

RELEVANT STORIES FROM ONLINE DATABASES

Susanne Craig, Globe and Mail, 16 November 1999:

The real reason Herald staff are hitting the bricks: At the bargaining table, the talk may be about money and seniority. But journalists on the picket line are fuming over what they say is the loss of their paper's integrity

At the bargaining table, the talk may be about money and seniority. But journalists on the picket line are fuming over what they say is the loss of their paper's integrity

The real reason Herald staff are hitting the bricks

At the bargaining table, the talk may be about money and seniority. But journalists on the picket line are fuming over what they say is the loss of their paper's integrity

Tuesday, November 16, 1999

IN CALGARY -- When Dan Gaynor leaves work, he has to drive his white Jeep Cherokee past angry reporters. Rather than look at the striking employees, the publisher of The Calgary Herald tends to stare straight ahead.

This is nothing new, many of the striking journalists say. They believe Mr. Gaynor's newspaper has been looking in only one direction for years.

More than 200 newsroom and distribution workers at the Herald have been on strike since last Monday. They are trying to win their first union contract and, officially, they are at odds with their employer over such issues as wages and seniority rights.

But ask the news hounds why they are on strike and the issues on the bargaining table never come up. Instead, they say they are angry because the Herald shapes the news, sometimes to favour a certain person or a certain point of view. It is an accusation people such as Mr. Gaynor hotly deny.

This is a story about a newspaper and its relationship with people of power and influence. It is about how the news is shaped. And it is about a group of reporters who have had enough.

It is also about a newspaper's attempt to reinvent itself to better reflect the community it serves.

It is a story you will probably never read in The Calgary Herald.

"The galling thing was the mantra of fairness and balance that management expounded upon," said Vicki Barnett, who has worked at the Herald for 24 years, including seven as environment reporter.

"What we [the Herald] believe in is one-sided coverage for small-c conservatives. At the end, [as she was winding up work on the environment beat] my heart was shattering when I saw what they were doing to the coverage of environment in order to favour their agenda."

Many of the striking staff accuse senior Herald management of running the newsroom with a heavy hand, often assigning stories based not on news value, but on whether the subject of the story was, for example, a friend of the publisher.

Several complaints focus on the actions of Mr. Gaynor's predecessor, Ken King, who left the paper in May to run Pacific Press Ltd., owner of The Vancouver Sun and the Vancouver Province. He left Pacific Press after just three months to join a Calgary real-estate firm.

The Herald newsroom and publisher's office are separated by a long hallway lined with the pictures of past publishers. Notably, Mr. King's mug is absent. No one has gotten around to hanging it up yet, although Mr. King left the paper six months ago. Instead, it is tucked away in Mr. Gaynor's outer office, collecting dust.

Mr. King says that while some journalists may not have embraced the changes he made, they were for the good of the paper.

"I joined the newspaper in February of 1996 and the newspaper was not performing on a fiscal standpoint nearly as well as it should have," Mr. King said in a recent interview. "It was not performing on readership and circulation nearly as well as it could have or should have. But neither were many other newspapers.

"It was becoming increasingly unpopular in the marketplace. It was not reflective of the city. If Calgary was an entrepreneurial, enthusiastic, upbeat city with a robust economy, the newspaper was not reflecting that."

But some reporters say Mr. King's attempts to build bridges with the elite in Calgary made them uncomfortable at times.

For instance, a Herald reporter once phoned Rod Love, then chief aide to Premier Ralph Klein, only to have Mr. King answer.

It was also commonplace, some reporters say, for staff to receive assignments flagged "FOK," code for "friend of King." At the same time, the line between marketing and news sometimes blurred, leaving some reporters wondering whether there was any difference between the two departments.

As well, newsroom staff coined terms such as "drive-by editing" for the late-night fiddling by some senior editors without consultation with reporters.

Herald management says its news direction has changed in recent years. As Mr. Gaynor explained in an editorial on the weekend, the goal now -- developed under Mr. King -- is to produce a paper of "FAB reporting" -- stories that are "fair, accurate and balanced" in every way.

In practical terms, this often means ensuring that both sides of an issue are represented within a news report's first four or five paragraphs. Before Mr. King became publisher, the issue would often be stated at the beginning, with the response in the bottom half of the story, which is common practice at many papers.

Management says it is trying to better reflect the community it represents, where the majority of people are decidedly right-wing and vote for either the Progressive Conservatives or Reform Party.

Calgary is a city on the rise. It is growing rapidly (its population last year was 907,000 and is soon expected to crack a million) and is known for its free-enterprise spirit. Its newspaper, Mr. Gaynor said, should reflect that.

Previously, management says, the paper's views were too left-wing and alienated many readers. It knows these changes haven't been embraced by everyone.

"This is very different from some of the views of people who started working here in a very different era," Mr. Gaynor said. "They certainly need to accept that it is the newspaper's point of view."

The dispute about what is news and who should decide the agenda has spilled onto the picket lines, the second strike in the Herald's 116-year history. There has been picket-line violence -- car tires have been slashed and threats have been made. Claiming to fear for their safety, managers have hired personal bodyguards and moved their families to secure locations. Co-workers have been pitted against one another and people have been left wondering whether management and the union can ever find common ground.

It wasn't always this way.

The Herald has a strong tradition of appointing newsmen to the top job. J. Patrick O'Callaghan, who ran the Herald from 1982 to 1989, carved out a reputation as a defender of a free and vocal press.

His strong beliefs about the craft are part of journalism lore. For example, he once said that when there wasn't a strong opposition in government, it was up to the press to assume that role.

Mr. O'Callaghan was cut from the cloth of newsmen who believe the adage that journalists should comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

"He believed we should be out taking unpopular positions in the community and that would move the community towards the centre," said Kevin Peterson, who took over from Mr. O'Callaghan in 1989. "No matter what way the stream was flowing, he believed someone should swim the other way."

At the same time, Mr. O'Callaghan knew how to treat employees. He established a company daycare centre, one of the first in Canada. During Calgary Stampede week, it wasn't uncommon to see children riding ponies outside the Herald building. And at lunch, mothers could visit or even breast-feed their children. There is also a fitness centre at the Herald.

It was the sort of place that attracted seasoned journalists such as Robert Walker.

"I was inspired to work for The Calgary Herald because of its high standards of ethical journalism," said Mr. Walker, who was deputy night news editor at Fleet Street's London Daily [Mail](#) and who joined the Herald in 1983.

"While I am well treated, largely because I have had 650 front-page stories in the past 10 years . . . I am reluctantly on strike to support my younger colleagues so they will have the opportunities I did."

Mr. Peterson started at the Herald in 1969 as a reporter. He quickly distinguished himself as a strong journalist, covering the legislature during part of Peter Lougheed's reign as premier. He moved up the ranks quickly, becoming publisher at the age of 38.

He was also known for being a bit of lefty. And his views were not always popular with the community.

Mr. Peterson believed that a cause worth supporting should be supported. He did not believe a cause should be supported because the community backed it. His beliefs did not go unnoticed at Southam Inc., the company that owned the Herald and is now controlled by newspaper magnate Conrad Black's giant Hollinger International Inc.

During Mr. Peterson's time as publisher, the notion of what a newspaper was changed. And toward the end of his seven-year stint, he came under increased pressure from the head office to increase profit and circulation.

"If you look back a generation ago, newspapers thought all the news that is fit to print meant they should cast criticism over everyone, no matter how much power they had," Mr. Peterson said.

"Over the past 10 to 15 years, it has moved to becoming about marketing partnerships and you **don't** cast nearly as critical an eye over your marketing partners. The dispute going on now is really about The New York Times motto of 'all the news that is fit to print' and marketing partners and their role in a newspaper."

Mr. Peterson left the Herald in 1995. In came Mr. King, who was lured from the rival Calgary Sun and, like many of today's newspaper publishers, has a background in advertising.

When he took over, Mr. King said, he inherited a paper that saw the glass as half empty rather than half full. His goal: Reshape the newspaper to reflect the views of an upbeat, vibrant community.

"I think we came down off the hill and back into the city," he said.

Mr. King denied the suggestion by some Herald insiders that his campaign to move the paper to the right reflected the beliefs of his friends, such as Mr. Klein and members of the business elite. "I know most of the people in this city; it is a blessing and a curse. I asked that they neither be rewarded nor punished for knowing me."

However, he added, "I feel so badly about the [the current labour] situation and any contribution to it I may have made because, a) that was not my intention and b) my intentions were completely honourable."

But he said he now wishes he had not done things such as answer Rod Love's phone when the Herald writer called. He had meant it as a joke, but clearly it was not taken that way.

Mr. King's misgivings notwithstanding, reporters say there was pressure, sometimes implicit and sometimes stated, to produce stories that were pro-business or pro-government. This editorial sea change was carried out, they say, by senior managers, whose habit of going in late at night to alter stories inspired staff to dub one "the midnight mangler."

That editor, Joan Crockatt, contends that the Herald is better for all the pain it has gone through. "The newspaper built many of its changes around things like fairness, accuracy and balance and those were talked about continually in the newsroom and those involved in some cases needing to go back at night and get the other side of the story," she said.

"That wasn't something that necessarily all reporters were used to doing."

Strangely, considering there is a strike, some reporters say relations between management and editorial staff have improved somewhat since Mr. Gaynor arrived.

Most of the editors who ruled under Mr. King have been moved to less high-profile positions in the paper or are gone altogether. And Peter Menzies, a 10-year veteran of the paper and a popular manager, was recently named editor-in-chief.

That is not to say the change in direction was a big hit with readers. A study released late last month by Newspaper Audience Databank Inc., which measured readership from last year, shows that the Herald has 319,800 readers on an average day, down 1.1 per cent from a year ago, although Saturday's paper has improved slightly, up 0.5 per cent to 322,600.

The rival Calgary Sun, on the other hand, is up -- 4.3 per cent to 211,300 during the week and 5.8 per cent to 145,500 on Saturday.

And the Herald reporters say the trust they once shared with management is still gone. They are willing to talk -- and have asked that talks resume today -- but now they want promises in writing.

"They said, 'Trust us,' before and it didn't get us very far," reporter Brian Brennan said.

Mr. Peterson said the challenge ahead of Mr. Gaynor is not any easy one; the heart of the dispute -- how the news is presented -- cannot be resolved at a bargaining table.

"Any publisher can leverage or abuse the value of the franchise," he said. "And if you abuse that franchise, sure you produce excellent results for a few years, but at what cost?"

"The challenge for both sides now is that you can't settle this dispute with a collective agreement."

*Susanne Craig is media reporter for The **Globe and Mail**.*

NEWSROOM BEEFS

A media insider who spent most of his career at The Calgary Herald suggests that, as publisher, Ken King got an old saying about journalists backward.

"He seems to believe we should comfort the comfortable and afflict the afflicted."

Clearly, people on strike rarely praise their employers. But what exactly happened under Mr. King to upset some of his employees?

The official story: Reporter Vicki Barnett said she left the environment beat after Mr. King took over because of continual interference from editors.

In one case, environmental groups were calling for the resignation of Ty Lund, then environment minister. An editor rewrote her story -- without consulting her -- so that it opened with Mr. Lund defending himself. "The editors would put the government in the lead [paragraph] all the time," she said.

Friends of the family: After a piece in which columnist [Don Braid](#) mentioned Calgary's powerful and wealthy Mannix family, the writer found himself called on the carpet.

According to Herald insiders, a Mannix confidant had complained, saying the family was upset at being described as secretive.

"I called him [Mr. [Braid](#)] in to tell him what I was told," said Mr. King, who conceded that this may have put the writer under pressure. "But I also think it is appropriate for journalists to understand the impact of what they do."

Two weeks later, Mr. [Braid](#) quit. He now toils for the rival Calgary Sun.

Drive, he said: Reporter Brian Brennan said he received a note in the spring from Mr. King on his personal, embossed stationery, suggesting a story on a local car dealer, who happened to be the publisher's friend.

"What am I going to do, not write the story?" Mr. Brennan asked. "He [Mr. King] holds the economic hammer in the building. You were made to feel if you didn't write it, it would be a career-ending move." The story ran April 4.

A word from our sponsor: Mr. King struck lucrative marketing relationships. For example, the Herald would sponsor a theatrical event and then use news columns to promote it.

The publisher wondered why reporters were so dismayed. "When there was something good being done that we were sponsoring, I thought, 'Why can't we just tell the world?' " Mr. King said. "Given the situation, you might not sponsor things now because you will be punished. If we reward them [the sponsors] because we are sponsoring them, that breaks journalistic ethics [in the eyes of some reporters]."

On second thought: Looking back, Mr. King concedes that he made mistakes, but he says that, most of all, he underestimated the power of his office and his influence on people in the newsroom.

He denies sending notes to reporters, but he regrets, for example, how his messages to senior editors -- which could have been sent to reporters -- may have been interpreted. "That those notes ever achieved that situation, that someone would have passed my note on through to someone else," he said, "that would be a practice I would review." [Susanne Craig](#)

Word count: 2752

All material copyright Bell Globemedia Publishing Inc. or its licensors. All rights reserved.

Don Braid column, Nov. 16, 1999, Calgary Sun:

21 / 33 - Tuesday, November 16, 1999 STRIKE TAKING AN UGLY TURN Edition:
Final Source: BY DON BRAID, CALGARY SUN Section: News Page: 4 Peter Menzies, the Herald's editor-in-chief, moved his wife and kids out of the family home on the weekend. The reason? "Security concerns," Menzies tells me. Their children were spooked by TV images of last Thursday's melee on the picket lines. There's no doubt that one week in, the strike of Herald writers and distribution workers is getting downright ugly. Somehow, though, I still have trouble seeing serious physical danger in all this. The Herald newsroom has always been a middle-class place where the deadliest threat is a paper cut. These people are writers, not muggers. Nonetheless, others are being drawn into an increasingly volatile mix. At Sunday's Stamps game, bulky security guards kept watch over replacement photographers. Herald managers say they feared that unionized TV cameramen might bother the snappers. "That happened on Thursday at the high school game," Menzies says. "The TV cameramen were obstructing the guys from doing their job." As both unions and management dig in, the stakes are rising with the tempers. Andy Marshall, the union local president, says the Alberta Federation of Labour agreed yesterday to ask its 115,000 members to cancel Herald subscriptions. "They'll contact all their affiliates and ask for subscription cancellations of all Southam products, including the Herald, the National Post and the Edmonton Journal," Marshall says. "There's lots of evidence that people are cancelling already -- and so far it's been spontaneous, not organized." In Vancouver, Southam boss David Radler snaps: "Who cares? "It's the kind of tactics these people are used to. They think it works. It doesn't work." Conrad Black's old running mate didn't know Menzies had moved his family. "It's a pity that sort of thing has to happen. Most people handle these things in a civilized manner. These people (the unionists) aren't capable of that." Tough words, but even harsher ones are flying between Herald writers. Last week, Catherine Ford, who's liberal on most matters, wrote a column describing the "mental gymnastics" that led her to keep filing her column during the strike. That prompted striker Naomi Lakritz, usually a conservative commentator, to blister Ford in a column posted on the union Web site. "It takes no courage at all to cross a picket line via computer from the coziness of Mount Royal," Lakritz smoldered. "I am a Herald columnist, too, but I didn't have to turn any cerebral cartwheels to know that walking the picket line was the right thing to do." Lakritz tells me: "Catherine's a nice person. But her opinion in this case is way out of line. She deserved to be shredded." Ford's response, through a secretary, was "no comment." While the Herald writhes, others hope to gain here in Calgary, which is fast becoming a newspaper war zone. The Globe and Mail sent in extra reporters to put out Calgary pages. Last Saturday, the National Post responded with a special section on Calgary's money and power elite. Here at the Sun, of course, our motives are entirely pure. Call 250-4300 for your subscription with the money-back guarantee.

Sharpe "Proud to be a scab" column (4 June 2000 Calgary Herald; 9 June 2000, National Post)

Proud to be a Herald scab (Post headline)

I cross the line for freedom of speech (Herald headline)

I am a scab. Until a few months ago, I had never crossed a picket line in my life, but today I do so at the Calgary Herald, defiantly and proudly.

I am a scab because free speech must never be silenced by a blockade of intolerance, ignorance and hatred. I am a scab who always believed that unions improve workers' rights. Yet when a union assaults the very foundation of democracy -- free speech -- I must bow out.

When a union uses intimidation, threats against family and life itself, I must not only bow out, I must actively shout out. To be cowed into silence is the death knell of democracy.

I am an anthropologist who is a working journalist. To me they are one. An anthropologist studies a culture by looking at all sides and asking questions of all. Anthropologists are supposed to be value-free; we must throw away our prejudices and baggage to get a true picture.

Journalists should do the same. We should go at a story with a fresh mind, plenty of research, and lots of questions -- of everybody. We sell our stories, with all the facts we can muster, to a media organization. We are employees, short- or long-term; they are the employers or owners. If we don't care for that arrangement, for whatever reason, we can leave.

I did, and it wasn't all that difficult, partly because some people in the newsroom shunned and vilified those who worked hard. Two years later, I returned to the Herald because it had completely changed its newsroom executives -- a measure corporate head offices take only when they want to signal a new direction.

Highly respected Herald journalists moved into top management positions, and were joined by superb managers from elsewhere in the Southam chain, publisher Dan Gaynor and deputy editor Gerry Nott.

Rather than give the new management time to invigorate the newsroom, however, the union abruptly went on strike.

This seemed a most unusual folly, because the journalists had won. The Southam owners had clearly heard their grievances and taken action.

There's no question some of the editorial staff had strong concerns; but these were being addressed in the most vigorous way.

Flush with success, the new Vancouver-based union wanted more. A new agenda was in place. Anyone, including their own members, who questioned their tactics and didn't agree with their strategy, was attacked.

The union went on a personal vendetta against Conrad Black, primarily because, they say, his papers are right-wing apologists. (Is that so? Read The Edmonton Journal, another of Mr. Black's papers that proudly espouses leftist causes because that position reflects the community -- as the Herald strives to reflect Calgary. Journal employees, interestingly, voted down this union.) At the Herald, no one sits on my shoulder telling me what to write, or how.

At the Herald we do not, as on the appalling union Web site, take words such as journalistic integrity and twist them into Edward Munchian versions of The Scream. We do not use the anonymous Internet to insult and slander former colleagues in the most venomous terms.

I returned to the Herald partly because this union, through attempted boycotts and misinformation, was trying to destroy a paper that has been part of Calgary for more than a century.

I remember a great union victory at the Montreal Star. A series of strikes was so successful that the Star closed its doors. Hundreds were thrown out of work, and one of Canada's greatest newspapers never published another line.

In this business you cannot stop publishing, even for a day. The readers expect and demand their Herald. People who love newspapers make sure they get it.

And so I am a scab. As I cross the picket line, I hear the profane insults and scatological remarks, and try to ignore the obscene sexual gestures. I watch the union "scabmobile" with its three makeshift hanging nooses, an implied death threat.

Inside, I listen to stories from my colleagues of death threats, physical assaults, vandalized homes and punctured tires. What would the union and other media say, I wonder, if the company resorted to such tactics?

I see former acquaintances transformed by a viciousness nearly incomprehensible. Faces I once saw in the office every day are bloated into balloons of hatred. I begin to understand first-hand the mob mentality that robs individuals of their very respect for the human dignity of those who disagree with them.

Demonstrating for better working conditions is a fair goal, but those conditions already exist at the Herald. The beautiful brick building that gazes at the mountains, with its cafeteria, fitness centre and on-site daycare makes visitors incredulous. What's the problem, they wonder.

There is none. This is the most pleasant, co-operative, stimulating environment I've ever worked in, a place where eager employees do their jobs enthusiastically, without complaining.

Fifteen years ago I was an avid union militant, the public relations director for the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. Today the people who were my colleagues back then call me scab, expecting me to be ashamed.

They'll probably never understand that like everyone else working here, I'm pleased to be helping this paper fight a just battle against scurrilous attacks.

I'm a scab, and damned proud of it.

Word count: **885**

(Copyright National Post 2000)

Braid and Sharpe join Herald (FEB. 26, 2000)

CALGARY (CP) - High-profile columnists Don Braid and Sydney Sharpe have rejoined the Calgary Herald after a two-year absence working for the paper's chief competitor.

Both have written best-sellers and have held senior news positions at major Canadian papers. The married couple began their new tenure at the Herald on Friday.

"We're delighted to have Don and Sydney returning to the Herald, which has always been their home," said editor-in-chief Peter Menzies.

For the past two years, the two have been working for the rival Calgary Sun.

Braid, who wrote a city column for the Herald from 1993 to 1998, has a masters degree in history and has written two best-sellers.

He spent many years in the Ottawa press gallery and has worked for nine publications over his 25 years in journalism, including a stint writing political columns for the Edmonton Journal.

Braid's new city column will appear four times a week.

Sharpe has a master's degree in anthropology from McGill University in Montreal and was a tenured professor at Athabasca University.

She was Calgary bureau chief for the Financial Post before joining the Herald as a senior business writer in 1997.

She moved into full-time daily journalism six years ago, previously writing freelance articles for national magazines such as Chatelaine.

She will sit on the Herald's editorial board and contribute a column four times a week.

(Calgary Herald)

Word count: **230**

Copyright Canadian Press Feb 26, 2000