

although it is certainly not possible to see all details, one can keep within the boundaries of a certain concept. I shall give a current example. A Canadian newspaper, at the present time, can decide, for example, to be separatist or federalist, can decide to be nationalist, and can decide to be absolutely indifferent to certain national values, in every case; and this constitutes a general line of thought. It is perfectly legitimate, in my opinion, for the director of a newspaper to tell his editorial writers at any time: "Here is the newspaper's orientation, this is it." It is a matter of discussing it with them if it is to work out. It is necessary that they discuss it with them.

Mr. Fortier: The owner and the board of directors owe themselves the right to have the last word?

Mr. Pelletier: They owe themselves the last word, that is to say that they have the authority, and you cannot deny it to them. But, I think that for the smooth functioning of a newspaper, if professional newspapermen are not concerned with establishing a proposition such as this, you will have an extremely rigid position, on the one hand, or perhaps without significance because, once again, the newspaperman's trade, in my opinion, is a profession and you cannot, it seems to me, decide very fundamental things in a realistic fashion without involving people of the profession with people who are in management.

Mr. Fortier: Having said this, and to use your example, you accept that the owner in the name of the board of directors, after discussion with the editorial team, says: "Here is my political position." Let us say: "The political position of my newspaper is federalism. Editorialize, with as many shades of difference as you wish, but do not depart from this fundamental position."

Mr. Pelletier: In the present organization of the press, I think this is legitimate. And it is inevitable that it turns out like this because, obviously, even if I said that I am against this, I would not be very realistic; because it is the board of directors which pays. But, what I do object to, because it is impractical, is that the board of directors then claims the right to slip its opinions into each of the editorials and to publish or establish a meticulous and fastidious censorship. This is not a matter of ethics or of morality, it is strictly a practical matter of operation. It cannot work if power is not delegated to someone who supervises, if you will, the putting into practice of this editorial policy.

Mr. Fortier: It is not a matter of force?

Mr. Pelletier: What I find, however, and what I consider invalid, is that a board of directors would presume to tell an editorial room: "On this subject, you will publish no information." For example, very few people will recall, because it is too old, that a certain great newspaper had a senator as its chairman of the board of directors—the moment is right to speak of it here—and for 25 years there was never a mention of the Senate in this newspaper, neither good nor bad. I find this absolutely reprehensible. A newspaper is not a business like others; it has social obligations to the public, that is to keep it informed and to inform it completely and honestly.

Mr. Fortier: At the information level?

Mr. Pelletier: At the information level. I do not admit any kind of interference in this sense. You do not speak of this, you do not speak of that.

Mr. Fortier: What do you think of a President of a radio station—perhaps a hypothetical question—who would instruct his employees not to mention in news bulletins the name of a political party presently offering candidates in Quebec?

Mr. Pelletier: I find this unacceptable. But not more so than I would understand or admit that the board of directors of a newspaper should tell its newspapermen: "You will not speak of such an event."

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The Chairman: Well, to get back to these guidelines, I think the next two questions follow very naturally from this discussion. Number 10: Should the mass media lead public opinion or follow it?

Mr. Pelletier: First and foremost, I think that there are very popular misconceptions about how a newspaper makes its influence felt on the public. I myself am of the school that the information part of a newspaper is much more powerful in leading public opinion by the information it imparts. I would refer to Walter Lippmann who wrote in "Public Opinion" around 1921 or 1922—in fact I think it is the book that made him famous—that no people can govern itself except in the exact measure of the amount of information that it can absorb. So I think that a newspaper influences public opinion much more by the information it gets to the public than by the editorial it writes and publishes. So I think that in the information part of the newspaper, the ques-