

1. How Much is Enough?

Communications in Canada is a big business – a billion-dollar business, as a matter of fact, in terms of advertising revenue alone. Does this mean that the news is controlled by Big Business? And if so, how is that affecting the public interest? Finding answers to these questions has been the Committee's main job.

Before we could begin to answer it, though, we had to analyse *to what extent* the media are controlled by various kinds of groups. Strangely enough, no exhaustive comprehensive study of this subject had ever been made in Canada – perhaps because businessmen in the communications field tend to move faster than statisticians.

Accordingly, the Committee commissioned Hopkins, Hedlin Limited, a Toronto-based consultancy firm, to take a long and detailed look at the economics of the communications business in Canada. Their report, which we are publishing as a companion volume to this one, was a massive undertaking. This chapter and the next are a summary of the findings.

We have a few words of caution regarding the data contained in these two chapters: they have nothing to do with people. In the interests of statistical consistency, Hopkins, Hedlin had to make some extremely rigid distinctions between what constitutes a "group" and what constitutes an "independent" owner of a media outlet. But these distinctions bear no direct relation to editorial performance. Some of Canada's best newspapers are owned by groups; some of the worst are owned by independents. The obvious point we're trying to make is this: in the following pages, which analyse the extent of group versus independent ownership, we're not talking about Good Guys and Bad Guys. We're simply describing the ownership situation as it exists, in statistical terms that are wholly consistent but sometimes rather unreal.

To determine the extent of concentration of ownership in the mass media, we limited our study to the 103 Canadian communities where a daily news-