

pers that I believe have been improving over the last five or six years, but generally speaking I think they are not.

I think it is a mistake because only the very bad—you know, there will always be a public who will want to know what calibre shotgun Mr. so-and-so used to kill his mistress, or his wife, or his mother-in-law, but I don't think this is the future of the written press in this country. I think that the future is in giving better information, more serious and better checking and verification of all kinds, than television or radio can make. I don't see any indication that, generally speaking, newspapers have taken this orientation. I might be wrong on this but it is my personal opinion.

The Chairman: Well, I think it would be unfair to ask you to become more specific on that question, but I do have to ask you about one specific organization and I am sure that it is a question that you would expect this morning.

I am sure the committee would be most interested in your comment on the Canadian Press news service.

Mr. Pelletier: Yes. I hesitate to give you an opinion on this because to assess a press agency, you really have to be working in a newspaper and seeing the output on the wire every day.

I would say that while I was in the trade I saw Canadian Press making tremendous progress in many directions. First of all, when I entered journalism it hadn't come to the minds of those in charge of Canadian Press that there were French language newspapers in Canada, for instance. The only thing they were ready to do was to reduce the price you paid for the wire and let you make your translation yourself.

Just on this realm of activity, we came to the absurd situation where you had an English-speaking reporter, for instance—I have a particular case in mind—covering a French-spoken address by the Premier of Quebec. This report of a French speech was sent in English to Canadian Press which had a translator to translate it back into French, and this is exactly how it operated. We eventually got rid of this nonsense to a large extent.

The only thing I could say now about Canadian Press is that for world coverage, CP, to the best of my knowledge, has to rely on foreign agencies much more than they should. This might be a question. You know, they might have very good reasons to do that—maybe it is because the dailies don't want to pay more, or maybe they can't pay more, I don't know. But we have to rely on American agencies, for instance, far too much.

The Chairman: Well, you have anticipated my next question. I was going to ask you about the proportion of news originating from non-Canadian sources, so why don't you just proceed?

Mr. Pelletier: I would like to give you two examples of that. For instance, in the paper I used to work with we had all the wires, including Agence France-Presse and Reuters and everything we could buy. We would come with all the copy and give it to one man on a particular event and said "Try to make a balanced view of all these conflicting views". This is a way of doing it, but we could find a better one, I am sure.

The example I would like to give you is, for instance, the very poor information you get on the whole area of Latin America. When I was an editor I made it a point of having everything that came from the whole of Latin America on my desk every morning for two months, because I was personally interested in Latin America and I had a hypothesis that the U.S. acted as a screen between Latin America and Canada. I could see that such was the case. Since I am still interested in Latin America very much, I look at the newspapers and I find very little in it, although it is in our hemisphere and although everybody knows there will be about 600 million people there by the 21st century. You know, it is a vital area of the world and communications are difficult there. I can see some of the reasons, but I think that it is really one area of the world where we have no direct feedback on what is happening or what Canada is trying to do there, and I think this is part of the weakness of the Canadian press.

Now, I am not blaming anyone because I am too removed from the field now to know whether it could be better; but I know that when I was an editor, I had to rely on Agence France-Presse on the one side and the Americans on the other which gave very little. Major newspapers like the *New York Times* used to run pretty adequate coverage of Latin America. I found out over the last five or six years they are slipping; they are not as good as they used to be.

A few years ago, if you wanted balanced information on Latin America, you had to rely on the Spanish edition of *The Economist*. I don't know if it is still being published or not, or whether it was a going concern—I never could know because I had no contacts with the people. This is a major weakness, I think, in our system and I don't know, frankly, how it could be corrected, but I think it is a situation which should be corrected.