

# ***Balancing Academic and Corporate Interests in Canadian Journalism Education***

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*Journalism education in Canada lags far behind the field in the United States, both in history and numbers. The first university-level schools of journalism in Canada did not open until the late 1940s, and until the mid-1970s there were only three four-year journalism schools there, all in the dominant province of Ontario. Two major reasons for this belated development have been practitioner resistance and a lack of funding. Despite the former, the number of university journalism programs in Canada has seen a recent upturn. This is largely a result of increased corporate funding, which has raised concern for academic independence.*

Journalism education at the university level in Canada has had a comparatively brief past marked by antagonism from working journalists and disdain from more established academic faculties. The field is not as mature as it is in the United States, where journalism education has progressed through several stages of development over almost a century.<sup>1</sup> The same pattern of development has started to be seen in Canada, according to one study, but when compared with the United States “each stage seems to have come roughly a half-century later.”<sup>2</sup> As a result of a shift in emphasis from the teaching of skills and technique to the offering of more advanced, conceptual coursework in U.S. journalism schools, some scholars see journalism itself moving from craft status to profession there, unlike in other countries where

teaching of the subject is “still in the stage of transition from trade school to academic institution.”<sup>3</sup> Journalism education in Canada lags behind in its development, obviously fitting the latter pattern. A recent upsurge in four-year journalism programs has been seen since the late 1990s in the westernmost province of British Columbia, however, with the conversion there of several former two-year colleges into University Colleges granting bachelor’s degrees.<sup>4</sup>

In the United States, there were at last count 463 four-year journalism schools, some of which have been operating since the early years of the 20th century.<sup>5</sup> In Canada, journalism schools at the university level are strictly a post-WWII phenomenon, and until the mid-1970s there were only three full-fledged university-level programs in

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the subject, all located in the dominant province of Ontario. Even into the third millennium, while journalism education had finally spread from coast to coast in Canada, the number of university programs in the subject could still be counted on the fingers of two hands.<sup>6</sup> In Canada, the underdevelopment of journalism education has led to a relative paucity of media scholarship, resulting in a disparity in media criticism, with academics outnumbered by industry advocates and marginalized to a significant degree. "The academic tradition in the United States . . . produces a relatively abundant flow of writing about news media," noted Peter Desbarats in 1989 while he was dean of the graduate school of journalism at the University of Western Ontario. "By contrast, public debate about journalism in Canada suffers from a constant shortage of historical perspective and reliable data."<sup>7</sup> This paper examines the state of university journalism education in Canada, looks at how it has affected the development of media criticism and journalism as a profession there, and ponders implications for the future of this subject in higher education north of the border.

### ***Practitioner Resistance***

At latest count universities and colleges in the United States enrolled 182,218 undergraduates and 12,382 graduate students in journalism and mass communication, annually awarding more than 40,000 bachelor's and almost 4,000 graduate degrees.<sup>8</sup> In Canada, journalism has traditionally eschewed the university tradition in favor of on-the-job training or, at best, the British craft-school approach to

education in the subject at two-year colleges. As a result, Canadian schools of journalism at the university level number only in the single digits and in 2001 awarded only 339 undergraduate degrees and another sixty-six master's degrees.<sup>9</sup> As most Canadian journalism schools have been in operation for less than thirty years, there is not a critical mass of journalism school graduates built up north of the border, where most working journalists, who entered the business through the apprenticeship system, are opposed to the very concept of journalism education. Some of the most prominent pundits do not hesitate to make their contempt for journalism schools known, as former *National Post* editor Ken Whyte did after hiring 135 journalists for the start-up daily in 1998. "Given a choice of two people with more or less equal experience, we would choose the person who hasn't gone to journalism school," declared Whyte. "Journalism schools leave people with a narrow appreciation of the craft and a hard-and-fast idea of what it takes to be a journalist."<sup>10</sup> Former magazine editor John Fraser was even more damning in his criticism in 1994 when he blamed most of the ills of Canadian journalism on J-schools that "foster institutional rancour and disbelieving zealotry" in students.

I can sniff journalism grads a hundred miles away, and increasingly at *Saturday Night* I tried to avoid them, unless they could prove to me that they had repented of nearly everything they had been taught. . . . What I would really like to do is take the budding journalists by their col-

lars and pants, and force-march them into literature courses, philosophy courses, psychology courses, political-science courses, law courses, theology courses, even basket-weaving courses – anything that would keep them away from Journalism 100.<sup>11</sup>

The academic voice is sometimes heard in response, but only from the margins, while “journalism professor” is used as an epithet by industry advocates who play on rampant anti-intellectualism in effectively countering scholarly calls for media reform. The scholarly view of journalism education as a valid, even vital, field of study is overshadowed by the more prominently placed opinions of some of the country’s most popular columnists.

- Robert Fulford: “A highly dubious enterprise. . . an embarrassment to many who teach it and some who study it.”<sup>12</sup>
- Barbara Amiel: “I suspect the good people are good ‘in spite of’ not ‘because of’ their journalism studies.”<sup>13</sup>
- Allan Fotheringham: “You can’t teach journalism, any more than you can teach sex. You’re either good at it or you’re not.”<sup>14</sup>

### ***Columbia of the North***

The professional voice dominates the skills vs. theory debate north of the border in large part because the journalism school tradition has much less to sustain it in Canada than in the United States. Unlike Missouri and Columbia, which were founded in the

early 1900s, the first university journalism schools north of the border didn’t open their doors until after WWII. The model that was followed at all three of the original post-war journalism schools in Canada—Ryerson, Western Ontario, and Carleton—came from the prototype program at Columbia, according to Desbarats.<sup>15</sup> Western Ontario’s journalism school even followed Columbia’s move from an undergraduate offering to a master’s program in 1974, although requiring three semesters to complete the degree instead of only two.

UWO was also the first to depart from the Columbia model, supplementing skills training with courses in ethics, history, law, and theory, according to Desbarats, a former network television news anchor who was dean of the journalism school there from 1981 until 1997.<sup>16</sup> But the Western Ontario program almost fell victim to university-wide cost-cutting in 1993 and was only saved by a last-minute appeal, after which the university’s board of governors narrowly overturned a decision by the university senate to close the journalism school.<sup>17</sup> However, the UWO graduate program in journalism, which now admits only about fifty students annually, suffered a significant loss of identity in 1994 when it was merged with a much larger program in library sciences into a new Faculty of Information and Media Studies. This led one alumnus to complain that “the soul of the journalistic enterprise had taken a beating. The art of storytelling had taken a back seat to info-crunching and a preoccupation with ‘techno-culture,’ in which undergraduates may now obtain a degree.”<sup>18</sup>

The journalism program at Carleton University in the nation’s

capital of Ottawa is not only generally regarded to be the leading J-school in Canada, but perhaps not coincidentally it is also the one that has moved farthest from the original Columbia ideal, according to Desbarats. Carleton's journalism school, which enrolls approximately 500 undergraduates and several dozen graduate students, is also unique in Canada for including a considerable mass communication component. An undergraduate program in communication studies was added in 1977 to supplement the journalism stream, a master's program commenced in 1991, and since 1997 Carleton has also offered a Ph.D. program in the subject.<sup>19</sup> According to Desbarats, this comprehensive scope makes Carleton's journalism school "closer than any other Canadian school to the type of institution now prevalent in the United States."<sup>20</sup> But through the scholarly expansion, Carleton's journalism program has thrived despite the increasingly academic approach, according to Desbarats, because it has stayed true to its professional roots. "At Carleton, under a succession of directors with journalistic as well as academic qualifications, journalism has remained the dominant element."<sup>21</sup>

The only one of the original three post-war Canadian journalism schools that has stuck doggedly to the Columbia ideal is the one at Ryerson, which emulates its model program in many ways, not least for its position in the center of the country's media capital, Toronto. From its origins in 1948 as the Ryerson Institute of Technology and an orientation toward printing instruction in Graphic Arts, within a decade the program had re-oriented itself almost exclusively toward journalism, according to Kesterton.<sup>22</sup> Since Ryerson be-

came a degree-granting institution in 1972, the report of the Royal Commission on Newspapers observed in 1981, a prejudice against its graduates as "merely uncultured technicians" had been dispelled.<sup>23</sup> But even after Ryerson graduated in 2001 from polytechnic to full research university status, its journalism school, which enrolls about 550 students a year, retained a relentlessly vocational approach. Its curriculum is almost exclusively devoted to skills training, except for courses on such standard subjects as Media Law and Ethics, and a couple of laudable offerings titled *Covering Diversity* and *Newsroom Leadership*. A joint master's program in Communication and Culture was commenced in 2000 with cross-town York University, but the pair could not be more mismatched, as York's coursework in communication stands at the opposite end of the theory-practice continuum from Ryerson's practical training in journalism skills. The contrast points up Ryerson's position, when it comes to university journalism education, as Columbia of the North. As such it is ripe for reform similar to that seen at its model institution recently, and along the lines of the Royal Commission on Newspapers' 1981 plea:

Instead of turning out narrowly trained journalists, sealed off in their shells producing journalistic pearls, with no concern for the outside world, could not the schools develop a critical look at the news media? To be sure, it would be necessary to combine this with teaching the practical aspects of the craft. There are some important

questions that bear on the future which can be studied in depth only at university.<sup>24</sup>

The Royal Commission saw Canadians as particularly well-positioned to deal with the era of new media technology then emerging due to the “solid foundation of theoretical studies” built in the 1950s and 1960s by Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan of the University of Toronto. Their contributions to understanding media, according to the Royal Commission, “altered mankind’s appreciation of the influence of media.”<sup>25</sup> Medium Theory, as the “technological determinism” of Innis and McLuhan is perhaps now better known in its second generation of development, has instead been advanced mostly by scholars in the United States since then, notably Neil Postman and Joshua Meyrowitz. Incorporating this area of study as a staple of the Canadian journalism school curriculum in order to examine just how “the medium is the message” might be an ideal way to integrate theory with practice, at Ryerson and elsewhere, combining as it does aspects of history, political economy, culture, epistemology, and sociology.

### ***The School of Corporate Journalism***

The stunted growth of university journalism schools in English Canada did not extend beyond the borders of Ontario until the mid-1970s, when Concordia University in Montreal began offering a degree program in the subject. By the end of that decade, four-year journalism schools had opened in both Atlantic Canada, at the University of King’s College in Halifax, and in

western Canada, at the University of Regina. But despite a promise dating from 1980 of a graduate school of journalism at the University of British Columbia, higher education in the subject did not reach the West Coast until 1998. The reason for the delay demonstrates the major problem besetting journalism schools in Canada—a lack of funding—and subsequent events illustrate the perils of seeking that funding from questionable sources.

The sorry state of journalism education in B.C. had long been a subject of derision, as for many years the only courses offered there were in two-year diploma programs, in print journalism at Vancouver City College (now Langara College), and in broadcast journalism at the B.C. Institute of Technology in suburban Vancouver. The 1990 report of an industry task force commissioned to study the situation quipped that “if B.C.’s system of post-secondary journalism education was a baseball team, it would be playing in the minor leagues, occasionally sending a player up to swing a bat in the majors.”<sup>26</sup> Task force co-chair Ron Robbins, founding director of the school of journalism at the University of Regina and a former head of CBC’s national television news, was more blunt in his assessment of B.C.’s system of journalism education, or lack thereof, calling it “something more than a horror story.”<sup>27</sup> Part of the reason for this lack of university-level journalism education in B.C. was perhaps the success of not only the two-year craft schools but also of the local university student newspapers in graduating apprentice journalists with practical experience in the business. The long-publishing *Ubysey* student newspaper at UBC in Vancouver was

noted for producing some of Canada's best journalists, and the cross-town *Peak* at suburban Simon Fraser University, which opened its doors in 1965, also proved a productive training ground.

But the lack of a university-level school of journalism in Canada's westernmost province was a source of some embarrassment, especially after such schools had spread, at least thinly, across the rest of country by the 1980s. The Royal Commission on Newspapers, which was called to investigate the newspaper industry following the simultaneous closure of major dailies by the country's two largest chains, was premature by fifteen years when its report mentioned that journalism education in Canada would soon be enhanced with the opening of a school at UBC in 1983.<sup>28</sup> When a journalism school still hadn't materialized there by 1988, *Vancouver Sun* columnist Jamie Lamb observed that UBC's embracing in principle of journalism as a scholarly subject eight years earlier had come with one important caveat:

The UBC senate agreed to a journalism department if somebody would finance it. UBC made this decision just as the economic recession arrived. . . . There were a lot of jokes about who would finance the school—The MacBlo School of Journalism and Stumpage Fees; The Keg “Hi, I’m Ken And I’ll Be Your Journalist Tonight” Program; Labatt’s Blue School of Journalism—but nobody seemed willing or able to kick in the required funds.<sup>29</sup>

Lamb's column was a spoof in the best tradition of columnist Allan Fotheringham, a UBC and *Vancouver Sun* alumnus, but his analysis of the state of limbo in which the prematurely conceived school of journalism at UBC existed—and of the dilemma facing university administrators—was closer to the truth than most realized at the time. Although the recession of the early 1980s had caused severe cutbacks in higher education and sent public universities in search of private money with which to make up the shortfall, often naming buildings and even courses after donors in exchange, UBC had not gone so far as to name a school or academic department after a corporate sponsor.

It took almost another decade to come up with the money needed to get a school of journalism off the ground at UBC, and when the identity of the mysterious donor was finally announced some were shocked that it was not even a Canadian, but Hong Kong *Standard* publisher Sally Aw Sian. Outrage followed when it was revealed that in exchange for a \$3-million donation to erect a building to house a school of journalism on the UBC campus (and a promise of continued financial support for operating expenses) the university had agreed to name the new school after the Sing Tao newspaper chain she also headed, an edition of which was published daily in Vancouver to serve a growing Chinese-speaking population. “Aren't there limits?” asked UBC political science professor Philip Resnick after a vote in the university's senate failed to prevent the unprecedented corporate christening of the Sing Tao School of Journalism. “Isn't there a point at which one has to say that certain things

are for sale and certain things are not?"<sup>30</sup> Fotheringham was even more pointed in his criticism shortly after the Sing Tao School of Journalism opened its doors in 1998. "What does [Sing Tao] have to do with British Columbia?" he asked on campus in a speech to a reunion marking the 80th anniversary of the *Ubysey*, on which he apprenticed in the early 1950s. "It is goddam ridiculous."<sup>31</sup> Fotheringham followed up from his long-running back-page column in the next issue of Canada's weekly newsmagazine, *Maclean's*:

Why does my alma mater have to go offshore for this loot? If you can teach journalism. . . . If anyone wants a journalism school, or needs one, what's with the locals? Especially since the timber barons made much of their richness by selling newsprint to the sheets that supposedly educate the masses.<sup>32</sup>

The furor flared up again in early 1999 when several Sing Tao executives were jailed for fraud in Hong Kong after an investigation into inflated circulation figures there found advertisers had been overcharged.<sup>33</sup> Aw escaped prosecution despite being named as a co-conspirator, but financial problems forced her to sell a controlling interest in Sing Tao's Canadian newspapers to the Torstar Corp., publisher of Canada's largest daily, the *Toronto Star*. Sing Tao's legal and financial difficulties also prevented it from keeping up its promised funding commitment to UBC, which fact university administrators managed to keep quiet until word leaked out just before the first seven-

teen graduates of the Sing Tao School of Journalism were set to receive their master's degrees. To make up the shortfall in the journalism school's budget, the UBC Board of Governors diverted money from its special purposes funds before approving an annual allocation of \$420,000 from its general operating revenues.<sup>34</sup> The university also stripped the Sing Tao name from the school's title, rendering it the generic School of Journalism. Many of the UBC journalism students learned of the name change only from reading a report in the independent campus newspaper, and in response they formed a student union with the stated aim of gaining greater transparency from administrators.<sup>35</sup> The journalism school's director, Donna Logan, insisted her embattled program was on "sound financial footing, but like every other unit on campus, we would like more money."<sup>36</sup>

### ***Increased Corporate Funding***

One alternative source of needed funding for Canadian journalism schools has been corporate money funneled through the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) and its "Public Benefits" program conceived in the late 1980s to ensure that a portion of the proceeds from corporate takeovers of media companies goes toward worthwhile media projects. One 2001 study found that some of the corporate takeover money had found its way into schools of journalism:

These packages usually emphasize direct programming initiatives, but nevertheless a

number of endowed professorships have resulted. Examples of this so-called “greenmail” are chairs at Ryerson, King’s College, and Regina that were funded by Maclean Hunter in 1988; one at Western [Ontario] established by Rogers Communications in 1995; and chairs endowed in 2000 by the largest private television network, CTV, at Laval and Carleton.<sup>37</sup>

The “greenmail” endowments serve several purposes for media companies—satisfying the demands of the CRTC that they give something back for the public’s benefit, ensuring perpetual brand recognition in the named professorships they create, adding some scholarly luster to the corporate name, and also making the media scholars who should be their closest critics beholden to them for millions of dollars. The latter point was made uncomfortably clear to Desbarats while he was dean of the journalism school at Western Ontario, which benefited from a \$1 million donation from cable television giant Rogers Communication in 1995. “When journalists subsequently asked me to comment on the Rogers takeover of [magazine publisher] Maclean Hunter, all I could do was draw their attention to the donation,” noted Desbarats after leaving UWO. “They understood right away that I had been, to express it crudely, bought.”<sup>38</sup>

The takeover of the CTV television network in the spring of 2000 by telecommunications provider Bell Canada Enterprises (BCE) provided an even greater windfall for Canadian journalism schools, as the Public Benefits package that came along with the \$2.3-

billion deal amounted to \$230 million. Of that, \$2.5 million was earmarked for an endowed chair in media convergence at Ryerson, contingent on the CRTC’s approval of the takeover.<sup>39</sup> As part of the same Public Benefits package, BCE provided another \$3.5 million to fund a Canadian Media Research Consortium set up between several universities, including Ryerson, Laval, and UBC, with a mandate to “focus on the development of Canadian data for use in media planning.”<sup>40</sup> By the end of 2000, convergence would be a hot topic at the CRTC after the BCE-CTV electronic alliance announced a print partnership with Thomson’s *Globe and Mail* and the second major private television network in Canada, CanWest Global, bought up the former Southam newspapers from Conrad Black’s Hollinger Inc. for \$3.5 billion. The resulting fallout in the Public Benefits arena led to the resignation of the head of one journalism advocacy group, which subsequently washed its hands of the money and cut its ties with the Canadian Media Research Consortium.

The moves came after *National Post* columnist Terence Corcoran described the CMRC as “a hitherto unknown group founded for the sole purpose of skimming a graft off the CTV takeover.”<sup>41</sup> The research funding, Corcoran pointed out, effectively recycled the Public Benefits money paid by the acquiring corporation back toward its own private interests. “If the major corporations . . . want research into the media, then surely they can spend their own money up front rather than cash extorted . . . via a regulator.”<sup>42</sup> A series of revelations by *Post* media reporter Matthew Fraser earlier in May 2001 about a letter-writing campaign to the CRTC by academics speaking in

support of the media mega-merger led the Canadian Journalism Foundation to sever its association with the CMRC over allegations of conflict of interest. Corcoran urged the CJF to “leave the academics to wallow in their own petty corruptions” in detailing the conflicts involved if it continued to participate in the Public Benefits program:

That leaves the foundation, set up by major corporations to raise ethical standards in the media, in the position of having participated in the extortion of money from BCE in return for providing a fawning defense of its takeover of CTV. Lining up for part of the pay-off are some of Canada’s leading journalism academics. All of this should make good fodder for the next foundation educational session to help raise the standards of journalistic ethics and reporting.

Just before the CJF scandal broke, however, the question of convergence had been the subject of CRTC hearings following the takeover of the former Southam dailies by CanWest and the *Globe and Mail’s* purchase by BCE. CanWest particularly gained a multimedia advantage in many Canadian cities, including Vancouver, where it suddenly owned both daily newspapers, most of the community press, and the two largest television stations.<sup>43</sup> The CRTC was able to pay close scrutiny to the arrangement, however, as the seven-year broadcast licenses of CanWest and CTV were due for renewal less than a year after the media mega-mergers. Many consumer advocates urged the CRTC to require an edi-

torial “firewall” between CTV and CanWest’s television news operations and those of their newly-acquired newspapers in order to protect whatever diversity remained in the Canadian news media. Some academics, however, argued against any such safeguard being placed on the broadcasters’ news operations—instead testifying that news media convergence would be in the public’s best interest—and the BCE and Global broadcasting licenses were extended without restriction. Fred Fletcher, a professor at York University, which is a founding member of the CMRC in its graduate collaboration with Ryerson’s school of journalism, told the CRTC hearings that rather than decreasing the diversity of voices, media convergence instead provides the “potential for greater journalistic competition” through collaboration.<sup>44</sup> UBC’s Donna Logan went even further in singing the praises of convergence to the CRTC—too far by far for some:

One of the things that has always disturbed me about journalism in Canada is that there were too many reporters chasing so few stories. . . . Converged journalism offers an opportunity to break out of that mould by freeing up reporters to do stories that are not being done and are vital to democratic discourse.<sup>45</sup>

Veteran columnist Claire Hoy was one of those most astounded by Logan’s testimony. “Is she serious?” wrote the long-time political commentator. “They’re not interested in freeing up reporters to chase stories they’re not doing now. They’re only interested in freeing up their bottom lines by doing

the same work with fewer reporters.”<sup>46</sup> Two months later, CanWest announced it was making a \$500,000 endowment to the School of Journalism at UBC. “We’re going to become the premier news organization in the country,” said company president Leonard Asper on a campus visit. “We’re going to invest in the nuts and bolts of that by starting with journalism. We believe in the principles of journalism and their enhancement.”<sup>47</sup> After a subsequent series of ethical controversies cast doubt on Asper’s statement, Logan publicly played down the extent of CanWest’s influence over Canadian journalism, going on local radio in mid-2002 to say that “the situation in Vancouver is one of the things that gets overblown, because we actually are in a very competitive situation here.”<sup>48</sup>

Also testifying before the CRTC in support of CanWest Global’s license renewal application in 2001 was Peter Desbarats, who as dean emeritus of journalism at Western Ontario had been named Maclean Hunter Chair of Communications Ethics at Ryerson the year before. “Trying to build a ‘firewall’ between print and TV newsrooms is an exercise in futility,” he later wrote in opposing what he called “state intervention in Canadian newspaper newsrooms.”<sup>49</sup>

## ***Discussion***

The development of journalism education at Canadian universities has been the subject of little research and, as a result, perhaps inadequate discussion. While Canada was the first country outside the United States to adopt university-level journalism education on a significant scale, its development has lagged behind that in the United States significantly in terms of both

scale and scope, although arguably not in terms of quality.<sup>50</sup> As a result, media criticism in Canada has suffered from a lack of academic credibility, along with the “constant shortage of historical perspective and reliable data” noted by Desbarats.<sup>51</sup> While many of the issues of public debate in journalism are largely identical in Canada to those in the United States, and thus much of the data and discussion emanating from U.S. journalism schools is applicable to and of assistance in the Canadian context, there are also significant differences between the countries in terms of politics and culture, not to mention media. As a result, the recent expansion of university-level journalism education there is badly needed, although perhaps not as much as is some consideration of the cost at which it has been gained.

The question of balance in journalism school curriculum, in Canada as in the United States and other countries, will likely never be resolved to the satisfaction of all those with a stake in journalism education. The nature of journalism as a professional endeavor requires that students be acquainted with the fundamentals of its practice, yet in order to earn a place alongside established university disciplines, journalism schools must go well beyond vocational instruction and ensure that their graduates are made familiar with the accumulated knowledge in their field of study. In determining an appropriate balance between skills training and more conceptual coursework, however, schools of journalism must first decide for whose benefit they even exist—the student’s in gaining entry into a preferred career, the media’s in recruiting trained technicians and content providers, or

society's in ensuring that the higher ideals of journalism in providing public service are met. In some ways the aims of industry are antithetical to those of higher education, as Blanchard and Christ point out.

Despite substantial occupational, organizational, and societal pressures, the liberally educated professional has the ability to reason independently and possesses a capacity for "moral imagination" to get around major constraints and act on principle, rather than to rely unthinkingly on occupational or company conventions, policies and rules of procedure.<sup>52</sup>

The question of industry influence over journalism school coursework, however, is overshadowed in importance by a larger but intertwined issue. The traditional role of the press to act as a watchdog on powerful institutions has become muted by the increased concentration of its ownership into one of the most powerful institutions of all. Since concentration of press ownership has long been at or near the highest worldwide level in Canada, it was perhaps inevitable that this country is where the use of acquired media power in political persuasion would become most apparent. As concentrated corporate ownership of the most influential medium, politically—daily newspapers—approached a theoretical maximum in Canada decades ago, due to the successive failure of government inquiries in the 1970s and 1980s to instigate reform, the only way to further extend the influence of owners will be through convergence of newspapers

with electronic media. While newspaper ownership has always gone unregulated in Canada under traditional notions of "freedom of the press," whether cross-media ownership should be allowed there remains a question for the CRTC, as broadcasting is by contrast to newspapers an area of longstanding regulatory concern.

## **Conclusions**

The limiting of journalism education to providing a mere training function for media industries has become increasingly unacceptable for many universities, as witnessed by the movement toward reform that became manifested most publicly at Columbia in 2002. As a result, it can be expected that many journalism schools in Canada will follow that influential example by offering a more academically rigorous curriculum. But a larger question of influence emerges from the corporate funding of journalism schools, raising the issue of in whose interest university educators should be expected not only to operate, but also to advocate. As Desbarats noted from experience, the independence granted to faculty by universities through tenure can become "rapidly eroded" by a different kind of dependence—on industry through the need for fundraising. "Unavoidably I gave up something in return," he concluded after accepting a corporate endowment. "No one should pretend, least of all university presidents, that this experience, multiplied many times and repeated over the years, doesn't damage universities in the long run."<sup>53</sup>

The Public Benefits program set up by the CRTC seems to be an ideal source of needed funding for higher

education in journalism, but as long as media companies are able to decide which university programs will get the money, the question of corporate influence will remain of concern. Similarly, the “data for use in media planning” obtained by bodies established with this Public Benefits funding, such as the Canadian Media Research Consortium, will likewise tend to serve private interests rather than advancing understanding of the political and journalistic implications of increased corporate control of media. Ensuring that the Public Benefits program indeed operates to the benefit of the public and not toward private ends will require an arm’s-length relationship from funding corporations that sees the money allocated in an impartial way. Only through an independent body administering the money can the question of influence over journalism education in Canada be resolved and any appearance of conflict of interest be avoided. At the same time this insulation from corporate influence will also help to more equitably decide the question of balance in curriculum between theory and practice at university journalism schools in Canada.

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