PANEL "C" - OWNERSHIP: BY WHOM? FOR WHOM?

Chairman of the panel was Yves Michaud, editor-in-chief of "Le Jour" Montreal; panel member was Robert Starr, Manitoba government Telecommunications.

Yves Michaud, speaking in French with simultaneous translation in English, described the democratic structure of Montreal's 16-month old daily, Le Jour, where decisions on content, staff hiring, firing and promotion are made by journalists who also establish policy for the paper. He told how he, Jacques Parizeau and René Lévesque of the Parti Québécois had got together after the October 1973, provincial election in Quebec, to discuss the need for "a brake on Quebec's monopoly press" which has supported the status quo and distorted news about conditions in Quebec and about the P.Q. The decision was taken to found a paper along democratic control lines of Le Monde in Paris, but to improve on the Le Monde model. "We are even more democratic than Le Monde," M. Michaud said.

A sum of $300,000 was raised, to which $150,000 was added a few months ago. There are 1,200 shareholders and only 2% of that capital is held in $10,000 lots. "The party holds $5,000 as Le Jour is independent and criticizes party policy," he said. "It is a paper of 'critical availability' to the Parti Québécois.

The democratic structure of Le Jour, as sketched on the chalkboard by M. Michaud, consisted of an X-shaped figure with the Editor-in-Chief at the centre cross-point of the X. On the upper left side of the X was "Ownership" vested in 1,200 shareholders in a "Shareholders Assembly", with one vote to each shareholder no matter how large his share. Below that is the "Council of Administration" consisting of 9 members (including 3 journalists, being the editor-in-chief and 2 others elected by the Society of Editors). On the upper right side of the X is the "Society of Editors" with 25 members, including the editor-in-chief and the photographers, which has the power to fire and did fire five journalists last January. Policy, format, and areas of coverage are in its purview.

Below that is the "Editorial Board" which consists of the editor-in-chief and his assistant who, together, have one vote only, and two journalists elected by the Society of Editors. It, too, deals with hiring, firing, and promotion but, also, with coverage of events and assignments.

On the lower half of the X, M. Michaud sketched "Editorial Page" on the lower left and "Page de Documents" on the lower right. This page, he said, was his prerogative with some limits.

Le Jour had lost $480,000 in 16 months, M. Michaud reported. Some 80% of its revenue comes from the sale of the paper at 25¢ (circulation 35,000) and 20% from ads. "The subscriber pays more for freedom," he said.
Audience members asked questions on whether Le Jour could be considered an elite paper or an activist paper, about its relationship with Le Devoir, with the Canadian National Trade Union (CNTU) structure and about the federal government's removal of advertising. Asked if he had been over-ruled by his colleagues on Page One placement of news, M. Michaud replied that he had on two occasions. One was for placing a picture of the Queen on a Page One layout. "The editorial board told me to put her picture on page 24. We publish 16 pages."

The other panellist, Robert Starr, Manitoba Telecommunications, described some of his province's plans for cable television in which remote regions of Manitoba would be served.

PANEL "D" - THE SQUEEZE: PRESSURES ON THE MEDIA

Jean-Marie Martin, president of the Quebec Press Council, was in the chair. Panel members were Jean-Raymond Saint-Cyr, manager of the French-language station CJBC in Toronto; Fernand Rochon, chief, Radio and TV news for CJBC and CBLT, Toronto; and Allan Hutsak, bureau chief for CTV news, Edmonton.

M. Martin viewed the press "not as opposition party outside the House but as vigilant with the newsman squeezed between public attitudes and politicians." He said, "Sometimes the press must become investigative. It is wonderful when people are made aware." A Montreal reporter in the audience interjected that "you can write but you don't always get published."

M. Martin criticized the "journalist who acts like a loudspeaker, who simply passes on a text rather than informing people." Turning to the proposed Quebec "Press Law", he said that M. Lalonde, the Quebec minister, is now preparing this bill and had given out bits of it in a Toronto interview. It has also been discussed at a study meeting of the Liberal party. There were four aspects that challenged press freedom: (1) A proposal that a permit be obtained from the provincial government before operation of a medium (2) Subsidies for some media (3) Declaration of assets and liabilities by newsmen, and (4) Formulation of a Code of Ethics. Additionally, the press law would probably deal with the concentration of media ownership in Quebec to counteract powerful owners.

M. Saint-Cyr spoke on public attitudes toward exposé stories, saying "We are Don Quixote tilting uselessly at social ills. The public re-elects the same politicians we have exposed." M. Rochon spoke on the progress being made toward televising House of Commons debates. He had been in Ottawa recently to discuss the question with officials and said that "a firm commitment to consult media people had been obtained."