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PUBLIC OPINION: THE CASE FOR A QUALITY OTTAWA DAILY

by

HENRY SPORN, B.A., B.J.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Journalism
Department of Journalism

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
January 31, 1992

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that Ottawa could support a quality daily newspaper, describes the characteristics such a paper would need to survive, and provides a model of the paper. Although the 1990-92 recession is hurting newspapers and overall readership continues to decline, there is opportunity for specifically targeted niche newspapers to carve out a market among readers.

In Ottawa, there exists a substantial niche of well-educated, affluent individuals, who would read a quality daily. The proposed newspaper, a tabloid called Public Opinion, would be a serious newspaper with meaningful articles about national and international events. It would also feature a strong editorial and opinion section and would cover the public service in a daily section.

Although the paper's circulation target would be low (between 25,000-50,000), its audience would make it appealing for many advertisers. The newspaper's financial success would depend on its commitment to excellence and its spirit of independence.

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PART I — INTRODUCTION

When the Sun group became the latest newspaper operation attracted to the idea of starting up an English-language newspaper to compete with The Ottawa Citizen, I was intrigued. Having lived in Ottawa intermittently between 1974 and 1977 and then permanently from 1981, I had already seen three newspapers founder in the market here. The first, Ottawa Today, a middle-of-the-road tabloid in a market dominated by two broadsheets, lasted only a few months. A broadsheet, The Journal, owned by Thomson, died next on the infamous "black Wednesday" in 1981, when Southam simultaneously shut down The Winnipeg Tribune. A year later, an independent group launched The Sunday Herald; the paper survived for seven years, which included an unsuccessful attempt at publishing a second paper on Wednesdays. It was eventually sold to the Sun group, who took over and refashioned the newspaper into today's Ottawa Sun.

The arrival of The Sun in Ottawa was somewhat audacious, given the dismal failure of second newspapers in cities across North America; but with the Sun's record of entering one-newspaper markets it wasn't surprising either. In Toronto, The Sun became "the little newspaper that grew" — growing out of the defunct Toronto Telegraph. In Calgary and Edmonton, The Sun also established itself as an alternative to the existing broadsheet dailies. So the Sun's entrance into the Ottawa market was the latest in a series

of forays that had been successful in other Canadian cities.

Ottawa, however, is a city unlike any other in Canada. Lacking a strong resource or industrial base, the main business of the capital is government, and that means the city has different demographic characteristics than other Canadian cities. The Sun, unabashedly geared toward a blue-collar, male readership, was trying to thrive in a city of white-collar civil servants. While it might be able to eke out a market among the relatively small number of blue-collar types in the area, it seemed to me that another product might do much better – namely, a quality daily aimed at the educated, highly literate segment of the population.

Not too long after The Ottawa Sun began daily publication in November 1988, Canada began to feel the effects of the recession. As retail businesses suffered, so did newspapers, which depend on the retail trade for much of their advertising revenue. The downturn in the daily newspaper publishing business prompted much soul-searching within the industry, as well as efforts aimed at boosting newspaper readership. Most of those efforts, however, were not directed at improving the quality of the product being offered; rather, they were designed to entice non-readers. Intelligent, well-read readers were for the most part ignored, presumably because it was believed they were reading newspapers already. Like television, many newspapers were pandering to the lowest common denominator and focusing

on their "look" in order to attract the widest readership possible – all the while cutting back on staff, which in turn led to an even greater decline in quality.

The proposal set forth in these pages is based on the thesis that the Ottawa market can and would support a quality daily. To support this thesis, I will describe the crisis in the newspaper business; the nature of the quality daily, and the specific characteristics a quality paper would need to succeed in the Ottawa area; and the demographic and economic justification for such a newspaper.

Each of these sections requires different analytical techniques. Section One uses a variety of articles from newspapers about the problems facing the industry. The effects of the 1989-1990 recession on newspapers are described, as is one possible solution – specialized, niche newspapers catering to particular markets. This section does not pretend to be a full analysis of the problems facing the industry, nor does it offer a plan for the industry to revive itself by reversing what seems to be the main problem – declining readership. Instead, a description of the problems and an alternative newspaper proposal is offered to meet a need in the Ottawa region.

Section Two offers a brief analysis of demographic and circulation data. This section required less of a knowledge of journalism than of statistics. Nevertheless, a clear picture of the Ottawa market does emerge, and largely backs

up the premise upon which this thesis is based -- namely, that this region offers special potential for a quality daily.

Section Three defines what the term "quality daily" actually means, determines the principles that would guide the proposed newspaper, and describes the kind of journalism that would be found in it, followed by a page-by-page summary. The hypothetical nature of this proposal is most apparent here, as it is virtually impossible to describe the paper's contents without actually having a staff to produce the newspaper. As a rough substitute, other newspapers and selected articles were used to put some flesh on what would otherwise be the bones of an outline.

Section Four, which deals with the business side of establishing and publishing a quality daily, is the most problematic. One major requirement for discussing projected costs and revenues for a hypothetical newspaper was a practical knowledge of how a large business operates, which was beyond my scope when I began this project. However, through consultations with a variety of business people and advertisers, a clearer picture of the needs and the potential of a quality tabloid did emerge. There is, however, one grand assumption that underlies the cost/revenue analysis offered in this section; namely, that the paper has been able to achieve adequate financing to operate at a loss until it can obtain sufficient advertising

to offset costs and generate a profit. Although there is some discussion about possible sources of financing for an Ottawa quality daily, a serious examination of financing would be extremely speculative and, in any case, beyond the scope of this thesis.

The financial figures put forward in this proposal are neither 100 per cent accurate nor 100 per cent complete. To achieve such accuracy and thoroughness, one would have to take this project one step further - to actually look for financing and to include items such as the cost of borrowing to one's calculations. That, however, is hardly feasible unless one is actually planning to start the daily newspaper being proposed, which I am in no position to do.

What this proposal can and does offer is evidence that the proposed daily would have the potential to earn more revenue than it would pay out in expenses. This, combined with the demographic data, indicates that the newspaper would have a better-than-fair chance of survival in the Ottawa market, if it could stay alive in its first few years of publication while it built a stable revenue base.

Finally, a word about the motives behind this proposal. The idea of a quality daily for the Ottawa area does not derive from a sense of effete intellectualism or from any particular ideology about the role of the media; it originated as a hunch. Most of the ideas proposed here are my own, research notwithstanding, and flow from my own

intuition and experiences within journalism. Establishing and publishing a newspaper in this day and age, given the tremendous costs involved, is an enormous undertaking, which must be rooted in common sense and backed up by strong, unbiased research. It cannot be driven simply by ideology or intellectual motives. At the same time, a quality paper must know itself, what it wants to be, and why it must do to earn its continued existence. In short, this proposal attempts to balance and combine the "intellectual" desire for a quality daily that offers meaning and context to the events of the day with the "practical" requirements of a sufficient readership and revenues that generate a profit.

PART II - CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY

The Crisis

The broadsheet daily newspaper is in big trouble. After years of record profits, most North American dailies find themselves under pressure just to maintain, let alone increase, their readership, level of advertising and revenues, and thereby sustain their long-term viability.

American newspaper publishers who gathered at their association's annual convention in Vancouver in May 1991 heard that the structural problems within the industry were "deeper and more widespread"¹ than analysts had previously suggested. In the words of one business writer: "Advertising is in a slump some analysts are calling the worst in 20 years. Profits are down substantially at many papers. Vacancies are being left unfilled and budgets are being squeezed, if not slashed. Almost everywhere . . . the mood is black."²

Most industry analysts agree that the fundamental problem for daily newspapers is a relative decline in readership. In 1945, for example, most U.S. (and Canadian) households subscribed to a morning and an afternoon paper.

1. Thomas B. Rosenstiel, "Newspapers face adjustment to decreased ad revenue," *The Los Angeles Times*, wire story, published May 7, 1991.

2. Alex S. Jones, "Newspapers being squeezed by hard economic times," *The New York Times* wire story, January 4, 1991. For publication January 6, 1991.

The "penetration" of the market by newspapers then was 135 per cent, which means that at that time, every household in the U.S. received an average of 1.35 newspapers.³

Circulation in the U.S. climbed until the early 1960s, when it levelled off at 62 million, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulation, the organization that monitors daily newspaper circulation.⁴ For three decades, newspaper readership in the U.S. has remained at essentially the same, early 1960s level, despite a large increase in the number of households. Penetration has been halved, and in 1989 stood at 67 per cent.⁵

Many reasons have been cited for this relative decline in readership. These include: 1) decreased literacy; 2) competition from other media; 3) a growing sense that what newspapers print is not what interests many sectors of the community, such as women and minorities, and, most ominously, young people as a whole. (Of 24 million baby boomers in the U.S. who entered prime newspaper reading age in the 1980s, only 500,000 subscribe regularly to

3. Jones, *NYT*, Ibid.

4. Jones, *NYT*, Ibid.

5. Jones, *NYT*, Ibid.

newspapers.)⁶

Despite the decline in readers, record profits were recorded through the 1970s and most of the 1980s by the newspapers that managed to stay in business. As printing and typesetting technology changed, labor costs fell, and, after the 1981-82 recession, advertising revenues for most daily newspapers, and for the industry as a whole, increased. Ironically, competition from other media and declining readership may have helped those newspapers that have survived. The tougher environment from the mid-1960s on forced many newspapers out of business, leaving most cities in the U.S. and Canada with one newspaper. That gave those publishers what amounted to nearly monopoly conditions. The fundamental problems of declining readership and competition from other media and new technology were therefore largely ignored.

No longer. There is real concern that the contraction in readership and advertising may continue, choking the winners of years gone by. Studies show that many people now read their newspapers only one or two days a week. Some only buy newspapers on days when grocery coupons are included, others just on the weekend.

6. Thomas Easton, Newspapers find profits affected by retailers' plight," *The Baltimore Sun*, March 17, 1991. Information obtained from Kenneth T. Berents, an media analyst at Alex. Brown & Sons, a Baltimore stock brokerage. Berents also says the U.S. population reading newspapers has dropped from 77 million to 67 million.

The renewed worry over readership has been prompted by the 1990-91 recession, which has seen advertising levels at newspapers across North America drop substantially. The fragile condition of major retail companies, such as department stores, and the downturn in real estate and employment have a direct impact on newspaper advertising.

As if all this weren't enough to contend with, the industry has also been forced to confront its considerable impact on the environment, particularly with regard to forestry management. As awareness of environmental issues has grown, newspapers, which provide a major market for forestry products, have come under growing scrutiny. In the words of one editor: "One day, the public is going to say to us: 'You can't cut down 1,000 acres of trees to deliver one Sunday paper any more'."⁷

As might be expected, the problems outlined above have prompted an identity crisis, with newspaper executives busily trying to figure out just what they should be doing in this new, uncertain business climate. Some industry executives and analysts wonder whether there exists any longer a need for the daily newspaper. As one editor put it, "Our readers are telling us we're not considered

7. Associated Press wire story out of Washington, April 7, 1990.

necessary."⁸

In short, daily newspapers appear set to undergo dramatic changes before the turn of the century. What remains unclear is how prepared the industry is for these changes.

The Response

The problems outlined above have generated what has been described as "the most energetic effort in decades" by the business to re-examine itself.⁹ In fits and starts, newspapers are trying to find out how and where they belong in a world where time has become a major commodity and where TV screens, home computers and toll-free numbers have become competing information sources.

Much of the effort has been put toward making the same technology that threatens the newspaper business work for it instead. Southam Inc., for example, has been experimenting with non-traditional information distribution methods, such as electronic and facsimile publishing. Taking their cue from The Globe and Mail, which began its fax edition in January 1989, Southam newspapers are collaborating in the production of a two-page fax news summary they hope will

8. Associated Press, Ibid.

9. Jones, *NYT*, op cit.

catch on with businessmen, professionals and bureaucrats.¹⁰ Many of its newspapers have also established audiotex (for example, The Citizen's Touchline telephone information service) and even videotex services, which provide up-to-date information to callers and viewers.¹¹ Some major newspaper firms in the U.S. have become involved in the creation of delivery services to compete with the post office. The Times Mirror Co., Gannett Company Inc. and Capital Cities/ABC Inc., for example, have signed agreements with Alternate Postal Delivery Inc., giving many of their newspapers the right to be part of a new national postal network.¹²

Newspapers are also undergoing changes in production prompted by environmental concerns. According to Bill King, director of production services for Southam Newspaper Group, "everyone will try to use as much recycled newsprint as possible. The newspaper industry is very open in sharing information about the environmental impacts of different technologies and production methods."¹³

The problems posed by new technology and environmental

10. Bachman, Mark, and Kenter, Peter; "Newspapers in the '90s," *The Torch*, Southam News in-house magazine, page 12, fall 1990.

11. "Newspapers in the '90s," *The Torch*, Ibid.

12. Jones, NYT, op cit.

13. "Newspapers in the '90s," *The Torch*, op cit.

concerns, however, are relatively easy to solve compared with the most nettlesome problem of all for newspapers – declining readership. With no clear-cut idea of how to arrest the trend, the industry has been all over the map, trying quick fixes, such as added graphics and color, to more detailed makeovers, trying to come up with the magic solution that will make their product more appealing to more people.

Two approaches have dominated the way newspapers are changing their content. The first, exemplified by The Globe and Mail's recent makeover, is an attempt to better appeal to the newspaper's already upscale constituency by providing a deeper, more thoughtful newspaper. The other approach, encouraged by the apparent success of USA Today, has been favored by a larger number of newspapers. Faced with a loss of young readers (especially young women) weaned on television, these papers are hoping that short, snappy stories with lots of color, graphics and other points of entry will give them an audience that, increasingly, is too busy or too uninterested to read a conventional paper. One extreme example is the Philadelphia Daily News, a tabloid, which in February 1991 named its new feature section "YO!"¹⁴ Although not as drastic, the emergence of "design" departments within newspapers – whole sections of the

14. Tom Maier, "Slumping readership, earnings are double whammy for newspapers," *Newsday*, wire story, March 17, 1991.

newsroom devoted solely to designing open pages and improving the look of newspapers – has been prompted by USA Today.

The two approaches briefly outlined above reflect a difference in attitude about what a newspaper should be and what direction it should take to attract and hold readers. Proponents of the USA Today approach argue that newspapers should be more "fun," featuring lighter, easy-to-read stories, with more design elements, especially colour and graphics. They argue that newspapers need to avoid being dull, should give quick answers, keep stories short, and give news more visually. An American director of a U.S. newspaper market research company puts it this way: "People don't want to read 50 inches on Afghanistan."¹⁵

In line with this philosophy, some newspapers have also attempted to become more interactive with their readers, either by offering up more space for correspondence from readers, or, in the case of The Boca Raton News, by involving the reader in the stories and issues it covers. (For example, combined with editorials is information telling readers what they can do about the issue. As well, information boxes, news summaries, indexes and color abound.) This newspaper, whose redesign and new format are part of an experiment by the Knight-Ridder chain, wants

15. Rosenstiel, *LAT*, op cit.

readers to think of themselves as partners with the paper.¹⁶

The problem with this approach, especially from the journalist's point of view (and, I suspect, from the reader's as well), is that it contains within it a paradox, namely, that a reading product can sell better by de-emphasizing reading and trying to mimic other media, especially television. Not only does such an approach carry with it the inherent danger of trivializing the news, it panders to its audience in a way that cannot but help downgrade its credibility among its readers. There seems to be little point in competing with TV by becoming more like it, although in the short term, a newspaper may be able to boost its circulation in this way.

The second approach, in the words of Ryerson School of Journalism chairman John Miller, requires "a leap of faith."¹⁷ Disdaining the "window dressing" of "an orgy of redesign, special sections, marketing surveys and carnival graphics," Miller argues that "rearranging the furniture and pandering to an increasingly narrow segment of potential readers" is really an exercise in "bunkerism," and that "the refusal to change (fundamental ideas about what a newspaper

16. Maier, *Newsday*, op cit.

17. John Miller, "The Challenge for Newspapers, *The Torch*, fall 1990.

should be) is the biggest threat . . . to the financial well-being and social importance of the free press in our society."¹⁸

Miller's critique is wide-ranging, as is his prescription for the continued viability of newspapers. But central to his argument is that today's "newspaper of record" must transform into a "newspaper of ideas" that provides better analysis of complex issues," instead of merely regurgitating facts people already know from TV the night before.

Such papers already exist in some form, though they are rare in North America. British newspapers such as The Independent, for example, offer opinion and analysis within "news stories" and seek out stories that are interesting, provocative, and not weighted "institutional news," with its emphasis on experts and authority figures. In its recent makeover, The Globe and Mail seems to have gone the same route, if not as wholeheartedly.

The Globe and Mail, like The Independent, can be categorized as a "great" or "quality" newspaper, defined as a publication that does "more than hold up a mirror to society. It must judge events and not simply report them, and have definite opinions and express them courageously. . . The truly great newspaper hopes to present such news and

18. Ibid.

views as to reform society, or portions of it. . . The great newspapers continually sort and coordinate the endless stream of news reports, attempting to arrange them to give meaning to the news."¹⁹

Through their special sections, existing newspapers themselves bolster the case for a "newspaper of ideas." The Citizen's Observer section, for example, is a vehicle for targeting well-educated, affluent readers. But advertisers, increasingly, are demanding more. They want their messages be aimed at specific demographic and ethnic niches, something newspapers are just beginning to learn how to do.²⁰

"It's an increasingly segmented market," says Marie-Anne Colucci, the product manager of special sections for The Montreal Gazette. "We provide the reader with specialized reading. In a sense, we're competing with magazines."²¹

And not just with magazines. For baby-boomers in particular, specialization in information has been a lifelong expectation since the 1970s, when a wide variety of

19. John C. Merrill and Harold A. Fisher, *The World's Great Dailies: Profiles of Fifty Newspapers*, Hastings House, New York, 1980, page 7.

20. Rosenstiel, *LAT*, op cit.

21. "Newspapers in the '90s," *The Torch*, op cit.

options, both on cable TV and on magazine racks, had become available. The number of choices since then, with the advent of Pay-TV, VCRs and home computers has skyrocketed. Market fragmentation in newspapers is something younger people raised with these other media have come to expect.

In the few cities across North America that retain more than one newspaper, the segmented market already exists. For instance, in Toronto, which has three dailies, there is a lot less competition than there used to be in the 1950s, when The Star and The Telegraph were active rivals in searching out news stories. In today's Toronto market, each paper serves a different market segment. While The Globe and Mail appeals mainly to well-educated, high-income people, The Toronto Sun aims at virtually the opposite market. The Toronto Star, meanwhile, serves as the only omnibus daily in town. The newspapers may compete for stories and for advertising, but little more than they do with other media.²²

The Opportunity

Ottawa's newspaper situation is much the same as Toronto's, with one important exception. No paper in this market appeals to the well-off and educated.

Like most cities across North America, Ottawa was a

22. Information obtained from a class lecture by Chris Dornan, Carleton University School of Journalism, in February 1989.

two-English-newspaper town for several decades. That era came to a close in 1980, when Thomson closed the money-losing Journal, leaving The Citizen with all of the newspaper market. In the early 1980s, a Sunday tabloid, The Herald, appeared. It never amounted to much in the way of competition for The Citizen, and eventually was sold to the powerful Sun group from Toronto, who transformed the paper into a daily that mirrors other Suns across Canada.

The Citizen has not been immune to the problems facing the industry. Considered Southam's flagship newspaper, the paper has felt the pinch of the recession and the need to attract new readers. It has responded, as has much of the industry, with a "design-first" approach to handling open pages, and charts and graphics are now de rigeur on most news pages. (Since the mid-1980s, The Citizen has had a design department, headed by a director of design, to oversee open pages. Editors merely fill in both headlines and stories to type size and length specified by a designated designer.) Short leads and easy-to-read stories were, until recently, a must, as part of The Citizen's attempt to capture new readers and hold old ones. Then The Citizen hired the Angus Reid firm of pollsters to do a "psychographic" survey of the Ottawa market, and has prepared a questionnaire for one-time subscribers to find

out why they cancelled their subscriptions.²³

As a result of the Angus Reid poll, conducted in the spring of 1990, The Citizen's orientation has changed somewhat. Having discovered that Ottawa contains a large population of well-educated individuals who want fewer pictures and graphics, and longer and better stories,²⁴ the Citizen revised its Sunday edition in the spring of 1991. The Sunday Citizen now uses smaller headlines, smaller photos and more analysis and opinion pieces. This Sunday edition may well become the prototype for the rest of the week in the near future.²⁵ (Circulation figures for the new Sunday Citizen are not as yet available. The old Sunday Citizen sold 157,243 newspapers as of March 1991.)²⁶

Despite the redesign, and the added emphasis on more challenging copy, the recession has led to a hiring freeze which has meant that news coverage, especially in the city section, has not been as thorough as it could have been, and pages get published with very little editing. The

23. The questionnaire was posted in The Citizen's newsroom.

24. Information obtained from the Angus Reid Group, Ottawa Newspaper Study, April 1990. The revamping of the Sunday edition was a direct result of the poll's findings, according to Citizen managers.

25. Information obtained in conversations with various managers at The Citizen.

26. Citizen Research Data, May 1991.

introduction of pagination without an increase in the resources and staff on the various desks has resulted in editors spending less time per story. In fact, newsroom staff numbers have actually fallen due to attrition, and no replacements have been hired. Good intentions notwithstanding, it is difficult to see how The Citizen can hope to produce a quality, high-end newspaper under these kinds of conditions.

The Citizen began its original Sunday edition to head off The Sun, which for a time published only on Sunday. Although the strategy appears successful, in that The Sun has yet to achieve a sustainable circulation (see next chapter) and is far from the 60/40 split between advertising and content North American newspapers aspire to, it is difficult to say whether that happened because The Citizen published on Sunday, or because the Sun is the wrong product in the wrong market.

In a sense, The Sun is Ottawa's first example of a market-specific newspaper. It projects an image that is supposed to appeal, primarily, to the working man, and while its right-wing orientation and traditional (male) values do not appeal to all, there is no doubt that it has a niche and meets a need within the community. Whether or not that niche is large enough to sustain The Sun is another matter.

In a February 24, 1991 column in the *Citizen*, Sunday editor Joe Sornberger quotes a 4th-year journalism student

(presumably from Carleton University), who predicts mass-appeal newspapers will lose ground to special-interest papers. Although Sornberger finds the idea "interesting," he writes it off by comparing it to "the Hockey News (going) daily and (knocking) off the Toronto Star."²⁷

Sornberger misses the point. In fact, a specialized newspaper doesn't have to "take on" a mass-appeal daily. If it finds its niche in the marketplace, expands gradually and keeps its costs low, it will find its own success. In addition, innovations in modern production technology, primarily the arrival of pagination (desktop publishing), which allow newspapers to phase out their composing rooms, would make such an operation less costly, and therefore easier to undertake.²⁸

These arguments apply to any specialized newspaper, including an upscale "newspaper of ideas." Even before the advent of the latest recession, the upscale niche was there, waiting to be filled. The recession, and the pressure it has placed on mass-appeal dailies, makes the present a more opportune time to explore the chance of success that such an

27. Joe Sornberger, "Good newspaper reading can turn on lightbulbs," *The Ottawa Citizen*, page 2, Sunday, February 24, 1991.

28. Of course, there would have to be enough editors on staff to maintain editorial quality while also performing the duties traditionally done by composing rooms. Even with the increased number of editors, however, the drastic reduction of the composing room would save the newspaper money.

endeavour might have.

The publication of a quality daily should not, however, be viewed as a means of boosting newspaper readership as a whole. Though no one can predict the future, it seems safe to assume that the downward trend in newspaper readership in general will continue through the decade and beyond. The chief victim of this phenomenon, however, is likely to be ~~the~~ the mass-appeal omnibus daily.

The appearance of niche newspapers will be a part of the restructuring of the newspaper market. Overall readership is likely to continue to decline, but there will still be a considerable market of committed readers out there, waiting for the right product. And what better product to offer readers than a quality newspaper that satisfies, challenges and provokes their own desire to read.

Although the idea of a quality daily is of limited utility to most broadsheet dailies, which try to be all things to all people, it does offer potential publishers other advantages. These include: the potential for a more educated, mainly higher-income audience, which would appeal to many advertisers; an intellectually honest approach that doesn't trivialize or pander to keep an audience; a consistent philosophy about newsgathering and editing that needn't change with every flutter in circulation or demographics; and, the satisfaction of producing a quality product.

PART III - DEMOGRAPHICS AND READERSHIP

Area Demographics

The Ottawa market is currently being served by three newspapers. The Citizen, with an average daily circulation of about the 175,000, is area's mass circulation daily. (It is noteworthy that Citizen circulation is dropping in every category; Monday-Friday, down from 196,910 in April 1988 to 174,953 in March 1991; Saturday, down from high of 254,116 in April 1988 to 231,303 in March 1991; Sunday, down from high of 172,010 in September 1988 (paper's introduction) to 157,243 in March 1991.)²⁹ The Citizen's market penetration of adults in the Ottawa/Hull area, meanwhile, is 50 per cent (of "yesterday's" readers), and 71 per cent (6/7 day cumulative).³⁰

The two other newspapers, LeDroit and The Ottawa Sun, serve two quite different sections of the Ottawa market. These newspapers' circulations are much lower (The Sun's audited weekly circulation is currently at 36,349, while LeDroit's is slightly less, at 33,887.)³¹ The Sun's market penetration is much less than The Citizen's: 18 per cent

29. Citizen Research Data, May 1991.

30. Citizen Research Data, from NADhank '91, *ibid*.

31. Audit Bureau of Circulation, figures for March 31-Sept. 30, 1990.

yesterday and 29 per cent 6/7 day cumulative.³²

Neither paper, however, serves what is arguably the area's largest market niche: its population population of highly-literate, well-educated, well-off people who are interested in public affairs, in particular politics and government.

	Toronto	Mtl.	Ottawa	London	Edmonton	Vancouver
Pop.	3,427,170	2,921,360	819,265	342,300	711,015	1.4M*
Deg.	377,300	257,590	114,200	31,470	67,490	n/a
35K	395,320	250,450	108,705	31,295	73,810	145,880
AHI	\$43,025	\$33,049	\$40,939	\$34,938	\$37,040	\$36,086
50+	375,105	215,980	93,095	26,235	62,855	124,180

(*) exact figure unavailable

The preceding chart gives the populations of six Canadian cities. It then notes the number of people who have completed a university degree, the number of men and women earning over \$35,000 dollars a year, the average household income in the cities and the number of households that earned more than \$50,000 in 1986.³³

The Ottawa region is the fourth-largest metropolitan area in Canada, behind Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Ottawa and environs has outstripped Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton in population. The Ottawa-area population, however,

32. Citizen Research Data, *ibid.*

33. Statistics Canada, 1986 census figures.

unlike that in the aforementioned cities, is divided into two linguistic groups. According to the census, of 760,265 people who gave a single response to their language, 486,425 were English-speaking, while 240,725 were French-speaking.³⁴

Because of their greater populations, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver are more likely cities to support a daily newspaper aimed at virtually any niche. Obviously, a newspaper that has a potential readership of 300,000 is in a better situation than one with a potential readership of 120,000. And so we find that both in Toronto and Montreal, the "high-end" of the newspaper market is already being served. In Toronto, The Globe and Mail's local edition is geared to this kind of reader; in Montreal, Le Devoir attracts the intellectual and professional francophone elites, although, it must be said, not in the numbers which ensure its continued survival.

The Ottawa metropolitan area, which is the fourth-largest in the country, would also appear to be a prime candidate for such a newspaper. But aside from its overall population, the city has a lot more going for it as well. The 1986 census statistics indicate that not only does Ottawa have a large and growing population, it has a higher level of affluence and education than most other cities

34. 1986 census, *ibid.*

across the country. Furthermore, the figures are even higher if one considers that the Quebec component of the Ottawa figures, which is overwhelmingly French-speaking, constitutes a considerably less-educated group. Of the 114,200 university graduates in the area, 98,525 come from the Ontario side, while only 15,685 live in Quebec. The same pattern holds true for income distribution in the area.³⁵

In addition, "psychographic" data indicate that the Ottawa market would be highly receptive to a newspaper about public affairs, public opinion and the public service. This evidence can be found in an Angus Reid survey commissioned by The Ottawa Citizen and carried out in 1990. In this survey, the population was divided into six groups, based on what Angus Reid calls psychographic profiles. These profiles are arrived at after analyzing the responses given by individuals to a variety of questions about their lifestyles, attitudes, and reading and entertainment preferences.

According to the survey, nearly half of the Ottawa newspaper readers want no-nonsense hard news from around the world and Canada (particularly concerning government events) and news about science and the environment, combined with strong thought-provoking commentary, editorials, and letters.³⁶

35. 1986 census, *ibid.*

36. Angus Reid Group, *Ottawa Newspaper Study*, April 1990.

Readership data

Data from the Newspaper Audience Databank (NADbank) and the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) indicate that the quality newspapers available in the area, particularly The Globe and Mail, enjoy a healthy readership.

Statistics on Globe and Mail readership in Ottawa have been compiled by NADbank, a division of the Newspaper Marketing Bureau. The 1990 figures for Ottawa indicate that the Globe and Mail has more readers among university graduates and individuals and households earning more than \$50,000 a year. The first number contains the percentage of the sample represented by the group in question. The second contains the percentage of Globe readers represented by the group, while the third figure indicates the percentage of the numbers within the group that reads the Globe.³⁷

* 35-49 age group makes up 29.08 per cent of sample, but 36.68 per cent of Globe readers; as well, 13.55 per cent of this group read The Globe;

* University grads make up 33.65 per cent of sample, but 64.49 per cent of Globe readers; as well, 20.59 per cent of this group read The Globe;

* White collar workers make up 58.60 of sample, but 74.19 per cent of Globe readers; as well, 13.60 of this group read The Globe;

37. NADbank 1990, obtained from The Ottawa Citizen

* Households with incomes above \$50,000 make up 42 per cent of sample, but 59.61 per cent of Globe readers; as well, 15.23 per cent of this group read The Globe;

* Individuals with yearly incomes exceeding \$50,000 make up 14.58 per cent of sample, but 39.32 per cent of Globe readers; as well, 28.98 per cent of this group read The Globe.

These figures confirm that well-educated, high-income individuals are much more likely to read a quality daily like the Globe than others. As we have already seen in the demographic data, Ottawa contains a disproportionate number of individuals that fall into these categories.

In addition, while the Globe has a relatively low circulation 15,154 (ABC 1990), the number of Globe readers is 70,400, or 11 per cent of the market. By comparison, Ottawa Sun sells 36,349 papers Mon-Fri., 40,790 Sunday, with readership of 100,900 Mon-Fri, and 78,700 Sunday. The figures show Globe gets passed around to as many as five people, which suggests it is widely read in offices and other work settings.

From the point of view of establishing a high-end niche newspaper in Ottawa, the Globe's circulation and readership are encouraging. Although a circulation of 15,000 would be considered quite low for a newspaper if it were actually aimed at the Ottawa market, the fact is, as a "national" daily, The Globe offers little specifically for the Ottawa

reader, both in terms of content and advertising. The Globe is published in several Canadian cities, aims at a total national circulation and doesn't target any one location (except Toronto, of course, in its local edition); under these circumstances, its circulation of 15,000 is quite high; furthermore, its high readership (70,000) indicates that, in offices at least, The Globe comes close to being Ottawa's second newspaper.

The demographic, psychographic and readership data indicate that there is a large potential audience of between 30 and 45 per cent of the area's population that could have some interest in reading a quality daily.³⁸ Understandably, given the nature of such a daily, this potential audience consists of people who already read newspapers. While there is a temptation to imagine that a quality daily would actually boost readership, there is, unfortunately, no evidence to assume that would be the case.

The Citizen's relatively high circulation and market penetration indicate that many readers of a quality daily

38. Demographic data in the 1986 census indicate that well over 100,000 people belong in the categories that would be prime targets for a quality Ottawa daily. As Angus Reid's study showed, about 48 per cent of the Ottawa-area newspaper reading public belong to the audiences likely to read a quality daily. The readership figures indicate that The Globe and Mail, an outside paper, has a circulation of 15,000 readers and over 70,000 readers, which would indicate at least the possibility of success for a local paper aiming to meet specific needs of this area.

would also be Citizen readers. The psychographic statistics indicate that nearly 50 per cent of Ottawa newspaper readers are interested in the kind of daily coverage that would be provided in a quality daily. A majority of those readers are Citizen readers as well.³⁹

The readership statistics, meanwhile, indicate that another large source of potential readers of a quality daily would be Globe and Mail readers. An Ottawa-based quality daily would have to compete for readers directly with The Globe and Mail, since both papers would roughly share the same niche; but it would share, for the most part, readers with The Citizen, particularly those interested in local news or classified ads.

Still, The quality daily's readership would hold some advantages for its publishers. It would be made up of those people in the community who value and enjoy reading, and make the time to do it. Such motivated readers, if we can call them that, are also a potent draw for certain advertisers with products that cater to a specific market, who also regard them as motivated customers.

The fact that there is a large, well-educated, affluent niche of motivated readers has not escaped notice at The Ottawa Citizen. The recently revamped Sunday Citizen is an attempt to attract more of the affluent, well-educated

39. Ottawa Newspaper Study, Angus Reid Group.

people identified by the Angus Reid psychographic survey.⁴⁰ According to Citizen Editor Jim Travers, not only the numbers but the nature of readers in the niche are attractive. "Those readers are interesting to advertisers," he says.⁴¹

Of a new quality daily, Travers says, "The idea has merit. If it can be packaged in the appropriate way, then there probably is a market there." He points to the success of The Hill-Times, a weekly newspaper about and circulated on Parliament Hill, as an indication that there are specific niche markets in Ottawa. And, he says, technology has made a difference. "What's really changed in the last 30 years is that you don't need millions to get into the newspaper business, as long as your (audience) targeting is right and you have an in-depth understanding of the markets." A new daily would also have to embark upon the "corporate equivalent of a guerrilla campaign, with real enthusiasm and excitement."

Travers agrees the newspaper market is becoming more segmented. "There's a lot of fragments in the spectrum right now." But the key to survival, he says, is make the newspaper a distinctive product.

40. Angus Reid Group, Ottawa Newspaper Study, April 1990.

41. Conversation with Citizen Editor James Travers, December 1991.

Presented with the option of offering an entire section of the paper to Public Service coverage, Travis agrees it is a way to be unique. But the costs, he warns, are great: "If you're going to do a good job (covering the public service), you'll have to put a lot of resources into it. And that's difficult. It requires a substantial, talented staff. You'd have to generate a lot of news coverage on your own."

Brian Cantley, director of editorial services for the Canadian Daily Newspaper Publishing Association, has a more jaundiced view about the chances of a new daily surviving. "There's a lot of forces out there making it very difficult to enter a new market. The Montreal Daily News thought they had it figured out. They had all the market studies, but they failed."⁴² Still, he doesn't rule out the possibility of success. "If you can come up with a product that sizzles, that catches on, that'll make it a success."

In the end, both Travers and Cantley agree that a successful foray into the Ottawa newspaper market would be difficult. "It's not an impossible idea," is Travers' conclusion. "The product could fly," says Cantley, "but it would need a lot of luck."

42. Conversation with Brian Cantley, director, editorial services, Canadian Daily Newspaper Publishers Association, December 1991.

PART IV – PUBLIC OPINION: A QUALITY DAILY

Defining the product

John C. Merrill points out: "It is quite common to find the leading serious papers of the world (regardless of where they are) referred to by an assortment of terms used interchangeably. The British call these papers 'quality' or 'class' papers, distinguishing them from popular or mass papers. The French often refer to them as journaux de prestige . . . In the United States, there seems to be no standard name – serious, quality and prestige being adjectives usually applied to them. Here and there, they are also referred to as great, intellectual, cosmopolitan, international and elite."⁴³

What characteristics define a "quality" newspaper? It is tempting to offer a few obvious traits – such as seriousness, responsibility, orientation toward an educated readership with a keen interest in public affairs – and leave it at that. Of course, it is hardly that simple.

For one thing, words such as "quality," "elite," "serious," "responsible," and "truth" are inherently subjective terms. They have no absolute value. In much the same way that no story can be absolutely objective, so these characteristics cannot be, for example, charted scientifically to determine whether newspapers meets

43. John C. Merrill, *The World's Great Dailies*, op cit., page 14.

"quality" guidelines. Just as a newspaper's objectivity is ultimately a subjective determination, so too is a newspaper's quest for quality or truth; in the end, a quality paper must stand on its knowledge, intuition and integrity, and its success will be measured by its readers.

Nor is being serious, responsible and presenting quality news enough. Newspapers that aim at a well-educated, "elite" readership must do more than inform; they must also provide their readers with meaning to the events they are reporting. This means they must interpret, as well as report; discuss ideas, not just facts; In some ways, the elite newspaper is a modern-day version of the biblical prophet, seeking out injustice with a view toward effecting social justice and progress.

Merrill undertook his first attempt to catalogue and categorize the world's "great" newspapers in the 1960s. His work in this area continued through the 1970s and into the 1980s, but the qualities of great dailies, it seems, haven't changed significantly. In the 1980 edition of *The World's Great Dailies*, Merrill and co-author Harold A. Fisher summarize some important characteristics of the world's great dailies:

1. Independence; financial stability; integrity; social concern; good writing and editing.
2. Strong opinion and interpretive emphasis; world

consciousness; non-sensationalism in articles and makeup.

3. Emphasis on politics, international relations, economics, social welfare, cultural endeavours, education, and science.

4. Concern with getting, developing and keeping a large, intelligent, well-educated, articulate and technically proficient staff.

5. Determination to serve and help expand a well-educated, intellectual readership at home and abroad; desire to appeal to, and influence, opinion leaders everywhere.⁴⁴

Despite the societal changes that have occurred since this list was first published, the same characteristics continue to define the quality newspaper. Still, there are some modifications necessary to reflect realities that, while perhaps not new, have come into the fore in the last decade. These include:

Independence. In the 20th century, independence in newspapers has been perceived mainly as freedom from a particular party line or dogma. Newspapers have been associated with certain political camps. (For example, The Globe and Mail is usually identified as a conservative newspaper; its cross-town competitor, the Toronto Star, is often described as a liberal paper.)

There is, however, a more profound kind of independence

44. Merrill, Ibid., page 23.

that newspapers ought to embrace. It is independence from tired or outdated thinking: that is, independence from an over-reliance on official sources, from rigid adherence to the ideology of objectivity that still pervades most newsrooms in North America. (In this light, Citizen Editor's Jim Travers' earlier comment that a successful quality daily would have to be the corporate equivalent of a guerrilla campaign takes on another interesting meaning.) The ideology of objectivity, which has persisted in journalism long after it was discarded in other, more academic fields such as history, originally served as a means to replace the partisan press of the 19th century with a press that would be of interest to the mass audience of the 20th century. Reliance (and over-reliance) on official sources was but one of the consequences of the shift toward objectivity. Since a quality newspaper aimed at the well-educated is not, by its very nature, interested in capturing a mass audience, the mythology of objectivity should be invoked only when it is appropriate.

That is not to say that objectivity as a guiding principle must be discarded. Most news reports will require a fair and balanced approach, if only to be credible and thorough. What must be cast aside is the knee-jerk dependence on objectivity as the journalistic mantra suitable for all occasions. (It must be emphasized here that a more subjective reporting approach would also have to adhere to

its own set of standards. In the end, perhaps, good working practices and intangibles, such as intuition and excellence, are more important to maintaining quality than choice of guiding editorial philosophy. And only with such devotion to excellence can a newspaper be considered truly independent.)

Using an intangible quality - excellence - as its measure, Public Opinion would operate under a "quantum" editorial philosophy that would allow objective reporting as well as subjective interpretation to co-exist within the newspaper and its articles. Just as we still use newtonian physics in our day-to-day lives, so an objective news approach can still work in journalism, so long as we do not depend upon it so slavishly and use it to excuse a tired, mechanical approach to news gathering. The facts may indeed be objective, but our analysis of those facts certainly is not. In an ever-more complex world, there is a need to provide the road by which we can modify the 20th century model of North American journalism.

Integrity. If objectivity no longer is the main guiding force in a newsroom, what is available to replace it? How can readers be sure what they're reading aims at truth and enlightenment? We can start by re-examining the European model as an alternative guideline for a quality newspaper. If one compares, say, The Globe and Mail and Le Monde, each considered the "national" newspaper in Canada and France

respectively, one finds a difference in emphasis. While The Globe and Mail is oriented more toward straight news reporting, the focus of Le Monde is analytical, and therefore, inherently subjective. Still, Le Monde tries to provide its readers with a picture of the world that is no less accurate than the world described by The Globe and Mail.

This is achieved by Le Monde (and, in a different kind of way, by the Christian Science Monitor) through a philosophy of fairness and balance (though someone who comes out negatively in a Le Monde article might argue this point). Certainly, Le Monde adheres to no party line; it has been attacked since its founding in 1944 by a myriad of groups both on the right and left of the French political spectrum.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Le Monde's extremely well-educated readership trust the newspaper to bring them "truth" in the way its editors and writers see it, and trust them to stick to their convictions even if that incurs official or non-official wrath. If any newspaper could be accused of excessive rationalism, it would be Le Monde. It is almost Cartesian in its appeal to the reason and logic within the human condition, and eschews emotionalism and prejudice. It judges events, but tries to do so fairly, and in doing so, aims to give meaning to current events.

45. Merrill, op cit., page 202.

Another example of integrity in journalism today can be found in the pages of Britain's latest quality daily, *The Independent*. Most of its staff of experienced reporters write in a personal, subjective style that falls somewhere between straight news coverage and analysis or background. Among the best of them is Robert Fisk, whose reports from the Middle East are prime examples of this "personal dispatch" form of reporting. Although (or perhaps, because) Fisk does not hide behind the mask of objectivity, there is an honesty in his reporting, a conviction that compels the reader to take notice of what he is saying. You don't have to agree with Robert Fisk, but you must consider his point of view, because it is fair, balanced, and written with integrity.

Of course, Fisk also tends to the basics better than most journalists. He finds places and events other reporters miss. He provides details that escape other reporters. He explains why the reader should care about the people in his stories. He digs up his own sources and usually tells a story, instead of merely writing a report.

While Fisk's talent might not always be available for a newspaper, the qualities he brings to it can be reproduced at an organizational level. A newspaper that makes no apologies for what it believes in, and doesn't pander to its audience or try to be all things to all people, will be taken seriously by its readers, who will come to trust its

reporting, if not all of its judgments. Such an approach requires the newspaper to put a lot of trust and responsibility in its reporters and editors.

Good writing and editing. All newspapers claim this as a priority, but few deliver. The problems stem from the conflicting aims of most North American dailies. At the same time as directives go out urging a greater emphasis on writing style, or on ensuring an error-free paper, other directives, usually motivated by less journalistic concerns (such as attracting a larger audience, or staff cutbacks due to sinking profits), insist on using simple language so as not to alienate readers, or writing short, snappy paragraphs. Editors, meanwhile, are often faced with the prospect of handling so much material that they cannot do more than a mediocre job. Proofreaders have long been a thing of the past.⁴⁶ As copy editors see themselves more and more as glorified proofreaders and compositors (particularly since the advent of desktop publishing in newsrooms), with little time to do the necessary editing and checking, newspaper quality plummets. As other responsibilities are placed on their shoulders (design, pagination), the quality of their work drops even further.

46. The author's personal experiences and observations as a copy editor at The Citizen provide background for these points.

The publisher of the quality daily, must, then, have a different approach to his business and his craft, founded in the belief that it can still be profitable (albeit less so), and a great deal more satisfying to publish and deal with serious discussion, to value truth and balance, and to present news interpreted in a responsible way. In practical terms, this means promoting a work environment where quality is the main goal; where rules may be broken, as per George Orwell's final rule of writing (all of the previous rules can be broken if the result is something barbarous); where the majority of resources are allocated to the main business of the newspaper – the written word – and not to page design, graphics, and photographs.

Staff development. Supporting the approach described above means, in practical terms, hiring the best in sufficient numbers, and requires a commitment to provide continual training to foster improvement in staff performance. It also means having faith in the knowledge of reporters and editors. The expertise of journalists needs to be expressed, not only in the pages of the newspaper, but in its boardroom as well, particularly in the establishment of editorial policy and publishing practices.

Non-sensationalism in articles and design. Some quality newspapers are visually indistinguishable from their mass-

oriented counterparts.⁴⁷ But many more adopt a "grey," print-dominated look that graphic designers, in the main, do not approve of.

Their disapproval is, to put it bluntly, irrelevant. It is debatable whether improved page design ever saved any newspaper. Even the graphically innovative USA Today, with its current circulation of 1.3 million, is not as successful as it would like to be. Selling more than a million papers would be quite the achievement for other North American newspapers, confined as they normally are to one city; but given that USA Today's audience is the entire U.S., with a population of 275 million, one may question its success in market penetration; conceivably, one could also argue that it has turned more readers off than any other newspaper in U.S. history. (Certainly, it is no profit-maker. USA Today is still losing money for its parent, Gannett; In 1989 it lost \$2 million; while in 1988 it lost a staggering \$24 million.)⁴⁸

47. Merrill, op cit. Throughout his book, Merrill cites examples of newspapers that are serious yet have a lighter design than, say, The Wall Street Journal. He cites Scandinavian papers, such as Berlingske Tidende in Copenhagen, Denmark, in particular, as taking such an approach, and explains that because their population base is so small, they cannot survive by appealing to only to the elite audience. He emphasizes that despite their bright appearance, these newspapers are renowned for their serious approach to news.

48. *The Ottawa Citizen*, October 13, 1989 and November 24, 1990, citing figures from the Audit Bureau of Circulation, September 1989.

In any case, USA Today makes no pretence of being a quality daily. To appeal to an elite, well-educated audience, more must be done than merely emulate television in print. As has been said again and again in this proposal, people who like to read don't need to be persuaded. It is safe to presume they are not afraid of the printed word. It bears emphasizing that magazines and journals aimed at well-educated readers do not resort to illustrations or fancy page layout to attract readers; novels and non-fiction books rarely do as well. Successful newspapers throughout Europe (Le Monde, Frankfurter Allgemeine, Neue Zurcher Zeitung) don't even publish pictures, and their type is so small that most North American dailies would consider it to be beyond the eyesight, let alone the sensibilities, of their readers.⁴⁹

The tendency of North American dailies to pander to their readers via design elements to entice them to read a story has its parallels in the sensationalism of much of the mainstream press. While tabloids like The Ottawa Sun are the most blatant in printing sensational stories that appeal to reader's emotion, rather than to reason, most broadsheet mass circulation dailies are by no means above printing stories that do little more than titillate. Whether it is a picture of Princess Diana in a bikini or a story about a

49. Merrill, op cit.

sexual attack described in lurid detail, examples of sensationalism abound in the mainstream daily press.

In this way, perfectly fine articles published in mass circulation dailies lose credibility. Often serious readers stop subscribing to the newspaper altogether; more often, the paper is read no longer for its content, but for its classified ads or advertisements. Like the mythical "good articles" in Playboy magazine, even good stories are no longer taken seriously.

The quality daily, on the other hand, is imbued with a determination to serve and help expand a well-educated readership. It does so by stimulating readers in other, more intellectual ways. It builds trust by *being* sincere, not by billing itself as sincere. It shows its courage by daring not to appeal to a mass audience, by seeking less to please than to enlighten, and by being unafraid to publish conflicting viewpoints, or arguments at odds with official, establishment views. All such a newspaper has is its integrity; it cannot sell its soul to sell newspapers and at the same time be true to itself. Yet only by being true to itself can such a daily succeed.

Public Opinion - An Ottawa Daily

As we have seen in Part II, the Ottawa area is a prime location for a quality newspaper. It contains a large, well-educated, well-off population that would welcome a newspaper

that provides a "rich diet of significance." This market segment enjoys analysis and opinion articles, and also wants to read more about government and the public service. The name of the daily, Public Opinion, would reflect the what the newspaper offers and what its potential readers most want to have.

But what sort of quality newspaper would be most suitable for the Ottawa market? And since a newspaper just starting up would have to be small to stay afloat in its early days, what compromises would it have to make?

Particularities of the Ottawa market. As outlined in the previous section, the population in the Ottawa area contains a proportionately high number of well-educated, affluent individuals and households, which provides a strong potential base readership for a quality newspaper. For residents of the area, this comes as no surprise: As Canada's capital city, Ottawa is the seat of government and most of its residents enjoy, directly or indirectly, advantages bestowed upon the region by Canadian taxpayers. Living alongside Parliament, a variety of government departments and an enormous proportion of the public service, Ottawa-area residents tend to have a greater interest in the affairs of government than Canadians elsewhere. At the same time, because the nation's capital draws Canadians from across the country, Ottawa residents

tend to have a strong interest in news and information from across the country. Most important, tens of thousands of people in the Ottawa area, including those in the top categories of education and affluence, work within the federal public service.⁵⁰ Thousands more work for federal Crown corporations, government-funded non-profit organizations or national interest groups headquartered in Ottawa.

Such a high number of federal and other quasi-government employees means that the public service in Ottawa is not merely an important employment sector; it is the primary engine for Ottawa's economic development. Even residents who aren't themselves employed by the federal government have a strong, if indirect interest, in the affairs of the government and its various departments.

For a quality newspaper, this poses a number of specific challenges. Public Opinion's readership would want information about federal politics, not merely out of interest, but because the affairs of the federal government have a direct impact on them and their community. At the same time, it is reasonable to assume that Ottawa readers also seek out thorough news coverage from around the

50. Exact, up-to-date figures were not available. Earlier figures printed in The Citizen in the mid-1980s indicated 70,000 people in the area worked for the federal government, while thousands more worked for other government agencies and Crown corporations.

country, particularly from their places of origin. Perhaps most significant, public servants and others that work with the bureaucracy are interested in information and news about its people, policies and programs.

Coverage of the Public Service

Currently, the Ottawa media do not devote too many resources to covering the public service. The Ottawa Citizen reports on the bureaucracy more consistently than any other newspaper, television or radio station; but nearly all of its public service coverage is handled by one journalist and one columnist. Other journalists report on the public service only when the news is deemed significant - for example, when a new policy or program is announced, or if a significant public servant is fired, moves, or resigns. Broader issues, such as long-term policy development, are rarely covered.

Public Opinion would treat the public service as Ottawa's main business and would cover it accordingly. Private enterprise, in the city and across Canada, is more than adequately reported by a variety of local and national newspapers. The Globe and Mail and The Financial Post provide extensive national business coverage; local weeklies, such as Ottawa Business News, and The Citizen and The Sun report on local business affairs. While the quality of local business reporting could be improved, covering the

public service in a special daily section would be a greater challenge and would bring greater rewards for a quality paper.

It could also help boost the paper's circulation. Assuming the high standards set forth earlier in this section were applied to reporting the public service, it is reasonable to assume that stories reported in Public Opinion would be the talk of every office in every government building in the area. The paper would be a must read both for senior public servants as well as their professional and support staff.

To be able to achieve these aims, the newspaper must operate under a set of assumptions about the public service, the role of government, and the relationship between government, the bureaucracy and the press. Among the assumptions:

1- government has an important role to play in the affairs and in the economy of the nation. In the National Capital Region, residents have an interest in a strong, effective government. After all, this region would suffer disproportionately from major attempts to scale down the role of government in the economy or to severely curtail government spending. Public Opinion would examine government for an audience that is more familiar with politicians and the public service than any other in the country.

2. Government must be made to work efficiently. An important reason for the loss of faith among Canadians for their elected representatives has been the sense that governments do not know how to manage taxpayers' money properly; that bureaucracies were poorly run, bloated and wasteful. This perception, while often exaggerated, is true all too often. Public Opinion would view itself as an independent watchdog on the public service, exposing waste and inefficiency and urging a streamlined, effective public service where taxpayers' money is spent delivering programs to people.

3. The nation's capital has a particular interest in world affairs. Public Opinion would feature world affairs prominently, both on page one and in its own section. While wire services would be a necessary component of this coverage, it would not be the primary source; that would come from a network of stringers (freelancers) around the world established before the startup of the paper.

As discussed previously, Public Opinion would be more than a newspaper of record, reporting the facts of the day; it would have a strong interpretive and analytical function, focusing on ideas and interpretation of events rather than just on the narrative of the events themselves. A great daily must do two things: it must be able to explain the events of the day thoroughly; and it must give them meaning. That would be the underlying goal of the paper's news pages.

A matter of context

For a daily newspaper, giving meaning to the news can only occur after the often mundane task of constantly sorting and co-ordinating the endless stream of news reports is completed. Only then can an understandable context for the events of the day be provided. The editors of a quality Swiss daily, *Neu Zürcher Zeitung*, put it this way: a newspaper should offer "a picture of events, not a blurred mosaic, and to the extent that a newspaper is able, to make events clearer and easier to understand."⁵¹ The short news story with the punchy lead does not, however, lend itself to this task. Very often, the complex and many-sided issues in the news cannot be reconciled with the 20th-century passion for brief, bright stories.

The articles in *Public Opinion*, regardless of the subject they covered, would be grouped in four or five rough categories. The first, the trademark of the paper, would take the form of a personal dispatch, written in an impressionistic, insightful style, examples of which can be found in the British daily *The Independent* and, occasionally, in *The Globe and Mail*.

A few examples of this kind of report are provided at the end of this proposal. Because this kind of writing approach is difficult to describe, it is necessary to study

51. Merrill, op cit., page 7.

existing articles to note how they differ from the usual news fare we are accustomed to in Ottawa. I have included two examples: one from *The Independent* and one from the *Globe and Mail*.

The first, from Peter Pringle, *The Independent's* Moscow correspondent, was written a few days after the failure of the Soviet coup.⁵² This story is ostensibly a straight news story, but it is not written that way. On that day, several events occurred worthy of reporting. The Soviet republic of Byelorussia declared its independence from Moscow; Boris Yeltsin continued his attacks on the authority of the freshly reinstalled Mikhail Gorbachev; a former close adviser to Gorbachev implicated in the coup had hanged himself; the new Soviet defence minister announced the replacement of the military's high command en masse; the Soviet parliament was to consider the formation of a new cabinet structure.

That is a lot of news to report in a short story, and if Pringle had adopted the normal Associated Press approach of "rounding up" the news in a series of sequential two- or three-paragraph bits, most readers would have been either lost or bored.

Pringle began with none of these elements. Instead, he opened as follows:

52. Peter Pringle, *The Independent*, August 28, 1991.

"President Mikhail Gorbachev spent yesterday locked in the Kremlin preparing a final attempt to save his lost authority but, even as he did so, the Soviet establishment and the Union of nearly 300 million crumbled still further and was, in effect, reduced to a mere 70 million people."

Although Pringle has not mentioned even one of the main events of the day in his lead, he has done something more important: he has provided a context for the barrage of news that is to follow.

Pringle's approach is not limited to the lead. Ten paragraphs down, in describing how Russian President Boris Yeltsin is taking over authority from the collapsing Soviet government, he writes: "The Yeltsin camp is having trouble concealing its glee as the Russian leader continues to annex vast chunks of the Soviet government, on the basis that it is on Russian soil..."

There is nothing inherently British about this writing style. A Moscow correspondent for The Globe and Mail, John Gray, used a similar approach in writing about communism's collapse in the wake of the failed Soviet coup. Just a couple of days after Gorbachev returned to Moscow from the Crimea, where he had been under house arrest at his summer home, the Soviet president and Yeltsin agreed that if either man was unable to carry out his duties, the other would automatically replace him. But Gray, in a style more akin to an analysis than a straight news story, begins with his own

assessment of the situation:⁵³

"Although he is safely back in the Kremlin after the collapse of this week's coup d'etat, an unhappy Mikhail Gorbachev has discovered that his Soviet empire is crumbling beneath his feet.

"His Communist Party has been deserted, banned and mocked throughout the Soviet Union, its obedient press silenced. The Soviet President himself has been denounced, jeered at and humiliated, and his authority stolen by the man who was his ally."

Only after these two paragraphs is the news about the events at the Supreme Soviet, or Soviet parliament, reported. Globe editors, meanwhile, inserted a few paragraphs about related issues acquired from Associated Press and Agence France-Presse. The result is somewhat different from Pringle's article in *The Independent* of a few days later; instead of a personal dispatch, Gray's piece is an amalgam of feature, analysis and news story. However, in the end, both articles provide essentially the same results: the reader receives context, and therefore meaning, by articles that do more than merely describe the events of the day.

Not all stories lend themselves to this kind of approach: a personal dispatch might not be appropriate for

53. John Gray, *The Globe and Mail*, August 24, 1991.

complex items such as news about financial matters or arms reduction treaties, for example. Reporters for The Independent, when covering such a story, tend to keep it extremely short. In some cases, that decision is appropriate, for a brief article may be all the story merits. There are, however, instances where a long, thorough descriptive story, of the kind done by The New York Times, The Washington Post and others, makes up in detail what it lacks in flair or interpretation.

For example, on October 7, 1991, The New York Times ran a front page story about the Bush administration's response to the Savings & Loan scandal in the U.S.⁵⁴ The story, which turned on to page 5 of the business section, contained 35 long paragraphs, and explained thoroughly how the sale of assets from failed S&Ls were being handled in a way that profited a few firms at the expense of the taxpayers who had financed the bailout of Savings and Loans. Although it lacks flair, (which, in any case, would be difficult to insert into this dry story about figures and documents), by virtue of its length and thoroughness, the reader is provided with understanding, meaning and context.

Another example from The New York Times of the same day involves a much more celebrated case: it is the first story about the allegations of sexual harassment made by law

54. Jeff Gerth, "Questions raised on revision by U.S. in S.&L. asset deal," *The New York Times*, October 7, 1991.

professor Anita Hill against then-nominee to the Supreme Court Clarence Thomas. As we know now, within a couple of days of this story breaking, the enormous public reaction that it brought (not to mention the electrifying Senate hearings where Hill and Thomas testified) would be grist for the journalistic mill. But on this day, the allegations had just become public and there was as yet little public reaction.

The Ottawa Citizen, for reasons of space, ran just a brief on this story⁵⁵; but The New York Times ran a 38-paragraph story that dealt not only with Hill's allegations, but also with her personal history (in relation to Thomas), with the issue of sexual harassment (particularly in legal terms), and with the way in which the story broke.⁵⁶ In rereading this story in the aftermath of Thomas's appointment to the Supreme Court, one is struck by how little there was left to know, despite the fact that there were three days of hearings in the Senate on this issue alone. Again, here was a story that made up in thoroughness

55. The author was the world editor the night the Anita Hill story broke. At the time, there appeared to be little to warrant massive news coverage for the story. In retrospect, the reaction to the news by women's groups should have been anticipated and more space ought to have been allotted to allow at least part of The New York Times' version to run.

56. Neil A. Lewis, "Law Professor Accuses Thomas Of Sexual Harassment in 1980's," *The New York Times*, Monday, October 7, 1991.

and detail what it lacked in flair.

These two kinds of articles, the personal dispatch and the thorough news story, would be the mainstay of news articles in Public Opinion. They would be augmented by newsbriefs (a must for a tabloid with limited space) and a variety of analyses and newsfeatures, mainly in conjunction with news stories. All the news pages, whether national, world, public service, arts, sports, or health/science/environment, would present stories written in these styles. Stories obtained exclusively from wire services would be reworked and rewritten by section editors, where possible, to maintain the consistency of the newspaper. Although there might be homogenization of news obtained from the wires under such a system, it would ensure the thoroughness of the news report. Furthermore, only straight news stories would be handled in this fashion. Reports from writers who specialize in personalized reports would, of course, be used on their own.

Editorial policies and practices

What exactly is meant by editorial policy? According to Merrill, editorial policy has to do with "consistency in outlook and in publishing practices; it is the course a newspaper chooses to follow as it answers two all-important questions: What shall we print? How shall we print it? Editorial policy is composed of the practices, rules and

principles which the paper sets as a guide and standard for itself. As such, it really governs every phase of the newspaper from the type of staff sought, the kind of news dealt with, the ideological orientation embraced, and even the size of type used in printing." But, Merrill points out, "Seldom are the most important phases of a paper's editorial policy expressed in writing; they are simply understood."⁵⁷

Although Public Opinion would make its political philosophy plain (liberal/state interventionist/reformist) it would ask of its writers stories that are fair and balanced. But the fairness of an article would not be determined by the amounts of paragraphs or quotes from "one side or the other." Rather, it would depend on the writer's idea of what is fair, not only from a journalistic point of view, but also in terms of the situation. (For example, during a hijacking, terrorists are often given stature and respectability simply because the press has reported their statements, demands and communiques uncritically, even when they know (or should know) that the information is false. This flaw stems from the adherence to "objectivity" and the notion that "every story has two sides;" in effect, the

57. Merrill, op cit., page 18.

terrorists profit from the hijacking via the media.)⁵⁸

If a reporter is allowed to use his own judgment in determining the validity of a particular source, his doubts and his certainties should also play a role in how he structures his story.

At the same time it is clear that newspapers often function, albeit sometimes unwittingly, as agents of the status quo. Again, this stems partly from the dictates of fairness/balance and objectivity; to get a balanced story, reactions must be sought, and who better to offer reactions than officials or "experts" on a particular subject. Of course, relying on these officials and experts merely perpetuates the status quo in that these establishment figures are seen as the source of all knowledge and opinion on a given subject. Unfortunately, what is often left out of the equation are the other experts whose voices are too weak, or considered too radical, to be acceptable spokesmen. Often, the only way for such groups to grow in influence is to shed the views they hold, or at least to modify them toward a more moderate position; in effect, to become co-

58. The debate about how the media should cover events of terrorism has raged for years without any conclusive argument being heard. In November 1991, The Citizen gave its journalists firm instructions on how to deal with reporting such situations in a new Policies and Ethics directive. The adoption of such policies, however, does not mean that terrorists will no longer benefit from media coverage.

opted by the status quo.⁵⁹

A newspaper that tries to provide meaning, however, must do better than merely talking with the officials and paid experts on issues. It must actively seek out those whose voices cannot be as easily heard, yet who are likely the most directly concerned with any given subject.

Newspaper of Meaning

Because of its tabloid size and because its purpose is not to be a "newspaper of record" but rather a "newspaper of meaning", Public Opinion would not attempt to cover a broad scope of the news. It would sacrifice the average, day-to-day kind of story in order to provide more in depth coverage of the stories it did cover. The newspaper would cover off any important news for which a full report could not be written in a series of packages of briefs; mostly these would consist of wire copy reports. Even some fairly important stories might be handled in such a way; for example, election results from countries where little change has occurred, or where a government has been succeeded by a

59. This phenomenon has been noted by a number of media analysts. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, in *Manufacturing Consent*, list five "filters" that information must pass through before reaching the general public. These include (1) wealth of media corporations; (2) media dependence on advertising; and (3) reliance of the media on information provided by government, business and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources. Pantheon Books, New York, 1988, page 2.

like-minded party, which has little effect on Canadians, might be properly covered off in a brief. Similarly, news from around the country available on the Canadian Press wire service of significance in one region but not in this one would likely be briefed.

Briefs could also be used as a means of being a newspaper of record in one area - the public service. Briefs could be used to publish some of the more interesting or significant press releases issued by government departments about new policies, procedures or regulations.

World news would be obtained through two main sources: stringers or freelancers from a dozen or so locations; and wire services. In most omnibus daily newspapers, there is an excess of wire copy for editors to look over in any given night. That is chiefly the result of too few staff manning newsdesks and too many wire services for the editor to read and choose from.

At Public Opinion, editors in charge of the world section would have the responsibility for their pages, which would be limited in number on a daily basis, giving them the opportunity to essentially rewrite world stories (and, to a lesser extent) Canadian stories as well, to turn these "wire service" stories into their own by virtue of their the revision. In effect, the wires would become not just story machines, but on the spot correspondents offering raw reports to be edited by the newspaper.

Newspaper sections

Like any daily newspaper, Public Opinion would be divided into a number of sections. Some of these, such as World (or International), National (or Canada) and Sports, are used by most, if not all, dailies in Canada. Others, however, would reflect the unique character of this quality daily in the national capital region.

In the projected page breakdown that follows, the newspaper is 20 pages long and ad-free (which would likely mirror its early days of publication). As advertising increases over time, Public Opinion's newshole would be maintained by adding pages. At the optimum level of advertising (60 per cent ads to 40 per cent copy), the size of the paper would be increased to 40+ pages, thus leaving the news hole at the same size.

Section breakdown

The sections would break down as follows:

Page 1 - four top news stories, plus briefs column to highlight top stories in sections, as well as interview and main op-ed piece.

Page 2 - turns from page 1

Pages 3-6 - Canada section

Pages 7-10 - International news section

Pages 11-12 - The Public Sector

Page 13 - Arts and culture

Page 14 - Sports

Page 15-16 - Health, science and environmental

Page 17-20 - editorial section

(Page 17 - Main editorial and letters)

(Page 18-19 - Op-ed pieces, cartoon)

(Page 20 - Feature interview)

Pages 1 and 2 would feature the day's top news stories. Because Public Opinion is a tabloid, there is only limited space in these two pages; therefore, the other main sections must also carry stories of significance. Page 1 would also devote a column of its 5-column format to a brief package that used the top story from each section.

The national section would contain news from across Canada, combining staff-generated copy with stories from a network of stringers and the CP wire service. It would also contain background articles, analyses, and informed commentary. Emphasis would be given to quality, not quantity of stories. When necessary, a brief package of important, but secondary stories would be included. On most days, the national section, as a primary component of Public Opinion, would be between four and six pages. On the inevitable slow days for Canadian news (primarily for Sunday and Monday papers), space would be given over to international news. Because the paper would have no business section per se, important business stories would also be included in the

national and world section. The section's main orientation would toward news on political, social and economic issues.

Invariably, there is always a much larger volume of stories available for news from around the world. That, and the unavailability of staff (at least in the early stages) to cover stories abroad, mark the main differences between the national and international sections. Stringers and available wire services would provide most, if not all, of the basic world news coverage. Staff writers and editors would, where possible, provide background and analysis articles, though freelancers and the wires would also contribute a great deal here as well. As in the Canada section, brief packages when necessary would be used. Again, social, political and economic issues would dominate in this section.

The next section, The Public Sector, marks Public Opinion's individuality as a newspaper. As such, it holds an importance that exceeds its location in the newspaper and the number of pages allotted to it. Despite the section's small size, adequate public service coverage would be extremely difficult, especially at first, given the size of the public service and related agencies, and because no other media organization has attempted to systematically report on the bureaucracy. There would be no model to follow. Possible obstacles could include resistance from the public service to this kind of daily public scrutiny, and an

erratic rate of news that would hamper the development of a daily section.

The latter potential obstacle could be mitigated by dividing the coverage of the bureaucracy into a number of beats. Though the resources would not be available to assign a reporter to each major department, there would be a staff sufficient in size to carve out particular areas of expertise. Six reporters would be organized to cover:

Beat 1 - Social services (Health and Welfare, Employment and Immigration, Secretary of State, Multiculturalism).

Beat 2 - Finance (Finance, Revenue Canada, Treasury Board)

Beat 3 - Resources (Environment Canada, Energy, Mines and Resources, Agriculture Canada, Fisheries, etc.

Beat 4 - Defence, External Affairs, NGOs (national organizations, voluntary and lobby groups) and unions (PSAC, PIPS, CUPW, etc.)

Beat 5 - Crown corporations and government agencies (i.e., Human Rights Commission, National Capital Commission, etc.)

Beat 6 - Senior reporter, who would identify trends in policies and practices and be the chief columnist for the section.

Public service briefs might also be written based on press releases obtained from government, although if the story merited more coverage, a reporter would be assigned to follow up on the release.

Three short sections would then share the next four pages. Well-written stories about the arts or health, science or environmental issues are of great interest among the well-educated readers in Public Opinion's target audience. It would, however, be difficult to devote too many resources to these sections in the early days of the newspaper. To overcome this, the newspaper's maxim, emphasis on quality rather than quantity, is important. Public Opinion would specialize in its arts and science reporting, publishing longer and better reviews and articles on special events, instead of trying to cover it all.

The same approach would be used in the sports section. Like arts and science, sport news would be of some interest to Public Opinion readers. In Public Opinion's sport section, they would find an in-depth story that describes the events and the people behind those events thoughtfully.

All three sections are likely to have only a page in the newspaper each day, so a well-written article or two would suffice to fill the sections. In sports, that could mean one story on the most memorable game of the evening, or about some less immediate but significant development in the sports world. For arts, it could mean a feature article about an impending tour, an expose of funding problems in the cultural industries, or a long review of an important concert in Ottawa. In the Health/Science/Environment section, developments come so often that this section could

likely be filled by wire copy, at least in the beginning. Arts and sports, meanwhile, would have a skeleton staff to generate some in-house copy.

Each edition of Public Opinion would conclude with a four-page editorial section, which would be another defining characteristic of the newspaper's personality. The first page would contain just one, medium length editorial; the rest of the page would be filled with letters. Medium and long letters would be encouraged.

Op-ed commentaries and background articles would comprise the next two pages, along with an editorial cartoon. These articles would be both staff written and drawn from the general public, and would balance news, national and public service issues. Science/health/environment stories would also be included.

The back page of the newspaper would feature a full-page interview every day. The interview would be the responsibility of one staff journalist, who would both line up and conduct interviews as well as act as a section editor by assigning interviews to freelancers or pulling them (where available) off the wire.

A typical edition

It is impossible to map out exactly what Public Opinion would contain if it were to publish. However, it is possible to go to a day in the past and describe how Public Opinion

would have covered the day's events. To do that, three newspapers were selected from Monday, October 7, 1991. The stories published in The Independent, The New York Times and The Citizen will make up parts of the content of Public Opinion. Of course, while *what* is covered is taken from these newspapers, *how* it would be covered is not.

Part of the reason for choosing a Monday is that the news on Sunday is usually very slow. It would have been easy to pick a day when the big news was happening in Canada and around the world. But it would be more representative (and more difficult) to fill a paper on a slow day. Saturdays and Sundays are typically the slowest news days of the week; hence Sunday and Monday papers usually have the fewest news stories (and the smallest news holes).

One problem in planning a newspaper based on news stories carried in other papers is that any specialized section Public Opinion might contain does not exist in these other papers. Specifically, although Public Opinion would devote a certain number of pages toward covering the Public Service, stories from the bureaucracy were unavailable in the other newspapers. There were, however, some important developments in the public service at the time, and a rough sketch of the day's section can be extrapolated from them.⁶⁰

60. These included strikes by the Public Service Alliance of Canada and by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. There were also revelations of large bonuses being paid to senior

Sunday, October 6 was indeed a slow news night for newspapers in Canada. The most important national story was the reaction to former prime minister Pierre Trudeau's comments on how granting Quebec distinct society status could enable the government of that province to deport anglophones. Other national stories included: a proposal by the Parti Quebecois to limit immigration when the unemployment rate is up; advancers on the B.C., Saskatchewan elections; anti-abortion protests across Canada; PM's trip to Far East cost \$296,000; Allan Legere's murder trial; EC tries to salvage bid for De Havilland; and a debate about the right of alcohol and drug counsellors to drink off the job in the Northwest Territories.

There was much more to choose from on the international scene. The main stories of the night included: Croatian capital threatened by Yugoslav federal forces; OAS urges Aristide's return to power in Haiti; Video of 6-year hostage Terry Anderson released; 10th anniversary of Sadat's assassination; Anita Hill's harassment allegations; Social Democrats in Portugal win election; Israeli peace activist jailed; Japanese try to find successor to Kaifu; Freed east bloc states say West has let them down; German neo-nazis attack foreigners; While marking Babi Yar slaughter of Jews, Gorbachev condemns anti-Semitism.

government employees when PSAC employees were being ordered to accept a wage freeze.

Although there was little public sector news over the weekend, in early October the labor dispute between the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the federal government had not been resolved; CUPW/Canada Post mediation was underway; and the issue of bonuses for senior federal and Crown corporation officials was being strongly debated.

In arts and entertainment, again, there was little to choose from. Top stories included the resumption of the NAC Orchestra's Sunday afternoon series and Elizabeth Taylor's wedding; as well, the death of Miles Davis, just a few days before, would be the subject of a retrospective look at this seminal figure in the jazz world.

As would be expected, things were more lively in the sports department. Stories included a Detroit businessman who was interested in buying the Ottawa Rough Riders. Meanwhile, the same Rough Riders beat their namesakes in Saskatchewan; the Toronto Blue Jays had just made the playoffs; and there was a full slate of NHL games.

There were only a couple of Health/Science/Environment stories available that night: Connaught Laboratories pumped \$15 million into vaccine searches; and, a new pyramid was discovered in Egypt.

Page by Page breakdown

As mentioned previously, page 1 would comprise the top four stories of the day, and would include a brief package

to highlight the top stories from the sections. On Sunday, October 6, the four stories would probably have been selected from the National and International lists; there were no noteworthy developments in the PSAC strike. Little else was reported. (Of course, with a well-staffed public service section, other stories may very well have come to light.) Similarly, there were no top stories from arts, science or sports sections.

Pages 1 and 2. My choices for page one would have been: Yugoslav general threatens Zagreb (because an attack on the capital of Croatia would have wide repercussions in Europe and around the world); PQ's attacks on Trudeau (because the former PM's remarks on the constitution, and the reactions to them, have been significant in the past and could be so in this debate as well.); Anita Hill's charges against Judge Clarence Thomas (With hindsight, it is easy to put this particular story forward for page one. It was not so easy on the night the news first came over the wire, as the controversy had not really begun yet. Still, the effect the charges would have, particularly among women's groups, should have been anticipated); Egypt marks 10th anniversary of Sadat's death. (This piece would provide the opportunity for a personalized, in-depth article on Egyptians' relationship with the legacy of their slain president.) As all stories would be rather lengthy, all four stories would turn onto page 2.

National. Although national space would normally be about the same size as the international section, on this night, the dearth of news in Canada means that some pages normally designated for the Canada section would be handed over to international. It is likely that if the paper were actually in operation, this situation might not occur. Staff reporters and editors might be able to provide a variety of stories on several significant Canadian issues. As well, there might be a wealth of feature material held over for the weekend editions. But on this night, no such story ideas presented themselves to this editor, and even filling the remaining three pages allotted to Canada news would have been difficult. Page 3, the main Canada page, would likely have focused on the two provincial elections that were in the offing at that time (B.C. and Saskatchewan, both subsequently won by the NDP). Articles could have taken the form of a personal dispatch from the respective campaign trails. There might also have been a newsfeature about the electorate in one of the provinces. Page 4 would have contained an analysis of the impact of Trudeau's remarks, given the strong reaction in Quebec and the rest of Canada; It would also contain a thorough news piece on the PQ proposal to limit immigration to Quebec as long as the unemployment rate was high; A personal dispatch story on the Prime Minister's trip to the Far East, if available, would have been included; if not, a thorough read on the expenses

incurred by the PM and his entourage. Page 5 would have featured two personal dispatches; the first, a combination of CP wire copy and dispatches from stringers on the anti-abortion demonstrations across the country, the second from the Allan Legere murder trial in New Brunswick; Any leftover space on any of the three pages would be used for stories on the EC attempt to salvage its De Havilland bid, and on the debate in the Northwest Territories over counsellors' use of alcohol. On this particular night, no brief package for other events in Canada would be needed.

International. Because of pages handed to the international section from national, the world section would begin on page 6. The main news on the night not handled on page 1 was the OAS demand that the Haitian military restore ousted President Aristide. This story would be handled, if possible, as a personal dispatch. (Latin American stringers, preferably in Haiti, would file the report. If unavailable, the best choice on the wire would be used. As well, there would be a story, possibly written by staff, about how Haiti has struggled throughout its history for stable, democratic government.)

The remaining world pages (pages 7-12) would feature a variety of dispatches, thorough reads, short newssers, and in-depth stories about the events of the day. Page 7 would begin with a short newser about the release of a videotape of Terry Anderson by his Lebanese captors. Page 8 would

feature two similarly related stories: Gorbachev's condemnation of anti-Semitism while marking the 50th anniversary of the massacre of Jews at Babi Yar by the Nazis and their Ukrainian collaborators, and the growing neo-Nazi attacks on foreigners in Germany. The former story would be filed as a dispatch; the latter as a short news story, but attached to a much longer analytical piece about the effects of intolerance in Germany's past on the present day.

Page 9 would group three stories about the fortunes of democratic governments. The outcome of the Portuguese election would take the form of a thorough news story; The Japanese ruling party's quest for a successor to the outgoing prime minister would be a featury dispatch; rounding off the page would be a short news story on the Belgian King's refusal to accept the resignation of his linguistically split government. Page 10, meanwhile, would contain a dispatch from eastern Europe about how the states freed from Soviet domination feel the West has let them down. Other world news would be contained in a newsbrief package that would be placed on page 10, the last world news page.

Public Sector. Sunday is, as would be expected, a slow, some would say dead, night for the public service, since most of it is shut down. In fact, no news from the public sector was reported that night. However, with the PSAC strike, the mediation between Canada Post and CUPW and the

revelation that senior bureaucrats were to receive bonuses while the rest of the public service were being offered a wage freeze, there was no shortage of potential articles. So the Public Sector section would include a long background analysis on CUPW and its stormy relationship with Canada Post (page 11); the rest of the page would be filled with a brief package of announcements issued late in the previous week by the public service or related agencies. Page 12 would include a featury dispatch on life on the PSAC picket line, and a column on the impact on public service morale of the bonuses awarded to senior bureaucrats.

Arts/entertainment. This section would take up one page (page 13) and would include a personal dispatch (from wires) on the Liz Taylor wedding, as well as a thorough report on the NAC summer series. (Normally, articles about stars would not be a staple of the paper, but this event had already captured so much attention that an interesting article could have been written about it, not as an exercise in stargazing, but rather to focus on the philosophy of excess exemplified by the Taylor extravaganza.)

Sports. The two-page sports section would include a newsfeature on Detroit businessman trying to buy the Rough Riders, and a personal dispatch on Blue Jays clinching place in the playoffs on page 14. Page 15, meanwhile, would feature short summaries on NHL games from the wires; the bottom of the page would be the "six-point section," with

box scores of Sunday's games.

Health/Science/Environment. This one-page section (page 16) would include two thorough news stories: on Connaught Laboratories pumping \$15 million into vaccine searches, and one on the pyramid discovery in Egypt. Both stories would likely be taken from the wires.

Editorial. Page 17's main editorial would be about remarks by Pierre Trudeau; Op-ed on pages 18 and 19 would contain analysis about the deteriorating Yugoslav situation and a analytical preview of the upcoming elections in Saskatchewan and British Columbia; as well, a piece on Pierre Trudeau, and how he's managed to make news despite his professed efforts to stay out of the limelight since he quit politics in 1984. Page 20, the back page of the paper, would feature an interview with Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's ousted president.

Style

As a thinking person's newspaper, Public Opinion would eschew flashy graphics, design and color for a more intellectual, "booky" look. But precisely for that reason, its overall design would have to be carefully considered. (There is a parallel here with the new look of The Globe and Mail. After an extensive redesign which, presumably, cost a great deal of time and money, the paper now does little to

vary its look.)⁶¹ The goal of Public Opinion's design would be to offer clean, readable pages containing stories of substance that are not cheapened by gimmicky points of entry but at the same time are not merely thrown together without a care for the reader's ease of reading. To this end, the paper's design would be five-column tabloid, and would use a number of hairline rules to delineate between stories so as to offer readers crisp, clear lines. A dominant (black and white) photo would be found on each page, and the paper would use relatively small sans-serif typeface for headlines, and (again small) 8-point type for copy. The paper's flag would be all caps, with the word "Public" in a roman serif typeface, while the word "Opinion" would use the same typeface, but in italics. The modular style of page layout would be employed, although deviations to this would be permitted if necessary for the better presentation of the story.

Organization of the newsroom

Public Opinion's newsroom would have to be organized in such a way as to best utilize the paper's initially limited resources. With a projected newsroom staff of not more than 40, the allocation of staff among departments is crucial.

Heading the newsroom, reporting directly to the

61. The Globe unveiled its redesigned newspaper in June 1990.

publisher, would be the managing editor. (There is no room in the budget for an editor to whom the managing editor would report.) The managing editor would have in his management team two assistant managing editors, four senior section editors and three junior section editors. Arts, Sports and Health/Science/Environment would constitute the junior positions; National, international, public service and editorial would be the senior positions, with the editorial editor being the "first among equals."

The remaining staff of editors would be junior editors assigned to various sections. The section editors for the national and international sections would each have a staff of four persons, not including the section editor and reporters. The public service and editorial sections would have two staffers each, and arts, sports, and science/health/environment would edit their sections alone.

Public Opinion's 15 reporters would also be divided among the various sections. The public service section would need the most reporters, six, as all the copy for this section would have to be staff generated. The national section, too, would require at least a staff of four. Arts, sports, and science/health/environment would each get one reporter.

Each section would operate as a "pod," autonomous yet interconnected with the other sections. This is necessary because of the varying tasks required in each section. In

the national section, for example, the section editor and his staff would have to assign stories to reporters and edit staff-written copy. In addition, they would have to assign and co-ordinate stringers from around the country, edit their copy, and edit and rewrite CP copy from the wire.

The international section, on the other hand, would have much less to do with story assignment, since it would have no reporters; instead, it would spend a great deal of time editing and rewriting stories off the wire, co-ordinating its stringers and freelancers from around the world, and (if possible) writing analysis articles for its section. The public service section would act much like the city desks at most daily newspapers, except that its focus would instead be Ottawa's public service. Editors would assign and edit staff written stories. Little else would be available from wires.

With only one staff reporter per section, The arts, sports and health/science/environment editors would have to scramble to fill their page(s) using wire copy and whatever their small staff could provide. The editors would essentially manage their page(s) themselves. The editors in the editorial department, meanwhile, would occasionally write, but more often search out, illuminating commentary for their section.

The structure of the newsroom would be hierarchical, with clear lines of authority and defined paths for staff to

advance, as is outlined in the following diagram.

Staff reporters and copy editors would be considered to be at the same level, reflecting the different talents required for each job and the equal importance of the jobs in the production of the newspaper. Reporters would be encouraged to try their hands at editing and vice-versa.

The remaining four positions within the editorial department would be filled by two photo editors, both of whom would at times serve as staff photographers (mainly for public service and national section photos); and by two librarians, who would establish and maintain the newspaper's morgue and reference centre.

PART V - REVENUES AND COSTS

Target Circulation

Just how large a circulation Public Opinion would have is virtually impossible to ascertain. Short of producing the paper and counting actual numbers, all one can do is offer some informed speculation. Even if one had the means to do extensive market research, without an actual product in hand any attempt to determine circulation would be unscientific and speculative.

However, there are ways around to minimize this dilemma. One method, though not one of choice for newspaper publishers, is free distribution. Unlike radio and TV, the print media have the means to determine their own circulation via free distribution. Radio or TV stations inherently offer their programming free, but listeners actively make a choice by tuning in. On the other hand, since newspapers and magazines are actually physically distributed, a case can be made that X numbers of papers have been printed and circulated. There is, however, no guarantee that the newspapers will actually be read.

Several magazines and newsletters rely on free distribution entirely, earning revenues solely from advertising.⁶² While this is not a serious option for a

62. A look at most people's junk mail in a week confirms that a wide range of publications are delivered free and presumably survive and prosper because of the advertising they attract.

daily newspaper in the long-term, it might be useful in boosting a new paper's circulation until it is able to achieve a respectable paid circulation.

A more orthodox, if riskier, method of assessing potential circulation is to set a target, rather than speculate about numbers which cannot in reality be determined beforehand. In other words, one takes the data that one has (in this case, the existing demographic and circulation data from Part II, as well as the more specialized psychographic data produced by Angus Reid), and using it, one determines a target (or several targets) to be aimed for.⁶³ (When *The Sun* entered the Ottawa market, its target was 50,000; although it started out with only about 20,000 readers, it has gradually crept up and is now only about 14,000 shy.)⁶⁴

For our high-end niche daily, one could achieve a target as follows:

* The demographic, psychographic and circulation figures indicate that a high-end niche daily has a potential

63. Information obtained in conversations with David Eddy, Director of Advertising Research at *The Ottawa Citizen*.

64. *The Citizen* reported in March 30, 1989 that *The Ottawa Sun's* projected, or target, circulation was 50,000. *Citizen Research Data*, published in May 1991, show that *The Sun's* circulation is approaching 40,000. Their success in closing in on their target circulation is attributed in large part to the low price of the newspaper on newsstands. (*The Sun* costs 25 cents.)

readership of about 200,000;

* Upon publication, 12.5% of that audience will be buying the newspaper = circulation 25,000

* In two years, 25% of that audience will be buying the newspaper = circulation 50,000⁶⁵.

Costs

Setting up a target circulation provides a reasonable reference point upon which to work out the newspaper's projected revenues as well as some of its most significant costs.

Publishing a newspaper is a costly proposition. Any paper must have a place to publish, which involves either buying or renting office space; it must have office equipment and supplies; unless it chooses to rely solely on stores and/or home delivery, it must buy boxes for distribution (these cost approximately \$350 per box); it must have a large staff to produce and distribute the newspaper and solicit advertising for it; it must have a budget for advertising and marketing (particularly in the case of a new newspaper); it must pay for Canadian and foreign wire services; and it must pay for printing.⁶⁶

65. Conversations with David Eddy, op cit.

66. Conversations with Rene Brazeau, The Citizen's business manager.

Because a new newspaper cannot know how business will go, it is wise for the paper to do all it can to keep its fixed and capital costs down. Capital costs would include a building, printing presses and computer equipment.⁶⁷

Of course, these things are necessary, but they do not have to be owned by the newspaper. A building, for example, can be rented. In May 1990, LeDroit sold its building on Rideau Street and now operates from a rented location in the market.⁶⁸ Similarly, while a newspaper must of course be printed, it can reduce its capital costs significantly by using a commercial printer or another newspaper's printing presses. (The Ottawa Sun is printed by Qualimax, owned by Hollinger's Unimedia, which also prints LeDroit.)⁶⁹ Another advantage of having printing done by an outside organization is in payroll. If a newspaper doesn't maintain its own presses, it doesn't have to pay pressmen.⁷⁰ Computers, and office equipment and furniture, could be leased to keep startup and capital costs down.

Staffing is a major expense in newspapers. While staff numbers vary from paper to paper, without qualified,

67. Rene Brazeau, *ibid.*

68. *The Ottawa Citizen*, April 25, 1991.

69. *Ibid.*

70. Conversations with Rene Brazeau, *op cit.*

dedicated personnel, a newspaper cannot be expected to do very well. For a quality paper, staffing, particularly in the editorial department, is an even greater concern. While there is no fixed number of staff absolutely necessary to the functioning of a daily, there are a number of positions that absolutely must be filled. These include:

Office staff: An office staff to handle the day-to-day administration of the newspaper, including collections (for ads and classified ads), payroll, and general office work. (Under the control of the paper's Business Manager.)

Advertising staff: Sales personnel and support staff to sell both retail and national advertisements. (Under the control of the Advertising Manager.)

Circulation staff: This department would be responsible for distributing the newspaper across the city. The logistics of this job are very complex. They would ensure that newspapers were circulated to stores, newsboxes, and subscribers.

Production staff: Computer operators and design personnel to work on advertisements and to help in the production of the newspaper. These departments are currently not as widely used within newspapers as they used to be due to the advent of desktop publishing in editorial and advertising departments; still, no paper can completely eliminate its production department, particularly with regard to advertising.

Technical staff: In an environment as dependent as the

newspaper is on computers, a strong technical support staff is more than a luxury, it is essential.

Promotions staff: Any newspaper, particularly a new one, must be able to promote itself and raise its profile throughout its circulation area. Promotions staff would be responsible for making sure the newspaper was well-known even before it published a single issue.

Editorial staff: Reporters, editors, editorial writers, copy people, headed by the Editor.

Miscellaneous: Some additional hiring would be required, either through outside agencies or on staff, for assorted tasks such as maintenance of the work place, and for extra office staff in the various departments.

Publisher: To oversee all operations of the newspaper.⁷¹

Staff Size

The number of employees at any given newspaper varies, and depends mainly on the kind of newspaper it is trying to be and the amount of revenue it brings in. The *New York Times'* editorial department alone has more than 485 employees; the paper employs thousands of workers in its total operation.⁷² By contrast, Ottawa's *LeDroit* has 130

71. Rene Brazeau, *ibid.*

72. Merrill, *op cit.*, page 220.

employees in total.⁷³

For the purposes of Public Opinion, however, even LeDroit's staffing is far too high. (That, in turn, might explain the financial difficulties experienced by that newspaper.) Staffing, ultimately, depends on advertising, which to a very large degree depends on circulation; not merely the number of papers circulated, though that is important, but the demographic profile of the newspaper's readership. The relationship between advertising and staffing size is quite simple: without revenues, payrolls cannot be met; therefore, staff size must depend in large part on the amount of newspapers sold and the amount of advertising revenue generated.⁷⁴

Having said that, no newspaper can function without enough personnel in the positions outlined above. In the case of the proposed high-end niche paper, a minimum number of staff might total around 80; this number could be increased to 100 or even 120 if increased circulation and revenues warranted.

Revenue

A newspaper has three sources of revenue: sales, which bring in a small, but significant share of revenue;

73. Information obtained from information officer at LeDroit.

74. Conversations with David Eddy, *op cit.*

classified ads; and advertising, which pays most of the bills and provides the newspaper with profits, which it can then use to grow.

Newspaper advertising is measured in Modular agate lines, or MALs. A 5-column tabloid has 900 MALs per page, or 180 MALs per column. To garner enough revenue to pay for all of the costs outlined above, newspapers aim for a 60/40 ratio between advertising and editorial content. That is, a 32-page newspaper contains 28,880 MALs; of these, 17,280 (or 60%) will be ads, and the rest being used for editorial content.⁷⁵

There are many factors that determine a newspaper's appeal to advertisers. Not all advertisers are looking for the same things. Small businesses will have different criteria than large ones. As well, the nature of the products or services offered play an important role in advertisers' media selection.

Advertising rates, of course, are an important determinant for any business wishing to advertise. A small business with a limited budget may opt for the cheapest ad rate possible. For example, in today's newspaper market, a small business might choose to advertise in *The Sun*, rather than in *The Citizen*, because he cannot afford to buy an ad in *The Citizen*, despite the fact that *The Citizen* has four

75. David Eddy, *ibid.*

times the circulation of the Sun. This approach is even more obvious in fragmented radio market, where advertisers will obtain a good deal from one radio station and stick with it, even though the BBMs (Bureau of Broadcast Measurement statistics) show that the station has a tiny listenership. This unsophisticated approach is chosen out of necessity by advertisers who cannot afford to pay top dollar to reach the most people.⁷⁶

Larger businesses, meanwhile, are less constrained by funding limitations. One method they use to determine advertising value is cost-per-thousand (cost/000), which measures how much a newspaper ad costs to reach 1,000 paid readers.⁷⁷

In today's market, for example, a 600 modular agate line (MAL) advertisement in the Citizen has a cost/000 of \$10.70. (This is the lowest cost/000 in Canada, incidentally.) The same ad in the Sun, meanwhile, has a cost/000 of \$32.68. It must be emphasized that the ad would have cost significantly less in the Sun; but because the Sun's circulation is less than a quarter of the Citizen's, its cost/000 is much higher.

In Public Opinion a 600-mal ad would cost the

76. Conversation with Katherine Jeans, Vice-President, Sound Venture Productions/Sound Video Post.

77. Conversations with Katherine Jeans, *ibid.*

advertiser \$900. (By contrast, a full-page, 900-mal ad in The Hill-Times, a 7,000-circulation weekly that covers Parliament Hill, costs \$970.)⁷⁸ The cost/000 of such an ad would be \$900 divided by 25 (for 25,000 readers), that is, \$36. While that is somewhat higher than The Sun's cost/000 of \$32.68 and more than triple The Citizen's cost/000 of \$10.70, two things must be kept in mind that would increase the value of an ad in Public Opinion for the advertiser.

First, although the cost/000 would be much higher, the actual cost of the ad, at \$900, would be less than half the price of an equal-size ad in The Citizen. Based on its \$10.70 cost per thousand and an average circulation of about 180,000, the price of an ad in The Citizen would be \$1,890. For small businesses, at least, that consideration would mean a great deal. Second, and more important, is the quality of the thousands being reached. Citizen ads potentially reach many more thousands, it is true, but the majority of these readers are likely not to be interested in, or unable to afford, the products being advertised. In other words, the advertiser's money is being wasted in reaching thousands of readers who won't (or can't) pay attention to his product. Public Opinion's readership, however, would be much more specific and targeted. Though there might be only 25,000 papers circulated, many of its

⁷⁸. Ad rate sheet, *The Hill-Times*, November 1989.

readers, if not most, would be in a position to afford, or be interested in, the product being advertised. These two factors, together, would mitigate against a business's reluctance to advertise in the paper, especially if circulation surveys indicate the paper is being passed around the home or the office.⁷⁹

Advertisers are looking for "motivated" readers in a newspaper, that is, readers who are likely to be interested in the product being advertised. A large concentration of such motivated customers is difficult to gain in a mass-circulation newspaper like the Citizen, which by its very nature has a readership comprising a broad cross-section of the city's residents.

A high-end niche newspaper like Public Opinion would find itself in the enviable position of being able to appeal to a wide range of selected advertisers. For example, a car dealer selling, say, BMW or Lexus automobiles ranging in price from \$40,000 to \$100,000 might be inclined to advertise in a high-end niche paper that reaches 25,000 or 50,000 readers if he were persuaded that most of those readers were in a position to afford the product he is selling; if he advertised in The Citizen, for example, he would reach 175,000 readers, but the vast majority would not

79. Conversations with Katherine Jeans, *ibid.*

have the means to afford his product.⁸⁰

Many exclusive businesses choose not to advertise in the Citizen, some because of the high cost, others because they believe their exclusive clientele would not be reached in the Citizen. Such businesses might include expensive restaurants and caterers, country clubs, resorts, exclusive boutiques, imported car dealerships and professional services, such as lawyers and accountants.⁸¹

Still, even many exclusive stores and other high-end businesses do advertise in the Citizen. So the mainstay of the newspaper would be businesses that also advertise in the Citizen.⁸² Although this appears at first glance to be somewhat daunting competition, Public Opinion's well-targeted audience and much lower rates would attract businesses to bring a small percentage of their Citizen advertising budget to the paper instead.⁸³ The former advertising research director at The Citizen, David Eddy,

80. Conversations with Katherine Jeans, *ibid.*

81. Conversation with David Eddy, *ibid.*

82. "The mainstay [of your paper] would be Citizen advertisers who add a bit to their advertising budgets or cut Citizen advertising by 10% to advertise in your paper." David Eddy, Citizen advertising research director.

83. Conversations with David Eddy, advertising research director, The Citizen. Eddy says the Sun pitches for ads by telling potential clients: "Cut a column off your Citizen ad and buy an ad in the Sun."

says: "Advertisers would realize that for a relatively cheap cost, your newspaper is targeting exactly the market they're after."

According to Eddy, the idea that competitors who go after advertisers in the Citizen don't survive, is a myth. "Look at The Ottawa Sun," he says. "Look at the weekly business magazines. The Yellow Pages, radio and TV." All those competing media, he insists, stay alive on businesses that also advertise in the Citizen.

Price and cost/000 are perhaps the most important determinants in how advertisers decide their newspaper advertising budgets. But they are not the only ones. As in most human activity, a variety of intangibles also enter into the process. The advertiser's own newspaper preference may play a part. Even more important, however, is the nature of the product being advertised. An exclusive women's clothing store, for example, is unlikely to advertise in The Sun, because of The Sun's mainly 64-per-cent male readership.⁸⁴

Retail advertising would be Public Opinion's bread and butter, but it would by no means represent the only kind of advertising the paper could draw in. Many large companies operating across the country or even across North America might also be interested in a newspaper with a specific

84. Citizen Research Data, May 1991.

audience of highly-motivated consumers. Although national advertisers prefer to deal with national newspaper chains, such as the Sun or Southam News newspapers, a small, independent daily can hire advertising representatives whose business it is to sell ads on behalf of their clients to national advertisers. The representative, of course, takes a percentage of the advertising dollar spent by the national advertiser; in return, he finds the ads, and the paper gains a valuable new source of advertising revenue.⁸⁵

Classified ads are another revenue source for newspapers; however, in most markets, the leading mass-appeal broadsheet daily tends to publish the lion's share of classified ads. This makes sense, from the advertiser's point of view; he wants to advertise where the largest number of people will see his ad. Still, there is a not insignificant amount of revenue that can be gotten from even a page or two of classified ads, and Public Opinion would offer the classified advertiser the same advantages as the commercial advertiser -- a highly motivated, well-educated, well-off readership. In other words, while classified ads for inexpensive apartments or clerical jobs might be few and far between in Public Opinion, there would probably be a market for, say, luxury condos, or professional services.

Newspaper sales also bring in enough revenue not to be

85. Conversations with Katherine Jeans, op cit.

discounted. If Public Opinion sells 25,000 copies at 25 cents each, for example, it earns \$6,250, minus a percentage (about 20 or 30 per cent) to the vendor. This sum might go a long way toward paying the newspaper's printing costs, for example.⁸⁶

The bottom line

It has been necessary so far to provide a mainly general outline of the newspaper business in order to explain what is needed for a newspaper, particularly a new venture, to achieve some measure of success. But to truly determine whether or not the Ottawa high-end niche paper could survive and be successful, a balance sheet detailing costs and revenues must be calculated and analyzed. Given the hypothetical nature of this project, such an accounting is difficult to achieve, and its results must be viewed in this light. Of course, any new venture, whether hypothetical or real, cannot offer 100 per cent guarantee that its projections are accurate.

For the purposes of this project, I have set a scenario (admittedly optimistic) to determine whether the high-end niche paper could actually show a profit. This scenario involves a 32-page newspaper on sale six days a week, with a staff of 80, a circulation of 25,000, and an advertising

86. Conversations with Rene Brazeau, op cit.

cost of \$1.50 per MAL.

Revenues

Advertising: A 32-page newspaper has 900x32 MALs. Assuming a 60/40 split between ads and newshole, revenues at \$1.50 per MAL would amount to \$8,236,800 yearly.

Sales: Assuming all 25,000 copies were sold at 25 cents each, sales would bring in an additional \$1,950,000, minus approximately 40 per cent to pay storekeepers and distributors, leaving \$1,170,000 in sales revenue.

Negligible sales in classified ads are envisaged in this scenario. So total revenue would be \$9,406,800.

Costs

The total cost of producing the newspaper is more difficult to ascertain precisely. However, by determining annual revenues of \$9.4 million, an upper guideline for cost can be established – namely, it cannot exceed, say, \$9 million. Some costs can be determined with a reasonable amount of accuracy. Printing, for example, for a 48-page paper six days a week over a year, or 312 days, would cost a total of \$1,696,350, at basic retail printing price. (If the 60/40 advertising to content ratio is assumed, 48 pages would be required to sustain a 20-page news hole). Of course, a newspaper that publishes daily could certainly reach an agreement with a printer for a lower cost; however,

this basic retail price is a useful guideline, and can be used to include other incidentals, such as spot color or other extra tasks the printer might be asked to perform.⁸⁷

Rent

Assuming that staff size was not to grow much beyond 100 or 120, 15,000 square feet of office space would be more than sufficient. Located in an outlying region of Ottawa, such as Gloucester or Nepean, commercial rates are \$15/square foot per year, making rent about \$225,000 per year.⁸⁸

Furniture and computers

Assuming a staff of 80, computer and furniture per employee should be calculated at \$250 per month per employee, or \$3,000 a year, making computer and furniture costs of \$240,000 yearly.⁸⁹

87. Information obtained from salesperson at Performance Printing in Smiths Falls.

88. Information obtained in conversations with Neil Bregman, President, Sound Venture Productions/Sound Video Post.

89. Neil Bregman, *ibid.*

Staffing costs

A. Staff breakdown

Public Opinion's staff of 80 would be broken down as follows: Editorial: 35 employees, including a publisher, managing editor, three support staff, 15 editors, and 15 reporters, divided up between national and public service beats.;

Advertising: 12 employees, including two support staff, 1 national advertising manager, 1 retail advertising manager, and eight sales employees;

Circulation: 5 employees, including a circulation manager and four circulation staff;

Computers: three employees, including one technical director and two technicians;

Production: 10 employees, including one production manager and nine staff;

Business office: An office manager, controller, payroll supervisor, personnel manager, and 11 support staff

Salaries: For professional staff, between \$45,000 and \$75,000; for support staff, between \$25,000 and \$35,000.

This adds up to 51 professional staff and 29 support staff. Total staffing costs, based on an average professional salary of \$60,000 and an average support staff salary of \$30,000: Professional - 3,060,000 \$; support - 870,000 K; Total - \$3,930,000.

Other costs

Wire services: Specialized wire services are not particularly expensive. Many, however, have entered into exclusive arrangements with The Ottawa Citizen, most notably The New York Times, the Washington Post-Los Angeles Times, Knight-Ridder, Scripps Howard, and, significantly, The Independent. There are, however, several British services, as well as alternative services, that are available. These include Gemini news service, North-South news service, the London Observer Service, and the Daily Telegraph, to name a few. Each of these would cost between \$10,000 and \$15,000 a year.

What is costly, however, is the purchase of the basic CP/AP/Reuter wire.⁹⁰ Canadian Press bases its charge to newspapers on their circulation; whereas The Ottawa Citizen pays about \$150,000 a year for wire services, the cost to Public Opinion would likely be about \$75,000 annually. Total estimated costs of wire service: \$200,000

Freelancers and stringers

If we assume an average price of \$300/day per article and an average of 10 articles by freelancers or stringers daily, the annual price for such stories would be just under \$1,000,000.

90. Information obtained in conversations with Gord Fisher, then *Citizen* Editor, now General Manager.

Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous costs, which would include items such as cars, expense accounts, travel (for reporters and for senior editors to secure freelancers across the country and around the world), office supplies, taxes and employee benefits, any special expenses that might arise, and telephones (both for reporters and faxes) cannot be calculated with any degree of accuracy. Instead, looking at expected revenues, miscellaneous costs have been estimated at \$1.5 million, which would leave, \$500,000 as profit assuming, optimistically, the 60/40 split of ads to copy is actually achieved.

Financing

Getting a newspaper off the ground requires a great deal of money. When The Ottawa Sun began publishing in September 1988, the Sun group estimated they would lose money for five years before turning a profit, and were willing to prop up the paper for at least that long.⁹¹

Since Public Opinion would be published independently, financial backing would be required. The sources for such funding can only be speculated upon, and even here, it is difficult to imagine investors, or a group of investors, willing to put up the millions of dollars necessary to keep

91. *The Ottawa Citizen*, March 30, 1989.

the newspaper afloat until it can be made profitable. In addition, Public Opinion's elite status would probably make it seem a particularly risky investment, despite the rosy revenue/cost picture painted above. In the words of business writer Paul Farhi: "investors basically got spoiled in the 1980s, and there will be a great deal of reluctance to accept anything less than they got before. The only way a newspaper company is going to keep those people happy is to keep down costs, and that means personnel costs."⁹² As mentioned in the previous chapter, the publishers (and investors) at a quality daily have to share a somewhat different mentality; one that is willing to sacrifice some profits in return for producing a newspaper that deals with serious discussion.

One solution is to take a drastically revised version of this proposal to an existing newspaper chain; in Ottawa, this could only mean to The Citizen and its owner, Southam News. Having commissioned the Angus Reid survey and being aware of the enormous potential in serving the well-read, well-educated Ottawa population, they might be persuaded to launch a high-end niche paper; Southam's involvement would solve any financial insecurity the newspaper would have in its early stages, but it would also curtail the paper's independence; and would leave the paper and its decisions

92. Paul Farhi, *The Washington Post*, July 23, 1991.

(particularly with regard to staffing) subject to the whims of Southam shareholders. Still, one can envision special terms being drawn up to allow for such a unique newspaper's relative independence from head office which would also allow for editorial offices separate from The Citizen's.

Alternatively, a variation of this proposal might serve as a prototype for a bi-weekly insert into The Citizen itself, containing public service news and commentary as well as more in-depth national and international articles. Such a regular insert might attract and keep a greater share of the area's large number of well-educated and affluent readers.

Still, the most attractive, if most elusive, solution to financing lies among journalists themselves. In 1986, a group of journalists from the London Times and other British newspapers, fed up with decisions made by the newspapers' new owners aimed more at securing greater profits rather than producing a quality newspaper, walked out and founded The Independent. Against all odds, the paper has become a resounding success, and, according to many, has surpassed the newspapers they had left. If enough money can be found among and by like-minded reporters and others within the craft willing to take a risk, the chances of actually getting some version of Public Opinion off the ground in Ottawa would be many steps closer to reality.

PART VI - CONCLUSION

This proposal has become more than a feasibility study for an alternative quality daily for the Ottawa area. It has also revealed the differences between the intellectual demands of a research project and the practical concerns of a major investment.

To support the thesis that a quality daily could succeed in the Ottawa market, this proposal has shown that the newspaper industry is undergoing a painful period of uncertainty brought on in part by circumstances in the economy but also by difficulties in adapting to a changing world where fewer people read newspapers. To flourish under these harsh conditions, a newspaper must offer its readers something unique that they can get from no other newspaper or broadcast outlet.

The demographic and readership data for the Ottawa area indicate that Public Opinion could be the right newspaper for the right market. There is a large enough niche of well-educated people to buy the newspaper, as long as it can successfully target its audience and offer an irresistible product.

Public Opinion's unique appeal would be felt on many levels. The newspaper's public service section, its emphasis on opinion and on in-depth news coverage would distinguish it from any other available daily. The newspaper's commitment to excellence, even at the expense of some

profits, would in time earn it credibility and a reputation for integrity in the community.

For a newspaper to function successfully with such lofty goals and commitments, a strong, guiding editorial philosophy is required. In this proposal, I have talked about moving away from a rigid adherence to objectivity as the ideology of the newsroom. It has not been my intention to discard objectivity or to deny its usefulness in day-to-day reporting. It is as useful a tool for the journalist as newtonian physics is for a modern-day engineer. But it is also time to accept the fact that the journalism of 25 and 50 years ago is not enough to satisfy today's sophisticated communication needs. A "quantum" editorial philosophy that recognizes both objective reports and subjective interpretation as co-existing simultaneously is needed.

To translate these profound thoughts and good intentions into meaningful action, a creative, intelligent and above all dynamic staff must be recruited and trained. Since the newspaper would be asking its employees to perform to a standard and with an enthusiasm unmatched elsewhere, it would have to offer employees a proper wage and, further, given its editorial philosophy, to involve the staff in high-level editorial decision-making.

Maintaining staff morale would be especially important in Public Opinion's first weeks and months. But the paper could turn things around quickly, since, even with a

circulation of just 25,000, the paper would likely appeal to a variety of advertisers of products aimed at the most affluent niche in the community. If the paper could quickly make its mark and achieve a 60/40 split between advertising and copy, it would earn enough revenue to make a profit. Subsequent circulation increases could be translated into profits through increases in the ad rate.

Ironically, as the data began to confirm the initial hunch that there was room in the Ottawa newspaper market for a product like Public Opinion, my doubts about whether the newspaper could succeed actually increased. I have argued that the current uncertain economic climate provides an opening for a niche newspaper. But it also increases the financial risks for any new business venture. After all, not just newspapers are suffering, but advertisers as well. Declining readership, too, is ultimately troubling for any print publication, despite the fact that Public Opinion would be aimed at the most literate segment of the population. Sometimes when I ask myself whether I would actually attempt to publish Public Opinion were I blessed with the means to do so, I cannot say yes with certainty.

Then there are the other times. When I realize that there are always persuasive arguments against taking a chance. In the end, if the potential outweighs the risk, the rewards of success – a respected, influential and profitable newspaper – would make the risk and effort worthwhile.

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Roger Bird, Professor, Carleton University School of Journalism, June-December 1991.

Neil Bregman, President, Sound Venture Productions/Sound Video Post, September 1991.

Rene Brazeau, Business Manager, *The Ottawa Citizen*, August 1991.

Randy Cantera, Editor, *Trans-FM*, September 1988.

Brian Cantley, Managing, Editorial Services, Canadian Newspaper Publishing Association.

Jim Creskey, Publisher, *The Hill-Times*, November 1989.

Ross Dickson, Publisher, *The Hill-Times*, November 1989.

David Eddy, Advertising Research Director, *The Ottawa Citizen*, February-May 1991.

Gordon Fisher, General Manager, *The Ottawa Citizen*, February 1991.

Katherine Jeans, Vice-President, Sound Venture

Productions/Sound Video Post, July 1991.

Leonard Kubas, consultant, Leonard Kubas Assoc., Toronto.

Bob Louks, Director, Algonquin College journalism program, October 1989.

Chris MacIntosh, Advertising Representative, *The Ottawa Citizen*, October 1989.

Peggy McPhail, Media Co-Ordinator, Hewson Bridge & Smith Advertising Agency, October 1989.

Elaine Oosting, Customer Service Representative, Performance Printing, Smiths Falls, Ontario, May 1991.

James Travers, Editor, *The Ottawa Citizen*, December 1991.

Tony Westell, Professor, Carleton University School of Journalism, September 1989-April 1991.

END

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