

## THE GROWTH OF THE PRIVATE ENTERPRISE PRESS

The journalism of 1807 to 1858 differed from that of the earlier era not only in numbers but also from the standpoint of newspaper tone and subject matter. Contributing to the latter was the appearance of a new kind of editor. He was the *entrepreneur* who established a press independent of the revenue from government business. Unlike his predecessor, he made money chiefly by printing advertisements and selling his papers to a gradually widening circle of readers. With this shift from government patronage, he became increasingly self-sufficient and was no longer afraid to involve his newspaper in the major issues of the day. His coverage of local news was still pitifully weak by modern standards, but he more than made up for it by his forthright editorial comment on contentious social and political issues.

## NEWSPAPER CONTENT AND STYLE

The subject to which the new-style editor gave most sustained attention was the 'Responsible Government' issue. The seeds of the struggle which led to the ultimate achievement of the important constitutional principle in 1849, were contained, for the Canadas at least, in the granting of Representative Government by the Constitutional Act of 1791. For Lower Canada the concession was a gift unwanted and unasked. The French Canadians were more interested in the preservation of their language, laws and customs than in the questionable advantages of an unfamiliar parliamentary device. They used the new representation in the newly created Assembly to fight for their racial and religious aspirations. In the process they tried to get control of the public purse strings as a means of achieving their ends, and insisted on such concessions as an elected upper house and legislative appointment of judges. In the struggle over these issues there grew up a bitter enmity between the Assembly and the Governor sent out from England. In Upper Canada the battle waged by the Assembly and the people was against the nepotism and privilege of the Family Compact and the inequities of the Clergy Reserves. In the Maritimes, despite traditions of moderation and harmony, there was a similar fight waged against those in power. Out of the conflicts in all three regions came the mature and useful Responsible Government concept so important in the Canadian political system. At the beginning of the movement it is probable that no one, including newspaper editors, could foresee the constitutional consequences of their long fight. It was only very late in the story that even the most enlightened leaders saw the full shape of their achievements.

In the day-to-day campaigning, however, the press played a prominent part. First newspaper participation came just as soon as the lines of political battle were drawn, right after the turn of the nineteenth century. The increasingly bitter rivalry between the *Mercury* and *Le Canadien* in Lower Canada after 1806, the spirited anti-government strictures of Joseph Willcocks' *Upper Canada Guardian or Freeman's Journal* which began in Upper Canada in 1807, and the vigorous criticisms of the 'Little Compact' which Anthony Henry Holland in the Maritimes carried in the *Acadian Recorder* from 1813 on launched a long press consideration of the gradually evolving constitutional device. It was a matter that was to feed the fires of general newspaper debate until at least 1849 in five provinces, and was to receive attention from the Newfoundland press as late as 1855.

It was during this development that individual newspapers came to be labelled according to the political stands they took. As those who were debating the Responsible Government issue became increasingly doctrinaire in their views, the majority of the important journals came to be known either as Reform or anti-Reform. Vigorous Reform papers included *Le Canadien*, *La Minerve*, *Irish Vindicator*, *Liberal*, *Colonial Advocate*, *Hamilton Free Press*, *St. Thomas Liberal*, *Colonial Patriot*, *Pictou Chronicle*, *Yarmouth Herald*, *Saint John Courier*, *Head Quarters*, *Prince Edward Island Register*, *Palladium*, and *Newfoundland Patriot*. Supporters of the Tory cause had among their number the *Quebec Mercury*, *Montreal Gazette*, *York Patriot*, *Courier of Upper Canada*, *Kingston Herald*, *Montreal Herald*, *Toronto Mirror*, *Pictou Observer*, *Cross and Olive Branch*, *Christian Messenger*, *Halifax Times*, *Saint John Herald*, *Loyalist and Conservative Advocate*, and *Islander*. Newspapers which avoided the extremes of both the fiery radical and ultra-conservative viewpoint and which might be designated as 'moderate Reform' were well