

April 1, 1975, Dominique Clift, in an article headlined "Quebec considers press curbs," said in part:

For more than five years various committees of the national assembly have been studying the growing concentration in the ownership of communications media as well as the public's right to unbiased information. The issue is a serious one in Quebec because the French cultural and economic environment is somewhat constrained, so that it becomes relatively easy for anyone to acquire a monopoly position in this field.

The article goes on to say there has been considerable pressure for government action in this field and that the premier has promised to introduce a law which will take care of the situation, that is, the concentration of power with respect to the press. The article goes on to say:

Current plans are to introduce the legislation some time in May or June. While the bill has not yet been drafted for presentation in the national assembly, the government is leaning toward the idea of making information media fall under the definition of "public services." This would place them under the jurisdiction of the Public Services Board which would grant accreditations or permits, and implement government directives on ownership and possibly other matters as well. No matter how straightforward and innocent these controls might be, suspicions that the government is trying to muzzle the press are very quick to be aroused.

The article expresses the views of a journalist who is alarmed about the suggestion that the provincial government may try to muzzle the press in that province. In the *Toronto Star* of May 17 we find a similar byline story by Robert McKenzie, entitled "Bourassa may restrict the press". In this article out of Quebec City it is pointed out:

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Liberal supporters are incensed at the media's role in hammering home the scandals which have hurt the party's image in recent months.

When Fernand Lalonde, a minister without portfolio and a Bourassa confidante, said in Toronto last month that the government "is envisaging" imposing a code of ethics on the Quebec press, the premier sought to defuse the remark the next day.

I could quote much more from that article. Perhaps it is sufficient if I simply indicate that there is a discernible degree of intolerance with regard to the press at the present time. Some—and I hope they are few in number—in politics are suggesting that, for the first time in Canadian history, there should be some restriction on the freedom of the press. That is why I believe we in this House of Commons have to be extremely careful that we do not amend the Income Tax Act or any other act and inadvertently give an unfair clout to somebody in government to stifle our free press.

I wish to touch on another point. I would comment at this point that I have found this debate very refreshing in the sense that we have had participation from government backbenchers, members of my caucus and the other caucuses. Many members have made an important contribution in their remarks concerning what they believe are the inadequacies of the bill. I refer, for example, to the hon. member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert) and the hon. member for Cochrane from the Liberal side.

I am sure the House will accept my independence on this matter if I specifically point out to the minister where I believe his eight negatives and four positives of May 8 do not apply to certain periodicals in Canada. I will mention one instance. As the act now stands, the minister is going to require newspapers in Canada to go out of business simply because he is not willing to accommodate them. I

Non-Canadian Publications

refer to the *Red Deer Advocate* and the group of newspapers in British Columbia that are controlled by the same group in England. While this group owns 100 per cent of the stock of these Canadian publications, they in no way direct the content of the newspapers. The staff is entirely Canadian. I would say that the *Red Deer Advocate*, for those who have read it, is as good a daily newspaper as you will find in any city in Canada of comparable size.

If you read the remarks of the minister at pages 5592 and 5593 of *Hansard*, you will find he gives a list of eight points—situations which he says should not be allowed to continue in Canada. I suggest that not one of his eight points applies to the *Red Deer Advocate*, yet the minister makes no exception for this type of publication. My colleague, the hon. member for Hillsborough, indicated that the *Christian Science Monitor* represents perhaps another difficulty if the amendment before us is passed. However, let me deal specifically with the *Red Deer* paper. For example, the minister stated as one of his negative points:

—we do not want the continuance of a situation wherein the world view of Canadian readers is being influenced by American periodicals the operations of which in Canada are facilitated by a tax deduction provision primarily intended to assist Canadian publications.

What does that have to do with the *Red Deer Advocate* owned by British interests? Absolutely nothing. In another point he stated:

—we do not want the continuance of a practice whereby the stories and articles reproduced in the French language Canadian edition of *Reader's Digest* are usually translated outside Canada.

That has nothing to do with *Red Deer*.

—we do not want the continuance of an arrangement whereby the editorial content of these foreign-owned magazines is imported from parent houses in the United States—

Again, nothing to do with *Red Deer*.

—we do not want the continuance, on the part of two foreign-owned magazines, of editorial policies that can hardly be said to be making a real contribution to Canadian cultural development and expression.

That has absolutely nothing to do with any magazine in Canada other than the two foreign magazines to which he referred.

—we do not want the continuance of a situation wherein foreign-owned magazines claim the right to be called Canadian while taking their editorial direction and most of their editorial content from their parent houses abroad.

Again, nothing to do with the publication to which I am referring.

—we do not want the continuance of a Canadianization progress record which, after 30 years, finds *Time* in Canada still owned and controlled entirely by *Time Inc.* in the United States—

The minister then refers to *Reader's Digest*. Again, it has nothing to do with the publication to which I am referring. He then mentions, as a second negative point, that he is alarmed at the \$19 million of revenue that is being taken by two foreign-owned periodicals. Presumably he is not including the group of papers I am referring to in his \$19 million reference.

In particular, I am trying to indicate that the minister's stance in drafting this bill and his statement were very, very subjective. He seems to be deliberately moving to thwart two magazines, *Time* and *Reader's Digest*. The fact that, in thwarting those magazines, he is creating problems and will probably hurt other publications in Canada