

MEDIA MANIPULATOR: A STORY OF K.C. IRVING AND NEW BRUNSWICK

Just outside of Saint John, New Brunswick, is gleaming modern oil refinery plant. Visitors to the site can listen to a strategically-placed intercom, replay message extolling the virtues of the refinery and K.C. Irving.

The Saint John Telegraph-Journal and Evening Telegram, Moncton Times and Transcript, and the Fredericton Gleaner are all the daily English-language news papers in New Brunswick. Even a cursory perusal will show there is as much difference in their pages as there is in the refinery's taped messages.

There's a reason for all this. Both the refinery and the newspapers are owned by the same person: K.C. Irving. "There were many situations in New Brunswick that cried out for media coverage --but they received little or no attention from the Irving group because of the danger of involving an Irving interest other than the mass media."

Sen. C. McElman
For a long time Charles McElman was a political outsider-- a liberal in New Brunswick, a province that has traditionally elected Conservatives. Yet Charles McElman was also the man who brought the outsider to power. As full time Liberal Party organizer from 1954 on, he was probably the man most responsible for the Party's unexpected 1960 upset victory that brought Louis Robichaud to power and turned the once-outsider Liberals into the very pillars of the establishment.

After serving as Robichaud's executive assistant for six years, McElman was elevated to the senate in 1966. In those hallowed chambers, McElman did the unthinkable for a New Brunswicker. He attacked K.C. Irving, and, more specifically his interests within the media.

Perhaps it was his senatorial immunity that suddenly emboldened McElman for the attack, or perhaps it was the late-sixties friction between the Liberals and Irving. But no matter the reason McElman revealed to the public the flagrant abuses of the Irving press.

The first inking of the skirmish to come was the outcry that was raised when Kieth Davey asked McElman to become a member of his commission on the Mass Media. He was characterized by the hostile press as a Liberal

Party hack, a man out to get Irving. A December 1969 appearance by Irving, Fredericton Daily Gleaner editor Michael Wardell and Saint John Telegraph-Journal publisher Ralph Costello, was remarkable only in the amount of venom that the Irving group spat at McElman

This was one of the biggest news stories to affect New Brunswick in a long time, yet the Irving press was so docile and submissive to their master, and so used to sugar coating news that the story was either run without comment or held back so as to link it with attacks on McElman himself.

But then on March 10 and 11, 1971, in a speech to the Senate, McElman offered a far-ranging indictment of the Irving press. After detailing the vast conglomerate structure of the Irving Empire, he urged that a Press Review Board be set up "to ensure that the news business continues to be everybody's business".

He referred to the Toronto Daily Star's characterization of New Brunswick as "Irving's private empire, complete with its official press -- print and electronic." Again he reiterated the theme of New Brunswick as a "journalistic disaster area" and outlined the specific abuses in numbered and numbing detail.

Finally he called for a "free and independent press in New Brunswick"; a press that would be a watchdog of the Irving corporate structure and the provincial government.

Irving's only passion is making money, and he excels at it. As Ralph Allen pointed out in MacLean's, in the only major article on the man, Irving doesn't smoke, drink, listen to music, read, look at paintings, or fish. Outside of high finance, his only known activity is going to church on Sunday. It might have been Irving that Max Weber was referring to when he wrote "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism."

"New Brunswick is proud, poor, and patriotic. Who keeps it that way? IRVING!"
-- worker at Irving's refinery

Edited from:

Ken Waxman, THE GEORGIAN

French Club

The last meeting of the French Club met on Thursday night, Oct. 14. The usual activities, including conversation, listening to French tapes, and singing French songs, were enjoyed by the participants. Coffee and cookies were served throughout the evening.

The next meeting will be held in the Co-Ed Lounge of Marion Hall on Thursday, Oct. 29. Either slides or a film will be included with this next meeting. Anyone wishing to learn French or participate in a French conversation is welcome.

R. McAtee

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-Anne Bolyn... another chip off the old block.
-No, Mrs. Godiva! That's not what we mean by bare back.