

## THE MAN IN THE MIDDLE

Senator Keith Davey thinks of himself as a dedicated public servant. He has put together a good track record as a consistent and conspicuous champion of the little man and of causes in the interest of the Canadian people. In this regard, he has earned points from a variety of performances — as national Liberal Party organizer, as one of Prime Minister Pearson's closest advisors, as the 53-day commissioner of the Canadian Football League and currently as chairman of the special Senate committee on mass media.

Although he probably has little fondness for his memories, perhaps nothing better characterizes the Davey approach than his head-knocking bout with the team owners of the CFL. He accepted the football czar job because, in his own words, he was a "sports nut" and because he felt the fans deserved a fairer shake.

Even as commissioner-elect, Senator Davey was leading with his chin. Sports-writers loved him for his off-the-cuff comments about the way the league was being operated and, what's more, he had plenty of ideas for making improvements. He freely discussed with the press, radio and television — and anyone else who cared to listen — such long-standing fan gripes as scheduling, TV coverage, league expansion, over-stress on defensive play and the organization of the Grey Cup festivities. It quickly became evident that Senator Davey had little reverence for sacred cows, particularly within the closed shop of Canadian professional sports.

For the team owners, he was poison. He was behaving so naively as to take seriously the terms of reference outlined to him. How dare this upstart question the neat family compact which had been so carefully nurtured by his predecessors! So, exactly 53 days after accepting the appointment as foot-

ball commissioner, Senator Davey tendered his resignation. The owners had failed to give him a vote of confidence at a Montreal meeting. The nation's football fans were the big losers in the charade.

The editorial columns of *The Montreal Star* noted the passing of the senator's brief but turbulent football career with a short obituary entitled "No Ombudsman." It is worth quoting in entirety.

*Senator Keith Davey must have established at least one record in holding on to his job as the supposedly all-powerful commissioner of the Canadian Football League for just 53 days. He learned something in the process, however: that there's no place for an ombudsman in the highly-organized business of modern spectacles based on sport. His big mistake, apparently, was in agreeing with complaints of people who spend a lot of money to keep the league going. He should, obviously, have ignored subscriber views and held the big-time promoters to be omnipotent — as they are where his job is, or was, concerned.*

The editors of *Content* sincerely hope that Senator Davey's inquiry into the country's mass media will not meet a similar fate. There most certainly is a place for an ombudsman in the highly-organized business of gathering and disseminating news in Canada.

His all-party committee of 15 senators started public hearings in Ottawa last December; they ended in April. Dozens of briefs were presented and a research staff has been compiling additional data on the state of the media. The report now is being written and is expected to be completed this month or in November. Its length will be approximately 1,200 pages.

### continued from page 9

Winnipeg. On the other hand, we had an FP paper which was *The Free Press*. Of course, we asked for written briefs from a great many papers across the country, but it was impossible, and indeed pointless, to accommodate every single paper. What would have been the point of listening to every last Thomson daily newspaper? We had the Thomson corporate people here and, as I recall, we had the Prince Albert paper, the Peterborough paper, and the Sudbury paper.

So in devising the list, the Vancouver Sun was asked for a written brief, but they were not required to make an oral presentation. They were very upset! This was amusing to us because when we were drawing up our list at the beginning, publishers were contracting me, either directly or through friends, to say that "surely we don't have to appear." As soon as the hearings started the shoe immediately moved to the other foot.

**CONTENT:** Would a follow-up examination a year or two later of those who appeared — the papers, the stations and even the journalists' associations, to see if they were applying to their own surroundings and their own functions those principles they described so beautifully before the committee — be a useful continuing function of Senate?

**DAVEY:** As you may know better than I do, there are certain newspapers in which individual working journalists or groups of working journalists have used the committee and the presentations by their publishers to follow up pretty hard on certain of their own suggestions and requests.

**CONTENT:** There is a criticism of the committee along the line that it showed considerable bias in appearing to have a predetermined set of good guys and bad guys. What seemed to be happening was that the

good guys came in and presented their briefs and came off as great fellows while the bad guys came off worse villains than the public ever imagined they were before. Is this something that came out of the press coverage of the hearings or is this simply a particular awareness of situations that existed in these areas?

**DAVEY:** To the extent that it was humanly possible, we tried to approach the thing without any preconceived set of good guys and bad guys; as chairman of the committee I was unaware of it. I suppose the most obvious example would be Mr. Irving and the confrontation he had with Senator McElman. However, I think that situation has spoken for itself. Obviously, we will be talking of Mr. Irving in the report. Whatever the situation, whatever animosity existed between Senator McElman and Mr. Irving, I feel Mr. Irving had a fair hearing. Now, I would like you to identify who specifically were the good guys and the bad guys in this terminology — I am just assuming that Mr. Irving was one of the bad guys.

**CONTENT:** The bad guys who come to mind obviously include Irving, but also Dennis and Daley in Halifax and, the publishers of the London Free Press.

**DAVEY:** As far as Halifax is concerned, I certainly don't think Graham Dennis came before the committee in the guise of a "bad guy." I didn't make any reference to Halifax in my original speech in the Senate. If some people regarded Mr. Dennis as a bad guy, then I guess Mr. Dennis painted himself into that particular corner. Really, I don't think in terms of bad guys and good guys and certainly Dennis didn't come before us as a bad guy. Some people have suggested to me that he didn't fare well in his presentation, but the questioning of Mr. Dennis was certainly no tougher than that directed at the *Montreal Star*, for example.



Senator Keith Davey

**CONTENT:** Some people have suggested that the London Free Press, somewhat unfairly, took a heavy pounding.

**DAVEY:** I was particularly interested in the Free Press hearings featured quite an extensive exchange between Mr. Blackburn (the paper's owner) and some of us. I can say right now that the London Free Press organization collectively was one of the most co-operative groups to appear before the committee. They were here several times for their various interests. Mr. Blackburn himself showed great interest in the committee. We asked for a great deal of confidential information from the Free Press, all of which we received. The co-operation we had from them was first class and our relationship was a healthy and happy one. Now having said all this, we are going to say some interesting things about these various organizations but I think it will be apparent in the report that we weren't dealing in terms of good guys and bad guys. Some of the people who may be regarded as bad guys, in the report may look like good guys and some of the people you hadn't thought of as being bad guys may look less attractive than you imagined.

**CONTENT:** Would you hazard just one indication of what will be in the report aside from commenting on Time and Reader's Digest?

**DAVEY:** Well, I don't have to because I know what is in the report. It has been written so I won't even comment on that. I guess the only question which would interest you is are we or aren't we . . .

**CONTENT:** Another article to appear in the first issue of *Content* is an analysis and review of the impact of Spiro Agnew's criticisms of the press and broadcasting industry in the U.S. I guess you don't consider yourself as being that kind of champion or critic in the Canadian context?

**DAVEY:** Not only do I not consider myself the same kind of person. I think that the mood of our committee, the direction of our work and the thrust of our report is very much in the opposite direction. Agnew (mind I have said this before) wants to remove power from the hands of journalists and publishers in New York and turn it over to the government in Washington. We don't want to do anything like that. We want to return this power to the people. The daily newspaper act or the preservation of newspapers act which was just passed in the United States demonstrates where Mr. Agnew's sympathies lie. He is clearly in favor of concentration of the press, provided it is concentration in the right hands. That is a far cry from the position I take.

## Davey

continued

terms of chain owners. We made up a composition decided, for example, would have a Southern have a morning paper. **CONTENT:** If Toronto gear as the heroes and Halifax, Saint J of Prairie cities as v due to the resourc respective organizations.

**DAVEY:** This is one of discussing in the rep to stop and think ab where the resources needed. They are presen

**CONTENT:** This is one in developing our ow the media through the are working with and zine is but one of th ous centralization a resources, therefore pe erped regions of the c served well by the m what thoughts might b from the hearings w much about what you ay?

**DAVEY:** Only to agr we will be talking ab You have put your which I think is terrib

**CONTENT:** Are yo amount of feedback from the working country?

**DAVEY:** I think we feedback from the w we did not find anyth new. We didn't re shattering revelation. did find a great deal nness and a great dea state of journalism i doubt about that.

**CONTENT:** Eric We ating comment abo onalism within th ractised in Canada. big yahoo syndrom basis of your conta rrying things a bit ing at, I believe, is th and even the men a end to have a ver readership. So that in of what the reader end to have a low gence.

**DAVEY:** Honestly, moving into an are close to things we a but just to answer Mr. Wells has reall needs to make a poi of the people the jou on of aren't really jo

**CONTENT:** But in the media across thi ng exceptions both mediocrity reflected that is of deep con Will the report refle **DAVEY:** I don't wa but I will simply sa an answer concerni hope that it is well c

**CONTENT:** I think people who are int urnalism in Cana comparisons with t ries, Britain for e done among my fri s much to be desir should start treati munications as a p prepared to subsi other resources. H ask. "Are you goi idly for magazin