

single exception, in the same kind of hands. They all belong to the Canadian business community and they all do what that community wants. And if Canadian businessmen assume an automatic, infallible identity between their views and those of every right-thinking Canadian, they are hardly unique among the oligarchs of history."

This gets us closer to the second question into which this Committee was established to enquire. As well as being commissioned to study ownership patterns of the media, we were also asked to consider "their influence and impact on the Canadian public." And this leads us inexorably to a consideration of content – the kind of newspapers we read, the kind of programmes we hear and see. It also leads us into a discussion – and here we tread with extreme diffidence – into the endlessly entertaining subject of *What's Wrong With The Press*.

Plainly, *something* is wrong. Judgements like this are risky, but it seems to us that there has never been a period in the nation's history when the press has been so distrusted, so disrespected, so disbelieved. "Our profession has moved far from the days of the yellow press and the alcoholic city room," Lee Hills, editor of the *Detroit Free Press*, recently told an audience of American journalists. "And yet, despite this great progress and new knowledge and greater dedication, I believe we are in danger of losing our most important asset: the friendship of our readers." His remarks apply with at least equal force in Canada.

*There is something about the media that is turning people off.* What is it? It's certainly not "sensationalism," because most newspapers abandoned that shrill technique a generation ago, for the excellent reason that it failed to sell newspapers. It's certainly not "bias." Most consequential news outlets in this country are objective to the point of tedium in their political coverage. And it's certainly not "superficiality," since the news coverage we receive today is more complete, more sophisticated, more exhaustive, than ever before.

No, it's something more basic than the failings which all these archaic weapon-words describe. It's got something to do with society itself, and the way it's changing, and the way people react to it. If the media turn people off, it's because society at large turns them off. If newspapers are losing friends, it's part of the same process by which Parliament is losing friends, and the courts, and the corporations, and the schools, and the churches.

We hesitate to wade too deeply into the swamps of sociology and McLuhanism, but it does seem clear that all the conflict, the hassle, the demonstrations, the social anguish which currently surround us have at least one common characteristic: they're all concerned with people versus institutions. From China's cultural revolution to Czechoslovakia's counterrevolution, from the high-school sit-in to the Red Power movement, this theme is a constant.

The media, precisely because they *are* institutions, are involved in this conflict – and they are involved as participants. One of the truly depressing