



Our first study asked the question, "Is a news organization more favourable to or less critical of its own parent company than other companies in similar industries?" We analyzed Sun articles on Hollinger, Rogers Communications, Thomson Corp., and Western International Communications (WIC), and their controlling shareholders, between May 1, 1996 and Apr. 30, 1997. For our sample we used Canadian News Disk, a full-text database of major daily newspapers. We excluded articles from further analysis if the headline and lead paragraph did not contain the company or person name; e.g., if Conrad Black was merely mentioned in passing somewhere within the article. We then looked at the tone of the remaining articles towards the companies and their high-profile owners. Were the articles supportive, critical or neutral?

We defined articles as being supportive in tone if the headline and lead sentence convey positive implications towards the subject or report profits as increasing ("Hollinger quarterly profits increase to \$26.6 million: Revenue during the same period rose to \$429 million from \$356 million a year earlier, the company reports").

Articles were critical when the headline and lead sentence show negative implications towards the subject, report profits as diminishing, or display doubts with negative implications ("Watching television could cost a little more next spring for the 2.6 million subscribers served by Rogers Cablesystems Ltd."). Articles were classified as neutral when the headline and lead





as much supportive as critical coverage during the post-takeover period, while other major Canadian news media companies received almost three times as much negative as positive coverage.

All articles critical of Hollinger were located inside the News or Business sections. None appeared on front pages. By contrast, other major news media companies, especially WIC, did have front-page negative items. During the 1996-to-1997 period, the Toronto Star had almost twice as many articles critical of Hollinger than the Vancouver Sun.

Additionally, the Sun had more supportive and neutral articles than did the Star. Critical items about Hollinger had a better chance of appearing on a Toronto Star front page than at the Vancouver Sun. Two-thirds of Hollinger coverage at the Star came from staff reporters, in contrast to only one-quarter at the Sun.

Given that Conrad Black now owns more than half of Canada's daily newspaper circulation, Canadians are becoming less likely to receive balanced reporting on one of Canada's most influential figures -- himself.

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### **Paper's coverage of think tanks favours one on the right**

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On Feb. 4, 1998, The Vancouver Sun reported a study about Canada's youth unemployment by the Fraser Institute, Canada's leading right-wing think tank. A week later, the Sun reported on the Alternati.2 [(in F) -0.2 (e) 0.2 (de) 0.2 (ra) 0.2 (l) 0.2 r Bdaget(a) 0.2 rej(i) 0.2 (nt) 0.2 (l) 0.2 y( byC ) ]TJ ET

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was called a "left-wing coalition" in the story headline, a "bloc" in the sub

Additional differences were found when we examined only news stories (leaving out editorial and commentary items), which comprised 43.6% (or 17) of CCPA items, and 44.7% (or 42) of FI stories.

The Fraser Institute was more than twice as likely as CCPA to have its publications or studies mentioned in its news items. CCPA research was mentioned in only 4 stories, 3 about the Alternative Federal Budget and one about protecting public pensions. FI research was mentioned in 24 news stories, for a ratio of 6 to 1 over the CCPA.

The Sun reported on FI studies about government-sponsored job-training programs, growth of the underground economy, government over-regulation of the economy, declining family earnings, economic freedom, tax freedom day, hospital wait lists, tax burden, and so on.

One reason for the disparity could be that the Fraser Institute's funding advantage allows it to carry out more research and to promote that research more effectively than the CCPA. Seven stories mentioned both CCPA and FI, meaning that the FI appeared in 41.2 per cent of stories reporting on the CCPA, while the CCPA appeared in only 16.7 per cent of stories reporting on the FI. The Fraser Institute was far more likely to appear by itself, with no countering CCPA perspective.

In summary, the CCPA has enjoyed increased access in numbers of items, and in how they are framed, but there is still a wide disparity between it and its right-wing rival, the Fraser Institute.