

independently owned newspapers will come on the market in due course because of the tax implications now facing Canadian business owners.”

This tendency could – but not necessarily – have the effect of reducing the number of “diverse and antagonistic sources” from which we derive our view of the public world. It could also – but not necessarily – lead to a situation whereby the news (which we must start thinking of as a public resource, like electricity) is controlled and manipulated by a small group of individuals and corporations whose view of What’s Fit to Print may closely coincide with What’s Good for General Motors, or What’s Good for Business, or What’s Good for my Friends Down at The Club. There is some evidence, in fact, which suggests that we are in that boat already.

We have, then, this natural conflict – which isn’t terribly unique in any democracy – between what the society needs and what the society can afford. The purpose of this Committee was not to ascertain whether concentration of media ownership is a Good Thing or a Bad Thing. *Of course* it is a bad thing; in a land of bubblegum forests and lollipop trees, every man would have his own newspaper or broadcasting station, devoted exclusively to programming that man’s opinions and perceptions.

In the real world, we must try to strike balances. How do you reconcile the media’s tendency towards monopoly with society’s need for diversity? And if it turns out that there really is no way we can fight this monopolistic trend, is there any way we can still ensure “diverse and antagonistic sources” of information within a diminishing number of media? Which leads us to all kinds of related questions, such as whether we are getting the kind of information service we can afford, or merely the kind we deserve.

These are tricky questions, and the Committee does not presume to have come up with definitive answers for all of them, or even most of them. We would stress, in fact, that this isn’t exactly what governments are supposed to be *for*. Further on in this report we suggest some measures which governments could take to encourage the development of a freer, healthier, more vigorous, more Canadian and – yes – a more *diverse* press. But in the same breath, we must recognize that all the medicare legislation in the world, by itself, won’t cure a single case of dandruff. To a very limited extent, government can be useful in amending some of the ground-rules under which the mass-media game is played. But it is only the players themselves – the public, the owners of the media, and most crucially of all the journalists – who can improve the quality and relevance of the product.

The extent to which the concentration of media ownership affects this quality is one of the chief concerns of this report. Accordingly, let’s state the situation in the baldest possible terms by looking at the 103 Canadian communities where a daily newspaper is published or a primary TV station is located.

Within these 103 communities there are 485 “units of mass communication” – daily newspapers or radio or TV stations – and slightly over half of