

them are controlled or partially owned by groups. Of Canada's 116 daily newspapers, 77 (or 66.4 per cent) are controlled or partially owned by groups. Of the 97 TV stations (including some relay stations), 47 (or 48.5 per cent) are controlled by groups. Of 272 radio stations, groups control or own a substantial interest in 129 (or 47.4 per cent).

The patterns of concentration take several forms. There are publishing and/or broadcasting chains which control media outlets in several communities. There are local groups which control some or all of the competing media in a given community. There are some groups which fall into both categories – they own newspapers or broadcasting stations in several different places, *and* own print and electronic outlets within a single community. There are also groups – the loose word for them is conglomerates – which have interests in various media outlets that are subordinate to their other investments. With the expansion of cable TV, the growth of suburban weekly newspapers, and the development of new media technologies, these patterns of group ownership could very easily become more intricate and pervasive in the future than they are right now.

But the trend towards fewer and fewer owners of our sources of news and information is already well entrenched. There are only five cities in the country where genuine competition between newspapers exists; and in all five cities, some or all of these competing dailies are owned by chains. Seventy years ago there were thirty-five Canadian communities with two or more daily newspapers; today there are only fifteen – and in five of these cities, the two dailies are published by the same owner.

Of Canada's eleven largest cities, chains enjoy monopolies in seven. The three biggest newspaper chains – Thomson, Southam, and F.P. – today control 44.7 per cent of the circulation of all Canadian daily newspapers; a dozen years ago, the total was only 25 per cent. The conventional wisdom still cherishes the image of the "independent" owner-editor, a tough but kindly old curmudgeon who somehow represented the collective conscience of his community. If this image ever had validity, it hasn't now. Your average daily newspaper editor is the hired branch-manager for a group of shareholders who typically live somewhere else. Fully 77 per cent of the circulation of all Canadian newspapers is now controlled by these chains, a situation which a frontier journalist like Bob Edwards, editor of the *Calgary Eye Opener*, would have found incredible.

In broadcasting, ownership is far more diversified. But the trend towards concentration is present, and it is accelerating. Nearly a dozen TV stations that once enjoyed local control or substantial local participation have come under the control of major broadcasting groups.

But suppose there *are* fewer and fewer owners: is this necessarily a bad thing? There is a lot of evidence to suggest exactly the opposite. Chain ownership has rescued more than one newspaper from extinction. Chain ownership has turned a number of weeklies into dailies. Chain ownership has