

lived. That applies to the communications media, to organizations as well as to individuals.

I am afraid that as a journalist I have to say, quite frankly, that in my view the press of Canada has been living an unexamined life.

Certainly that statement, as well as any other, explained our purpose. I think that in a sense it also confirmed the reason for our existence. Senator O'Leary took eloquent issue with two of our central recommendations, each of which I now propose to discuss for a moment.

After conceding, on page 416, that "I do not think that a lot of amalgamations are a good thing," he then went on to reject our proposal for a press ownership review board in these words: "Surely the anti-combines legislation should cover that".

Well, that fairly well sums up the publisher position on this question of concentration. It fairly well sums up the position which has been taken by any number of publishers across the country. We asked the same question of almost every media owner in Canada who appeared before the committee: "How much is too much?" At the hearings there was, of course, no clear agreement as to the amount. No one advanced a tentative formula, but one thing did happen. Practically all of the media owners who appeared before the committee conceded that yes, there were in fact some points on which common ownership was no longer in the public interest, and yet most were prepared to concede that this ongoing trend towards concentrated press ownership was in fact a problem.

Our Committee did make a recommendation which was not a pat mathematical formula which we rejected as an approach because it was incompatible with the reality of Canadian economics and geography. We proposed an *ad hoc* solution: a press ownership review board, whose criterion should be that all transactions to increase common ownership in the mass media are undesirable and contrary to the public interest unless shown to be otherwise.

Very few publishers agreed. Most did not. Most took the position described by Senator O'Leary, the majority favouring some form of application of the existing combines legislation.

It seems to me that there is one thing basically wrong with the existing combines legislation as it relates to newspapers. Simply stated, it is a fact that it has not worked. That is apparent by the very extent of existing press concentration in this country. The press ownership review board might not be an ideal solution. I am not married to that concept, nor are the members of the committee. However, I am vitally concerned about solving the problem by means which are preventive before the fact rather than—as applies with the existing legislation which does not work anyway—punitive after the fact. Perhaps, as Senator O'Leary went on to suggest on page 417, the anti-combines legislation should cover that, and if it does not it should be amended. Perhaps that is the solution. Perhaps the existing legislation should be amended to produce a workable format.

The point that we wished to register, and I should like to underline it here today, is that the time has now come for action in this important area.

Both Senator Walker and Senator McElman asked me a question relating to retroactivity. If they will bear with me for a few moments I will refer to that when I discuss the magazine industry.

Almost all honourable senators who addressed themselves in the debate to the issue of a press council were in favour of it. However, Senator O'Leary was not. At the risk of repeating some of the arguments that were extremely well advanced by our colleague Senator Petten, I should like to say a word or two about the idea of a press council.

Such a council would have two great virtues. It would serve as a watchdog to monitor the press in much the same way as the press now monitors society. An incidental value would be that for the first time journalists and publishers would come together on a more or less regular basis to discuss something other than monetary matters, something other than salaries, as is the case with the working press; something other than advertising revenue in the case of the publishers. They would discuss standards, ethics, professionalism and quality. The press council would consist of publishers, working journalists and media consumers. There would, of course, be absolutely no government involvement. I repeat that there would, of course, be absolutely no Government involvement. This fact was very clear in our report, so I was astounded when Senator O'Leary said he would be very much opposed to the idea of a press council with Government involvement. So would I, Senator O'Leary; I would object as strenuously as you. However, it is important to understand that it is not the nature of our proposal; there would be no Government involvement in the press council.

Between the kind of petty grievance that can best be redressed by a letter to the editor and the major complaints that are better adjudicated by the courts, there is a large area of medium-sized problems where a press council would be most effective. Regretfully, however, many publishers, but by no means all, continue to reject even this minimal degree of reader involvement in their activity. A great part of this comes from one city where they should know that if a newspaper treats badly or harasses its readers there is practically nothing they can do about it.

One of the more familiar arguments advanced by publishers before the committee in opposing the press council was the contention, which is at variance with the fact, that the Press Council in the United Kingdom has not been very effective. Kenneth Bagnell, editor of the *Globe Magazine*, asked the other night on television where have mediocrity and superficiality gone in the United Kingdom now that there is a Press Council. In fact they have not disappeared nor will they in a free press operating in a free society but they are less, and make no mistake, for public credibility as between readers and the media in the United Kingdom is far greater. I should add that is a first hand impression gained in the United Kingdom last spring. Several of us were over there; we spoke to pub-