Metro Toronto Media: A Combustible Situation

The Toronto media scene remains in a state of potential combustion despite apparent tranquility at the surface following the demise of the Telegram, the shoestring success of The Sun, a year of CITY-TV and the advent this year of Global Television.

While the Sun has surprised many of its death-wishers by staying alive, adding circulation and selling a Sunday paper, there is word that this independent, tab-sized morning paper may be taken over by one of the national chains. Southam Press would be the most logical. Since Free Press Publications moved into Montreal through a merger with The Montreal Star, thereby placing a counteropposite to The Gazette (a morning paper owned by Southam) it would seem that the next move on the board would be for Southam to checkmate the F.P. daily in Toronto, namely The Globe and Mail, by buying The Sun.

The time would be propitious for Southam or Thomson to buy as The Sun, while rising, would be relatively cheap and The Globe is known to be losing circulation. In fact it may be that The Globe and Mail sells first and that Roy Thomson will renew his attempts to enchain it in his media empire. (he tried to buy it for $9 million in 1975). That would be a calamity as The Globe, after many ups and downs, has turned out to be a model of investigative journalism in some areas of coverage while Thomson continues his cashbox operations on 30 dailies across Canada.

Stories on conflict of interest in the Ontario cabinet, on Fidinam's dealings with the provincial government and its contribution to the Conservative party election fund, Ontario Hydro's building contract award to Moog and many other items originated in The Globe.

Looking toward the tower at No. 1 Yonge Street, some are asking: "What has happened to the old Toronto Star" which seems to have filed some stories in the wastebasket. Yet The Star has been more trenchant on American take-overs of Canadian industry and the need for public controls in the oil industry.

Now, if Southam should come into the Toronto field to add The Sun to its chain of 13 papers it would have its Southstar partner, The Toronto Star, as a cosy neighbour and its main competitive thrust would be against The Globe and Mail. There seems to be some rivalry between Southam Publications and Southam and yet newspaper chains can be mutually accommodating as witness the nice arrangement in Vancouver where F.P. and Southam are joint owners of Pacific Press which produces the morning Province and the afternoon Sun.

Ideally, the Globe and Mail could be taken over by a national foundation and published as a national newspaper with an editorial board including such stalwarts in journalism as Claude Ryan and Louis Martin for a French language section; Ron Haggart, June Callwood, Ian Adams, Bruce Hutchison and some newcomers. Facsimile transmission via microwave to cities across Canada (researched by the Globe in the 50's) or print-outs from TV sets and finally a newspaper via the satellite Anik could come later.

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