
In *Yesterday's News: Why Canada's Daily Newspapers are Failing Us* (1998), John Miller laments the malaise afflicting the production and distribution of news in Canada at the close of the twentieth century. Well documented but hardly scholarly, it underlines the importance and timeliness of *From Politics to Profit,* Minko Sotiron's exploration of the transformation of Canada's newspapers from small, locally owned businesses into properties operated as branches of large, sometimes multinational, corporations. Sotiron provides a scholarly context for current discussions of the media's place in Canada, and echoes many of the concerns they present.

Sotiron weaves throughout his narrative details of printing methods, equipment and production costs, and changes in distribution and transportation networks, as well as ratios of editorial to advertising content, and comparisons of revenues from subscribers, advertisers, and other sources. His familiarity with the sources and context for the current study is demonstrated in a previous publication, *An Annotated Bibliography of Works on Daily Newspapers in Canada, 1914–1983* (1987). *From Politics to Profit* also draws on the personal papers of the major newspaper publishers of the period, including the archives of the Southam company. It is a fit companion to Paul Rutherford's *A Victorian Authority: The Daily Press in Late Nineteenth-Century Canada* (1985), which charted the development of daily newspapers as social and political forces in their communities. Sotiron takes up the story of Canadian newspapers where Rutherford left off, addressing the shift of newspapers from politically aligned publications to independent entities. While historians have often attributed the change in the United States to the challenge the 'mugwumps' presented the Cleveland administration following 1872 and to the rise of the Progressive movement, Sotiron attributes the change in Canada to economic factors.

According to Sotiron, government support for economic development and the growing prosperity of Canada lay at the heart of the change. Government patronage was shifting from solely political ends to economic goals, and newspapers were one means by which entrepreneurs could both influence and secure patronage. Printing contracts from political parties diminished in significance relative to total revenues, for example, but publishers often had a range of other business interests through which they could win favours from political connections. Special editions to promote and 'boost' communities were just as much in the publisher's interest as the public's, serving as they did to attract government attention and new businesses — or,
depending on your perspective, advertisers. Sotiron effectively dispels the myth of an independent press dedicated to public service.

Sotiron suggests that newspapers were eventually read less for their editorial content than their advertisements, but clearly indicates that this shift was the consequence of new social attitudes. Both publishers and readers were responsible for the transformation of newspapers during the period, and the increasing importance of advertising. For the publisher, advertisements brought revenues and boosted the profile of communities; for the reader, they were essential for consumer activities and participation in the booming economy. Hand in hand with this shift was the adoption of new management models, in which the editorial staff became a smaller proportion of a newspaper's total employees and editors themselves lost status to middle managers whose eyes were fixed on increasing revenues through advertising and self-promotion.

Notably, Sotiron makes reference to a significant portion of the daily papers operating in the country during the period; over 100, out of a maximum total in operation at any one time of 138. The only two jurisdictions not represented or mentioned explicitly are Prince Edward Island and the Yukon (the Northwest Territories, for its part, did not have a daily paper during the period, and Newfoundland had not yet joined Canada). This successfully establishes a framework for a narrative that illuminates the situation confronting publishers across Canada. Ironically, while Sotiron challenges the consolidation of the newspaper industry that resulted from the shift in newspaper publishing, the best documentation exists for those papers that have survived the vicissitudes of the past century. This tends to focus his attention on papers in the larger centres of Toronto and Montreal, and particularly papers now owned or controlled by Southam. To this degree, the book mirrors and is limited by the very consolidation it describes.

One significant shortcoming is Sotiron's limited consideration of the relationships between newspapers and their communities. He outlines the emerging dynamic between newspapers and politicians, and the corporate interests controlling the railways, but how did it compromise the ability of the dailies to serve their readers and communities? Larger dailies may have swallowed smaller daily and weekly papers, but what opportunities did the consolidation create? How did readers respond? These aspects deserve consideration, given the question Sotiron asks in closing: “Where does the individual, whose voice needs to be represented and heard in society, fit in” (161)? The new relationship between daily newspapers and the communities they once served — and which Sotiron suggests they were beginning to abandon in favour of a new audience — would shape the liberties and constraints under which weekly papers, and later radio and television, operated.
This fact indicates the broader importance of Sotiron's study, not just to historians of print culture, but of media and communications in general. It also suggests that the roots of the current revolution in authorship, reading, and publishing are far deeper than the rise of new media. Rather, the seeds were sown in shifting attitudes towards the use of the press at the dawn of the twentieth century and a new conception of how it was to serve the public on a daily basis.

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This remarkable book combines a comprehensive study of the modern evolution of popular magazines with the most rigorous analysis of their contents ever undertaken. Amazingly succinct, at under three-hundred pages, this study nonetheless does full justice to the many factors which affected the development of modern popular magazines, including revolutionary innovations in printing technology, commercial advertising, and marketing, as well as the evolution of American and British societies. Through a series of surveys and summaries, each covering a twenty-year period, the author traces the vicissitudes of the popular magazine press in a manner not unlike such pioneers as the late Frank Luther Mott, John Tebbel, and Theodore Peterson.

Not satisfied with a purely anecdotal approach, however, David Reed lends his study a rare degree of authority by a subject content analysis of three dozen leading American and British magazines selected, inasmuch as possible, on the basis of audited circulation figures. The contents of all issues of these titles that were published in the final year of each decade between 1880 and 1960 he has classified into as many as twenty-nine subject categories, each of which was then quantified as a percentage of the total number of pages (partial pages were measured in square millimetres), and the final tallies presented in tables filling a twenty-eight page-appendix. While others have undertaken content analyses of popular magazines — for example, Richard Ohmann's recent Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century (1996), which focused on the advertising