

CANADIAN MAGS ADOPT TIME SIZE

Since there is no other English weekly newsmagazine in Canada (and since it's generally estimated three people read one magazine, translating Time's circulation to a weekly readership of well over a million), Time is by far the most powerful magazine advertising medium in the country.

So it attracts more ads than any magazine in Canada. Now, when an advertising agency prepares an ad campaign, it will prepare its ad plates to a specific size, determined by the magazine in which it is running most of its ads. For example, the commonly-seen Gilby's liquor ads, or the Rothman's cigarettes ads, are prepared to what is called "demi-tabloid" size. Or, to quote a more frequently-used ad industry phrase - Time size.

Macleans magazine used to be the same size as Life magazine two years ago, substantially larger than Time size. But it cut its magazine size down to Time size.

This has nothing to do with more attractive appearance or layout convenience.

The reason is bluntly put by Peter Gzowski, editor of Maclean's until he ran into loggerheads with Ronald MacEachern over its editorial policy:

"Canada's national magazine adapted its size to that of Time magazine, so that it would be able to carry ad plates created for campaigns in Time. It felt that it could attract more advertisers if it didn't confront them with the bother of having to make new ad plates of a different size, which can be costly.

The TV supplements in the Toronto Star and all the Southern chain papers are also "Time size". And this has little to do with attractive appearance either, rather with the simple economics of picking up the crumbs after Time.

But this is merely a reflection of how Canadian magazines have frequently found they have to dance to the tune of Time in order to be able to attract enough ad revenue to survive.

Time controls the Canadian magazine industry in much more direct and significant ways.

The 12 regional editions of Time magazine have a much greater effect on Canadian publishing than just providing convenient vehicles for advertisers. They are a principal factor in suppressing the growth of indigenous Canadian magazines.

"With all this can entail..."

In its own way, Saturday Night is the Most Canadian magazine of the lot. It has been in Canada for decades, and today serves, by its publisher's own description, "the middle-brow." It's gotten better since Toronto literary critic Robert Fulford took over the editorship. Fulford is much respected as an editor who seeks out new authors, and if the magazine can't be said to have necessarily shaken the pillars of society, it has to be granted that it never claimed that role. It makes intelligent reading, but maybe any Saturday edition of the Globe and Mail offers as much.

Macleans-Hunter refused to print Saturday Night one month because it owed the company a staggering amount in back printing bills. After a brief crisis that raised doubts that the magazine would ever come out again, they scrounged another printer.

It's very important to Time, Reader's Digest and Maclean-Hunter to try to keep Saturday Night afloat, and that's why it survives.

The pathos of its long winter towards survival, coupled with their argument that they can only survive on the crumbs of Time, must somehow be the most significant comment on the whole affair.

The only hope for keeping a Canadian magazine alive, unless one is Maclean's with the money of the fifty-odd Maclean-Hunter trade publications keeping it afloat, is to build it on a tight regional base and low budget like The Mysterious East, or nationally, on readers' support and free labor, like The Last Post. And in both cases, the chances of achieving mass circulation more than 100,000 are infinitesimal.

Even Maclean's ran at a loss except for last year — and seems headed into the red again.

The Canadian Forum lives from hand to mouth, with a tiny circulation. The Five Cent Review died last year. Parallel died four years ago. The Montrealer died last spring. These magazines were as different politically as night and day. Magazine deaths are indiscriminate.

But one has been omitted. Saturday Night, with a circulation of 100,000. And that may prove to be the saddest case of all.

The danger in talking about saving the Canadian magazine industry lies in the unsettling question Senator Grattan O'Leary raised in his testimony before Davey last February — who the hell wants to preserve this garbage? ("I pick up a recent copy of Maclean's magazine and what do I read? That modesty has more sex appeal than nudity!")

Macleans he denounced as sometimes "a pale imitation of Playboy". Saturday Night he dismissed — "it doesn't even count".

And when the committee asked him if he were writing the report today, would he try to protect the industry, he snorted: "I would if I thought the Canadian magazines were what they were when I made my report. They have changed and they say they are satisfied with the situation — and so why in the devil should I go out of my way to protect them? I won't protect Saturday Night. You know what is keeping Saturday Night alive as well as I do. It is being kept alive for that very reason. We want more magazines. It is not being kept alive by its own efforts. It is being kept alive because other magazines want to keep it alive and have taken the necessary financial precautions to keep it alive. If they want to go along with it, all right."

Macleans-Hunter has done an admirable job of learning to live with its enemies of a decade ago.

The cosy entente between Time and the Digest, on the one hand and Maclean-Hunter on the other, was cemented when both realized that mutual backscratching did a better job of raking in profits than competition. Enter the Magazine Advertising Bureau, the splendid co-operation of the most powerful Canadian publisher with the world's two largest magazines. Advertising efforts are shared, giving Maclean-Hunter more ads without having to fight Time and the Digest for them.

The ad market is big enough to keep the two of them going if they don't compete and just share their efforts instead. In fact, if they coast along in this brotherly manner, they find the market is just right — big enough for the two of them and that's all, no room for anyone else.

Of course this looks rather bad for poor Saturday Night, which would go under in a flash if it were left to its own. And since a pretense of a varied Canadian publishing industry must be bravely maintained for political reasons, they "keep it alive and have taken the necessary financial precautions to keep it alive," as Senator O'Leary so ungraciously put it. Bad publicity if it died. Nationalists might seize upon this.

Competition?

Saturday Night can never compete with them. No other American competition can come in to threaten the Time-Digest-Macleans-Hunter crew, thanks to the Pearson government.

Except for The Canadian and Weekend, which are newspaper supplements and not separate magazines, no publication can rise to challenge them in this country. Oh, maybe a Toronto Life or Vancouver Life, but who cares?

And that's what Ronald MacEachern meant when he so candidly told the Davey Committee: "... the disappearance of Time and Reader's Digest would rock our applecart."

In digging through our back yard for foreign weeds, we tend to overlook growths of local variety. Although in some cases it's hard to tell them apart.

One MP remarked in Ottawa when Pearson pushed through the legislation exempting Time and the Digest that "we let the foxes into the coop with the chickens, and they will all be devoured."

Perhaps it would be more accurate to say we let the foxes in with the chickens, and the chickens discovered that they too could be foxes.

Time and the Digest wisely realized that the best way to accommodate themselves in this country was to make it lucrative for the opposition.

But another man who has had a busy summer must not be omitted. For he is crucial to the rest of the Lobby.

He is John Scott, the academic-looking token Canadian of the old "Canadian Affairs Section" in New York who today surveys the situation from the commanding heights of the Time head office in the Bank of Commerce building in Montreal.

As editor-in-chief of the four-page Canada section he's busy making the whole jamtack credible as a Canadian operation. A sigh of relief must have been heard from John Crosbie, Ronald MacEachern, Paul Zimmerman and "Bud" Drury when he got the word on what was in the LeDain report on drugs.

Scott's got to keep coming up with these stories fast this year. First of all it makes good publicity, and most important of all it makes the magazine look like it's actually doing more than it has been doing all its life in Canada — rewriting the papers, gluing together stringers' notes, and churning it all out in four pages.

People of a cynical bent might even maliciously speculate on the great convenience surrounding Time's leak from the LeDain Report. Look for more Cabinet leaks before the year is out.

John Scott has been so busy, in fact, that his office churned out more Canadian cover stories in the first half of this year than it did all last year, and double what it churned out a couple of years ago.

And all summer John Scott's legion of Stringers has been ferreting out quotes and facts on another major cover story. It's on Canadian nationalism.

And that's the nicest touch of all.

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