the reporters to send to Inverness to cover the small, yet important, stories such as the rejuvenation of

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[93] Rankin MacDonald interview, Dec. 2001.
[94] Rankin MacDonald, "Get it Together," Editorial, *Inverness Oran*, Jan. 16, 2002, p. 8, calls on the Strait Regional School Board to regain the confidence of the parents, teachers, students, support staff and taxpayers. Also, Lauterer, *Community Journalism*, p. 250.

the boardwalk in Inverness or the Judique volunteer fire department giving up ambulance service. The latest studies show that their belief in weekly papers is well founded. Publisher Frank Macdonald and editor Rankin MacDonald believe that people in Inverness County will always want local news.[95]

The *Oran* produces journalism that contributes to the public life of the community. As Davis Merritt describes in *Public Journalism & Public Life*, the paper goes beyond the limited mission of just "telling the news"; its staff are not detached. They are fair minded citizens in public life; they are concerned with making proper connections in stories rather than emphasizing separation; the stories in the *Oran* not only describe the "going wrong," but imagine "going right" and the *Oran* sees its readers as more than just consumers or a market for advertisers, but "as potential actors arriving at democratic solutions to public problems."[96] For example, the *Oran* recently donated $10,000 to a new community centre in nearby Port Hawkesbury. As well, its editor Rankin MacDonald as chairman of the sidewalk committee in Inverness managed to raise $1 million from municipal, provincial and federal governments to fix the town's sidewalks.[97] This spirit runs through each and every issue of the *Oran.* The staff at the *Oran* report, write and live by these basic beliefs.

Given the remote location of the *Oran* and its limited advertising market, it's

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[95] The Canadian Community Newspaper Database (ComBase) reports that weeklies in Atlantic Canada have the highest exclusive readership rate in Canada. For data of the Newspaper Readership study of Oct. 2003 see: <www.ccna.ca-files/news/NationalStudyTables.pdf>. For stories see, Wade Tomlin, "ComBase begins Canada-wide launches," *The Publisher*, Oct. 8, 2003; and "Community papers best way to reach public," the *Tribune*, Nov. 5, 2003, p. 1.

[96] Merritt, *Public Journalism & Public Life,* p. 113-14.

[97] Francine Dubé, "Homesick expats get their Cape Breton fix," *National Post*, July 17. 2004; Bill Dunphy, "Centennial Dinner honours 30 outstanding citizens," *Inverness Oran*, July 21, 2004, p. B10. This story shows the connection the owners of the *Oran* have to the community because Eleanor Macdonald, Rankin MacDonald and Frank Macdonald are among the honoured and received an award for 28 years of community service.

unlikely that the paper will face pressure to sell to a media chain. However, the *Oran* faces serious challenges, both internal and external. The internal challenge of succession will have to be considered soon. The external challenge of rising printing costs is something the *Oran* has been wrestling with since big chains started buying Atlantic weeklies and their presses in 2002. The *Oran* is left with limited choices of printers for its weekly print run of 5,000 papers. In the end economics could drive the paper out of business.[98] Still, they soldier on as many other independents.

A quotation from William Whyte's *The Organization of Man* that appeared in the second edition of the *Oran* in 1976 is never far from mind: "There are only a few times in organizational life when man can wrench his destiny into his own hands – and if he does not fight then, he will make a surrender that will later mock him."[99] The *Oran* took up that challenge 28 years ago. With the support of the community and local advertisers, the founders have stubbornly held on and made their destiny right at home in Inverness County, Cape Breton.

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[98] This is a recognized problem among many independent weeklies. Burton, Editorial, *The Marshfield Mail*, Missouri, U.S.

[99] Bob Neville, editorial, *Oran Inbhirnis*, April 17, 1976. William Whyte, *Organization of Man,* Middlesex, Great Britain: Penguin, 1967.

Chapter III: *The Eastern Graphic* – PEI's political conscience

Weekly newspapers serve the information needs of the immediate community – both when it comes to news and advertising. The news and feature stories tell people what's happening in their schools, municipality, ice rinks and in minutiae of their daily lives. The weekly is also the way local businesses advertise – tell the community what products and services they have for sale. While newspaper subscriptions and store sales are sources of revenue, advertising is what pays for the bulk of news. Many publishers[1] admit at best, it's a fine balance. At worst, it's an uneasy tension when it comes to pleasing advertisers and speaking the truth. That's because publishers at enterprising weeklies such as *The Inverness Oran*, *The Eastern Graphic* and *The Miramichi Leader* take their jobs seriously. They try to do more than provide their readers with day-to-day happenings and advertisements. The publishers recognize that their newspapers have a larger civic duty – to promote community interests and development, to point out areas neglected and to uncover and report on injustices even when it makes advertisers or people in power squirm. [2]

In the previous chapter we saw that the *Inverness Oran* has established a model that benefits both the community and the survival of the small family business. This relationship is built on trust. It comes from consistently providing a comprehensive look at what's happening in the lives of people in Inverness County as well as advocating

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[1] Frank Macdonald, publisher of the *Inverness Oran*, Paul MacNeill, publisher of the *Eastern Graphic* and David Cadogan former publisher of the *Miramichi Leader* all say this. From personal interviews with Kim Kierans in 2001and 2002.

[2] For a discussion of civic journalism see: Lauterer, *Community Journalism*, Chapters 13 and 19, pp. 209-226 and 307-316; Miller, *Yesterday's News*, pp. 217-220; Stein, "An Ordinary Mission," p. 96; and Byerly, *Community Journalism*, pp. 19-30; and Rosen, *What Are Journalists For?* pp. 6, 142-43 and 285.

community interests and action. However, the *Oran's* future is uncertain. External economic pressures could threaten its survival if, for example, printing costs are greater than the newspaper's revenue from advertisements and sales. The other uncertainty is whether the paper can survive the transition to the second generation or a new owner. These are questions all small independent newspaper owners face. The *Eastern Graphic* is no exception. In 1998, it dealt with the issue of succession when its founder Jim MacNeill died suddenly. His children Jan and Paul MacNeill have taken over. They are facing the pressures of operating a small independent paper with a circulation of 5,581[3] in an increasingly corporate world. They face the pressures of how to balance the publishing business[4] and its public service. After 41 years the *Graphic* has achieved a financial stability, which allows the MacNeill family even more freedom to break its own path editorially. The publication appears to be past the personnel and financial crises that often defeat newly formed and alternative newspapers.[5]

The office of the *Graphic* is on Main Street in Montague, a 40-minute drive east of Charlottetown. The town of almost 2,000 is a service centre for the farming and fishing industries in eastern Prince Edward Island. It provides a strong, diverse and loyal advertising base for the *Graphic*. The Statistics Canada 2001 census shows that Kings County is not immune to trends. Population for the county fell 1.9 per cent from the 1996

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[3] Canadian Community Newspaper Association, "Database Montague (PE) Eastern Graphic," June 28, 2004 <http://www.communitynews.ca/database/details>

[4] The business, Island Press includes the *Eastern Graphic*, the *West Prince Graphic*, the *Island Farmer*, and *Fish Farming*. It also publishes everything from telephone books to place mats for local restaurants.

[5] Since the 1960s many enterprising alternative publications have failed, such as *Mysterious East* in Fredericton, *Fourth Estate* in Halifax and *Square Deal* in Charlottetown. Mainstream weekly publications such as the *Patriot* in Dartmouth and the *Monitor* in Charlottetown also have difficulty breaking into areas with established newspapers. Often they don't have the capital to finance the project until it gets solid advertising and subscription to finance the editorial.

census to 19,180. In the town of Montague the exodus was 2.5 per cent with a population of 1,945 in 2001 as compared with 1,995 people in 1996.[6]

For the past 41 years the *Graphic* has followed the tradition of strong community newspapers. It is intensely local and loyal to the readers of Kings County. It reflects the daily lives of the community and promotes the interests of its readers. Unlike many weeklies, the *Graphic* has taken its mission one step further. It has garnered a national reputation as the watchdog and champion of ordinary people in Prince Edward Island.[7] It scrutinizes the activities of government and institutions throughout the province in both its news and editorial pages.

It's an unlikely role for a weekly newspaper.[8] That's usually the territory of a public broadcaster or daily newspapers located in the centres of power. However, in 1963 when Jim MacNeill founded the *Graphic* he told a CBC TV reporter no other media on PEI were holding the establishment accountable for their actions and activities. So MacNeill took on the role of provincial critic and he did it from Montague in eastern PEI, away from Charlottetown, the centre of power:

> I think ordinary people have a right to know and I don't think people within government really have a right to be making arrangements, deals, call it what you want, outside of the public scrutiny.[9]

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[6] Statistics Canada, "2001 Canadian census Community Profiles."

[7] "Eastern Graphic wins national awards," *Eastern Graphic*, June 9, 2004, p. 3. Publisher Paul MacNeill was awarded the George Cadogan memorial Outstanding Columnist Award at the 85th annual meeting of the Canadian Community Newspaper Association. Judges wrote, "MacNeill has been a consistent warrior in the interests of fair play and honesty in his region for years." The newspaper also won awards for best business writing, outstanding reporter initiative and best agricultural edition.

[8] Communication theorists claim that community newspapers are guard dogs of communities and seldom take on the role of watchdogs in the community. The *Graphic* goes beyond assumptions and arguments for guard dog role as presented in Chapter II, footnote 56.

[9] Jim MacNeill interview with Linden MacIntyre "The Lively One" *The Fifth Estate*, CBC TV, Feb. 28, 1995.

Dr. David Weale teaches Prince Edward Island history at the University of Prince Edward Island. He says most media on PEI do not or are reluctant to assume the role of critic for two reasons: they belong to national chains,[10] which appear to be more interested in the bottom line and keeping advertisers happy than editorial enterprise; and speaking out is not the Island way:

> People are very guarded. I always say that's why the Island soil is red. It's from the biting of so many tongues."[11]

People from PEI may be guarded, but Jim MacNeill, an immigrant from the Isle of Barra in the Scottish Hebrides, was not. He arrived in Toronto in 1958 at the age of 22 with $100 in his pocket and all his worldly possessions in a suitcase. MacNeill brought with him a fiercely independent highland spirit to Prince Edward Island.

Dr. David Weale draws a loose parallel between the crusading work of Jim MacNeill and eastern PEI's history of protest movements:

> King's County was the centre often of the protest movements in the 19th century – the land protest of the tenants against the proprietors. And in a way Jim was kind of a 20th century leader of the tenants, the people on the periphery, the people on the edge down there against the very, you know, Jim was very anti-establishment, very suspicious of establishment people, whether in business or in politics. And yeah, so in a way whether there's any

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[10] Conrad Black owned the *Journal Pioneer* in Summerside and in Charlottetown, the Thompson family owned *The Guardian* and *Evening Patriot* in 1964. The *Evening Patriot* has since been phased out and the remaining two papers *Journal Pioneer* and *The Guardian* are now owned by a multi-national company based in Montreal, Transcontinental.

[11] David Weale, personal interview, May 2, 2003. Also Flora *et al.*, *Rural Communities*, p. 242-43 who found that some level of controversy and debate is needed to make informed and democratic choices and that the local paper plays an important role in that dialogue. It conveys information, sets the tone of the community and dialogue by suggesting that the controversy is legitimate. "It is communities where controversy is openly aired that are best able to process information from a variety of sources and make choices that have the potential to enhance community well-being."

> actual connection or not there's an interesting historical coincidence at the very least that this protest journalism should come out of the same area that the protest politics came out of.[12]

This chapter examines the founding of the *Eastern Graphic*; its growing pains; its mission to serve both Kings County and people of PEI; how it won the loyalty of local people and respect of politicians; how the paper survived the death of its founder Jim MacNeill; and its survival with a new generation at the helm.

The *Graphic's* Beginnings

Jim MacNeill's road to Charlottetown came through an Island girl, Shirley Nicholson. They met at the Catholic Information Centre in Toronto and married in 1960. The social activist young couple had signed on to be house parents for troubled youth in Prince Rupert, BC. They were ready to head out west when the priest in charge of the project died. Instead they headed east to PEI. Shirley started working for a lawyer in Charlottetown. MacNeill got a job selling advertisements in Charlottetown for the Summerside *Journal Pioneer*.

It didn't take long for MacNeill to figure out he was in the wrong line of work. He was bringing back more stories than sales; soon he started reporting. In an interview for CBC TV's *Fifth Estate* Elmer Murphy, a former editor and publisher of the *Journal Pioneer*, remembers MacNeill as a fearless enterprising reporter. For example there was the time MacNeill went to cover a boat burning in Charlottetown Harbour and Murphy didn't hear back from MacNeill for hours:

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[12] Weale interview, May 2003.

> Oh, later on, perhaps two or three o'clock the phone on my desk rang and I answered and he said, "Jim here." I said, "Where the Christ have you been?" It turned out that he went out on the boat. Nobody else did. He was going to stay with the story wherever it landed him.[13]

MacNeill was not content to work at the *Journal Pioneer*. He dreamed of starting his own community newspaper and looked to eastern Prince Edward Island. It was the ideal place to start a weekly. Montague was the commercial centre for farming and fishing, it wasn't far from Charlottetown, the capital city, and it didn't have a community paper of its own.[14] MacNeill scraped together $5,000 from savings and loans. The couple left their jobs. With two young children and a third on the way, they moved east to Montague. It's a 40-minute drive from Charlottetown, east up the TransCanada and then left at Poole's Corner through the potato fields of Kings County and past turn offs for the fishing villages that dot the Atlantic coastline.

The *Eastern Graphic* hit the newsstands on Wednesday, December 11, 1963 – all 2,000 typed and stapled copies. In the first editorial Jim MacNeill promised readers complete news coverage of eastern PEI: "The paper will be devoted to local coverage of people, places and things, because we believe that it is in this respect that we can be of service."[15] MacNeill kept his promise and then some.

The MacNeills were new to the community and new to the newspaper business. Shirley MacNeill remembers those early days:

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[13] Elmer Murphy interview with Linden MacIntyre, "The Lively One," *Fifth Estate*, CBC TV, Feb. 28, 1995.
[14] Eastern PEI was served by the daily morning provincial paper the Charlottetown *Guardian* and the afternoon Charlottetown newspaper, the *Evening Patriot*. At the time both papers were owned by the Thompson newspaper chain.
[15] Jim MacNeill, Editorial, *Eastern Graphic*, Dec. 11, 1963.

> We worked from a little office in the house. Jim typed out a story and I retyped it and … if there was space at the end of a line I'd put x's and then I would type it. This would be the third typing and I'd make spaces between the words so that the columns would be justified. So it was done three times and the kids learned that if we were busy and they were hungry they knew where the bread was and the peanut butter and jelly and so they learned to fend for themselves. They also helped a great deal.[16]

While other children were out playing, Paul and Jan MacNeill along with their three siblings learned the newspaper business from the ground up. Paul MacNeill:

> Sitting up on the living room up of mom and dad's house on a Wednesday afternoon with little white envelopes full of stamps and you'd take them and you'd manually lick them and you'd slap them on the paper and get them ready for mail. And you hoped you didn't get Charlottetown or miscellaneous because those were the thickest [laugh]. You liked the little small ones, build up momentum. As five kids we did it all together. So, of course you sold papers. You had your paper route. You know you did whatever you had to or whatever you were told to do.… It was a wonderful way to grow up. It was certainly, I think, now if you were to look back and analyse the benefits of being a small independent newspaper and a small business and relying on the family. We have a very tight knit family today. I suspect a lot of the origins go back right to sitting in the living room putting stamps on papers.[17]

Jan MacNeill:

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[16] Shirley MacNeill, personal interview, July 12, 2002.
[17] Paul MacNeill, personal interview, July 12, 2002.

> We always had jobs, summer jobs, after school jobs. We always worked after school Monday, Tuesday, weekends, selling papers so there was always something to do. For us it was we were lucky to have jobs making 50 cents an hour, whatever it was, but we could always afford to get French fries after school because it was our own money, right?[18]

Hughie Graham is an advertising consultant with Island Publishing. He started with the Eastern Graphic in 1963:

> Original place was up in the old Masonic temple in the basement of the Maritime Electric building. I seen it so cold up there that the [film] developer would all freeze up.... Back then he started with a 1250 multilithe printing press which was, I think, the size of the paper was 17 inches long, and you'd print one side of it and you'd ... let it dry and then turn it over and reprint it again. The paper would jam and you'd we'd finish printing them and we'd turn around and glue them. The back page used to be 1/16 of an inch bigger and it was printed in coloured stock for you could distinguish where you could cut the paper when they were piled up. And you had steel weights to hold the papers down when you glued them and let them dry. Then a woman come along with a knife and separated all the papers and then somebody come along and put the labels on and run to the post office with them.[19]

Starting a newspaper in a new community and trying to raise a young family was a financial challenge for Shirley MacNeill:

> Well, it was really, really tough. You know, I can remember one time the bills would be coming in or we'd be threatened to have our lights turned off. And I remember Gilbert's [Clements] father

[18] Jan MacNeill, personal interview, July 17, 2002.
[19] Hughie Graham, personal interview, July 12, 2002

> phoning me one time. Gilbert's father was with Maritime Electric. He said, "You know, Mrs. MacNeill, you could save money if you paid the bill on time," because they charged interest, but we didn't have the money.[20]

While Jim MacNeill was an enterprising reporter, he was no businessman. Collecting money for advertisements in the *Graphic* was often forgotten or set aside in the chase for stories no one else had. It was not unusual to find MacNeill holding court in the Charlottetown Hotel, buying rounds and listening to civil servants trade stories back and forth – conversations that would often be research for stories that would make the front page or a pithy editorial in the *Graphic*. But Shirley MacNeill says that didn't pay the bills or put food on the table:

> There was another time I had friends come over from Nova Scotia. Betty and I sat out on the lawn and we're talking and I'm waiting for Jim to come home. It's Saturday afternoon and he had gone out collecting. I'm waiting for him to come home because I needed to get some groceries and when he landed home [it was] with $3.74. That was pretty scary. But it was scary because we had company. But then, you just gave them what you had....
>
> I've often said I made three lists. I made a list of groceries that I thought I would like to have. Then I made another list scratching out some of those thinking that I could do with this. And then when I got the money, of course, it was the final list. You couldn't have everything you wanted.[21]

George Beck owns Stewart and Beck's Home Hardware on Main Street in Montague. It's right across the street from the *Graphic* office. His store has advertised in

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[20] Shirley MacNeill interview, July 2002.
[21] *Ibid.*

the *Graphic* since the beginning. Beck remembers the uphill march Jim MacNeill had 41 years ago trying to drum up advertising to publish the weekly newspaper:

> I thought how will he ever make a go of it in a small town like this to do a weekly newspaper? At that time there were probably only 1500 or 1700 people in Montague and a few more in the surrounding areas for sure, and not that many businesses in our town to sell advertising. Well, Jim MacNeill fooled all of us.[22]

It was hard work and some smart hirings including long-time Editor Heather Moore. She came home from Alberta on a holiday. MacNeill hired her and she never left. Moore has been with the paper now for 31 years:

> Jim had to make a supreme effort to get to know the people first. Then to get those people to accept him as a businessman and I think that probably … that they thought that they weren't willing to accept that interference right away and it was a really hard struggle for him at first. He faced a great number of challenges, not only from the people, but in the early days there wouldn't have been the money that there would be in later years, so he worked for a lot of years for very little money and it was just his perseverance and determination that kept him going.[23]

The *Graphic* community: local and provincial

From the beginning the paper was filled with stories about the lives of people in eastern Prince Edward Island. Local events such as a gigantic fireworks display in Souris

[22] George Beck personal interview, July 12, 2002.
[23] Heather Moore personal interview, July 12, 2002.

and the world's biggest strawberry shortcake at the Montague Strawberry festival shared the pages alongside reports of the activities of the provincial government and commissions. There were the hand-printed advertisements from local businesses such as Helaine's Millinery, Wightman's grocery store, Keenan Fuels, the Kingsway Motel and Island Furriers.[24] MacNeill understood the importance of local news and information to the survival of the newspaper:

> The major role that the paper has to play is to tell what is going on, to be a mirror and reflect back to the readers what they're doing and what they're friends and colleagues and other people around are doing.[25]

PEI journalist and *Graphic* columnist Jack MacAndrew says MacNeill had the winning formula:

> Jim MacNeill to me epitomized like no other journalists I've ever encountered the notion … that the ultimate role of the journalist and its ultimate purpose is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. And that is what Jim MacNeill did every day of his journalistic life. And that's why his paper has always been such a mélange of down home two-headed calf, Mrs. Smith's prize rose bush on the one hand and some fairly meaty ideas on the part of myself and in terms of his own writing and editorials on the other. It's a strange mix, but it has been a successful mix.[26]

It's a mix that Dr. David Weale knows all too well:

> I met Jim around 1967. I was a minister, a clergyman at the time in the little fishing village of Murray Harbour. And I remember the

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[24] *The Eastern Graphic*, June 24, 1964.
[25] Jim MacNeill interview, *Fifth Estate.*
[26] Jack McAndrew personal interview, July 17, 2002.

> United Church minister and I had kind of joined forces to open a youth recreation centre, something like that, because there was all this money available for these Centennial grants. So we remodeled this hall and we were going to have the opening, you know, and it had a basketball net, a pool table, that kind of thing. I mean pretty small stuff. But we thought it would be nice to get some press on this so we invited the new newspaper man who had just started up to come down and of course he arrived on the scene and that was the first time I met Jim MacNeill and at that time I think he was doing virtually everything associated with the paper. And you know his willingness to kind of drive out to Murray Harbour at that point for an opening of a little hall for youth was a sign though, I think, of the kind of determination that he had, his sense of the importance of local events. And I think those were qualities that carried him, you know, to the success that he had later on.[27]

Just 11 years later, David Weale felt the sting of Jim MacNeill's critical pen. He was now principal secretary to Conservative Premier, Angus McLean and a member of the Central Christian Church in Charlottetown along with two other prominent Tories. Weale and his political cronies were fair game for the *Graphic*:

> It just so happened that when the election in '78 and '79, there were three of us who were friends at the time. There was myself and … a young man named Barry Clark and another young man named Horace Carver and we were not only all friends, but we were all active at that time in the same church. And of course immediately when Jim kind of recognized this his antennae went up and he started to just ask kind of difficult questions about how is it that these three people from the same small church [are top advisors in the Conservative government,] and is it wise for these people, and

[27] Weale interview, May 2003.

> are we getting too much of the same perspective on issues because you know, blah, blah, blah. And at the time of course I thought it was nonsense, and petty and I thought Jim was gone too far [chuckle,] but why not, I mean, why not ask the questions and you know it's the kind of thing if I would have been outside looking in I would have been wondering myself.[28]

MacNeill did things differently in the *Graphic*. He covered the local stories, but his strong sense of fairness and high principles soon led him to become a watchdog of provincial and federal governments, agencies and commissions. He printed the names and salaries of provincial officials and civil servants. He printed the list of political donors. He constantly criticized the provincial Liberal government of Alex Campbell and his ministers for how it was spending federal economic development money in the 1970s. He even joined forces with David Weale in the 1980s to fight the government on the fixed link:

> There is aggravation. There are disturbed feelings. There are people wanting to rip other people off and all these are very much part of the community, so if we're going to be reporting about it we're going to be telling you about it, you have to show it warts and all.[29]

David Weale says MacNeill was courageous to speak his mind on controversial issues on PEI:

> The social and political dialogue here is often muted and understated. There are certain people, you know, who have a lot to say, but the majority of the population is very careful. We Islanders are a careful breed and it's interesting that Jim would … you know

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[28] *Ibid.*
[29] Jim MacNeill interview *Fifth Estate.*

> Jim MacNeill who was not careful, who was bold, found a place here. And maybe if I could speculate on that psychologically, maybe in a way Jim was saying what a lot of people wanted to say but couldn't often. You know he became a voice for a lot of people.[30]

The *Graphic* started to publish just as PEI was going through great transitions. The 15-year federal-provincial Development Plan was an ambitious strategy set out to overhaul the economy and society in areas such as agriculture, fishery, tourism, education and community development and it was making a lot of people upset.[31] The small upstart community paper soon was known for its reporters barging into closed meetings and publicizing secret meetings. It questioned school consolidation, endless consultants and government spending. It could be argued that MacNeill's coverage was perpetuating an idyllic garden anti-development myth that favoured the view that PEI is self-sufficient and insular.[32] But this is not the case. MacNeill was just doing his job as a journalist – he was holding politicians accountable for every decision that involved taxpayer's money. He also gave a voice to previously unheard opposition.[33] The *Graphic* gained a loyal following across the Island. It also won the respect of people in Kings County, including local advertisers such as George Beck:

> Jim was a very honest individual who called things as he saw them. Now everyone one of us might not have agreed with how he saw them all of the time, but you had to respect him to be brave enough to print what he printed, of how he saw things and he at times probably endangered his advertisers by speaking out against certain

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[30] Weale interview, May 2003.
[31] David Milne "Politics in a Beleaguered Garden" in *The Garden Transformed:Prince Edward Island 1945-1980*, Eds. S. Dasgupta, D. Milne, and V. Smitheram (Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1982), pp. 39-72.
[32] *Ibid.*
[33] *Ibid,* p. 64-65.

> items, but that's what had to be done and Jim did it. Most of us were still loyal to him with our advertising as well. I think everyone was proud of Jim MacNeill's newspaper and by advertising with them that helped to make sure the newspaper would always be here as well as get results.[34]

Sharon Reilly is a long-time sales consultant at the *Eastern Graphic*. She says the line between the sales and editorial departments is clear. Advertisers have no influence on what news and comment appears in the paper:

> I have this standard line when I meet new clients. I always say this is what we can do for you. This is why I work here. If there's a better product I'd be working for them. And if you ever get your name in the courts please don't call me because I can't help. We never keep it out.
>
> One night my then husband and my children we were going to Florida and I got a call the night were leaving, someone who had been in court that day saying, "Sharon, I do a lot of advertising with the paper; you have to get my name out of the courts." I was like, "Ohhh, call Jim. Can't help you there." I just told them there is no possible way. It doesn't work that way.[35]

Taking the high road can be bad for business. Advertising consultant Hughie Graham says that didn't stop MacNeill from publishing the truth or speaking his mind in columns:

> I seen him lose a contract in one building where he was renting to the government and he went against the grain when the development plan had just came in and he didn't agree with a couple of instances on the development plan. They pulled the rent on him. Back then he was like everybody else, he was struggling for

[34] Beck interview, July 2002.
[35] Sharon Reilly, personal interview, July 12, 2002.

> a living, but he just turned around and he regrouped and kept on going. He wasn't scared of the government. That was one thing you could say about him. He spoke his mind.[36]

Columnist Jack MacAndrew says MacNeill had a way of getting under the skin of politicians right on up to the premier:

> And I can remember in the sessions where during the time I was at the Charlottetown Festival I was also Alex Campbell, Premier Alex Campbell's brain trust, worked on his election, wrote his speeches, being in sessions where they would say, "The God damn *Graphic* you know. That bloody MacNeill, whatever. We're going to cut off all advertising." And I would argue with them against this, saying, "You can't do this. This is ridiculous. This is a democracy, yadda, yadda, yadda, yadda." But he used to infuriate them and of course the government would change and the next government in their counsels would be swearing at MacNeill and da-da-da-da. The *Graphic* I've been told has always been required reading for politicians.[37]

Bud Ings was the Liberal MLA for Montague from 1970 to 1982. He served in the cabinet of Alex Campbell and often found himself at the mercy of MacNeill's critical pen:

> Whether it be political or whether it be that they didn't like the construction of a certain bridge. I remember the Vernon River causeway. Now it got a lot of press and I think the *Graphic* was quite right in going on the side of the people that time and saying what a inadequate job they were doing up there and it brought forth the

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[36] Graham interview, July 2002.
[37] MacAndrew interview, July 2002.

> people's point of view and I think they were one of the first to do this kind of thing.[38]

Advertising consultant Hughie Graham says no politician escaped the scrutiny of Jim MacNeill:

> One particular person he used to fight and chew a lot was the former Lieutenant Governor Gilbert Clements. They used to row like cats and dogs, but the downsides of the whole thing they were the very best of friends. Gilbert didn't always agree with what Jim said. And Gilbert was a very outspoken person and there was a mutual respect between the two of them.[39]

Gilbert Clements served 25 years in the provincial legislature as a Liberal MLA and cabinet minister. He recently retired as Lieutenant Governor of Prince Edward Island. Clements was one of the first people to meet Shirley and Jim MacNeill when they moved to town in January 1964. Clements rented the MacNeills their first house. Later when Clements entered politics and became a Liberal cabinet minister he endured almost weekly barbs in the *Eastern Graphic*:

> Well, I think it would be difficult for me to come up with anything he supported. Jim, as I said, knew that controversy sold papers. So most anything I suggested should be done, whether it was cleaning up car bodies or controlling manure from the farm waste and all of those sort of things, preserving our rivers, there was always a reason why I shouldn't do what I was gonna do and there wasn't enough consultation, that sort of thing. And while this griped me in a way and I used to worry about it to start with, at the last I used to say to my wife, "What was in the paper last week?" She said, "I can't

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[38] Bud Ings personal interview, July 12, 2002.
[39] Graham interview, July 2002.

> remember." Well, I said, "Well, that's what's going to happen this week and don't let it concern you." So I learned that the best thing wasn't to respond. But I've got to say this, that a lot of things that Jim said were accurate and I always paid attention to them because as I say it's the odd bucket of chaff that doesn't have one bit of grain in it. So I think it was important to read them, which I always did although I never told Jim that. I often told him I didn't see the articles.[40]

The *Graphic* was required reading for politicians. Each week was a surprise. They never knew what story MacNeill had unearthed or what opinion he would pronounce in his column. As Advertising Consultant Hughie Graham observed, MacNeill was hard on those who had power, but he was fair:

> If the government of the day was in the wrong it didn't make any difference to him he criticized them. And the next day if they done something right he'd pat them on the back, which you don't see any of the daily papers doing this. He wasn't scared to speak his piece.[41]

Jack MacAndrew says MacNeill had an uncanny ability to lampoon politicians and the next day give them a friendly greeting in the grocery store or at the Legion:

> I can remember I think it was the 10th anniversary of the newspaper. There was a big dinner down in Montague. Everybody got up and said nice things. Of course a lot of them started with, "I don't always agree with you Jim but I think sometimes this sometimes that, but you've been good for Montague," and yadda yadda. The final one to get up was the mayor. He went on to praise Jim as a

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[40] Gilbert Clements, personal interview, July 12, 2002.
[41] Graham interview, July 2002.

> great citizen and a great credit to Montague and what have you. And he sat down and Jim got up and said, "I'm glad you said those things Arnold because tomorrow when you read the Graphic." [Laugh.] He had written some story or another in which he took the hide off Arnold Whitman.[42]

Few held grudges against MacNeill for long – after all it was business and never personal.

MacNeill was a warm friendly teddy bear of a man with a twinkle in his critical eye. But he had another side. When faced with injustice, his Celtic blood stirred and he became passionate. MacNeill would argue his point over a round at the pub and rant in his acerbic weekly columns. For example, the 1991 death of Michael Miller, a teenager from Charlottetown, stirred MacNeill's deep sense of justice. An off-duty RCMP officer on his way home from the mess after a few beers struck and killed Miller. The subsequent investigation was riddled with problems including lost evidence. When the officer was acquitted two years later, Islanders including MacNeill were outraged:

> This case [must] be appealed.... If it isn't it will simply mean that the Miller family hasn't been given justice. Neither have other Islanders – justice denied to one is justice denied to all.... Michael Miller was killed by a police corporal who was legally found to be drunk. That can't be left as simply "Not guilty."[43]

Even after the victim's parents Scott and Karen Miller settled a civil lawsuit against the Attorney General of Canada, MacNeill continued his campaign to expose what he called two levels of justice in PEI. He stepped over the line and in an editorial

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[42] MacAndrew interview, July 2002.
[43] Jim MacNeill, Editorial, *Eastern Graphic*, Dec. 15, 1995, p. 8.

accused the Mounties of a cover up in Miller's death. Even though MacNeill issued a partial apology, the two officers named sued MacNeill and the *Graphic* for libel. MacNeill died before the case made it to court.

Another case did make it to court. In 1994 Liberal MLA Robert Morrissey sued MacNeill and *Island Press* for defamation over a story that appeared in MacNeill's other weekly newspaper the *West Prince Graphic*.[44] One of MacNeill's reporters wrote a story that claimed the minister was using his influence to hand out patronage to people needing hospital beds in western PEI. MacNeill went to court in November 1995 and successfully fended off the charge and a subsequent appeal in April 1997.[45]

MacNeill as an independent small publisher risked his business to uphold what he believed was his paper's civic duty to free speech. It was courageous and it could have cost him his business. This is what makes the *Graphic* stand out from many other papers. The bottom line is not financial profit, but rather profit for the dialogue in the community.

MacNeill held public officials up to the highest standard. The rules were no different for him. When he was charged in December 1990 with impaired driving in Nova Scotia he made sure his editor Heather Moore made it front page news in the *Graphic*:

> One of the few things I had in place was that if it was bad news it had to go on the front page. So that made it easy for Heather Moore or anybody else to know how to handle it.[46]

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[44] MacNeill founded the *West Prince Graphic* in Alberton for western PEI in 1980.
[45] "Dr. fed up," "Patronage hits hospital," Wayne Thibodeau, "Don't bother calling MLAs can't help," Thibodeau, "Morrissey wants long term beds," *West Prince Graphic*, Jan. 26, 1994, p. 1; "MLA takes *Graphic* to court," *West Prince Graphic*, April 20, 1994, p. 1. Also, *Graphic* lawyer David Coles, personal interview, May 2002.
[46] Jim MacNeill, "The Lively One" *Fifth Estate*.

MacNeill took his conviction one step further. During the year his licence was suspended he did not write columns or editorials on any subject. He led by example and the community noticed.

The *Graphic* Grows and Consolidates

Despite two fires, MacNeill's business thrived. The weekly had become part of the fabric of eastern Prince Edward Island. Ed MacDonald grew up in eastern PEI with the *Graphic*. He now teaches Island history at UPEI. MacDonald says it's difficult to separate the *Eastern Graphic* from the community. The two are intertwined:

> A newspaper such as the *Graphic* becomes both the guardian of a culture and part of the culture. And if we look at our lives as a continuing kind of a dialogue between the local and the global then a paper like the *Graphic* plays a central role. If you are swallowed up by the global you lose that sense of having an identity and rootedness. If you're consumed by the local then you lose the broadness of vision and it becomes impossible to change. If you have roots that are very deep it gives you strength, but makes it hard to move so you need a balance. I think that a paper like the *Graphic* is essential to that sense of balance we all need in our lives. So in that sense they play a role that goes much beyond what you read in its pages.[47]

When the *Eastern Graphic* started to pay for itself, MacNeill looked west to Prince County and started the *West Prince Graphic* in Alberton in 1980. After that came the bi-weekly *Island Farmer* and other publications including an entertainment paper *The*

[47] Ed MacDonald personal interview, May 2, 2003

Gig. In 1994 he bought a failing weekly in Truro, NS – the *Weekly Record*. The *Record* was one of MacNeill's biggest disappointments. Residents of Truro never warmed to the *Graphic's* style of enterprise reporting. As well, the business community never fully supported the paper with vital advertising dollars. When a news story criticized employee safety at a major grocery chain, the company – one of the paper's largest advertisers withdrew its vital advertising dollars. Other retailers in Truro followed the advertising boycott and without that income, the paper folded. The last issue of the *Record* was May 13, 1997. Four days later the *Record* received a Citation of Merit for Enterprise Reporting at the Atlantic Journalism Awards in Halifax. MacNeill took the closure of the *Weekly Record* as a personal failure[48] – his first and only. On all other fronts, the *Graphic* was making a name for itself provincially, nationally and internationally.

MacNeill still made time to mentor young people. His biggest pleasure came in the hours he spent working with young journalists studying at Holland College in Charlottetown and the University of King's College in Halifax. His message was, always find the people and they'll tell you what's important. He told the young journalists the same thing he told his reporters – talk to 50 people every day. MacNeill believed the only way to get new stories was to get out of the office, meet people, ask questions and listen. It's legend that he made sure his reporters left the office by having desks, but no chairs. His high standards started to pay off. His papers started to rack up journalism awards:

> [Announcer's voice]: The 1993 Journalist of the Year is Jim MacNeill of the Eastern Graphic, PEI [clapping and music]. Just before presenting this award to you the judges wanted me to convey to you that they selected you not only for writing some of the best editorials the judges have seen in the more than 10 years of this

[48] Jim MacNeill personal conversation, May 17, 1997.

> award, but also for continuing to prove that the "small" in small town journalism refers to geography, not journalistic achievement. [clapping] … [Jim MacNeill]: We all take great enjoyment and pride out of winning awards at an evening like this, but unless we put something back and make sure those students are hired, we're going to be in trouble along the way [clapping].[49]

The following year, 1994, MacNeill was the first Canadian to win the prestigious Golden Quill Award from the International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors for his editorials on the Miller case. His son Paul would become the second Canadian to receive the award in 2002.[50] MacNeill went on from success to success. On May 14, 1998 he received an honorary doctorate in civil law from the University of King's College. With a customary mischievous twinkle in his eye he concluded his speech to the graduates with a mock Latin phrase borrowed from an old publication, the Cape Breton Highlander, *Nulle illigitim carborundum* – don't let the bastards get you down.[51] Two days later Dr. Jim MacNeill died. He had a heart attack on the ferry back to Prince Edward Island. He was 62 years old.

The Transition

The death of Jim MacNeill sent shock waves across the country. The staff of the *Graphic* wondered what would happen to the enterprise. Editor Heather Moore had lost her mentor:

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[49] Jim MacNeill, speech Atlantic Journalism Awards, Halifax, May 1993.
[50] *Eastern Graphic*, July 3, 2002.
[51] Jim MacNeill, unpublished address to the University of King's College convocation, May 14, 1998.

> The loss of Jim MacNeill was a terrible shock to the people here in the office, but Paul should be given full credit … We didn't miss a beat. He came in. Jim died on a Saturday and Paul came in on Monday morning. He got everybody together and he said, "We will have a paper; we'll continue on; nobody will lose their jobs and we'll get through this." He immediately took the role as a leader and I think that made a difference. We did have a lot of struggles for that first year because you can't remove somebody as important as Jim was from an organization like this and not have huge holes because although he wasn't in the office a great deal, he had sort of semi-retired from it and removed himself and let us do the job, but still you knew he was there; you knew you could talk to him about any part of the business and that did, it left a huge void.[52]

Jim MacNeill's son Paul was joined at the *Graphic* by his sister Jan MacNeill. Her experience in newspaper sales complemented his editorial edge:

> I was in New Zealand actually at the time. I had written in my journal actually a couple of days before he died that I was ready to come back to PEI 'cause I had no where else to go. I knew I didn't want to go back to Ottawa and get into that rat race again so I knew I was coming back to PEI for a little while 'cause I figured they'd give me a job, they'd have to, right? And then it was there that I sort of got the call and was on a plane within two hours..... Things happen and change and you're here.[53]

Shirley MacNeill was delighted that her daughter Jan decided to come home and help run the family business:

> I was really surprised because Jan was a big city girl. She loved

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[52] Moore interview, July 2002.
[53] Jan MacNeill interview, July 2002

> she lived in Ottawa for a number of years, loved it, then lived in Maastricht and she loved that. And she loved to travel, but this was a challenge for her that she wanted to dig her heels into.[54]

With Shirley MacNeill's blessing, Paul and Jan took over Jim's pride and joy – the *Eastern Graphic* and the other publications. Sales consultant, Sharon Reilly:

> The transition went surprisingly better than I could have ever hoped and I think most of the staff feels that way. It was just different. Paul and Jan, they're both very different to work for. And of course with Jan, Jan's kind of a buffer, so that, [Paul] that statement though that he's got pretty big shoes to fill. I think he's done amazing things. They're [Paul and Jim] very much one and the same. They walk the same. They look the same. It was eerie after Jim died because you'd be in here on a Sunday morning about 7:30 and you'd hear this one two three foot shuffle at the door and it sounded as if Jim was wiping his feet. It would be, Oh my goodness. But it was Paul.[55]

The question on everyone's mind was, would the business survive the loss of Jim MacNeill? For many, MacNeill *was* the *Eastern Graphic*. All eyes turned to his son Paul, a younger likeness of his father. Paul had recently returned to the family business in 1995. He left and struck out on his own after an altercation with his father:

> I'm not sure that anyone really knows the story to that, [laughter]. I just remember that one night I wasn't doing my job particularly well, which was in the darkroom, and Dad came in and we got in an argument. We closed the door, which was a funny thing, then we got in a bit of a shouting match and I said a couple of things that would be just cause by any barometer [laughter] and I don't know whether I

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[54] Shirley MacNeill interview, July 2002.
[55] Reilly interview, July 2002.

> quit or he fired me or both, but I ended up in Nova Scotia, which was very nice. It was the best thing he ever did for me because then the ties were cut and you sink or swim on your own merit. I don't know whether he was trying to teach me a lesson at the time or not, but that was the lesson.[56]

Paul MacNeill left the Island and worked with various community newspapers and then spent seven years as a reporter with the Halifax *Chronicle-Herald.* When Jim MacNeill died, his wife Shirley MacNeill handed over the business to Paul:

> In the beginning I used to say to Paul when he'd do something I'd say, "Paul, Dad wouldn't do it like that" and after a number of times that I said that I thought he can't walk in his dad's footsteps. He's got to do his own thing. So I think he's done, he's definitely done his own thing. Although I believe he's got the same goal to go after a story, he's got the same, he'll go up the ladder to get a story and his writing is like Jim's I think, but they've changed the paper.[57]

Paul MacNeill says his mother's support has been invaluable:

> I guess I'm inspired by Mom just because, I guess, she's held the course and she's given us the freedom, Jan and I, to run the paper as we see fit to a large extent. Keep her abreast of everything and that's fair and right. You know it would have been a very easy call for Mom to say at the time, "Let's just get rid of it." She didn't do that. She trusted us. And she gave us a chance to fail, which was a very nice option to have.[58]

Jan MacNeill tends the advertising and sales side of the business. Paul MacNeill

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[56] Paul MacNeill interview, July 2002.
[57] Shirley MacNeill interview, July 2002.
[58] Paul MacNeill interview, July 2002.

is in charge of the editorial. Without their father at the helm it took some time to ease into their new roles. Jan and Paul MacNeill have done it without the conflict and competition that other family companies in this situation can face. Jan MacNeill:

> In the beginning it was quite hysterical, actually, because we go back and look at it. Now, I had just come off three years of travelling and, you know, had been in an advertising job and I knew my business, right? So I came in here and Paul's now publisher, right, soon as Dad passes away and it's like okay, is he my boss? Is he not my boss? It took about six or nine months to find our footing. People would say things like he's got to do what Jim did, go out and meet the people and talk to the people. I'd say no, he doesn't. He'll do it his own way, you know, just give him a chance. A lot of people wanted to see it fail I think in the beginning when we took over, and I heard that and I also heard the upswing of it where they say, no, no, no, these guys are young, they've been around the block a little bit they'll bring it along. But, yeah, it took it a little while to find our footing, but we did. We'd close the door and we'd say our piece and find some common ground in there. And now it's just in stride. We work very, very well together.[59]

Paul MacNeill says the two bring complementary skills to the business:

> I've got a left half and she's got a right half or vice versa and together we make one brain. My skills are not Jan's skills. I'm editorially, come from an editorial background and she comes from an advertising background and she's very good at what she does. Obviously we've had to work out where we meet in certain areas, but we have developed a really good working relationship. I know when to ask her something. She knows when to ask me something. We know when we have to decide something together or have the

[59] Jan MacNeill interview, July 2002.

> freedom to do it by ourselves. It's just worked out really well. The secondary thing about that is you have someone you can talk to and that's been of great benefit, just throw ideas out or try to talk off a bad day or whatever it happens to be. It's been a really good experience.[60]

The transition from founder Jim MacNeill to the second generation was smooth because both children have complementary, not competing, experience in running a newspaper. It was also possible because the newspaper had a solid advertising base and the support of retailers and the community. It made it much easier for Shirley MacNeill to keep the business in the family:

> Well this was Jim's dream and you couldn't just let it fade away and unless I sold it, but Paul and Jan didn't want that. So they had to have the chance to see what they could do and they've done 100 per cent. Yeah.[61]

Jack MacAndrew says the second generation has passed the test:

> I think following Jim MacNeill is the toughest act in journalism. Well, Paul MacNeill is pulling it off. His pieces are every bit as acerbic, pointed and often wrong headed as his father's, but that acorn ain't fell far from the tree, let me tell you.[62]

The Second Generation

Jim MacNeill had a mission to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

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[60] Paul MacNeill interview, July 2002.
[61] Shirley MacNeill interview, July 2002.
[62] MacAndrew interview, July 2002.

His son Paul has embraced the same mission:

> But on PEI, it being such a small province, we've always had this secondary niche to do and say things that provincial media were ignoring. That's a reasonably important niche because if you look at the media nowadays on PEI – with the CBC being diminished, with our daily papers being swapped as if they were parcels of waterfront somebody has to stand up at some point and be a medium where people feel comfortable saying things and are allowed to say things especially with government. Even PEI's government spends millions of dollars a year messaging its image and somebody has to, at least in a small way, has to stand up and say, hold on.[63]

When the province passed the new Freedom of Information (FOI) Act in November 2002, it was only natural that Paul MacNeill would test it. PEI was the last province to adopt a FOI act. By December 2002, MacNeill had fired off more than 20 requests for information. The *Graphic* asked questions about the development of the $23 million Atlantic Technology Centre, highway construction projects and about farm chemicals in Alberton wells and so on. In every case, government officials denied the applications. They ruled the questions did not meet the public interest. Instead of information, MacNeill got a bill for $4,000 to pay for the cost of processing his questions. Officials even refused to consider waiving the fee. The *Graphic* filed eleven complaints to the Commissioner[64] and then MacNeill went to his readers. He printed a form on the

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[63] Paul MacNeill interview, July 2002.

[64] Paul MacNeill, "Government says Freedom of Information answers will cost Graphic more than $4,000," *Eastern Graphic*, Jan. 29, 2003, p. 1; Also, Paul MacNeill, "Freedom of Information (if you've got the money)," Editorial column, *Eastern Graphic*, Jan. 29, 2003, p. 5.

front page of the newspapers in the winter of 2003 and asked readers to submit a question about how the Binns government does business and spends taxpayers' money.[65] The paper paid the five-dollar application fee for each question. The paper received a steady flow. People wanted to know everything from MLA pensions to the environment and education.[66] MacNeill's conclusion was the same as before the new law took effect: the new law was a sham.[67] He accused the government of hiding behind the law to withhold more information than ever before – including the names, titles and salaries of public servants. For more than 30 years, the *Eastern Graphic* has published the salaries of public servants – the largest budget item of the province. The annual feature has been delayed because the province refused to release the information, citing the new FOI law.[68] Paul MacNeill spoke out on CBC radio against the move:

> If under this act you can refuse to release who works for the provincial government, what else can the provincial government refuse to release? What else can it hide from taxpayers? Public servants and salaries are the largest budget items the government has. This ruling says the public doesn't have a right to know and I think that's a very dangerous precedent.[69]

The *Graphic* appealed the ruling to the PEI Supreme Court.[70] The paper publishes every Freedom of Information request that the government denies including details about

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[65] Paul MacNeill, "Got a question? Fill out the free coupon," news story and Column, *Eastern Graphic*, Feb. 5, 2003, pp. 1, 5.
[66] Paul MacNeill, "Answers to a few of your Questions," Editorial column, *Eastern Graphic*, Mar. 26, 2003, p. 5; Also Amy Cudmore, "No government money earmarked for clean up," *Eastern Graphic*, Feb. 19, 2002, pp. 1-2.
[67] Paul MacNeill, "Access to Information law is a sham," Editorial column, *Eastern Graphic*, May 15, 2002, p. 5.
[68] Paul MacNeill, "Salary information now taboo,"Editorial column, *Eastern Graphic*, Sept. 10, 2003, p. 5; Also, "Taxpayers not allowed to know who works for PEI government," *Eastern Graphic*, Sept. 10, 2003, p. 1.
[69] Paul MacNeill, CBC Radio news interview, Sept 11, 2003.
[70] *The Eastern Graphic*, Feb 5, 12, 19, Mar 26, May 15, Sept 10, 2003.

the finances of the decision to amalgamate Eastern Kings and Southern Kings Health Regions. In that application the *Graphic* received 41 pages, but none of it had anything to do with the original request.[71] On another FOI request MacNeill waited a year and a half for the government to get back to him about documents relating to the creation and support of Polar Foods International, a bankrupt fish plant. He received a thin file because government officials deemed that releasing documents "would hurt the business interests of Polar Foods." MacNeill pointed out that this was no longer an active company and called the government's response an abuse of power and arrogant. "In essence the Binns government is snubbing its nose at plant workers it effectively fired in communities such as Anglo, Howard's Cove and Gaspereaux. It's putting its own self interests and those of a bankrupt company ahead of ordinary Islanders and taxpayers who have lost millions in the Polar debacle."[72] It is this willingness to ask the questions and spend money to get answers that makes the *Graphic* different from other community newspapers. The *Graphic* takes its duty to the public seriously.[73]

Paul MacNeill has also kept up his father's practice of treating everyone fairly. He's as quick to dole out criticism as well as praise. For example, Paul MacNeill chastised Lawrence MacAulay, the MP for Cardigan, for not supporting PEI fishermen in their protest against herring seiners fishing off the North Shore in November 2003.[74] Yet a week earlier MacNeill weighed in over a conflict of interest involving former cabinet

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[71] Beverley Roach, "Province not releasing details on health care amalgamation," *Eastern Graphic*, Feb 12, 2003, p.1.
[72] Paul MacNeill, "Binns Government loves secrecy," Editorial column, *Eastern Graphic*, June 2, 2004, p. 5.
[73] Olien *et al.*, *Community, Conflict & the Press,* pp. 217-235 and others (see Chapter II, footnote 56) contend that "newspapers and other media of communication are not the independent, self-styled social agents" but rather they are "an integral subsystem." I would argue that the given the examples in this thesis the *Oran*, the *Graphic* and the *Leader* are exceptions to this passive view of weeklies.
[74] Paul MacNeill, "Why wasn't Lawrence on the wharf?" Editorial column, *Eastern Graphic*, Nov. 5, 2003, p. 5.

minister Allan Rock and the Irving family of New Brunswick. MacNeill pointed out that Rock's free vacation at the Irving fishing camp was much more serious than the allegations of cronyism and patronage that forced MacAulay to resign as Solicitor General in October 2002.[75] UPEI history professor Ed MacDonald says Paul MacNeill is like his father.

> He gives credit where he thinks it should be given and he criticizes when he thinks it should be done. So in that sense I think that that the Graphic continues the tradition of being slightly ornery, but in a good way.[76]

For Paul MacNeill it is all about making the public aware of issues. For example,

> Dundaree, this whole development down at Brudenell and the second golf course and the golf academy. We were the ones who first talked about that lease five six years ago whenever it first came up. We were the ones who broke the story that the government was paying $632,000 a year over 10 years to a group of private investors and they were covering all the costs. We were the ones who talked about the deal with Holland College when the golf academy was sold and the province agreed to a) finance the purchase for Holland College and b) pick up any losses. There's no question that government should be involved in our lives, but I think the argument is that it should be good investment, it should be solid investment, it should be based on fact and substance not who you support, not your political affiliation.[77]

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[75] Paul MacNeill, "If Rock won't quit, fire him," Editorial column, *Eastern Graphic*, Oct. 29, 2003, p. 5. See also Paul MacNeill, "Era will be fondly remembered," Editorial column, *Eastern Graphic*, Oct. 30, 2002, p. 5. It was written when MacAulay resigned.
[76] Ed MacDonald interview, May 2003.
[77] Paul MacNeill interview, July 2002.

No one is above the law. So when Morrell-Fortune Bay MLA Kevin MacAdam continued to use his government-issued credit card after he left cabinet, it was on the front page of the *Graphic*.[78] Politicians who have been under the MacNeill microscope may not like it, but they see the value in the role the *Graphic* plays in presenting different points of view and stimulating debate. Former Liberal MLA Gilbert Clements:

> It brings out a voice that might not be heard and I think it's important that there be that voice in a community. It's not just the Montague community, but sometimes the provincial community.... Jim never did and Paul doesn't bother with press releases. You can grind them out by the cartload. They just throw them in the garbage. They want that personal contact. And they want the view that they want and they don't want the view the politicians want brought forward. So I think the important thing about the *Eastern Graphic* and Prince Edward Island and this area in particular is that it has a voice of its own.[79]

Even Robert Morrissey, a former cabinet minister and MLA from Prince County who sued Jim MacNeill and the *Western Graphic* for defamation, admits that the weekly newspaper provides an important role in getting out critical information to readers on Prince Edward Island:

> I always enjoyed very much the *Graphic* and Jim's style of writing. And his view was always, which is one I could accept because we had a discussion some time after was that – look government and you politicians have the all resources around you to put the most positive spin on things. It's my job to find what you're not telling – and that's very much the way it should be. And it's right, it's true.

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[78] Mary-Ellen Godfrey, "MacAdam defends use of government issued credit card," *Eastern Graphic*, Feb. 19, 2003.
[79] Clements interview, July 2002.

> You look at all the resources. Government rarely makes a big deal out of bad news. So most of the things coming out, it's been packaged, it's been glossed over, it's been sweetened as they call it. So from that approach, yes, there's a useful role in finding out what's going on.[80]

This weekly paper has been such a strong watchdog of government that politicians try to double guess what the *Graphic* will say about something. It's a strong opposition role in a province that does not have strong opposition parties.[81] Conservative Premier Pat Binns, a MLA from eastern PEI, recognizes that the *Graphic* contributes to the political debate on PEI:

> They play a stronger role as well on the political front, you know, the story behind the story sometimes, and I usually anticipate, you know, that whatever government might do that Paul and Jim before him will sort of be looking behind this story and that they'll have a different slant on it. Again, I respect that it's their right to do so. It's like having an opposition. You might give a little more thought to how you do something, trying to explain the rationale behind doing things a little bit more thoroughly knowing that it's always open to question and in the case of the *Graphic* mostly likely will be questioned. So yeah, I think in that sense it's probably helpful. They probably help us keep out of serious hot water sometimes. Sometimes it seems pretty hot, but it could be hotter if they weren't there maybe.[82]

Paul MacNeill is very clear about the role of the *Graphic*. It is not a political opposition. It is the eye and ear and the voice for the ordinary people. So when Premier

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[80] Robert Morrissey personal interview July 19, 2002.
[81] As of July 2004, PCs held 23 seats and Liberals 4 in the PEI legislature.
[82] Pat Binns personal interview, August 1, 2002.

Pat Binns lured legislative reporters into the role of opposition one day in the legislature in May 2002, MacNeill took a swipe at his colleagues. In a column MacNeill reminded reporters that it's not their job to supply questions to the government in the absence of the Opposition:

> Aside from the ethical line crossed, there was no benefit for the media to the exercise.... If they had stuck to their job then the story would not have been about the media supplying questions. It would have been about the lack of accountability in the provincial legislature. It would have been about the role of backbench MLAs. It could have turned into a debate about proportional representation. It was none of that. Instead Island media simply made themselves look like willing pawns in maintaining the image of the Binns government.[83]

It's edgy commentary from MacNeill, editor Heather Moore and columnist Jack MacAndrew that has earned the *Graphic* the title "The Lively One." Advertiser George Beck is always interested to read the latest political comment:

> For many, many, many, many, many years, I guess pretty near since it started, we have sold the *Graphic* here at the store as well as many other businesses in Montague and Charlottetown, Georgetown, Cardigan, wherever. And we pretty well as soon as the *Graphic* guy comes in on Wednesday morning there's people waiting here to get their copy of it. That it's part of the ritual for our week to get our hands on the *Graphic* when it's fresh, hot off the press I guess is the right word. The first thing I read is Heather Moore's editorial and the next thing I read is Paul's controversial articles [laughter].[84]

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[83] Paul MacNeill, "Media has no right to supply questions," Editorial column, *Eastern Graphic*, May 8, 2002, p. 5.
[84] Beck interview, July 2002.

Paul MacNeill says he gets great personal fulfillment from writing his column, but there's more to it than that:

> I don't know if I could run just a little paper that was just happy, happy, because it's not. Communities, there's a lot of very positive news in our communities, but a good paper should be a reflection or a window on the community, warts and all. And our community extends to the provincial government and that's what makes it unique, I think.[85]

Premier Pat Binns would agree:

> Oh, I think it is unique in terms of the sort of political stories that it pursues compared to most other weeklies at least and even dailies. You can just about count on there being a political story every week. That's not always the case even with the some of the dailies or they don't necessarily go for the story behind the story and my sense is the Graphic is always probing a little bit deeper and I think it's unique in that respect.[86]

Former Liberal MLA Gilbert Clements goes one step further in his assessment of the *Graphic*. He says the *Graphic* is a necessary part of political democratic life in PEI, not found elsewhere:

> It brought out the other side. Really there was nobody else to do that in this area.... It caused a lot of people to discuss things that probably they would have accepted as foregone conclusion. From that point of view I suppose it has helped the democracy of the area.[87]

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[85] Paul MacNeill interview, July 2002.
[86] Binns interview, Aug. 2002.
[87] Clements interview, July 2002.

The *Graphic's* Future

The *Eastern Graphic* has established itself as a strong local newspaper[88] with a solid advertising and sales base. It maintains its national reputation as the political critic and advocate for the ordinary person in PEI. It's a balancing act. Editor Heather Moore is not content to rest on the paper's accomplishments and awards that line the walls of the office in Montague. She sees changes in the publishing business with the rise of chain ownership and wonders how the paper will attract a younger audience. Moore says the *Graphic* will have to adapt to those changes if it's going to survive:

> I think Paul now too faces a different set of challenges but equally as challenging in that he has to come in here and take a paper that's already successful, but keep it successful and that's a huge challenge because the readers that Jim had when the paper started, those people sadly some have passed away and they're retiring now and their demands are a whole lot different than the demands of today. Readers are younger now for the most part and they expect a whole different presentation and it's not just the technology of the business, it's the topics that are covered. They want the information and they want it fast. Whereas in the earlier days with the *Graphic*, people were more patient in what they read because it was all new to them. But now it's so much more of a challenge. It really is.[89]

Jan MacNeill recognizes those challenges. She and Paul MacNeill share the same vision for the business:

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[88] Every June for 26 years reporters head out before the crack of dawn with cameras to produce "Day in the Life," a pictorial account of the lives of people in Kings County. See the latest "Day in the Life," June 23, 2004, *Eastern Graphic*, June 30, 2004.
[89] Moore interview, July 2002.

> Ultimately the bottom line is to produce excellent editorial newspapers and when we do that we could have a yucky week somebody going off at us but on Wednesday when that paper comes out and you've put out a top notch product you just go, yeah. That's what we're doing it for – our readers and the advertisers and the community. And I guess that's the key, the power of community newspapers; it's very strong when you live in a small community like this, whereas you know in Ottawa or a bigger centre you're just another blip in the media and here it's very different. It's part of life here and that's the part I think I've always missed.[90]

In talking to the staff, it's easy to see why the *Graphic* is more than just a collection of information, photographs and advertisements. Editor Heather Moore says the *Graphic* is more than just a newspaper:

> It's an addiction. When you can get a good news story or you can take a picture of a senior in the community who has celebrated their 100th birthday, their 90th birthday or their 50th wedding anniversary. That's an achievement that shouldn't go without public recognition. And we're able to tell the readers about this. We can help them celebrate. It's a sharing thing. It's like having a good friend. You don't keep a good friend unless you share, unless you give your opinions and give a part of yourself. We give back parts of ourselves in that newspaper and that creates a connection and if that connection wasn't there we would just be an object. We would just be another newspaper on the newsstand. But because there are personal parts of us, we have input into that newspaper and we collect from the other people, we collect the same things from

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[90] Jan MacNeill interview, July 2002.

> people in the community and we put that in the newspaper and it's like a friendship.[91]

The friendship is still vibrant after more than 40 years. Moore thinks that's what makes the *Graphic* different from most other weekly newspapers. Publisher Paul MacNeill would agree and says there's no life like it:

> I call this, it's not a franchise, but I call this the best franchise on PEI because a) you're involved in your community, b) you're accountable to one editorially and c) it is such a damn rewarding career because you get involved in people's lives. News is not always positive, but if you read the paper 80 per cent of the news is positive. The other 10 per cent or 20 per cent should be printed anyway which is positive. This is a really rewarding way to make a living.[92]

For Jan MacNeill Wednesday is the best day of the week:

> There's a buzz to getting in the car on a Wednesday and going out to Sobey's and seeing buddy reading the paper. Or in a restaurant or coffee shop, people reading it or discussing it, you know, that's what it's all about. Sometimes we forget because we're in the office, but if you go out and see it you'll realize that it's so much part of the community.[93]

Heather Moore says the *Graphic* is one constant in an ever-changing world and she hopes that will keep the newspaper around a long time:

> The towns and communities are getting larger, but as they grow and develop and the population increases there still needs to be

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[91] Moore interview, July 2002.
[92] Paul MacNeill interview, July 2002.
[93] Jan MacNeill interview, July 2002.

> something constant in those communities. I would hope that the people who read the newspaper would see us as a constant, the *Eastern Graphic*. As everything is changing around them and they have to learn to adapt, because you can't interfere with progress, it's going to happen and it's a good thing. But the one thing that they know is going to happen is that the *Eastern Graphic* is going to come out on a Wednesday and it's going to be about the people in the community and it's going to explain some of those changes. I would hope that this is the role we are playing but too I think there's some comfort in that.[94]

The *Eastern Graphic* plays an important role in the social and political life of both its communities – local and provincial. But it is a two-way street. The community rallied around Paul MacNeill and two daughters, Erin, 5, and Katie, 3, when his wife Jeanne died unexpectedly in July of 2003. It was the tight relationship with the community that gave Paul MacNeill and his family unexpected strength and support:[95]

> I think I may have a better understanding of community because when Jeanne passed away it was overwhelming the support we received and continue to receive. I thought I sort of knew what community was about and I realize now that I really didn't have a very good idea, at least a refined idea. People care about people in small towns and that's been so abundantly clear to me and my girls and now for the next 40 or 50 years we try to pay it back.[96]

That relationship with the community was built paper by paper over some 40 years. Jim MacNeill both cultivated and tested it on the news and editorial pages. His son Paul continues that tradition ever mindful of his father. Jim MacNeill died in 1998, but he

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[94] Moore interview, July 2002.
[95] Paul MacNeill, Editorial column, *Eastern Graphic*, Sept. 3, 2003, p. 5.
[96] Paul MacNeill interview, Jan. 8, 2004.

remains a presence at the paper. The door to Paul's office still has his father's name plate. It reads: "Jim MacNeill, editor and publisher" Paul MacNeill says as long as he's publisher, his father's name plate will stay put:

> It's a reminder of where we come from, of what this place should be on a weekly basis. It's ... Dad's thoughts sort of permeate every corner of this building. He's in the thought process. He's ... I still regard it, I will always regard it as his paper because it is his paper and that's not to say that we're living in the past. I think it's just a reminder of … a daily reminder. When I walk in here this is the bar you have to meet today, and you try to meet it. Whether you do or not, that's open for debate.[97]

Editor Heather Moore says Jim MacNeill remains an inspiration for everyone at the *Graphic*:

> I would like to think that we are doing, continuing with what Jim wanted this paper to be, that is to keep it basically the same as what it was, what he strived for, what his goal, was to make it a people paper and part of the community. And I think that remains an inspiration with us. His heart was in this paper. You can't … there are some parts of it that will never change and that part of it of course is being the people. And I would like to think that he's looking down on us and saying, "OK, that's a good job."[98]

Paul MacNeill rests easy knowing that his father's spirit remains in the paper:

> Dad I mean, dad he floats around this building. People, if we have a good story, we'll say, "Jim would have liked that story." We

[97] Paul MacNeill interview, July 2002.
[98] Moore interview, July 2002.

> know. That's a good thing. That means what he brought during his tenure here is still to a certain extent alive.[99]

The need for an independent newspaper such as the *Eastern Graphic* that puts people first and holds the government accountable at the expense of the bottom line is more important than ever on Prince Edward Island and elsewhere. As media corporations continue to consolidate and concentrate, the number of diverse publications and broadcasters diminishes. Fewer voices mean the public has limited access to varied information or points of view about issues important to civic life and democracy.[100] Paul MacNeill sees an important role for independent newspapers such as the *Eastern Graphic*:

> I think in this market it matters because we care solely about this community. We're not driven by budgetary demands. That box is a Freedom of Information request that Transcontinental wouldn't make. No other media would make that request. That box cost me probably $700 bucks, but it's important to ask. That's what makes independents different. We have the freedom to do things we want to do that are important to the community. The corporately owned papers, regardless of how good they are, at some point the rubber hits the road and head office dictates how things are operated.... You know I'm 37 years old and I'm a dinosaur. I was trying to figure out after the Transcontinental deal I think we may be the third largest independent newspaper publisher left in Atlantic Canada.[101]

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[99] Paul MacNeill interview. July 2002.
[100] Chapters IV and V will look at the effects of corporate concentration on independent newspaper publishers and their communities.
[101] Paul MacNeill interview, Jan. 2004.

In Prince Edward Island, Montreal-based Transcontinental Media owns the two daily newspapers in Charlottetown and Summerside. All five private radio stations in PEI are no longer locally owned. CBC Radio continues to provide provincial news and current affairs programming albeit with a reduced staff and budget. CBC TV has been slashed from a one-hour news and current affairs show to a half-hour on weeknights. It's now a bureau of the Halifax operation with fewer staff and less airtime. So the job that Jim MacNeill started in December 1963 is more vital than ever. The *Eastern Graphic* is a homegrown, local alternative medium. It is free to question the plans, actions and decisions of politicans and authorities. It provides an independent voice, a contrary point of view. In this age of media concentration, Jim MacNeill's children, Paul and Jan MacNeill have inherited a more difficult and more important task. They know it and embrace the responsibility. As long as they continue to publish, people in Prince Edward Island will have a choice at the newsstand – one with a local face.

Chapter IV: *Miramichi Leader*: Community News Goes Corporate

"Dear Mr. Thatcher. It's from Mr. Kane. Go on. Sorry, but I'm not interested in gold mines, oil wells, shipping or real estate. One item on your list intrigues me – the New York Enquirer, a little newspaper I understand we acquired in a foreclosure proceeding. Please don't sell it. I'm coming back to America to take charge. I think it will be fun to run a newspaper. I think it would be fun to run a newspaper."[1]

Media owners in Atlantic Canada may not be John Foster Kane from the movie *Citizen Kane*. But a few of them think it's fun or at least good business to run a newspaper. These days community newspapers in Atlantic Canada are hot commodities. Since 2002 more than half of the community newspapers in Atlantic Canada have changed hands.[2]

It started modestly in May 2002 when Advocate Publishing in Pictou, Nova Scotia moved into New Brunswick and bought the *St. Croix Courier* in St. Stephen.[3] In June 2002, Cameron Publications on mainland Nova Scotia merged its 11 publications with Robinson-Blackmore's 15 weeklies in Newfoundland to form a new company – Optipress.[4] In November 2002, Brunswick News, a division of the Irving family, went on a buying spree in New Brunswick. By the time it ended, the Irvings had added more than a dozen English and French language community papers in the province to their

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[1] Dir. Orson Welles, *Citizen Kane*, Screenplay by Herman J. Mankiewicz, and Orson Wells, USA, 1941.
[2] Kathy Hannigan, the then executive director of Atlantic Community Newspapers Association, telephone and e-mail interviews June 2002, Dec. 2002, Jan. and Feb. 2003.
[3] *Pictou Advocate*, May 8, 2002; *Saint Croix Courier*, May 7, 2002. Advocate Publishing, owned by the Murray family, has five weeklies in Nova Scotia and one in St. Stephen, NB.
[4] "Newfoundland Capital and Cameron Publications create *Optipress*," *Publisher Bulletin*, June 7, 2002 <http://www.ccna.ca/news/>; *Hants Journal*, June 12, 2002; *Yarmouth Vanguard*, June 11, 2002; *The Coast Guard*, June 11, 2002.

three dailies.[5]

In 2003, Transcontinental Media moved in to the weekly newspaper market in Atlantic Canada. It bought Cumberland Publishing's press and its weeklies in Amherst, NS and Sackville, NB. It then sold its weekly in Bathurst to Brunswick News. That gave the Irving family firm control over the newspaper market in New Brunswick. Transcontinental turned its attention to its big purchase – Optipress. The deal gave the Montreal-based company all 16 weeklies in Newfoundland, nine on the mainland of Nova Scotia plus nine printing plants.[6]

As a result, less than one-third of Atlantic Canada's 60 community papers are now independently owned. Transcontinental and Brunswick News are the two corporate giants in the region. The move to corporatization of community news presents serious issues – freedom of speech, diversity of voices and indeed the fate of the future of rural communities.

As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, the 2001 Statistics Canada census revealed a grim picture of rural Canada with an exodus of young people.[7] With just

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[5] Canadian Press, "New Brunswick Newspaper Company to buy five weeklies in the province," Nov. 12, 2002; "*Northside News* begins new era," *Northside News*, Nov, 22, 2002, p. 5, was just one of the five newspapers in Henley Publishing to announce company sale to Brunswick News. Other papers included the *Bugle* in Woodstock, the *Victoria County Record* in Perth-Andover, *The/La Cataracte* in Grand Falls and the *Valley Weekend.* The sale of *Miramichi Leader, Miramichi Weekend*, and *Kings County Record* was completed Jan. 3, 2003. See David Cadogan, "Selling papers and business feels like amputation," and Nicolas Stevens, "We'll miss seeing you around here," *Miramichi Leader*, Jan. 2, 2003 and "MacIntosh appointed *Leader* publisher," *Miramichi Leader*, Jan. 2, 2003; and Community Canada Media, "MacIntosh replaces Cadogan at *Leader* and *Weekend*," <www.communitycanadamedia.ca>, Jan. 3, 2003. Brunswick News announced it added the French language newspaper *Le Madawaska* to its holdings on Jan. 8, 2003. See Marty Klinkenberg, "Purchase of weekly stirs debate," *Telegraph Journal,* Saint John, Jan. 10, 2003. Ron Caldwell, "Pair of New Brunswick community newspapers turned into inserts," *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, Jan. 20, 2004 for details of purchase of *Oromocto Post Gazette* and demise of *Northside News* as an independent weekly. Community Canada Media, "Northern Light bought by Brunswick News," Aug. 1, 2003 <www.communitycanadamedia.com>. "The *Observer* Joins The Brunswick News Family", the *Bugle*, Feb. 25, 2004, announces sale of *Observer* in Hartland to Brunswick News.

[6] Kim Kierans, "A new and powerful kid on the block," *Media*, (Spring, 2004), pp. 25-27.

[7] Statistics Canada, "2001 Census." Also, "Mayor cites cause for population decline," and "Honey I shrunk New Brunswick," *Miramichi Leader*, Mar. 14, 2002.

about 20 per cent of Canadians living in areas with rural postal codes, Canada is becoming a city-centred nation. Small towns are losing basic services. Banks, post offices, service stations, and grocery stores are moving to centralized areas to cash in on a bigger population base and the wider margins of profit.[8] People in rural areas now have to leave their hometowns to conduct business. This trend poses a serious problem for people in rural communities. If rural communities are to survive they need among other things a strong and independent press. With the corporate concentration of local private radio, weekly papers are one of the last means for people in communities to talk to one another and share what is happening politically, culturally and socially. Community newspapers give people a voice that they do not have in the provincial, regional or national media. In an editorial Serge Lavoie, former executive director of the Canadian Community Newspapers Association, wrote that community newspapers are a business, but unlike most businesses they have a crucial role to play in community development.[9]

Chapters II and III looked at first and second generation independent weekly newspaper owners and how they run their newspapers as a public trust to promote community and cultural development, as with the *Oran* in Inverness, NS, and to keep public officials accountable, as with the *Graphic* in Montague, PEI. Both newspapers have faced and to date overcome economic and succession challenges to the continuation of their businesses. This chapter looks at what happens when the business

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[8] Rankin MacDonald, Editorial, *Inverness Oran*, May 8, 2002; Editorial, *Spectator*, Annapolis Royal, NS, Jan. 15, 2002; and many other Maritime weeklies have made this lament.

[9] Serge Lavoie, "Desperately seeking rural supporters," writes, "They aren't simply media properties to be measured for their available cash flow (although cash flow is good, very good.) They are often engines of community economic development, a role well beyond the run-of-the-mill community boosterism you can find at most newspapers, including dailies." Lavoie left as executive director of CCNA in Jan. 2003.

leaves the family living room for the corporate boardroom. It examines the trend from independently owned and operated community newspapers to a corporate model. This chapter examines the evolution of the newspaper the *Miramichi Leader*, a widely-respected independent weekly with a circulation of 7,700[10] and the factors that brought its owner, David Cadogan to sell to a conglomerate, Brunswick News, a division of the Irving empire with its petroleum, transportation, shipping and forestry interests. We will examine some of the implications for community journalism from the sale. What has happened with the *Leader* is a trend across rural North America.

Miramichi Newspapering

The Miramichi has been described as "a river, a city, a community, a region and a state of mind."[11] It is on the northeast coast of New Brunswick in Northumberland County, an area of 4,720 square miles with a population of more than 82,000 people. It is known for the Miramichi River, a world-class salmon stream.[12] It's also known for its resources – fishing, forestry and minerals. From the mid-1820s it has generated a lively history of publishing right up until now.

Statistics Canada 2001 Census of the Miramichi[13] paints the community as diverse with Mi'kmaq, Acadian, Irish, Scottish and Loyalist roots:

> My name is John McKay. I'm a member of Miramichi City Council and chairman of the city's community development and tourism

[10] Canadian Community Newspaper Association, "Database: Miramichi (NB) Leader," June 28, 2004, <http://www.communitynews.ca/database/details>.
[11] Doug Underhill, *Miramichi Tales Tall and True,* (Saint John: Neptune Publishing, 1999), p 11.
[12] *Ibid.*
[13] Statistics Canada, "2001 Community Profile Miramichi," *2001 Census.*

> committee. I've been a previous mayor of Newcastle. Sat in the legislature of New Brunswick for 20 years and last occupied the position of Speaker before I left the provincial scene. Grew up in the Miramichi. My family first came here around 1785 from New York. And this is where I have my roots and this is where I live my life....
>
> You have to appreciate the Miramichi is not necessarily the same as other parts of the Maritimes. The Miramichi has always been a very independent minded part of the province. We from 1785 on vigorously resisted being part of New Brunswick, there were petitions that went endless on led by William Davidson, one of the early settlers here to get us separated from New Brunswick and reconnected with Nova Scotia....
>
> In the very first election in 1785 there was a very prominent dissident elected in Saint John by the name of Elias Hardy who challenged the family compact. The governor had his election thrown out – that they used some kind of skullduggery and had his election thrown out. So at that time the elections were held at different periods, over a two-month period. So the Miramichi had not had its election at that time. So William Davidson who was running for election and we were electing two people here. He invited the same Elias Hardy to come up, to become the candidate in the Miramichi and join him on the Miramichi ticket and he was elected here and he went to sit in the legislature to torment the family compact just the same.[14]

As with eastern Prince Edward Island, the tradition and spirit of protest that comes from being away from the mainstream runs deep in the Miramichi. James A. Pierce of Halifax came to the area in 1826 to establish the first newspaper, the *Mercury*, in Chatham, NB. It published weekly from 1826 to 1829. Subscribers paid $4, postage

[14] John McKay, personal interview, Aug. 30, 2002.

not included.[15] The *Mercury* gave way to the *Gleaner*. According to historian W.D. Hamilton, it "became a newspaper of record for the northeastern section of the province."[16] The publisher James Pierce was deeply interested in politics and was not afraid to speak his mind. It cost him 22 days in jail for printing that "Lemual A. Wilmot MLA had told an untruth"[17] in the House of Assembly.

Miramichi councillor John McKay:

> We had one of our local newspaper editors here who spent time in jail, ordered there by the legislature because of some of his editorial comment. This is unheard of today of course, but he was called before the bar of the house and he was sent to prison. Very vigorous newspaper history here.[18]

Pierce returned to the Miramichi a hero. Hamilton wrote that: "The kind of newspaper which Pierce strove to produce was 'a well regulated, carefully supervised, high toned and independent journal.' While the content of his ideas would not have been shared by some of his more enlightened contemporaries, the fact that 'he pursued an honorable and independent course truckling to no man or party' was universally acknowledged and respected."[19]

Years later, Miramichi Historian Louise Manny wrote in the *North Shore Leader:* "A survey of Mr. Pierce's newspaper shows us a man of progressive ideas. He

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[15] Underhill, *Proud Stories from the Miramichi*, p. 45-46. Underhill quotes W.D. Hamilton in his privately published work *Dictionary of Miramichi Biography* that the *Mercury* "carried news and literary material from established publications. It also ran advertisements and paid notices but had little other local content."
[16] *Ibid,* p 46.
[17] *Ibid.* p. 47.
[18] McKay interview, Aug. 2002.
[19] Underhill, p.48.

was campaigning for education for women as early as 1833. His scathing articles on employers who did not provide proper safeguards for mill workers are something to read."[20] The *Gleaner* lasted in various incarnations until 1881. The area also had an abundance of other partisan newspapers advocating different points of view including "Liberal Conservatives" and the Temperance Movement. Some newspapers, including the *Leader* in Newcastle, only lasted three issues.[21]

It was a competitive business, with newspapers coming and going in communities throughout the Miramichi. Some of the longer-surviving newspapers included Newcastle's *Union Advocate*, 1867-1948; the *Chatham World,* 1882-1929; the *Commercial* in Chatham, 1898-1964; and the *North Shore Leader,* 1906-1973.[22]

As John McKay points out, newspapering even into the mid-20th century was partisan and spirited:

> The owner of the *North Shore Leader* was our Member of Parliament for 19 years and so you had the advantage of having a Member of Parliament with his own newspaper....
>
> There is a rebellious spirit here....
>
> It was perhaps we were isolated away from the mainstream. The Miramichi was settled by people in many cases who were not perhaps in the mainstream of other places. The so ... it's a consistent spirit of independence I guess and rebelliousness.[23]

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[20] *Ibid*, p. 49-50.
[21] *Ibid*, p. 50-91. This 1893 newspaper is interesting because it was published by Sir Max Aitken, later known as Lord Beaverbrook. Three issues came out and A.J.P. Taylor's biography titled *Beaverbrook* noted, "Three numbers came out nearly all written by others. Max was content to set the type and work the press." Also see, J. George Johnston, *The Weeklies Biggest Circulation in Town*, (Bolton, Ont: The Bolton Enterprise, 1972), p. 243. Underhill's *Proud Stories from the Miramichi* lists the newspapers that came and went in the Miramichi area.
[22] *Ibid.* In 1973, the *North Shore Leader* became *Miramichi Leader.*
[23] McKay interview, Aug. 2002. Also, Johnston, *The Weeklies*, p. 243.

This is the community into which George Cadogan arrived. The seasoned newspaperman may have been from Ontario, but he shared that independence and rebellious spirit of the Miramichi. He also knew community and worked to reflect that on the pages of the *North Shore Leader*, which he bought in 1973. His spirited son David took over the paper in 1978. The following year the paper was renamed *Miramichi Leader* to reflect the amalgamation of *Miramichi Press* and the *North Shore Leader*. Cadogan then set out on a mission to become the best weekly in Canada. Until the economic crunch and technological revolution of the mid-1990s, he published a weekly newspaper that rivaled the best.

In the next section, we examine the Miramichi's weekly newspaper and the role of the *Leader* under the Cadogan family. In the 30 years the paper did its job, it reflected the diverse community and provided a forum for important public issues to be discussed.

The Cadogan years: 1973- 2003

> [David Cadogan: "There goes the press. Let's go give it a listen. Hear it coming up to speed." Sound of press operating.]

The press. There's no other sound like it. For people with ink in their veins, it's a rush. Listening to the pulse of blank paper weaving and pressing up against the ink smeared sheets of metal. Then minutes later watching it spit out newspapers with words and pictures. It takes your breath away. The press. It's been David Cadogan's heartbeat for most of his 62 years:

> I was eight years old, my dad had just bought the Durham Chronicle. So first day I'm in there I'm handed the broom and told to sweep the floor [by] Bill Kennedy who was the shop foreman. I started to sweep and he came over [and said,] "What on earth do you think you're doing?" I was sweeping in a pushing motion. He said, "You don't do that." He said, "You pull the broom towards you so that any dust that comes up off the floor comes up into your pants, doesn't go up into the equipment, type." So that was my first … eight years old and terrified of the shop foreman right from minute number one. So I've been working in newspapers ever since….
>
> And you know I was the traditional printer's devil – wash type and put it away. When I was 10, I started to run the job presses and at 10 you weren't allowed to run a press that had a motor on it but the little hand fed presses in those days had foot pumps and you could pump them. By the time I was 12, I could pump that thing faster than an engine would drive it and learned to run every machine in the plant. [24]

It wasn't an easy apprenticeship. His father was a tough newspaperman – hard working and a driver. George Cadogan had high expectations for everyone – especially David, his son:

> I can remember at times he would want to go for a walk. We'd be walking through snow that would be just up to just below his knees. It would be up to my hips and as a little kid I remember thinking I was going to die of exhaustion. And even my mother trying to get him to take a little mercy on me and him saying, "Ah, it will toughen him up." It seemed to me the only thing that came out of

[24] David Cadogan, personal interview Feb. 20, 2002.

> his mouth in regards to me was that it will toughen him up. But to some extent maybe it was true.[25]

Cadogan used that toughness as he worked his way up through the newspaper industry. Married with a child at 18, he started writing for a Southam trade publication and then moved into sales. That took him to the *Pictou Advocate* in Nova Scotia. Then in 1970, Cadogan made the leap into publishing. With his father and another partner, he bought his first newspaper, *The Bugle* in Woodstock. His second newspaper, *Dalhousie News*, came four years later and *Miramichi Press* in 1976:

> So you didn't have to be a really hotshot businessman to be reasonably successful during most of my career. So I was lucky in that regard to come along at a time when community newspapers really bloomed so I was able to hire reporters, editors and photographers to have more space for news and everything else.[26]

That's because the advertisements that pay for the paper were plentiful. Rick MacLean revels in those glory days. He was a reporter and editor at the *Miramichi Leader* on and off for 20 years. These days he spends his time in a classroom – passing on some of those print skills to young journalism students at Holland College in Charlottetown:

> I was like a salmon. I kept coming up the river. I kept coming back, really, it was because of Dave Cadogan. It really mattered to him what was in the newspaper and when I went there, what attracted me was he said, "I'm hiring you to make this the best newspaper in the country and I don't care what you do, within the limits of budget, but I don't care what you do as long as that's what you accomplish." We had a

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[25] *Ibid.*
[26] *Ibid.*

> good-sized staff. Pound for pound we were in that three four year period we were fabulous, no ifs ands or buts.[27]

MacLean can thank Cadogan's press for that. It brought in the advertisements and cranked out those print jobs. The hardworking press paid for the journalism Cadogan and MacLean are so proud of. This little paper with four reporters had a mission. They published two papers a week and as MacLean boasts, they also found time to break news stories such as the chemical company, Domtar's dirty little secret:

> We got a call from a guy who said I'm standing in a field over here and there's oily muck coming out of the ground and I think it's from Domtar 'cause it's just across the railway tracks up the hill. So we started sniffing around. The Domtar plant, if you take telephone poles and sort of dip them in chemicals so they don't rot when you stick 'em in the ground – that's what this place did. So we went to Domtar. We went to the province. Everyone told us no, no, no, no. They actually told us at one time that the landowner had been allowing a local mine to dump lead and zinc scrap there. I don't know how that turns to an oily slime. But anyways that's what they were telling us. The province said there was no problem with Domtar. Domtar said there was no problem with Domtar. Their chief scientist basically called us a bunch of idiot hicks and why are you bothering us. We ran a full page in the spring of 1987 and another full page a couple of months later. At one point we had a reporter doing nothing but working on that for two weeks, which is pretty big, it's 25 per cent of our reporting staff. Nobody followed up on the story. We couldn't get the dailies interested. We couldn't get the CBC interested. We couldn't get anybody. We were out there with our fannies wagging in the cool breeze with this one.

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[27] Rick MacLean, personal interview, April 17, 2002.

> Finally we got our hands though access to information, and the conservation council helped us, on 20 years of correspondence between the province and Domtar. Well, guess what? It wasn't our fanny that was hanging in the wind. For 20 years in a row the province said, "You're breaking our rules. You're polluting a stream. You're polluting the soil and you should do something about it." For 20 years Domtar sent back a letter and said, "Yup we will," and that was went on for 20 years. We sat down and thought about it and said what are we going to do with all this. There were reams and reams of these letters. So I went to the publisher and said, "I want to print em all but I can't unless you give me an extra four pages." He went [snap fingers], "Fine." We printed the four pages worth of this stuff with a big story on the front page. The last I heard Domtar was up to the 14 million dollars in the clean up. [28]

Week after week the paper ran stories with headlines such as "Local plant must be checked," "Province finds no chemicals from Domtar in water," "Pollution in local field shocking," and "Toxic waste."[29]

> [Sound of phone ringing. Rick MacLean: "Just one second. Yeah, it's Rick MacLean. Hi there. How are you?]

That's a reporter in Alberta calling. She's working on a story about Domtar and has questions for MacLean. She still remembers the stories in the *Leader* some 17 years after they were published. It's enterprising stories such as Domtar that gave the *Leader* a national reputation. The Cadogan style of journalism took folks in the area by surprise. Councillor John McKay:

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[28] *Ibid.*
[29] *Miramichi Leader* headlines from Feb. 25, Mar. 20, May 6 and July 31, 1987.

> The old newspapers were mainly covering the quiet routine life of the community. The social column was a very well read column where Mr. and Mrs. Jones motored to Tabusintac on Sunday afternoon to attend their niece's birthday party. A good time was had by all and that sort of thing.
>
> The *Miramichi Leader* became a little more colourful. The format changed. They became a little bit more aggressive in their reporting and it became by Miramichi standards perhaps a bit more sensational.... Crime was covered in copious detail. A trial was given major coverage in the newspaper, pages and pages of coverage, extensive detail. This was something that was somewhat of a change from the earlier days with the *North Shore Leader*. Obviously there was an appetite for this and all the newspaper was doing is responding to that appetite.[30]

This was especially true when serial murderer Allan Legere was on the loose wreaking havoc in the Miramichi in 1989. Headlines tell the story: "Living with fear," "Tests cut list to one – Legere," "Communities ban trick or treating," "Caught!" "Church bells ring in celebration," and "Legere case cost about $400,000 per week."[31] Former editor Rick MacLean:

> We did a great job the year Allan Legere was caught. We nailed that story. I knew he was going to be caught on a Friday. I just knew it. Our paper went out on Thursday. At 5 o'clock, 5:30 in the morning I get the call, he's been caught. We've spent six months in hell with this guy. He murdered four people, beat them to death – a woman in her seventies, a priest who was 69, two women in their 40s – beat these people to death in their homes, set fires, two women, two

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[30] MacKay interview, Aug. 2002.
[31] *Miramichi Leader* headlines from Nov. 17, 24 and 29, 1989.

middle-aged sisters, set their home on fire about a 60 second walk from the fire station, two minutes from the police station right smack dab in the middle of town, about a 30 second walk from our office. We had just gone through hell while Allan Legere was on the hunt. And sure enough he gets caught on a Friday. I jumped out of bed, jumped in the car, rushed to the RCMP station, got there ahead of Fred Ferguson, the crown prosecutor. That's how quick I got there. We always hate to admit it, but we do, but Fred and I gave each other this big hug, the only time it happened I guarantee you in our whole life. And then I ran down to the office. Everyone is piling into the office. It's 7 o'clock in the morning. It looks like deadline day at 3 o'clock. Everybody's there. We said we have to put out a paper. We gotta put out a special edition. We can't wait until Tuesday. We have to do it today. Dave calls about 9. He's in Woodstock flipped out because he's in the wrong part of the province when this is happening. He says, "We've got to put out a paper." So I started running through this list. We were two hours ahead of him. The advertising guys were all set, just give them the go. We had reporters running around all over the place. We had a sister paper in Sussex. Turned out that that Legere had gone through there when he kidnapped a RCMP officer and truck driver. We had people running all over the place doing all this stuff. He started tprhyme stuff. We did that. We did that. We did that. You just have to say go. He basically yelled, "Go." Between 9 o'clock and 7 o'clock that night we produced a 20-page tabloid from a dead cold start. Three-thousand dollars of advertising sold in an hour. We won a national award for it. We had 100 and some people waiting right down the street at the Irving where the paper first becomes available standing there waiting for the newspaper. When it was done I went

> out and got really drunk with some friends. It seemed like the proper thing to do.[32]

Story by story, the *Miramichi Leader* won the hard-earned respect of the community. Councillor John McKay says the *Leader* has done its job well:

> As far as on a consistent basis keeping community aware of what's going on, being a voice for various interests in the community, the local newspaper has played that role. It's more than just a medium for editorial comment. It's a commercial newspaper. It lets people know what's on sale, what's being sold, when the church suppers are, when the holidays for the various businesses are taking place. It's the local bulletin board. And I think that it serves, that its main purpose, that's where the commercial interests come in people because if people didn't purchase advertisements you wouldn't have a newspaper, but the newspaper also of course delivers the news and allows people to express their comment. There's also a proactive editorial board with the newspaper. They take stands on issues, very strong stands.[33]

This is the advantage of private ownership. While contentious stands sometimes lost readers or precious advertising dollars, David Cadogan says it's just the cost of serving the public:

> One Friday afternoon when our shopping mall, we had one big shopping mall, suddenly shut down. It just shut down. All of a sudden there's yellow tape all around the parking lot. Everybody is ordered out of the mall and told to go home – Friday afternoon. So we've got pictures of all this. Monday the editor gets in touch with the mall manager and says, "So what's the story?" What it had been

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[32] MacLean interview, April 2002.
[33] McKay interview, Aug. 2002.

> was a bomb threat. This was back in the days when bomb threats were still pretty much a new thing and people really didn't know how to deal with them so if they got one they scattered. So he [the mall manager] said, "I don't want anything about it in the paper." So he came to me and I said, "I'm sorry you close a mall and send 5,000 people home – there were 5,000 people in the mall at the time and it's closed for the whole weekend – we're not going to pretend it didn't happen. People want to know." And so anyways we did know about the story, there were all sorts of other sources for that information. We didn't have to rely on the mall manager for it. So anyway he called me, "You son of a bitch, if you print that story there will never be another inch of advertising out of this mall for your paper as long as I live." And the police chief had agreed with him. The police chief had told him, "Yes, that damn Cadogan he shouldn't," blah, blah, blah. And in fact he kept his word. We didn't get another inch of advertising from the mall association as long as he was there.[34]

Unlike the *Record* in Truro, other advertisers didn't follow the lead of the mall manager and pull their advertisements from the *Leader*. The paper had a strong and diverse base of advertising and absorbed the loss. Because it was his paper, David Cadogan says he had the freedom to set his own financial bottom line. It ran like the tide. Sometimes it went up and other times, it went down, but Cadogan made sure there was always enough to pay the bills and put resources back into the paper. Former editor, Rick MacLean revels in those years:

> At one time St. Thomas University was in Miramichi, Chatham at that time. Then they moved it to Fredericton. And apparently Frank McKenna said one day, "You know if you Dave had been publisher

[34] David Cadogan interview, Feb. 2002.

> of the newspaper then they never would have had the guts to move that thing." I thought that was a pretty nice measure, that if it came time to raise a stink people would call us because they knew that it could get ugly, but that was okay and we could become very unpopular, but that was okay too. We tried not to make the whole community mad at us at once. That was about the only rule. You couldn't fight the whole place at once. You'd pick your fights. There was an awful lot of fights. [Laughter] it was great. Those were easily. I had a ball those first up through the early '90s until the money sort of ran out and it got tough. Those were … those were glory years. [35]

The *Miramichi Leader* was there to cover all the stories including contentious ones such as the amalgamation of municipalities in the mid 1990s. People objected to then Premier Frank McKenna's plan to merge the former towns of Newcastle and Chatham along with the villages of Nelson-Miramichi, Douglastown, Loggieville and several local service districts such as Chatham Head, Nordin, and Moorefield. There's no doubt the birth of the new city on January 1, 1995 was rocky.[36] Dodi Dickieson served on Newcastle's last council and the city of Miramichi's first council for a total of six years:

> Everything we did was under a microscope. The paper sometimes would take the opposite stand on issues and being the power of the paper they could continually write about it, where most of the councilors, we were moving onto other issues. But they kept certain issues in the forefront that maybe should have been dropped. The transfer station issue was a big, big one. We were looking at building a transfer station within the city limits and location became

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[35] MacLean interview, April 2002.
[36] Doug Underhill, *History of City of Miramichi,*<http://ww.inmgroup/net/jeep1/history/id7.html>

> an issue, whether we needed one was an issue, all the issues of the transfer station. It was continually in the paper. People were upset about it. The more you read about it the more you think it's going to happen. The power of the paper, you read that stuff, you sometimes think it's the fact. They were just expressing, the paper itself was just expressing their own opinion, which doesn't make it any more of an opinion than mine, but then again the power of the pen could stir up the people. I remember one night there was a meeting and it wasn't even on the agenda. It had been in the paper off and on. Then one councillor mentioned it. We always had big crowds at our meetings -- one hundred-fifty, one hundred people at a council meeting, which is unheard of, but they were very interested in the goings on of council and that caused a big scene that night. Again, I guess it's because of the paper trying to keep people informed of it, but it was no longer an issue with us. It had already been put to the back burner and settled, but we ended up going to a landfill 50 clicks up north of here. There's no transfer station in the city, that's eventually what happened. Like every council you look at options and the final result was that we ended up shipping it up to the landfill in Red Pine and the issue of the landfill took up a lot of time. There were lots of issues that were going on at the time and sometimes you hated to pick up a paper because you're reading things in it … and going, uhhhh, okay. [37]

The paper has maintained its watchdog role over the years.[38] As with the *Oran* and the *Graphic*, the *Leader* was clear that its job was to bring forward all points of view in the newspaper so that residents could make informed, intelligent decisions.

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[37] Dodie Dickieson, personal interview, Aug. 31, 2002

[38] This is to be contrasted with the view that the media play the role of guard dog against external threats rather than watchdog of internal institutions. See Chapter II, footnote 56 for a thorough discussion

Take the case of Wal-Mart. In 2001, more than 11,000 people petitioned the chain to build a store in Miramichi. The company agreed. It picked a site wedged between two residential communities – a site not zoned for commercial development. Residents complained loudly and the *Leader* supported their concerns. The editorial pages took a strong position against rezoning the area. David Cadogan says he had nothing against Wal-Mart or jobs or tax dollars – it was the location. In the end council defeated the application to rezone the area and Wal-Mart eventually found a new site in nearby Douglasville. The debate did not sit well with everyone including Greg Barry, an established businessman who is the broker-owner of Royal LePage Real Estate Service. Barry has operated his business in the community for more than 30 years:

> This whole issue of more commercial development for the Miramichi, the Wal-Mart issue, and the position the newspaper took in that editorial-wise, it was almost a weekly thing, weeks on end and the publisher of the paper took a very strong opposition to the placement of Wal-Mart in that particular location, and me in business, I have a hard time with the position that the publisher took. It was almost like it was unfair. It was a case of, a case of those who were opposed to it their position being stated very strongly in the newspaper but there was very little information provided or given the other side of the issue that being the developers i.e. Wal-Mart and the consequence. It's contradictorial but it's also condescending. I guess that's what I didn't like and haven't liked about the newspaper, our local newspaper in recent years.[39]

[39] Greg Barry, personal interview, Aug. 30, 2002.

Cadogan says news coverage of the Wal-Mart development presented all sides of the issue.[40] On the editorial page it was another story. Cadogan says he has no qualms about the editorial support for the residents. He maintains that debate and conflict in the newspaper helped citizens and politicians make informed decisions about the development:

> I feel the newspaper did exactly what I think newspapers are for. And in this case if the majority of people would have been happy to have Wal-Mart bargains and Wal-Mart had gotten what they wanted and the town the city had got its assessment, but two neighbourhoods of people would have had their rights trampled all over and rights that were written in a zoning bylaw, then the majority would have abused its power. The majority in a democracy has the responsibility to be fair. Council did decide, I believe, to be fair. I've had people complain to me bitterly about my role in it, but I've also had calls that say it's the finest thing I've ever done, so who knows. I will, to be truthful, be a whole lot happier the day Wal-Mart announces that they're going to build in an area of the city that is suitable for them and I'm able to say, "I told you so."[41]

David Cadogan remains proud of the tough stands that the *Miramichi Leader* took throughout the years even if the paper lost advertising revenue and readers: "Now those really good times, really easy times are passed. The retail advertising has mostly

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[40] Coverage was extensive, See, Gerit Bosma, "Wal-Mart (sic) has no Plan B for Miramichi," *Miramichi Leader*, Jan. 18, 2002; Bosma, "Neighbours meet to prepare for public hearings on Wal-Mart," Feb 1, 2002; and Bosma, "City Faces tough ruling," Feb 8, 2002; David Cadogan, "No one signed to have Wal-Mart in their backyard," Editorial column, *Miramichi Leader*, Feb. 8, 2002; Noella Blacquiere, "Wal-Mart Could bring jobs, growth: consultants," *Miramichi Leader*, Mar. 4, 2003; Blacquiere and Bob Rupert, "Wal-Mart rezoning," *Miramichi Leader*, Mar. 4, 2003; Cathy Carnahan, "City rezones for Plaza BNG, Wal-Mart," *Miramichi Leader*, Apr. 1, 2003.

[41] David Cadogan, personal interview, Aug. 31, 2002.

moved to flyers and so it's much tougher now."[42] Rick MacLean thinks the best years were the early years when the *Leader* had more staff:

> As the years went on and that got chipped away I think you still produce a damn fine newspaper, but you're not the best paper in the country and I don't think there's much chance you can be. I always felt we were coming back to the pack. There was a saying – I think it was Lord Beaverbrook that actually said it – it was on our masthead on our editorial page "We lead. Let those who can follow." And I always thought that's what we did in the late '80s and the early part of the 1990s and I wasn't really sure about that in the later years.[43]

As a regular advertiser, Greg Barry doesn't think weekly newspapers still serve his needs or the needs of the community, regardless of ownership:

> I look at it from the point of view as an entrepreneur who is earning a living in the community that we in our business, service sector business, certainly don't get the same results that we look for in a community-based newspaper as we used to. I don't think that has anything to do with ownership. I think the times have changed.... I'm advertising on a weekly basis because I feel I need to do that rather than the benefits of doing it. I don't see the benefits. We track it. We don't see a lot of benefits from it. We just ask the public where did you see this, very few people are coming back to us and saying we saw this in the local newspaper.[44]

The newspaper business has become leaner. Flyers have replaced grocery ads that used to take up pages in the weekly papers. People are a lot busier. They commute

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[42] David Cadogan interview, Feb. 2002.
[43] MacLean interview, Apr. 2002.
[44] Barry interview, Aug. 2002.

to larger centres to work. Lucrative advertising dollars moved from the pages of the newspaper to flyers that are often printed elsewhere. So it's no surprise that it was not as easy for independent publishers such as David Cadogan to make as much money printing newspapers as in their heyday. With less profit to be made and an ever increasing overhead, especially if you own your own printing press, it's also not surprising that he and other independents are selling out to chains such as the Irvings:

> It's not a choice of selling to another editor. Editors don't have money and they can't – the future is just not that way anyhow. The advertisers are part of chains and networks and even if you can get to the cities where they live they won't give you time. They buy packages. They don't buy individual newspapers. They're not interested in how good the *Leader* is compared to some other newspaper somewhere. They're going to buy newspapers or they're not. They're going to make one order one bill … a private corporation, a big corporation can put a rep in their office wherever they are and do the deal.[45]

While finances play a big part in this shift from independent ownership, the newspaper business is more than just a money-making venture. It's a public service, a tool of democracy. The challenge now is how to maintain that role in the new corporate news economy.

The New Corporate Economy

"I believe in the profession of journalism. I believe that the public journal is a public trust; that all connected with it are, to the full measure of their responsibility trustees for

[45] David Cadogan interview, Feb. 2002.

the public; that acceptance of lesser service than the public service is a betrayal of this trust." – *Walter Williams, The Journalist's Creed, 1914.*

> [Sound of the press running. David Cadogan: "Right now it's running at 23,700 copies per hour." Kim Kierans: "And this run, how long will this run take?" David Cadogan: "About 12 minutes." Press sound continues]

David Cadogan keeps his state-of-the-art press busy with other jobs – 12 minutes to print about 5,000 copies of the *Spec*, a small community newspaper in the Gaspé. Cadogan has been printing the *Spec* for some 20 years – through both the good times and into the lean years. As Cadogan approached 60, he started thinking about retirement. This is a man with an insatiable curiosity – a man who says he wants to be everywhere all the time, close every bar in the world every night and party with the band afterward! Publishing three papers a week and running a printing business didn't allow much time for that. So when it came time to consider what to do with Cadogan Publishing and its three papers, press and printing business he looked to his daughter Joanne. It seemed like a logical move. She was an editor and writer with the *Leader*. But Joanne Cadogan turned her dad down:

> The papers now, the business that my father built was worth millions. So there were all kinds of things.
>
> One I didn't think I could afford it.
>
> Two if I'd sat down with my father and tried to work out any kind of a deal to buy the papers from him in increments, his retirement, his freedom in his retirement was going to be a big responsibility for me and I just didn't want to fail him in that regard. And I wasn't sure I wouldn't because I don't have a background in

> business, so I'm not accustomed to looking at the bottom line and seeing where we're leaking money, that kind of thing so I just wasn't sure I could do all of that. I knew I could be an editor. I knew I could be a writer, but I didn't know if I could be a publisher and I didn't want to see his life too tied up in my ability to do that. And I'm not sure that he would have been willing to either. He did come to me several times and say, "Do you want it, do you want it, do you want it?" In the end I didn't feel that I could, that I could take it. It was too expensive and there was too much wrapped up in it at that point and nobody wants to be around to dismantle it to make it pay. [46]

David Cadogan says in the end he is not sure it was a good idea to pass on the business to the third generation:

> Joanne was saying how she didn't think she could afford the paper. That would not have been a problem. That was never an issue. She did not want to do my job. And in all conscience I think I would have been setting her up for a beating if I had done it that way. Just because if I didn't sell to the Irvings doesn't mean they weren't coming to town. In this day and age one of those big corporations if they decide they're coming to town, they're coming to town and they may not kill you, but they will certainly take all the fun out of life for you. [47]

Many thought that former editor, Rick MacLean would leap at the chance to return home to the Miramichi and take over the business. There's no doubt it was tempting, but in the end MacLean says the proposition was too risky and rich for his pocketbook:

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[46] Joanne Cadogan, personal interview, Aug. 30, 2002.
[47] David Cadogan interview, Feb. 2002.

> It was going to cost $2 million plus to buy the paper. If I had managed to buy it and the Irvings decided they wanted that market they'd set up across the street from me and lose money for 10 years until I finally gave up. So I didn't think it was realistic to buy into the industry, which is a big change in the industry. Thirty years ago that was the logical path.... you'd get into the business as a reporter, you'd become an editor, the publisher is ready to retire, no one in the family wants to take it over. Why don't you buy it? And I probably would have. But that's not a logical career path anymore. It's too expensive. It's way too risky. I'm not a good businessman anyway. But in the old days it would have been forgiving enough. In the old days you had grocery ads. Every town that had a grocery store had a newspaper because you had to have run your advertising somewhere. Now those are all full-colour flyers. That money's gone. It's a lot tougher business to be in to raise the money to run a newspaper than it was 30-40 years ago when you set up and got the grocery ads and that would pretty well cover the thing. Everything you got after that was what you piled into the bank or it kept you running or slowly made some money for you. Gone. It's not the same industry anymore. The local drugstore doesn't exist. It's owned by Shoppers Drug Mart. The local department store doesn't exist. It's owned by Wal-Mart. They all run flyers. You have to work like hell to raise advertising money. It's a lot tougher business.[48]

So when the Irvings came knocking in 2001, Dave Cadogan opened the door, but not too quickly. For 2002 he kept 51 per cent controlling interest in his Miramichi and Sussex papers. He did hand over the *Kings County Record* in Sussex to a young

[48] MacLean interview, Mar. 2002.

Jamie Irving to manage.[49] This boyish looking 25-year-old with a shock of straight blond hair and brilliant blue eyes is the son of Jim Jr., president and chief executive officer of J.D. Irving Ltd, forestry arm of the family business. Jamie Irving is also oldest of J.K Irving's grandchildren. He regards himself as a bit of a black sheep. He doesn't share his father's passion for pulp and paper – or any of the other businesses of "the family" as he refers to them. His passion is newspapers:

> I've always wanted to get to have a serious paper. I was always hanging around Reynolds and all these guys. You know everyone's always wanted to have a serious paper and when I got there, when I got to Sussex, it was small enough from a pure business point of view – someone said we could just turn it into a shopper and we could do this or we could do that.
>
> One day we were at the *Telegraph Journal* hashing out these meetings and the premier was in the boardroom next door for an editorial board meeting. They were sort of saying, "Listen, maybe you don't want to spend the money on this, do this or add pages. Reporters could get expensive. How do you want to do this?" I said, "Yeah, but you know, I want the premier to come to my editorial board meetings too. I want a newspaper." … So that was, the trick was to find a business model and there is a business model that makes these papers viable.[50]

A shopper – a freebee paper stuffed with ads – just wouldn't do, not for the young man who cut his journalistic teeth with former *Telegraph Journal* editor, Neil Reynolds. Instead, Irving redesigned the *Kings County Record* in 2002. He hired more

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[49] Brunswick News acquired minority interest in *Miramichi Leader*, *Miramichi Weekend* and *Kings County Record* in Jan. 2002. It became sole owners of Cadogan Publishing in Jan. 2003. See: *Miramichi Leader*, Jan. 22, 2002; David Cadogan, Editorial column, *Miramichi Leader*, Feb. 1, 2002; and "Irving's acquire interest in Cadogan Publishing," *Publisher*, Feb. 2002.

[50] Jamie Irving, personal interview, Jan. 2, 2003.

reporters and expanded news and sports coverage beyond Sussex. Buoyed by his success, he assumed the position as general manager of the community paper division for Brunswick News – in charge of all the community papers from Sussex to Miramichi and up the Saint John River Valley:

> We're in the process of doing a lot of planning right now, but we've purposely made each of these sites very much autonomous. So we're trying to give each their very own individual flair, let them reflect the community. This stuff is important, it's not as much for business reasons as for anything, I mean, advertisers are the same all over the place, they want, they recognize when they're putting the money into a product whether or not it's really got the attention of the community or if they're just forced to do it because there's no where else to go.[51]

Serge Lavoie was the executive director of the Canadian Community Newspapers Association, a national federation of seven regional associations for community newspapers. He worked with both corporation and community newspapers and says they have very different philosophies:

> Community newspapers serve a particular type of community. They serve it in a particular way. They're considered home grown, locally owned and operated. They're at the heart of their communities. Whereas a corporation that owns dailies may often look at their communities as market extensions of their dailies. A way for the daily to cover off parts of the geography they don't cover off with their daily. So a daily will sell its advertising on the basis of a core daily and a network of weeklies or community newspapers. It's a way to offer the advertiser or the flyer distributor a way to get more

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[51] *Ibid.*

> coverage. Their tendency would want to be perhaps to push down the weekly, not to stress it as much, if they're only looking at it as an extension of the more profitable daily they don't want the weekly to steal the thunder. So we're a bit at odds there.... We'll always have that creative tension between the independents and the corporations and it's anybody's guess what's going to happen.[52]

Through its Brunswick News division, Irving dominates newspaper publishing in New Brunswick. It owns all three English language daily newspapers and more than a dozen weekly newspapers in the province. Four English language independents remain: the alternative weekly *Here* in Saint John, two independent weekly newspapers with paid circulation, and a free paper financed through advertising. It is a meagre offering for readers looking for other points of view, especially if they live outside of Campbellton, St. Stephen, Dieppe or Saint John. The situation in New Brunswick with the domination of the Irvings and in Newfoundland with the Transcontinental Media monopoly raises issues about how well the public is served if there is only one choice at the newsstands.

The Move to Media Concentration

"There is safety in numbers, and in diversity, and in being spread out, and in having our roots in many places. Only in variety is there freedom."[53]

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[52] Serge Lavoie, personal interview, July 5, 2002. Also see Flora *et al.*, *Rural Communities*, pp. 266-67, in which the authors say chain newspapers with limited links to individual communities are less likely than locally owned newspapers to be active promoters of the local growth machine. Instead "the newspaper's interest is in selling more newspapers and, in particular, more advertising ... Hence when a newspaper is no longer locally owned, the growth machine loses an important integrative element."

[53] Walter Lippman to Iowa editors and publishers more than 50 years ago taken from an article by Frank A. Blethen: "Concentration of Media Ownership is Eroding Our Democracy," *I Want Media* <http://www.iwantmedia.com/people/people19.html>

Those are fine sounding words about the freedom of the press. When journalist and renowned public intellectual Walter Lippman spoke those words to Iowa editors and publishers more than 50 years ago, there was still a free press. Many independent newspapers flourished, and all of them dependent, not on government for license renewals, but on communities where they were written, edited and read. Over the past 40 years multimedia conglomerates have absorbed most independents – both dailies and weeklies. They have moved decision making to corporate head offices whether it is in Moncton or Toronto. Lippman's model is a quaint memory. The picture today is much different. It's "one of relentless chain-building, consolidation and corporate centralization."[54]

It is business and big business. The modern newspaper executive sees the benefits of the business in black ink on a ledger book, not the black ink of important news stories for its readers. It's all about investment and dollars. There's no doubt a newspaper has to make money to stay in business so it can print those stories. It also has another role. Newspapers provide a public service.

The question is how well the public will be served by Irving-owned newspapers that cover much of New Brunswick – just like the company's forest and other business interests. Philip Lee is the director of journalism at St. Thomas University in Fredericton:

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[54] Excerpt from Gene Roberts and Thomas Kunkel, *Leaving Readers Behind: The Age of Corporate Newspapering*, (University of Arkansas Press, 2001). Reprinted in *American Journalism Review*, AJR, May 2001. Miller, *Yesterday's News*, p. 13, writes "Newspapers, of course, are businesses, but they are businesses that must perform a public service for their customers. The more profitable the business, in theory, the better able it is to invest in the gathering of news, which in turn delivers readers, which in turn attracts advertisers. But the business pressures of the early 1990s have caused that formula to unravel.... The days of the independent, local private owner are largely gone, replaced by corporations that are run according to the dictates of the bottom line."

> I've heard the cries, the expressions of concern about the Irvings moving into the community papers and the question I would ask [is], "Have these papers been traditionally been producing a high level of journalism or quality journalism?" Could they? And I question that. I don't think that they've been producing any journalism that's really noteworthy anyway. The *Miramichi Leader* at various times has done good stories and I acknowledge that and they've had some good people working there. But they haven't been leaving a big impression in the world of journalism in New Brunswick anyway, so I'm not sure that we're going to notice a change there.[55]

Lee worked at the Irving-owned *Telegraph Journal* in Saint John for years as a reporter and editor. He was there when Jamie Irving started hanging around the newsroom in his final year of high school and got the journalism bug:

> I think that Jamie Irving is really the person to watch in all of this. Jamie Irving is has been educated in journalism. He has a Masters in Journalism from Carleton. He went to Columbia Journalism School. He's a person who understands the news business and understands it from the point of view of a reporter, journalist. I think that he's got a lot of potential and influence in the direction that the journalism in the companies go over the next decade. [56]

Jamie Irving says he wants to do great things in small communities:

> The vision is just to give the community a newspaper they can be just as proud of as a city with a daily. That's one of the advantages we have as a larger media company. We have a lot of press capacity so we can add pages to the paper. We've got a lot of technical

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[55] Philip Lee personal interview, May 2002.
[56] *Ibid.*

> expertise. Those are tremendous advantages for a little town in Woodstock or Sussex or Miramichi. [57]

Chains call it economies of scale or synergy. Critics call it monopoly. Bigger means chains can attract the advertisers to keep the presses running and the shareholders happy. Bigger also means readers will have fewer choices and points of view when they go to the newsstands. Miramichi councilor John McKay has been in provincial and municipal politics for a long time. He admits the acquisition of the weekly papers is a good business move for the Irving empire. But he is not so sure it is good for readers in communities such as the Miramichi:

> I think that a well-run weekly paper is very profitable, especially if you don't have to worry about other competition, which is the case here, so you know it's almost a monopoly, a sort of benevolent monopoly just the same, still it's a very good climate to make money.
>
> I think things will go along as they always have. I don't think you're going to see editorials in the papers criticizing Irving initiatives so that may be seen by some people as being perhaps a restriction, perceived restriction on editorial freedom....
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> I wish him well, Mr. Irving.[58]

People in New Brunswick have lived with the concentration of English language daily newspapers for more than 30 years.[59] The dailies in Saint John, Moncton and

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[57] Irving interview, Jan. 2003. See, Danielle Dobi, "Showdown in Stonetown," *Ryerson Review of Journalism*, Summer 2001, p. 41. The author quotes the general manager of the St. Marys *Journal Argus* (Ont.), a Metroland paper that says that corporate ownership freed the paper from many of the financial constraints independents face. "For example, the *Journal's* aging computer server was replaced when Metroland acquired the paper [June 1999]. Being part of a chain also means the *Journal* can secure advertising deals that are rarely available to independents."

[58] McKay interview, Aug. 2002.

[59] J. George Johnston, *The Weeklies*, p. 219-20, in which he quotes Bill Sawdon, publisher of the weekly *Sackville-Tribune Post* (NB), who campaigned against tax arrangements for the Irvings and as president of the

Fredericton have all been Irving-owned since the late 1960s. In 1969 the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media chaired by Senator Keith Davey put media concentration in Canada under the microscope. The report of the Davey Committee called the Irving mixed conglomerate with its media, petroleum, transportation and forestry interests "a Bad Thing."[60] Bad as John Demont points out in his book *Citizens Irving* because "the difference was that in most Canadian cities and provinces readers could buy another paper, one not owned by a single owner.[61] The Irvings had the daily newspaper market wrapped up tight. They still do. With their entry into community newspapers that market is getting tighter.

In 1970, the Davey committee recommended a Press Ownership Review Board with powers over all daily and weekly print mergers because, it said, "*all* transactions that increase concentration of ownership in the mass media are undesirable and contrary to the public interest – unless shown to be otherwise."[62] For the Davey committee it all came down to democracy. Newspapers are not just another business and shouldn't be "dependent on the greed or goodwill of an extremely privileged group of businessmen."[63] The Davey Committee wrote that "What happens to the catsup or roofing-tile or widget industry affects us *as consumers;* what happens to the publishing business affects us *as citizens*... as institutions they are of national importance."[64] But it

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Canadian Weekly Newspapers Association in 1954-55 spoke out against corporate concentration. "The concentration of power of any major portion of the press in the hands of a few individuals is not a safeguard of freedom for the press or the individual. Independent ownership is the forte of the weekly newspaper publisher and the weekly press.... Our independence can make us great if we use it wisely."

[60] Special Senate Committee on Mass Media, *The Uncertain Mirror,* p. 70. An account of K.C. Irving's appearance at the Committee appears in Douglas How, and Ralph Costello, *K.C The Biography of K.C. Irving,* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1993), pp. 232-250.

[61] John Demont, *Citizens Irving,* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991), p. 97.

[62] *The Uncertain Mirror,* p.71.

[63] *Ibid,* p. 67.

[64] *Ibid,* p. 75.

was not important enough for the federal government in 1970 to enact legislation to prevent increases in concentration. That Press Ownership Review Board never happened. However, in 1971 the Combines Investigation Branch did charge K.C. Irving Limited with breaking the competition law. The guilty verdict was overturned in a higher court [65] pointing to the "inefficacy of existing combines legislation"[66] to deal with media monopolies.

Just 10 years later, media concentration was making the headlines again. The Royal Commission on Newspapers "was born out of shock and trauma"[67] when the Winnipeg *Tribune* and the Ottawa *Journal* both closed on August 27, 1980 as part of a deal between Thomson and Southam news organizations. Tom Kent was chairman of the commission. Now, he's a fellow of the School of Policy Studies at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. Kent's Royal Commission recognized the acceleration of concentration of ownership in media conglomerates. His commission called for the protection of independent media outlets. It recognized the need for diverse voices in the media to ensure a democratic debate among citizens. The Kent Commission proposed the government regulate newspapers and other cross-ownership media mergers with a Canada Newspaper Act. The premise was that the state should safeguard the public's right to information. Kent said government already did that in broadcasting through the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (or C.R.T.C.) and it should be expanded to include print:

> Get more competition, more diversity by ownership rules. What the

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[65] For a full discussion on this case see: Demont, *Citizens Irving*, pp. 94-116; also, How & Costello, *K.C. The Biography of K.C. Irving*, pp. 276-94.
[66] *The Royal Commission on Newspapers*, Ottawa: Supply and Services, 1981, pp. 57-59.
[67] *Ibid*, foreword xi.

> Royal Commission proposed is that if a newspaper is owned by a company which has other interests greater than of the single newspaper, other newspapers or other businesses, then it must operate, all except one paper, you've got to give it one paper. It must operate under a trustee arrangement under which the independence of the editor is assured. That sort of trustee arrangement operates in many great papers of the world. It happens with the decision of the *Guardian* and *Le Monde* and so on. Our argument was that there should be a newspaper act requiring it in all cases of multi-ownership.[68]

The federal government didn't follow the recommendations of its appointed committees. Ottawa did not change its legislation to deal with media consolidation, concentration and cross ownership. Instead, it listened to the lobbying from powerful and rich media owners hungry to grow networks.[69] The government opened the door to huge mergers, many of which are teetering under massive debt. Those conglomerates are now pressuring the federal government to go one step further and open the media borders to foreign investors.[70]

The government of Quebec is the only province that has tried to take action to deal with the growing corporatization of media outlets. In November 2001 the Ministry of Culture

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[68] Tom Kent, personal interview, December 11, 2002.

[69] Marie-Helen Lavoie, "Media Cross-Ownership in Canada," *Heritage Canada,* 2002. This article discusses the three major deals of the early 1980s: The purchase of Hollinger daily newspapers by CanWest, owner of *Global* television network, the alliance between the Thomson group, owner of the *Globe and Mail* and BCE, the owner of the *CTV* network; and the Quebecor's acquisition of *Videotron* group *TVA*. Lavoie examines the economics, socio-political and journalism issues surrounding media cross-ownership. Lavoie writes that journalist David Olive wrote a story in the *National Post* rejecting soundness of convergence as a business strategy based on the history of the Disney group. The premise is that companies such as Disney spread themselves among too many sectors in search of potential synergies. See also, Gordon Pitts, *Kings of Convergence,* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2002).

[70] Lavoie in "Media Cross-Ownership" notes that limiting foreign ownership, the federal government has allowed very large firms such as BCE, Hollinger and CanWest to develop. Also see: Matthew Fraser, "Old-think media ownership rules have had their day," *National Post,* Aug. 12, 2002 in which Fraser calls for change of rules. The president of Transcontinental Media, Andre Préfontaine was one of many media executives to appear before the Senate Heritage Committee to make the case for opening Canada's borders to foreign investment. For the full text of his October 30, 2003 presentation see <www.transcontinental.com>

and Communications released recommendations regarding media concentration in Quebec.[71] In November 2002 it set up a parliamentary commission to analyse media concentration in the province "regarding the quality and diversity of information."[72] The Quebec Community Newspapers Association reacted by saying the Ministry had gone beyond its mandate.[73] In Quebec and elsewhere owners of multi-conglomerates continue to embrace their corporate chains[74] and resist any initiative by the government to control the media.[75] They have lost sight of their civic or public role in society. Alan Gregg is the chairman of the Strategic Council, a company that does national market and public opinion research:

> Well it's interesting. What we're seeing right now is a kind of boomerang on the whole convergence argument both on a commercial and an ethical basis. The big conglomerates are struggling terribly. They're not finding a way to drive one single form of content through multiple channels of distribution. The other thing is that we're starting to find, driven in part by the CanWest Global situation, but I think it's a much larger ethical concern. Really, we have to have a diversity of voices out there right now and conversion mitigates against that. The entire business model, the economic model of convergence is to eliminate, if not eliminate diversity, just to have far, far fewer voices out there. So I think there is always going to be room for an independent press and an independent voice and

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[71] To view the document go to <http://www.assnat.qc.ca/fra/publications/rapports/rapcc3.html>

[72] "Quebec government sets up media concentration committee," *Publisher,* Nov. 2002.

[73] *Ibid.* "I do not believe that government has any right to recommend or implement 'quality' or 'quantity' control over a free press," said Greg Duncan, executive director of the QCNA. "I am afraid that the newspaper industry could end up being regulated by a structure similar to that of the CRTC."

[74] *Montreal Gazette,* Feb. 4, 2003. Pierre Peladeau, head of Quebecor tells the CRTC that the company needs to grow media concentration to finance strength in its print media (dailies weeklies and magazines), TV and Internet. For another point of view see: Lavoie, "Media Cross-Ownership in Canada," where David Olive is quoted: "In the name of convergence a lot of nimble firms have been transformed into sluggish oversized conglomerates with anemic profits."

[75] Just days after Peladeau of Quebecor was pleading the corporate case to the CRTC, the parliamentary commission of the Ministry of Culture and Communication released its findings and called for Quebec to exert more media control. The committee suggested more public scrutiny, editorial autonomy and an information law for the press. *Montreal Gazette,* Feb. 7, 2003. Also see Nelson Watt, "Committee urges Quebec to provide loans to encourage media in some regions," *Canadian Press*, Feb. 6, 2003.

> a contrary point of view. The research we have out there says that's very, very important. They'll accept bias as long as the bias is transparent and as long as it's offset by other bias and they get conflicting points of view that they can make their own [decisions.][76]

There are certainly a lot fewer media voices these days and many of the voices out there are converged – part of a newspaper, television, online, radio family.[77] The lines are blurred and Tom Kent says a press tied to a TV licence is less likely to cover a story that will anger politicians.[78] He points to what happened in 2001 when CanWest fired the publisher of the *Ottawa Citizen*, Russell Mills, after the paper criticized Prime Minister Jean Chretien:

> When the famous business of the *Ottawa Citizen*'s firing of the publisher took place I wrote a letter to the *Globe and Mail* pointing out this wouldn't have happened if the original proscription against forbidding cross-ownership, which the Trudeau government did issue in 1982, [had not been recinded.] ... The Mulroney government cancelled it against cross-ownership. If that had been enforced, this situation wouldn't have arisen. The *Globe and Mail* didn't publish that letter because obviously it's against their interests given the control by *BCE*.[79]

Kent says another example of the national media holding back stories not in its

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[76] Alan Gregg, personal interview, July 5, 2002.

[77] James W. Carey, "Space, Time and Communications," in *Communication as Culture*, (New York & London: Routledge, 1989), p. 169, in which he writes: "The new media centralize and monopolize civic knowledge and, as importantly, the techniques of knowing. People become "consumers" of communication as they become consumers of everything else, and as consumers they stand dependent on centralized sources of supply."

[78] "Any company that combines newspapers and TV has a strong incentive not to print anything that will make an enemy of any Prime Minister. That is as applicable to a [Paul] Martin or a [Stephen] Harper as it is to a [Jean] Chretien.... A press tied to a TV licence is a press to be trusted even less than the press has been trusted before." Tom Kent, "Media takeovers threaten freedom of the press," in Ian Elliott," Kingston *Whig Standard*, Oct. 11, 2002; This quotation is also found in Kent, "Concentration with Convergence – Goodbye, Freedom of the Press," *Policy Options,* (Oct. 2002), p 27.

[79] *Ibid.* For text of Kent's unpublished letter to the *Globe and Mail* go to *Songsheet*, the official publication of the Southern Ontario Newspaper Guild, July 2002 at <http://www.song/on.ca/songsheet-july02b.html>; Order in Council, P.C. 851735, 1982; Also see Hugh Windsor, "Aspers may feel heat of backfiring after Mills's firing," column, *Globe and Mail*, June 19, 2003 about a motion to investigate the health of the Canadian media.

corporate interest came in December, 2002. Kent appeared with others before the Heritage Committee in Ottawa to defend Canadian ownership of the media. He says the proceedings of the day were not reported in either of the two national newspapers; Apparently the *National Post* and *Globe and Mail* did not think that opening media ownership doors to foreign investors was information that the Canadian public needed to read about and debate. Kent says convergence is at the root of the problem. When media owners such as the Asper family have newspapers and a TV channel, they become beholden to government for broadcast license renewals. The company is less likely to want to offend the government with critical stories in its newspapers. Kent says it's easy to correct that problem, but the federal government does not have the political will:

> There should be, initially it can be a directive to the CRTC, but it should be replaced by definitive legislation prohibiting the granting of broadcast licences or the renewal of existing broadcast licenses to people who own newspapers. Just prohibit cross-ownership. Perfectly within government's power. Should do it. However secure it may feel, the government of the moment is not likely in fact to continue to be the government indefinitely and it is in the interest of politicians as a whole that there be open free discussion and unfortunately it is not in the interests of the people who happen to be in power at the moment and who are liable to feel they're in power forever. They're wrong about that, fortunately. It is in the interests of the politicians as a whole that there be ample free discussion. However, as I say the decisions of the moment are contrary to those who feel secure – wrongly.[80]

[80] Kent interview, Dec. 2002. Also, Bruce, Emke & Wilkinson, "Social Cohesion and Communications," p. 25, suggest changes to the tax law to make it possible for rural media to compete with urban imports with a bill such as Bill C 58 which uses tax law on advertising to protect Canadian magazines from U.S. competition. And, Robert McChesney *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication and Politics in Dubious Times,* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press Press, 1999), preface, ix and pp. 300-19. McChesney advocates a structural

Kent maintains that the Irving monopoly in New Brunswick would not exist today if the proposed Canada Newspaper Act had been enacted in 1982, nor would today's larger media problem of cross ownership – with newspapers, Internet, television and radio mixing it up. There would have been no *Globe and Mail* and *CTV* merger. The Asper family would not have control over *Global Television* and many newspapers including the *National Post*. Conglomerates just wouldn't exist.

The Kent Commission came close to achieving its goal. In 1982, the Trudeau Liberal government passed an Order in Council to stop common ownership of newspapers and broadcast stations in the same area. Soon afterwards the Conservatives under Brian Mulroney swept to power and in 1985 quietly revoked the Order.[81]

Kent's Press Rights Panel to regulate media buying and selling through a National Newspaper Act didn't sit well with newspaper owners back in the 1980s. It still doesn't today.[82] In New Brunswick, Jamie Irving thinks "the family" has been hands off its media holdings far too long:

> There's a lot of rhetoric around about the owners having too much

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media reform that is part of a broader movement to democratize all core institutions of society. It involves stronger trade unions for journalists, a non-profit and non-commercial media, public broadcasting, regulations for commercial broadcasting that are in the public interest and anti-trust legislation.

[81] Tom Kent, "Concentration with Convergence," pp. 26-8. Also, Order in Council P.C. 851735, 1982. The Progressive Conservative government of Brian Mulroney repealed the order in 1985 before it could be tested.

[82] At a conference entitled "Who controls Canada's Media?" hosted by the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, Montreal, Feb 14-15, 2003, the media bosses are still bellyaching and defending their holdings. Gordon Fisher, President, News and Information, CanWest Global Communication Corp, maintained that "owners have every right to control the content and ideology" and that it is "their obligation." He concluded by saying that "if you want to find the bogeyman, it's not owners, not government, not the Charter of Rights, it's the unions." At the same conference, Robert Pritchard, President and Chief Executive Officer, Torstar Corporation, exhorted delegates to read Kent Commission report because "it's dead wrong as to how newspapers would evolve." Pritchard focused on the Press Rights Panel rather than the main and still relevant recommendations and observations of the Kent Commission –the need to control and regulate concentration to ensure variety and diversity of voices necessary to a democratic country.

> influence and it was never true, and quite frankly I think it's the surest way to kill a good newspaper is to take the owners out of it. There's nothing worse for those papers than not having the owners involved over the years.... Newspapers like any business need a lot of attention, constant attention. I'm biased, obviously, but I do think it's important that the owners do get involved in the papers. I think the best thing that's happened in the last few years is that they sort of got involved in it again and have taken an interest in the media side of the business again, not that there wasn't always an interest, but it was always at arm's length. Now they're investing, buying properties, getting good journalists, people like Reynolds. We've had all kinds of great editors and I don't think that can be anything but good for the industry, for the individual properties, for the people working for them and for the readers ultimately, right?[83]

That's at the heart of this debate – the readers. No matter who owns the *Leader* it will continue to publish the pictures of the local basketball star and the Girl Guides. There will be the sports scores and church teas. The paper will promote music festivals and fundraisers. And of course the social notes – who's visiting whom? What happens when it comes to reporting the tough stories – controversial stories that involve the Irving family and its many interests – shipping, forestry, petroleum. Jamie Irving:

> As far as the family goes, if we were just fly-by-night guys and we came in and bought the newspapers to keep a lid on things, that might work for a year or two. You might be able to cover up a spill or something that happened, but it would never last forever. People would talk. My father and my uncles and my cousins have always been sort of committed to building for the long term for generations and so that they've always had the best intentions. So as long as

[83] Irving interview, Jan. 2003.

> they're treated fairly and equally and the same as anyone else would be and that they get both sides of the story in the paper, they're not going to discourage you from anything. They haven't. It seems like a reasonable compromise. [84]

Colleen Daley is not convinced readers will get the full story in Irving newspapers. She served on District 10 school board, hospital boards and most recently volunteers with co-op credit unions in Miramichi:

> We've had the Cadogans here for years and years and years. I hate to see a monopoly and that's what would worry me if they buy up too many community newspapers, because I see Woodstock, the owner there selling to the Irvings. So that would trouble me. You need that private independent spirit in a newspaper and I'm not sure … I remember hearing my father talking about the monopoly the Irvings had on the *Telegraph* and different newspapers and it didn't serve a community well – I'll put it this way – a nice way of putting it, it didn't serve the community well. I don't know if things will be any different today, but it doesn't do to have a monopoly.[85]

Miramichi politician John McKay says that despite what they say the Irvings do influence editorial direction in their papers, especially when it comes to elections in New Brunswick:

> We are developing towards a climate that's not ideal. The fact that so many newspapers would be owned by one interest is not in my opinion a good thing. Now, the Irving family will claim and perhaps with a good deal of sincerity that they do not try to influence editorial direction with the newspapers. But nevertheless there is

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[84] *Ibid.*
[85] Colleen Daley, personal interview, Aug. 31, 2002.

> that cloud that hangs over the issue of whether or not there is editorial independence.[86]

McKay points to the provincial election of June 1999 in which the Irving papers took a strong editorial stand against the Liberal government of Camille Thériault. McKay says that's not the first time the Irvings have used their newspapers to campaign to protect their business interests:

> They've always been successful except in the 1967 election in which they backed Mr. Van Horne – the Irvings have usually been very astute in supporting the government that wins the election. In the 1967 election there was very bitter violent attack upon Mr. Robichaud because Mr. Robichaud was taking, was bruising the Irving interests because of his changes in the taxation policies, elimination of tax concessions and so on, which would affect the Irving properties considerably. And there was a violent, in sense of non-physical, very brisk we'll call it, a challenge to the government and it failed. The people did prevail in this case. They were able to overcome the influence of some very vigorous arguments that were placed in the various newspapers.[87]

The editorial page can and should have a point of view. One of the perks of owning a newspaper is the freedom to express those views. However, the concern with multi-conglomerates such as the Irvings is that a paper won't take a critical look at issues connected to the company's other interests. It is unlikely readers will see editorials or columns critical of the Irving oil refinery in Saint John or praising union action at the Irving shipyard. The Irving owned newspapers will use the editorial pages

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[86] MacKay interview, Aug. 2002.
[87] *Ibid.*

to boast about Irving successes such as exceeding production at its sawmill in Sussex.[88] Rarely will they offer a critical opinion on any of the Irving interests. For example, the "Air Irving" controversy in 2003 involved politicians, including federal ministers who had accepted free flights and visits to the Irving fishing resort on the Restigouche River in New Brunswick. When that news broke, the news and editorial pages of the Irving weeklies, including the *Leader* had nothing to say about the incident. Just two of its weeklies, including the *Leader*, published cartoons, one of which poked fun at the Irvings. The other poked fun at federal minister Allan Rock.[89]

However, when it comes to the company, loyalty is rewarded and disloyalty punished, as an employee with *Northside News* found out. When Brunswick News bought the Fredericton weekly, managers asked a graphic designer to help out on the editorial side. Russell Lee Webb's first column titled, "Allow me, if I may, to introduce myself," was his last. He used part of his column to praise the founding editor of the paper whom Brunswick News had fired. After the column hit the newsstand, Webb was called in and fired.[90]

Even though editors are reluctant to cast a critical comment about Irving interests on the news and editorial pages, they do understand the value of serving the

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[88] Michael Wolowschuk, "When Good News is Also the News," Editorial, *Kings County Record*, Mar. 23, 2003, p. A6.

[89] The *Victoria-Star* (Grand Falls, Perth-Andover) reprinted a cartoon from DeAdder of the Halifax *Daily News*, "I caught a scandal," Oct. 29, 2003, A4. The caption read, "Don't you hate it when people understate what they caught on their fishing trip." There is a drawing of cabinet minister Allan Rock with his hands spread apart saying," I caught a scandal this big." The *Miramichi Leader On-Line* cartoon, Oct. 23, 2003 had the caption, "Introducing ... Atlantic Canada's Newest Regional Airline: with direct flights from Ottawa to the Maritimes!!! More connections than any other carrier!!!" There was a drawing of a jet with "Air Irving" on the side taking off. The Air Canada and Tango jets in the cartoon were grounded.

[90] Russell Lee Webb, "Allow me, if I may, to introduce myself," *Northside News*, Jan 8, 2004, p. 4.

community. The papers do bring forward local issues for public discussion,[91] such as the ongoing story of financial irregularities in the administration of the local hospital in Miramichi.[92] Since taking over, the Irving-owned *Leader* has won several awards for its investigative coverage into Atcon, a private group of politically connected business people who wanted to borrow $7.5 million from the municipality to build a $62 million laminated veneer lumber mill. The *Leader* chased down every angle of the story to show readers what was involved and held those with the money accountable. The paper presented all points of view in the news stories, opinion columns and editorials and letters to the editor. This created an atmosphere that allowed a healthy debate to take place in the community.[93] But these stories do not have a connection to the Irving interests so editors were freer to follow the stories to reveal all sides and help the reader come to some understanding of the issues involved.

It's a different story when it comes to news coverage of Irving interests. Irving

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[91] The Irving newspapers in the Saint John River Valley have been covering hospital closures thoroughly. For example, the *Victoria Star* in Grand Falls, Perth Andover and Victoria County has presented continuing news coverage in issues of health care involving all members of the community with editorials, comprehensive news stories, and lively letters to the editor. See *Victoria Star*, June 30 and July 7, 2004 editions for an example of the coverage and range of debate.

[92] Bob Rupert, "Community in dark 2 years and too long in hospital scandal," editorial, *Miramichi Leader*, Feb. 20, 2003; Gail Savoy, "Hosp. probe," *Miramichi Leader*, Mar. 28, 2003; and David Cadogan, "Hospital case: Miramichiers should presume innocence," Column, *Miramichi Leader*, Mar. 28, 2003.

[93] Coverage in 2003 is extensive, but from the *Miramichi Leader – Online* headlines you get an idea of various angles presented on this story. Bob Rupert, "Have faith, folks don't you worry," Feb. 18, 2003; Rupert, "Don't shoot the messenger," Feb. 27, 2003; Rupert, "Leader editor not against the mill, but for openness," Mar. 6, 2003; Rupert and Nicholas Stephens, "Atcon Action," Mar. 11, 2003; Stephens, "Business NB needs one month to assess Atcon's funding bid," Mar. 18, 2003; Stephens, "Improper city loan opposed," Mar. 18, 2003; Cathy Carnahan, "City holds special meeting on Atcon deal," Mar. 20, 2003; Rupert, "Democratic process needs a free press," Mar. 20, 2003; Carnahan, "Atcon says proposed mill good for business, people," Mar. 25, 2003; "Atcon arrangement: Unanswered questions," Mar. 25, 2003; Carnahan, "Councillors and Atcon deal, who voted how – and why," Mar. 25, 2003; Carnahan, "Councillors challenge Atcon vote Weyerhaeuser cites legal precedent," Mar. 28, 2003; Carnahan, "Discussion of Atcon deal goes back to Council Wed," Apr. 1, 2003; Carnahan, "Miramichi, Atcon have official deal," Apr. 3, 2003; "Who's who?" Apr. 17, 2003; Carnahan, "City, Weyerhaeuser, Atcon in Court," May 6, 2003; Carnahan, "Is City a bank? Is Atcon Group deal legitimate," May 8, 2003; Carnahan, "Atcon – deal supporters differ with Weyerhaeuser," May 13, 2003; and "Judge decides Atcon/City deal violated the law," May 16, 2003.

stories do make it onto the news pages of the weekly papers, but the stories tend to be "good news" or news releases masked as news, such as the story about "Irving into diapers." The headlines tell the good news story: "Irving commits $650,000 to train future employees," "Sawmill is breaking all records," and, "J.D. Irving exceeds performance review standards." In another case, a reporter went to the sawmill in Sussex and produced a complimentary two-page story with colour photographs about what the sawmill does. Then in another full-page story about forestry, the vice-president of Woodlands for J.D. Irving wrote a half-page article about how mill owners must remain competitive.[94] These stories are uncritical and only present the company's point of view. For example, a story in the *Victoria Star* about Irving Oil's application to build a service station, Big Stop near Grand Falls has only one source, an Irving Oil spokesperson. The reporter did not seek out any environmental groups for comment on the environmental impact of such a development. Instead the reader is reassured that Irving has the technology to deal with the size of the development and wastewater.[95]

It would be instructive, if not interesting, to see how a Brunswick News weekly would cover a crisis involving an Irving interest and how it would be shaped by management or self-censorship.[96] Philip Lee says during his tenure at the daily

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[94] "Irving commits $650,000 to train future employees," *Miramichi Leader*, Mar. 28, 2003; Bill Brewer, "Irving Mill – Truck, Bark, Sort, Cut, Grade, Ship," *King's County Record,* p. D1,2; Robert Pinette (vice-president, Woodlands, J.D. Irving), "Mill owners, Contractors, Must Remain Competitive," *Kings County Record*, Jan. 27, 2004, p. B5; Michael Woloschuk, "A job well done," *Kings County Record*, Mar. 23, 2003, p. 1; "J.D. Irving exceeds performance review standards," *The Bugle*, Apr. 16, 2003, p. A9; Canada News Wire, "Irving into Diapers," *Kings County Record,* Sept 16, 2003.

[95] Mark Rickard, "Irving to build Big Stop near Grand Falls? Facility must have EIA approval," *The Victoria Star*, July 14, 2004, p. 1. Also, Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly,* xxii, where he states that conflicts of interests between the public's need for information and corporate desire for "positive" information has vastly increased.

[96] Dr. Erin Steuter, Mount Allison University has done considerable research into coverage of the Irving oil refinery strike in the *Telegraph Journal*. See Erin Steuter, "Beneath the Fold: Reading Ideology in the Irving Family Newspapers," *Textual Studies in Canada: the Journalism Issue*, (Vol. 16, Fall 2002), pp. 1-30; Steuter and Geoff Martin, "The Myth of Competitive Challenge: The Irving Oil Refinery Strike," *Studies in Political Economy*, (Vol. 63, Autumn 2000), pp. 111-132; and Steuter, "The Irvings Cover Themselves: Media

newspaper the *Telegraph Journal* in Saint John the Irvings never interfered in news coverage:

> The largest problem is really, I believe, self-censorship in these organizations, that the editors, managers of these papers tend to censor themselves according to what they imagine the desires of the owners would be. In my experience censorship around stories for example that related to Irving interests was almost always self-censorship. It was never a member of the family coming in and saying, "Don't write this story" or "Don't have this spin." You'd certainly get a reaction at various times from the owners or from managers of other Irving companies, but part of being a journalist is to be firm in your convictions and to say, "This is a legitimate story, it was covered fairly, this is the way we do it."[97]

The reality is editors and reporters will shy away from covering or underplay stories they perceive their bosses just don't like – stories perhaps about Irving interests such as petroleum, transportation and forestry. That chill filters down from senior management to the editors and reporters. That trickle down effect is exactly what the Davey Committee[98] and the Kent Commission[99] observed.

Jamie Irving says he doesn't see a problem as long as journalists do their jobs:

> I think that what everyone is worried about is that news gets slanted differently or left out. If you're doing your job as a newspaper you report the news. The trick is to make sure that the coverage is fair and balanced. If the journalist has their byline on the news story, if

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Representations of Irving Oil Refinery Strike 1994-1996," *Canadian Journal of Communication,* (Vol. 24, no. 4, 1999), pp. 629-647.

[97] Lee interview, May 2002.

[98] Special Senate Committee on Mass Media, *Uncertain Mirror,* p. 87.

[99] "Management exerts control in two effective ways: by appointing executives and by setting or approving budgets. Both these decisive functions are performed in the head offices of the chains. Beyond any question they thus determine the character and orientation of the branch plants." *Royal Commission on Newspapers*, p. 178.

> the journalist has any integrity, then that's your assurance that you're getting good news, good quality news. So I'm really not sure what the concern is.[100]

Reporters should not have to carry most of the burden for balanced, fair and complete news coverage. Tom Kent says it's too big a responsibility. He says newspaper chains need to ensure editorial freedom. They can do that by handing over control to strong independent managers – that is, if owners are sincere about resisting this self-censorship:

> It is in a sense a subtle influence, the people who own the newspapers and the broadcasting media choose the people who do the management. They chose people who they will trust to do the management. And the people who do the management are then influenced unquestionably by the interests of the owner, corporation and the sort of assignments they get, the sort of people they appoint and so on. On the whole I think it's fair to say that journalists in the newspaper business and some in the broadcast media try to do a pretty honest job, but they have to do it within the environment set for them by the assignments these corporate dominated organizations give them.[101]

There's plenty of support for Kent's point of view from media critics and academics.[102] In New Brunswick, Jamie Irving doesn't buy the top down theory of self-

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[100] Irving interview, Jan. 2003.
[101] Kent interview, Dec. 2002.
[102] "There is no need to censor a political or economic view that is never expressed. There is no need to direct a political or economic opinion that is already in place. These two dynamics constitute the thought process in much of the mass media today." Frances Russell, "Laying down the Liberal Law," *Winnipeg Free Press*, July 5, 2002. "The chains increasingly are pressuring top editors – primarily through their wallets – to focus more and more on corporate goals, and less and less on news.... The business side is in clear control, and its influence is being felt in unwelcome ways in the news pages." Excerpt from Roberts and Kunkel, "Leaving Readers Behind: The Age of Corporate Newspapering," *AJR*, May 2001. Also Ben Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly*, xx, where he states

censorship:

> People are trying to say that to make it sound like a Wal-Mart thing where everyone is going to have to wear blue Nikes now because Wal-Mart got a deal on them. But journalism is a different business than that, and ultimately it comes down to the reporters in those individual towns and the editorial staff in individual towns. If someone were to buy up all these papers and put CP [Canadian Press wire service] canned copy through all of them the same, there wouldn't be much point of having a community newspaper. The business model is pretty much dependent on local news for local readership for local advertisers, and if they understood the business they'd know that it's not going to be one world one voice.[103]

Sean Murray is the chief operating officer of Advocate Printing and Publishing in Pictou, NS. It has six weekly newspapers in NS and NB. Murray has served as president of both the Atlantic and Canadian Community Newspapers Associations:

> It really depends on how management looks at it. If they see the tradition of community newspapers as having that relationship with readers and the relationship with the community and they are forward thinking managers and hire "intra-preneurs" – those are entrepreneurs that are employees within their corporations to run their areas and make sure they stay vital to the communities – I think they'll have an incredibly successful business model.
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> If they look at them as just profit centre, business units where they're going to put a manager in and have the manager run it from head office, I think they'll find it a hard struggle to make money

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that new corporate owners "constitute a new private ministry of information and culture." And, McChesney, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*, p. 2, "This concentration accentuates the core tendencies of a profit-driven, advertising-supported media system: hyper commercialism and denigration of journalism and public service. It is a poison pill for democracy."

[103] Irving interview, Jan. 2003.

> with it. Perhaps those organizations are not going to end up owning them for long. They're going to look at selling them again because the success won't be there for them.[104]

The bottom line in corporate owned community newspapers may well be financial – getting those advertisements and subscriptions to finance the journalism. Jamie Irving says he has a company business plan to make sure his weekly newspapers in New Brunswick are viable businesses – that they make money. Irving also says his weekly newspapers in New Brunswick have a bigger role:

> These community newspapers, they have a responsibility to bring local issues to light – serious issues, education or transportation or garbage disposal. There's big things that any newspaper tries to do to improve the community it's in. And that stuff is good and if you can do that, that's good too. It's also to make people feel like they're in a community that's close knit. It's very gratifying to go through a paper and see names that you know and lots of pictures and faces and read the ads. The ads are very important in newspapers too. It's how people feel like they're living in a community.[105]

In the Miramichi, Irving's community vision did not include long-time editor Joanne Cadogan. He replaced her as editor of the *Miramichi Leader* and *Weekend* at the end of March 2003.

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[104] Sean Murray, personal interview, July 5, 2002.
[105] Irving interview, Jan. 2003.

A New Beginning

When David Cadogan sold the *Miramichi Leader*, and his daughter stepped down as co-editor, it was the end of three generations of the Cadogan family in the newspaper business in the Miramichi. Joanne Cadogan had some parting advice for the Irvings:

> Just to be in the community, and if you can't be here I think it's a good idea to give as much control as you can to the people who are. That's not necessarily over the money but just over the content, to be able to give them an opportunity to respond to the community as it is. If you just throw in a bunch of people who are moving through, then I don't think you're going to have a product that really speaks to the community, because you're not going to have people involved with it who are part of it. And I think it's hard to have a love for a community and to reflect the love for the community if you're just passing through. So I guess that's my advice is to try to keep some people here who have roots in the community and who care for it. They will help you make it something of the community, it's about the community, it's not just selling advertising to make some money. [106]

Even though Miramichi businessman Greg Barry has no love for the Cadogan style of journalism, he does appreciate the value of local ownership:

> I think that we're going to find that we will lose some of that community based news. The ownership of newspapers and the community base should have some local ownership to it because I think they know their community that they are writing about and what they're reporting on better than outside ownership. I would be

[106] Joanne Cadogan interview, Aug. 2002.

> concerned whether or not the bottom line at this newspaper is going to be more important than the quality of paper that's going to be produced. That's probably a normal thing with large chains taking over a number of local newspapers, but it's just a reality and just what's going to continue to happen. But it will lose some of its local flavour probably, because it's not local ownership and they probably wouldn't know and understand the community as well as most people who read the newspaper.[107]

The Irvings and other corporate media bosses should listen carefully to the advice if they plan to stick it out in Miramichi and other small communities for the long term. The readers are the best judges. If they're not picking up the paper, then advertisers will be taking their business elsewhere. With the rural population declining it's important to build and maintain the loyalty of the readers, and community papers appear to be doing that.[108]

For the past 27 years the Miramichi has been Dave Cadogan's community. The *Miramichi Leader* and *Weekend* his voice. He admits the handover was not easy. It was hard to let go. But Cadogan is reassured by the fact that Jamie Irving wants to publish excellent newspapers:

> What his perception of … what an excellent newspaper is, may or may not be mine, probably not. And in fact you know there are a lot of people in this community who think I'm full of it because I'm in favour of the legalization of drugs, not just marijuana, but drugs. I think it's a health issue, not a legal issue. I'm pro-choice; I'm anti-capital punishment. You know, if I was running for MP around here

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[107] Barry interview, August 2002.
[108] Derek Dunn, "Mayor cite causes for population decline," *Miramichi Leader*, Mar. 14, 2002; also "Community papers best way to reach public," *The Tribune*, Nov. 5, 2003, p. 1.

> I wouldn't get my deposit even if I was nominated by one of the two main parties, so in fact not only will a lot of people like someone to have a different philosophy from mine running the paper, I almost feel that they deserve it. They deserve their turn too. Just because I'm an independent and just because most journalists tend to like my approach doesn't mean that we as a group are any more entitled to be in charge of who runs those papers than anybody else. [109]
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> [Sound of press running. David Cadogan: "I love the sounds. It's a big rush every time I hear the press up to speed." Kim Kierans: "Why?" Cadogan: "It just signifies to me that we're getting the news to the people. You know, ah, I don't know what it is. I guess it's what we … it's sort of it's about what we work for, to get the paper out and when it's coming out I guess the climax I guess." More press sound.]

It was not easy for David Cadogan to give up the business:

> I'm absolutely terrified that I really won't exist any more when I'm not David Cadogan, publisher of the *Miramichi Leader*. I look at my business cards now and I think there's going to come a day when I can't hand it out any more. And who the hell am I if I'm not publisher of the *Miramichi Leader*, because why will anyone talk to me anymore? If I want to know something and I call, will they call back? And it won't be enough for me to have an opinion, I've got to be able to push it somehow; certainly, without the newspaper I can't see myself having the ability to push ideas the way I can. So I'm terrified.[110]

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[109] *Ibid.*
[110] *Ibid.*

The University of King's College recognized David Cadogan's 30-year contribution to community newspapers and conferred upon him a honorary Doctor of Civil Law degree on May 3, 2002.[111] As of January 2003 he sold his papers, press and publisher title. In 2003 Cadogan wrote a provincial column for the Irving weeklies[112] including his beloved *Miramichi Leader*. He also spent a few months as spokesperson for the Irving media company – Brunswick News. Within a year of selling his newspapers, Cadogan had severed ties with the Irvings and branched out on his own. He remains a member of the industry advisory board for the School of Journalism, University of King's College.[113] Now that he's semi-retired Cadogan is travelling and also markets a new Internet technology for newspapers:

> It's been the most wonderful fun and it really has been great to be involved with all of the people who make a community. I've just been so very lucky to be able to do it.[114]

On one level Jamie Irving has lived up to his promise to produce good newspapers for residents of Miramichi. After Joanne Cadogan left in March 2003 he hired community-minded editors, first Bob Rupert, a newspaperman and former journalism professor who had retired in the Miramichi,[115] and then former *Leader* editor, Rick MacLean. MacLean returned to edit the paper in 2003-04, during his

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[111] "Publisher's note," *Kings County Record,* May 8, 2002; David Cadogan, "Volunteering source of Happiness; Doctor Cadogan discovers," convocation address, *Miramichi Leader*, May 21, 2002.
[112] David Cadogan, "It's Easy to See Why Canadians Are Cranky," *Kings County Record,* Jan. 14, 2003, was his first column for Irving weekly chain.
[113] "Journalism school appoints Cadogan to advisory board," *Miramichi Leader*, Mar. 4, 2002.
[114] Cadogan, "It's Easy to See Why Canadians Are Cranky."
[115] In his first editorial Rupert wrote that the paper's job is to provide information to readers "to make informed decisions and choices." He added that the residents "share the right and responsibility to get involved." Rupert, "Left turn turns out just right for Leader's new executive editor," column, *Miramichi Leader Online,* Feb. 11, 2003.

sabbatical from teaching journalism at Holland College. Under their leadership the paper continued Cadogan's commitment to provide a voice for the community. What has yet to be tested is how the *Leader* will cover a controversial story involving the other business interests of the owners, the Irving family. When that happens with an environmental, legislative or labour problem, the community will be watching to see how the newspaper handles the story. If it falls down, there are few voices other than Irving left in New Brunswick communities to tell the other sides of the story.

Chapter V: Community Newspapers in a Concentrated Media World

"The widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources is essential to the welfare of the public... a free press is a condition of a free society."[1]

As Chapters Two, Three and Four showed the publishers of independent weekly newspapers such as the *Oran* and the *Graphic* face huge pressures. Without their own printing facilities, they rely on the presses owned by chains such as Transcontinental and Brunswick News. The printing market is much smaller since chains started buying independent newspapers.[2] When printing costs at one company rise, small independents have few options elsewhere. There may come a time when independently-owned papers find their revenue from advertisements and subscriptions will no longer cover the costs of news gathering, printing and distributing a weekly newspaper. The *Inverness Oran* faced this possibility after Transcontinental bought the independent press in Amherst in 2003 where the *Oran* and *Graphic* were printed.[3] The *Graphic* is in a stronger financial position to absorb higher printing costs, but it remains aware of its vulnerable position in a corporate-dominated media. Despite these external threats, these papers continue to provide necessary information so residents can communicate with one another. The

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[1] Mr. Justice Hugo Black, U.S. Supreme Court, Associated Press v. United States, 326 U.S. 1, 20 [1944].
[2] Further study is recommended into the effect of corporate concentration of the presses and freedom of speech. See, Mark Rickard, "Review prints last copy after 113 years," *The Victoria Star*, Grand Falls, NB, Jan. 7, 2003, p. A9. The publisher of the *Fort Fairfield Review*, David Henley blamed shrinking retail market for advertisements and the lack of a press: "Unfortunately, without our own printing press, it was not viable to publish the *Fort Fairfield Review*." Also, David Burton, "Community Building through strong community journalism," writes: "The cost of newsprint is an escalator that goes only in one direction [up]."
[3] Frank Macdonald, private conversation, May 15, 2004.

papers also act as a catalyst for change, invoking residents to take part in the civic life of their community.[4]

The case of the *Leader* is more complex. Since Brunswick News assumed ownership in 2003, the paper does not share the same concerns, as the two independents, about who will print its paper and how much it will cost. The *Leader* had its own press, which was shut down in favour of the new owner's underutilized presses in Moncton.[5] The *Leader* also does not have to struggle with concerns about succession since the Irving conglomeration is larger than its general manager, Jamie Irving.[6] Brunswick News owns all three English-language dailies and most weeklies in New Brunswick and can command a strong advertising base to generate revenues. Jamie Irving, against the advice of his accountants, has chosen to re-invest some of that revenue into expanded local news and sports coverage in his weeklies.[7] In the short time Brunswick News has owned the *Leader*, it has done an admirable job of covering community events and issues such as the Atcon controversy. It was easier for the paper to cover this story thoroughly because the issue did not involve Irving interests. In stories involving Irving

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[4] Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995), pp. 162-63: "What democracy requires is a vigorous public debate, not information. Of course, it needs information too, but the kind of information it needs can be generated only by debate. We do not know what we need to know until we ask the right questions, and we can identify the right questions only by subjecting our own ideas about the world to the test of public controversy. Information, usually seen as the precondition of debate, is better understood as its by-product. When we get into arguments that focus and fully engage our attention, we become avid seekers of relevant information. Otherwise, we take in information passively – if we take it in at all." Rosen, *What are Journalists For?* pp. 141-144, discusses the theory of John Dewey who wrote in *The Public and its Problems*, (1927) that "democracy must begin at home and its home is in the neighborly community." For Dewey, "The printed word is a precondition of the creation of a true public, but it is not sufficient. People must engage each other in conversation about issues in the news."

[5] Irving interview, Jan. 2003.

[6] Though there is no doubt that Jamie Irving has influenced the content of the newspapers. His desire to produce quality papers is reflected in his investment in editorial resources. Should Irving leave it is unlikely that Brunswick News would keep the commitment to editorial resources.

[7] Irving interview, Jan. 2003.

interests such as petroleum, forestry, transportation and development, readers can expect at best neutral coverage. If examples from other Brunswick News weekly newspapers are any indication, readers will most likely be fed positive, uncritical coverage of Irving related stories.[8] The lack of critical comment or balance in coverage must remain a concern for citizens of New Brunswick because the Irving interests permeate almost every facet of life in New Brunswick. This censorship by commission or omission eats away at the very heart of the purpose of a free press in a democratic society.

Bill Clarke, the editor of *The Tribune* in Campbellton, NB, one of few remaining independent community newspapers in New Brunswick, gives good reasons why readers should be concerned about the trend to corporate community news:

> It's rather sad to see the ownership of local newspapers being concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.... The traditional community newspaper, owned by someone you passed on your way to work, was a vital part of the community it served. The publisher ... knew that his prosperity was dependent on his service to the region where his paper was read.
>
> The same cannot be said for the chain-owned paper.... With the giant corporations, the bottom line is what counts and everything else takes a very distant second place.
>
> Then there is the question of power. Surely it would be a very stupid editor who would not understand that criticism of those who sign the cheques is less than wise.
>
> One way or another, communities lose when their hometown papers become part of large corporations. It's just not the same when someone far away in a boardroom is making the decisions.[9]

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[8] See Chapter IV, pp. 145-150 for examples of uncritical coverage of Irving interests such as sawmills exceeding production levels, diapers for Irvings and opening a new Irving Oil Big Stop in Grand Falls.
[9] Bill Clarke, "We're a rare breed," editorial, *The Tribune*, Campbellton, NB, Jan. 15, 2003.

In 1970, Keith Davey, chair of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media predicted a "hypothetical extreme" where "one man or one corporation could own every media outlet in the country" if the government did nothing to stop newspaper concentration.[10] In 1981, Tom Kent, chair of the Royal Commission on Newspapers, uttered a similar warning. The Kent report said that without government regulations "the process of concentration will continue to a bitterer end: company will take over company, agglomeration will proceed until all Canadian newspapers are divisions of one or two great conglomerates."[11] At the time it sounded extreme, but that is what is happening.[12]

Kent maintains commercial or government interests dominate most media outlets in this country. As a result they are not independent – not free to do their public service, to stimulate public debate and maintain a healthy democracy:

> I foresee the media becoming less and less truly informative, the breadth of information, the nature of information they provide, and less and less willing to permit a diversity of opinions to publicize diverse opinions, and the whole political life and democracy will be the poorer for it.[13]

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[10] Senate Committee on Mass Media, *Uncertain Mirror,* p. 6.
[11] *Royal Commission on Newspapers*, p. 220. Interestingly, The Hutchins Commission, "The Problems and Principles," written in 1947, in *Our Unfree Press: 100 Years of Radical Media Criticism*, Eds. Robert W. McChesney and Ben Scott, (New York and London: The New Press, 2004), pp. 220-228, raises similar concerns about media concentration as the government appointed commissions in the 1970s and 1980s.
[12] See Chapter I, p. 6 and Chapter IV, pp. 101-102.
[13] Kent interview, Dec. 2002. Also, Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly.* In his second preface he writes that the social consequences of media concentration include the potential for anti-democratic tendencies that stem from less news and commentaries. See: Peter Stevens, *Global Media*, (Toronto: New International Publications, 2004), p. 54, who writes that a democratic media "should operate according to the goals of public service, which emphasize universal and affordable access and diverse content. The public service media knows the difference between citizens and consumers." Also, McChesney and Scott, *Our Unfree Press*, pp. 4-5, argue "privately controlled, for-profit media systems are fundamentally at odds with democratic social goals.... Free market governance of the media system tends to produce fewer and fewer voices over time as competition is eliminated to increase profits. Diversity gives way to homogenization as each competitor races to the bottom to find the least costly, most salable stories.... The market is simply a poor mechanism for arbitrating public debates and comprehensively reporting public information."

So where will people get conflicting or differing points of view so they can make their own decisions about issues that affect their civic life? Will it be CanWest, Bell-Globe Media, Transcontinental, the Irvings? In the bigger centres where a conglomerate owns the television and radio stations and the newspaper, the same information is presented to readers, viewers and listeners in different formats, reducing the number of interpretations offered to people.[14] Diversity of news and opinion becomes even more problematic when you leave those big centres such as Toronto and Montreal. Most communities are one-newspaper towns. New Brunswick and Newfoundland are all but one-owner provinces. If the multi-conglomerates such as Irving control the print media as well as much of the other industry in the province, what public institution will hold these companies accountable? It will certainly not be Irving media holdings in New Brunswick. If these conglomerates are in a tangled relationship with the federal government and beholden for broadcast license renewals as Tom Kent points out, who will hold the government accountable? It will certainly not be these media outlets. Few independent media voices are left, apart from the publicly funded Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Keith Davey's Special Senate Committee on Mass Media in 1970 and Tom Kent's Royal Commission on Newspapers in 1981 provided the government and citizens with solutions to these problems.[15] Now another Senate committee is revisiting the issue. The 12-person Senate Transport and Communications Committee chaired by Senator Joan Fraser was formed in April 2003. It has heard renewed calls from many, including Tom Kent, Patrick Watson, the former chair of the CBC, and Russell Mills, the former

[14] Lavoie, *Heritage Canada.*
[15] See Chapter IV, pp 135-140.

publisher of the *Ottawa Citizen*, to stop and even dissolve cross-owned, concentrated and converged media companies.[16]

The Senate Committee has also heard from the defenders of media cross-ownership, concentration and convergence. Corporate media leaders argue that with the Internet and increasing number of specialty channels, people have access to a greater variety of sources for their news and information.[17] That is the case for wired audiences seeking national and international news, but that is certainly not the case for local news. Even the publicly funded CBC does not have the resources to be in every community coast to coast. With media concentration and cross-ownership, citizens have fewer channels through which to obtain the information and opinion they require to participate fully in the life of their communities.[18]

While media concentration is back on the public agenda, it has not captured the attention of the Canadian public. The testimony from the Senate hearings has received perfunctory attention in the mainstream corporate media with much of the focus on national issues involving convergence and foreign ownership. The trend to media concentration among weekly newspapers has received little attention. Nor is it likely that

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[16] Graham Fraser, "Media expert criticizes cross-ownership," *Toronto Star*, April 2003; Kent interview, Dec. 2002; Steven Chase, "Watson calls for state newspaper," *Globe and Mail*, May 2, 2003; Graham Fraser, "Mills calls for new rules for media," *Toronto Star*, May 2, 2003; Gregory Boyd Bell, "Multimedia firms will feel Senate heat," column, *Hamilton Spectator*, May 17, 2004. Also see Friends of Canadian Broadcasting website for news stories and editorials on media concentration <http://friendscb.ca/articles>

[17] Préfontaine, presentation to Senate Transport and Communications Committee, October 30, 2003. Other presenters included spokespeople for Rogers Communications, the Fraser Institute, and the managing director of media and entertainment with BMO, Nesbitt Burns.

[18] Lavoie, *Heritage Canada.* One suggestion for distant media owners comes from Overholser, "In the Age of Public Ownership, the Importance of Being Local," pp. 64-5. She says they should hire good people and pay them well so they don't leave and they should consider an affirmative hiring policy – hire local people. Another idea resurfaces in an article by Edward A. Ross, "The Suppression of Important News," in *Our Unfree Press*, pp. 181-92, who wrote in 1912 that owners should withdraw from the business and he advocated an endowed non-commercial newspaper to keep the others honest. His suggestions have a modern ring.

the position of community weeklies will occupy much attention of the Senate committee. Should this be the case, developments in an important part of the medium spectrum will be overlooked.

If recent surveys are any indication, Canadians are becoming uncomfortable with the growing presence of the corporate media,[19] but not enough to organize and lobby the federal government for changes to the regulatory structure of the media. The failure of the Canadian public to rally against the corporatization of the media and to fight for an independent media as compared to interest groups in the United States is lamentable and should be the subject of further study.

New independent publications such as *Here* in Saint John and the *Current* in St. John's are springing up as alternatives to the newspaper chains.[20] However, they face huge challenges. It is not easy to establish a wide readership and to attract the necessary advertising base to pay for the publication. It is also difficult to remain competitive because the corporate competition has economies of scale in design, advertising and news gathering. Corporations also own most of the presses that many independents rely upon. So the independents have a huge job if they wish to challenge the corporate

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[19] Communications Energy and Paper Workers Union hired Strategic Communications to conduct a poll between June 27 and July 4, 2002. The company interviewed 1,000 people 18+. Sixty-six per cent agreed that media concentration is a big problem and that the federal government should take action. The poll is accurate +/- 3.1 % (19 times out of 20). To see results <www.cepmedia.ca/files/pollresults_e.pdf>; Also, "Media a worry: Survey," *Toronto Star*, July 6, 2002. Also see, Canadian Media Research Consortium, "Report Card on Canadian News Media," June 7, 2004, found that 56% of Canadians surveyed see consolidation of media ownership as having a negative impact on their trust in the media. The study is based on interviews with a sample of 3,012 Canadians in Nov-Dec 2003. The margin of error is +/- 2% (19 times out of 20). Report available at <http://www.cmrccrm.ca/english/reportcard2004/27.html> The head of CBC News, Tony Burman told a symposium on media and democracy at the University of King's College on March 25, 2004 in Halifax that viewers and listeners are also unhappy with the kind of coverage media is providing. He said an internal CBC survey in 2003 also found that most of its viewers and listeners wanted more foreign news coverage from Canadian sources.

[20] See Dobi, "Showdown in Stonetown," pp. 38-9. She writes that the editorial quality of the local paper St. Marys *Journal Argus* went down after Metroland, a Torstar subsidiary took over the 81-year-old paper in June 1999. St. Marys *Independent* moved in to provide "a lively alternative."

media. It will require business savvy as well as excellent journalism over many years if they want to avoid the well-trodden path of many other excellent and enterprising publications that published and perished.[21]

It appears at this point small publishers and their readers cannot look to government for regulation to encourage an independent and free media. In the absence of government intervention, it becomes the responsibility of readers to be vigilant. After all, the future of their local newspaper reflects the future of their community.[22] This is something former independent publisher David Cadogan understands: "When an independently owned paper is sold to a chain, the community loses a contributor to local boards, service clubs and charities. It loses a client for local law firms, insurance agencies and accounting firms. What relevance and population and services will the smaller communities have in another 33 years? Does anyone care?"[23]

The ingenuity of enterprising independents such as the *Oran* and *Graphic* will find and maintain a profitable niche. Local remains the heart of community journalism, but it's a value-added local that is the winning formula for the *Oran, Graphic* and even the post-Cadogan *Leader*. What distinguishes these weeklies is their commitment to be more than a guard dog of community values.[24] They use the papers to present all sides of

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[21] For example, *Mysterious East*. Fredericton, 1969-1972; *The Plain Dealer* Fredericton; *Square Deal*, Charlottetown, 1970-71; *Fourth Estate*, Halifax, 1969-1974. Also see Reid, "1970s: Sharpening the Sceptical Edge," p. 497.

[22] Rankin MacDonald interview, Dec. 2002. Also, the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation's New Rural Economy (NRE) study of emerging economies calls community newspapers important resources. "When we think of the social cohesion and connection of a community, a newspaper is a voice, a sounding board and a source of discussion for the community. Communities that don't have [a community newspaper] have a void," says David Bruce, director of NRE. See: Christopher Gooding, Community Media Canada, "Rural Canada study praises community newspapers," *Springhill and Parrsboro Record*, NS, Apr. 14, 2004; and <www.crrf.ca>

[23] David Cadogan, "The brilliant future of community newspapers," Opinion, *Community Media Canada*, June 15, 2003.

[24] Olien *et al.* "Conflict, Consensus and Public Opinion," p. 319-20.

an issue so that readers have enough information so they can begin to ask the right questions and take their rightful place in a democratic society.[25] It appears that independent owners are best equipped to take on that role. They have an intimacy with the readers and advertisers in a community that chains don't have. Independents have a vested interest in the economic success of their communities. Independents such as Rankin Macdonald at the *Oran* and Paul MacNeill at the *Graphic* also have the freedom to take risks editorially and financially. They make decisions at a local level and control their own purse strings. Chains can try to achieve some of that with local managers and editors, but in the end editorial excellence and independence must give way to the corporate business model and the financial bottom line from head office.[26]

Given these concerns weekly newspapers play a more vital role than ever in reflecting both the successes and failures of their communities.[27] As seen with the *Oran*,

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[25] Lasch, *Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, p. 11-12 and 162-63.

[26] Excerpt from Roberts & Kunkel, "Leaving Readers Behind," *ARJ*, May 2001. Also, Scott Bury, "Delivering the goods," *Canadian Printer* Magazine, April/May 2004. Also, London Publishing Limited has filed a complaint with the federal Competition Bureau claiming that the *London Free Press* has engaged in predatory pricing to protect its monopoly; See Keith Damsell, "Tabloid files complaint against London Free Press," *Globe and Mail*, Feb. 21, 2003. Also, John Hasher, "Passion for the Minor Leagues," *Columbia Journalism Review*, May/June 2003, p. 66, writes that private ownership makes a difference. "The difference comes down to who's making the decisions. Who has the power to decide the goals of the paper? If you give that power to the stock market, those goals are different." Also see Miller, *Yesterday's News*, p. 63: "The bottom line is not good citizenship, or service to the community, or the preservation of a free press, or finding a way to deliver information to people in the twenty-first century; the bottom line is profit." Brunswick News is not a publicly traded company so no financial figures are available. However, Transcontinental Media's second quarter 2004 results can be viewed at <http://www.transcontinental-gtc.com/en/fs01/p01000_040610.html >. The company reports consolidated revenues of $522 million, a 10% increase over the same period in 2003. Despite huge purchases including Optipress, it had a 16% increase in operating income and stockholders received a 5% increase in earnings per common share.

[27] ComBase, Canadian Community Newspapers Association, <www.communitynews.ca> study of more than 24,000 English-speaking Canadians in 400 newspaper markets found that more Canadians read community newspapers than the daily paper in the same market. Of those surveyed, 56 % in Atlantic Canada said they read the last issue of their community paper, while only 50 % said they read a daily newspaper. Atlantic Canada also had the highest exclusive community newspaper readership rate in the country at 27 %. For data see: <www.ccna.ca-files/news-NationalStudyTables.pdf > and Wade Tomlin, "ComBase begins Canada-wide launches." Also see, Richard Blackwell, "Canadian readers turn to local papers: study," *Globe and Mail*, Oct. 8, 2003; and, "Community papers best way to reach public," *The Tribune*, p. 1. Another study by the National Newspaper Association in the U.S. found a similar trend with 71 % of non-metro area residents regularly reading community newspapers, compared with the 55.1% of

and the *Graphic*, enterprising weeklies will continue to take their public service role seriously and go that extra step to spark communities into action so that they are informed and can take on their civic duties.[28] In areas where citizens are unhappy with the media chain or conglomeration, new media – alternative newspaper or Internet publications[29] – will rise to give voice to the voiceless so that they too may sing their songs. These efforts, though laudable, are not enough.

Enterprising independents such as the *Oran* and *Graphic* are endangered. They face the internal pressures of succession. They face the external pressures of keeping readers and advertisers as well as juggling high costs of printing and technological changes. One would like to remain optimistic and say that a strong vibrant independent

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the total population who read daily papers on weekdays. Most small-town residents cited community papers as their primary source of local news. *Editor and Publisher*, Jan. 1. 2001, p. 10. Also see: Canadian Community Newspapers Association, "Snapshot 2002: The Developing Picture of the Canadian Community Newspaper Industry," Dec. 2001- Jan 2002.

[28] David D. Kurpius, "Sources and Civic Journalism: Changing Patterns of Reporting?" *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, Winter 2002, pp. 855-56, in which he quotes Jay Rosen who calls on journalists to "(1) address people as citizens, potential participants in public affairs, rather than victims or spectators; (2) help the political community act upon, rather than just learn about, its problems; (3) improve the climate of public discussion, rather than simply watch it deteriorate; (4) help make public life go well, so that it earns its claim on our attention." And Miller, *Yesterday's News*, p. 215 writes that what community newspapers do well is to listen, enable, reflect and disclose.

[29] For example, Dru Oja Jay, *Dominion*, online national newspaper, <http://dominionpaper.ca/>. David Cadogan, "The brilliant future of community newspapers" in which Cadogan sees the future of community newspaper publishing as electronic. Dennis Coyle, "Readers drive 'open source journalism,'" *Island Press Association*, www.islandpress.org, May 13, 2004. Coyle documents an experiment in The *Bakersfield Californian* with what it calls "open source" journalism. The paper has an independent website and bi-weekly print edition called the *Northwest Voice*. Readers contribute 90% of the content on the website at northwestvoice.com. Schools, churches, youth sport organizations and park districts produce 60% of the material, columnists 20% and the rest comes from occasional contributors and the editor. "People love the idea of community content and also love the super local emphasis," said Mary Lou Fulton, product development manager. "We've received many articles, pictures, even recipes. This type of information is often dismissed by daily newspapers as 'not news'. We also always want to say 'yes' to the community and believe they will say 'yes' to us in return." Bruce, Emke, and Wilkinson, "Social Cohesion and Communications," acknowledge the potential of the Internet, but say it will take time because introduction of infrastructure is slow, pp. 11, 16. Also, Walter E. Niebauer Jr., and Eric A. Abbott, "The Community Newspaper in an Online Society," in *Having all the right connections: telecommunications and rural visibility*, Eds. Eric A. Abbott, Patricia C. Hipple & Peter F. Korsching, (Westport CT: Praeger Publishers, 2000), p. 117 where the authors note other forms of community media include volunteer newspapers, local channel cable television, paid subscription Internet newspapers and websites by local businesses and community organizations though the authors admit Internet options will take time because many communities lack the technological base.

press will survive and new ones will rise up to counter this corporate consolidation wave. However, the trend shows the opposite as corporate media chains continue to buy up independents. Apart from the Senate committee, which can only listen and make recommendations to the federal government, little is being done to deal with media concentration and convergence in Canada.

The *Oran* and the *Graphic* are two weekly papers that have, so far, been able to buck the trend. They are role models and remain watch dogs for their communities. Despite the economic challenges, independent weekly newspapers such as the *Oran* and *Graphic* are preferable to the alternative model – profitable lap dogs of corporate masters.[30] After all, the *Chicago Times* had the interests of civil society in mind when it wrote back in 1851: "It is a newspaper's duty to print the news and raise hell."[31]

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[30] See Chapter II, footnote 56. Also Innis, *Empire & Communications*, p. 170
[31] Editorial, the *Chicago Times*, 1851.

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Conferences

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"Media concentration in the 21st century: an international, national and provincial phenomenon," organized by the Acadian Association of Journalists, Moncton, Oct 31-Nov 2, 2003.

"From Joe Howe to Journalism Schools: Democracy and Journalism in the 21st Century," Halifax, March 25, 2004.

Appendix B: Atlantic Canada Studies Program – Interview Consent Form

SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

Atlantic Canada Studies Program - Interview Consent Form

Name of Interviewee: _____ Interview Date: _____

Name of Interviewer: _____ Telephone: _____

Faculty Supervisor: _____ Telephone: _____

To the Interviewee:

You are invited to be interviewed by the Interviewer named above, as part of her/his research towards a Master's thesis in Atlantic Canada Studies. The research project has been reviewed and approved by the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board. You are asked to fill out and sign this consent form. You should be aware that you may discontinue the interview at any time if you wish to do so, and withdraw your consent to participating in the Interviewer's research. Any questions or concerns may be directed to the Interviewer, to the Faculty Supervisor, to the university's Coordinator of Atlantic Canada Studies (Dr. John G. Reid, Coordinator, Atlantic Canada Studies, Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3H 3C3. Telephone: 902-420-5760), or to the Chair of the university's Research Ethics Board (Dr. Eric Lee; e-mail: ethics@stmarys.ca). Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Response of Interviewee:

I agree to be interviewed by the Interviewer named above. I realize that portions of the interview may be cited or quoted in his/her Master's thesis, and I give permission for this to be done. I am aware that copies of the thesis will be deposited at the Saint Mary's University Library and at the National Library of Canada, and that they will be available for consultation or purchase by members of the public.

I give permission for the interview to be tape-recorded, with the understanding that one copy will be retained by the Interviewer, to be used for scholarly purposes only, and one copy will be deposited at the Saint Mary's University Archives. Yes _____ No _____

If yes, I wish public access to the Archives copy to be granted on the following basis:

Unrestricted _____ Restricted (please specify) _____

If the Interviewer eventually publishes her/his thesis, or portions of it, in the form of an article or book or radio broadcast, I require him/her to seek my further permission for any citations or quotations from this interview. Yes _____ No _____

Signature of Interviewee: _____ Date: _____

Saint Mary's University

Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada B3H 3C3

Research Ethics Board
tel 902.420.5728
fax 902.496.8772
e-mail ethics@stmarys.ca
web www.stmarys.ca/academic/ogsr/REB.htm

Appendix A: Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Human Subjects

Saint Mary's University

Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Human Subjects

This is to certify that the Research Ethics Board has examined the research proposal or other type of study submitted by:

Principal Investigator: Kim Kierans

Name of Research Project: Community and news: A study of three community newspapers, The Inverness Oran, Miramichi Leader, and Eastern Graphic

REB File Number: 2001-100

and concludes that in all respects the proposed project meets appropriate standards of ethical acceptability and is in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Conduct of Research Involving Humans.

Date: 17 Dec 01

Signature of REB Chair: _____

Dr. Eric Lee