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### HANDBOOK EDITOR 1981

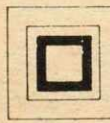
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# The inside scoop on Canadian newspapers

**Book Review: Canadian Newspapers, The Inside Story,**  
 Edited by Walter Stewart,  
 Hurtig, \$14.95.  
 by Martin Cohn

**Canadian Newspapers, The Inside Story**, was about to go to press when two of Canada's most venerable dailies folded suddenly in a deadly double play. As editor Walter Stewart notes wryly in his introduction, "events have overtaken the printing process."

That's not new to the business: Breaking news often comes in past deadline. But in the grand tradition by which editors and pressmen scramble to replate an outdated front page that has left the composing room and gone to press, Stewart's concluding remarks find their place in a brief addendum-tagged onto his introduction at the last minute.

In retrospect, the dual demise of the Thomson chain's Ottawa Journal and Southam's Winnipeg Tribune, last August, may well have been a self-fulfilling prophesy. As Stewart notes in the original portion of his introduction, newspaper chains often give foundering dailies a brief reprieve; "But no Canadian should deceive himself that newspaper proprietors are sentimentalists; they are businessmen, and the moment it makes sense to amalgamate and homogenize the contents of the chains, they will do so. They always have, and they always will." And so it goes.

On writing of the chains, one is reminded of how the Canadian Press Stylebook treats the subject—in two terse sentences. Southam and Thomson, two of CP's largest customers, are newspaper "groups," the guide informs us, not "chains." Touchy.

But what of the book? It's hard to review **Canadian**

**Newspapers** objectively when one has an abiding passion for newspapers, and it's easy enough to see that this book may be of limited appeal. But for the hardcore news-hound, this book will be a delight—pure and simple. Those with even a cursory interest in newspapers will find it revealing and enlightening. It is engagingly written by veteran newsmen, spirited, hysterically funny in parts and outrageously irreverent. At all times though, it cares deeply.

Local residents will find Harry Flemming's account of the Halifax Herald compelling, depressing, vindicating and in a way, pleasurable. The reader may find himself just a little less frustrated when he next picks up The Chronicle-Herald or The Mail Star, if only because the incomprehensible has at last been unequivocally explained—and exposed. The book is worth buying for the chapter on the Herald alone.

Readers from other parts will find chapters on the Newfoundland and New Brunswick papers equally absorbing; and most will find the chapters on the nation's major dailies, The Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star, and The Montreal Gazette, simply fascinating.

The Globe and Mail, as might be expected, gets a triple-A rating. Writer Michael Enright describes The Globe as "a writer's newspaper," where reporters are spared the brutish axe of cavalier copy editors and rambunctious re-write men. The Globe, says Enright, "conveyed the feeling that if only 14 people across the country actually read the paper, it would still be the most influential journal in Canada."

Editor Stewart saves his

wrath for the much-maligned, yet secretly savoured Toronto Star. His critique is devastating, as he describes in excruciating detail the paper's foibles and festering internal dissension. Why he stuck it out for nine years at The Star, though, Stewart doesn't say.

The chapters on the Winnipeg and Vancouver papers are absolute gems; a chapter on the resurgent Edmonton Journal, while flaccidly written, gives the paper high marks, making it the only paper besides The Globe to get a positive rating.

Stewart's book also includes an excellent and highly literate chapter on foreign reporting by The Toronto Star's once-peripatetic George Bain; a chapter on French journalism in Quebec, by the highly respected Dominique Clift; an acerbic account of the Parliamentary Press Gallery by Roy MacGregor; and a gorgeously funny look at The Canadian Press news agency, by Kevin Doyle.

Stewart's introduction will prove surprisingly enlightening to those unfamiliar with the behind-the-scenes workings of newspapers. It is harshly critical, yet unquestionably devoted and exceptionally informative.

As an amalgamation of more than a dozen unrelated contributions on newspapers spread coast to coast, some readers will find **Canadian Newspapers** disjointed.

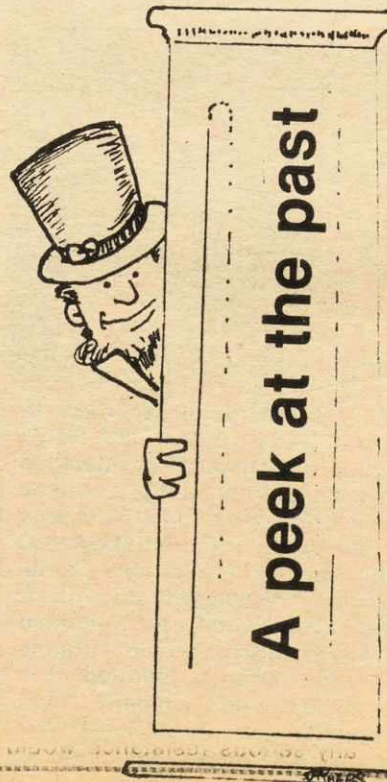
The book fails to weave a coherent, comprehensive and satisfying overview; but its shortcomings are outweighed by the myriad succulent morsels it leaves us. It is a spirited companion in these turbulent times for the printing press, even if the chapters on the Winnipeg and Ottawa papers are out of date.

## Ladies at Dal—How absurd!

by John Cairns

"Ladies studying at Dal-housie? How absurd! It must never be allowed." This appears to have been the feeling of Dalhousie authorities in 1876. Not everyone, however, agreed. An article in **The Dalhousie Gazette** of May 31, 1876, defends the fairer sex and advocates its presence on campus. Let's scan the author's arguments:

"A PLEA FOR THE LADIES  
 If it will not cause the hair of our academic dignitaries to assume an attitude perpendicular to their respective scalps, we would like to suggest a slight alteration in the status of Dalhousie. Nothing less than the admission of ladies to our venerable Halls. Such an alteration may, at the first blush, strike some persons as radical in the extreme. Yet on carefully considering it, we can see no valid objections to it, and very many good reasons in its



favor.

jections against 'mixed' colleges are levelled against boarding colleges. Dalhousie is not a boarding college, and the proposed change is therefore not exposed to the arguments based upon any danger to manners and morals that might possibly result from the too great proximity of the sexes. . . .

Turn now to the arguments in favor of ladies' admission. We lay it down as a principle scarcely requiring argument that our young women should receive the best education that can possibly be attained by them. . . . If any persons are still so stupid, so rooted and grounded in shortsighted bigotry, as to deny our premises we pass them by; the persons whom we are most nearly addressing are our college authorities, and among them, we trust, no such person can be found.

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