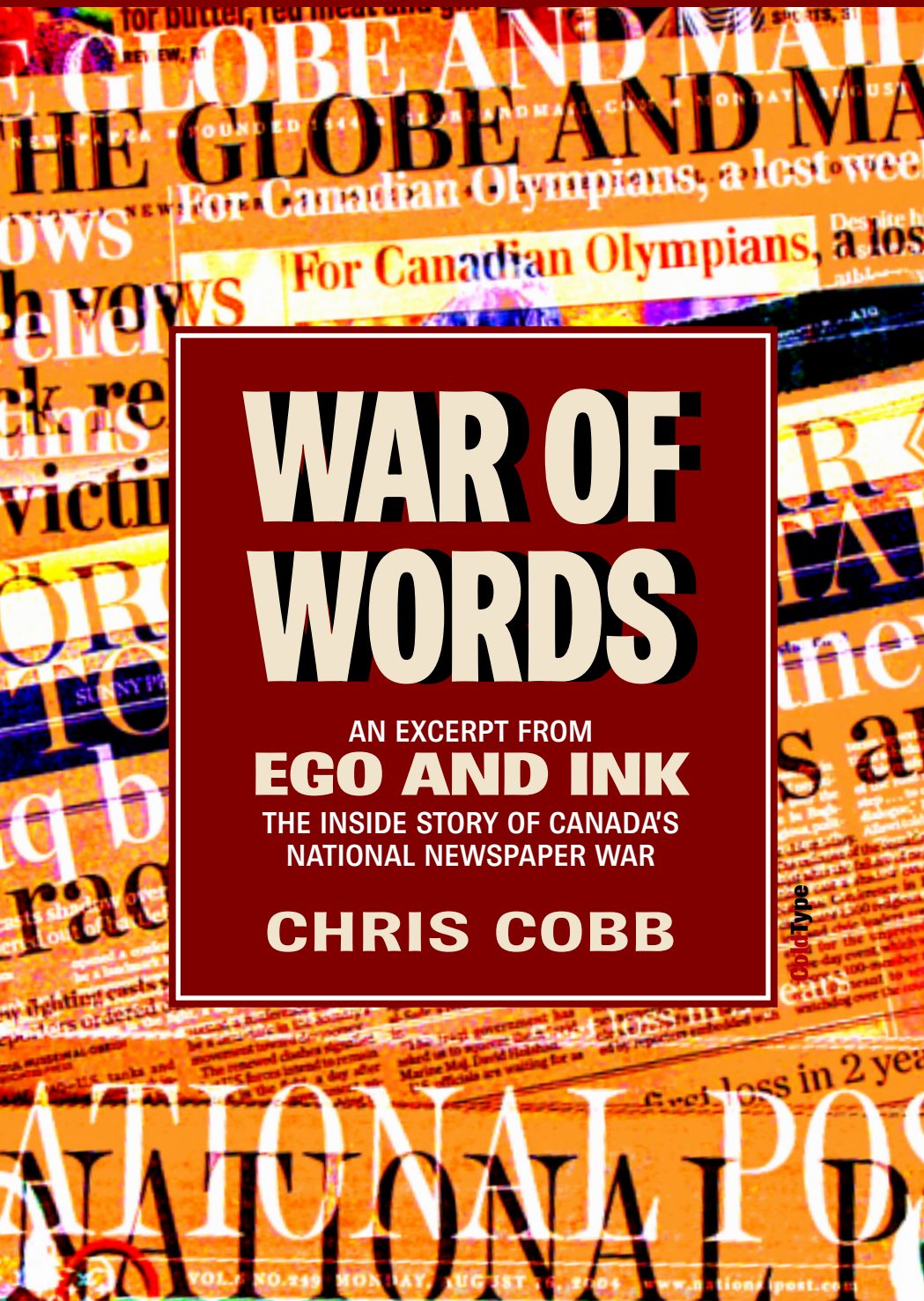

WAR OF WORDS

AN EXCERPT FROM

EGO AND INK

THE INSIDE STORY OF CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER WAR

CHRIS COBB

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INTRODUCTION

Chris Cobb's widely-praised new book *Ego And Ink* chronicles the creation and launch of Conrad Black's National Post and the subsequent vicious newspaper war in Canada between the Post, the venerable Globe and Mail and the Toronto Star. *Ego And Ink* details a circulation battle in which millions of newspapers were either given away or sold well below cost in cut-price subscription deals. Together, it cost the three newspapers more than $1 billion to articifially inflate their circulation figures.

Journalistically, Black's Post was a brash, irreverent broadsheet with a distinct right wing bias and an approach to feature and column writing that was new to Canadian daily journalism. The Post, led by editor-in-chief Kenneth Whyte and his British deputy Martin Newland, was launched on October 27, 1998 and, through various methods, was quickly boasting number one status in many major cities. After a year struggling and failing to match the Post's brash style, the Globe's publisher Phillip Crawley turned to the U.K. for help and hired former Fleet Street editor Richard Addis and, as his deputy, a young, relatively inexperienced Chrystia Freeland.

Addis, much loathed by many Globe journalists, pushed ahead with a single-minded ruthlessness to give the Globe the pizzazz he considered it lacked. As morale inside the Globe plunged to new lows, Jan Wong, one of the Globe's star columnists, put it this way: "The Post did a wonderful job of being fun and light and finding the quirky features. We were people who had always been sober and serious and suddenly we were putting on mini skirts and starting to dance but we didn't have any rhythm. The Post stunned the Globe with its light touch and innovation but our stories didn't sparkle or have any taste. They were like sequins on a stripper's panties."

At the Post, Martin Newland had brought some tricks of the trade from his years at the London Daily Telegraph and with Whyte's quirkty approach to the news, the newspaper became a formidable opponent. Every Post front page carried a quirky story, from Julia Robert's armpit hair to a remarkable offbeat saga about a cat up-a-tree in a Toronto suburb.

In this excerpt – Chapters 13 and 14 of *Ego And Ink* – Cobb and his colourful cast of characters discuss the Post's journalism and how the Globe reacted to it.

THE AUTHOR

Chris Cobb is a reporter and feature writer at the Ottawa Citizen. Until the temporary disappearance of he National Post's sports section in the fall of 2001, he was also a twice-weekly TV sports columnist for the newspaper. He has received three National Newspaper Award citations and was co-winner of the Southam newspaper company's President's Award for reporting from the crumbling Soviet Union.

Among other experiences, Cobb has lived and worked in Israel, covered the collapse of East Germany and the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia.

CHAPTER 13

RELIGIOUSLY IRREVERENT

"You'd walk past a National Post box and you'd feel fangs in your legs like a mad dog had just bitten you."

– John Bentley Mays, columnist, National Post

The National Post knocked the 154-year-old Globe and Mail off kilter with staggering speed and apparent ease. Perhaps the Globe lost its nerve, and its faith in itself, too soon, or maybe it was institutionally ill equipped to face the bright, brash, and sexy package every morning. The venerable daily was obviously trying hard, but it seemed spooked, and in often clever but revealing ways began mimicking some of the Post's design techniques and taking uncharacteristic Post-like approaches to news stories and feature articles. Its mix of page-one stories became noticeably lighter and design and story selection on page three of its first section – a particular Post strong point – changed significantly. Christie Blatchford, who wrote primarily about criminal trials, had made an instant impact in the Post with her coverage of the Gerald Regan trial in Halifax. The former Nova Scotia premier, facing charges of rape dating back forty years, was perfect grist for Blatchford's passionate, opinionated style. The Post played her columns well, and for a while at least the Globe assigned its own reporter, Erin Anderssen, to cover court cases

in a similar style.

But the Post was full of daily surprises and would regularly devote copious pages and much of its journalistic resources to one topic. This "Outbreak of Third World War" approach to subjects of sometimes dubious qualification defied Canadian newspaper convention but was an echo, in fact, of what had been happening for more than a year before the Post at the Ottawa Citizen under the editorship of Neil Reynolds. In fact, Reynolds's Citizen also sparked the Post's predilection for photographs of young attractive women.

The Post was awash in hubris, its hand-picked, non-unionized staff willingly working twelve-hour days or more for little extra reward other than the pride and satisfaction of being part of the team. There was no happier, more dedicated group of newsroom employees on the planet, and it was giving the upstart daily a significant advantage. There was a buzz around the words National Post, and among those who had rejected offers to join the new daily regrets were not uncommon. Like a brash young stranger rolling into a small frontier town, the Post was the centre of attention and admired even by those who could only allow themselves to admire grudgingly.

That gave people like Christie Blatchford – people who had gambled by jumping to the Post – an extra jolt of satisfaction. "When I left the Sun, everyone I knew told me I was crazy. It was never going to get started, they said. And then it wasn't going to last. And then it wasn't going to last a year. And then it wouldn't last two years. But every single son of a bitch who said it wasn't going to get started was knocking on the door and asking, 'Can I get a job?'"

A renaissance seemed to be happening in Canadian daily newspapers, and whether you were in the newspaper business or simply some unsus-

pecting reader having a free newspaper thrust into your hand at the local gas station or coffee shop on the way to work, it was inescapable.

Globe columnist Robert Fulford, who would eventually create a major upset by defecting to the Post, described the Globe and Mail's reaction to the Post as "panic and hysteria." "My impression is that they completely mistrusted their tradition as a defence. Instead of playing to their strengths, and building up their best qualities, they panicked. 'We are not good enough' was the feeling. To become more Globeish was not a solution. They had to become something else."

The Globe had a useful and consistently helpful spy in the Post's organization – most likely outside the newspaper's Don Mills headquarters – who had slipped the Globe's senior managers a copy of the final Post prototype the night before its official launch. William Thorsell passed it around that evening during a Globe social gathering at the King Edward Hotel.

"My first reaction," says Thorsell, "was that it was much more conventionally arranged and put together than I expected it to be. I thought it would be more different from a traditional paper than it was. It had a couple of features that were very unusual and magazinelike. Avenue was very expensive but very well done – a luxury really."

Thorsell concedes that the Post introduced an impressive mix of news and human interest along with a good sense of when to commit extra resources to an event. "When there was a big story they would devote six pages or so with a tremendous combination of news, photography, and [opinion] columns that might have been a two-page thing in most papers. So when we thought they were going to six pages, we went to four. In their first budget coverage they did about twenty pages and we did our usual four. I was really taken with it, but then again is anyone going to

read twenty pages on the budget? So we had those kinds of discussions that were provoked by what they were doing, and sometimes we picked up the cue and other times we said, No, it's their world, and didn't think it was necessary to respond to it. Some of it was about staking out territory – saying [they] are serious, even more serious than the traditional Globe."

Thorsell met the early weeks of the Post with series on health care and aboriginal issues, deliberate statements of journalistic purpose attempted to instill a steady-as-you-go ethos into his managers. Despite the subsequent, often clever adaptations of certain Postisms, he tried hard to shore up the Thorsellian view of what a daily newspaper should be. Senior features editor Sarah Murdoch was struck by the editor-in-chief's determination. "At our morning meeting, we would all compare the Star, Globe, and Post [a ritual at all three newspapers]. William was less complacent than most people and erred on the side of saying that things the Post did were pretty darn good. But at the same time he didn't want to make any changes by copying what made the Post what it was. He was very clear that we shouldn't deviate from what he considered wonderful journalism. The Globe set the agenda for the country with political coverage and he was prepared to leave pop culture to the Post because he preferred the higher arts. He had a vision of what the Globe should be and never wavered on it. It was admirable."

Not everyone judged Thorsell's Globe so positively. Former Globe foreign correspondent and Saturday Night magazine editor John Fraser agreed with his chum Robert Fulford that the Globe was running scared from the Post's opening volley. "The Globe had this great franchise that William Thorsell fucked around with for ten years and didn't seem to do any damage because there was no competition. He's not a dumb person,

but he introduced some of the stupidest ideas I've ever seen in journalism. It was a boring paper and they miscalculated getting ready for the Post. It was a big shock when the Post came out with such a comprehensive, comfortable voice that was both more intelligent, more fun, and racier than the Globe could ever hope to be. Parkinson and Thorsell were in over their heads. Thorsell had no experience of competition and didn't have a clue how to create an exciting front page."

Fraser, now master of Massey College at the University of Toronto, wrote a weekly media column for the Post in which he regularly used goings-on at the Globe as grist for his pieces.

Former Globe and Mail publisher Roy Megarry, the man responsible for saving the Globe from possible extinction in the mid-1970s by reinventing the newspaper as a national daily, considered it inevitable that the Globe would stagger at the start. "When you have enjoyed a monopoly for all those years and had the market all to yourselves, it's human nature to start taking things for granted. You are at the top and you are successful. It reflects in your readership research, in your circulation, in advertising revenue, and editorial. Throughout the organization, even though you think you are being innovative, it's still not the same as having a competitor breathing down your neck. It was one thing to strategize and anticipate, but when it actually happened and you read the Post for six days in a row, it was obvious that whatever we were doing, we had to do better. They put out a good newspaper."

Megarry, long retired, was brought back to the Globe as a special adviser to Phillip Crawley, the Englishman brought in from New Zealand three weeks before the Post launched. Megarry took Crawley across Canada as part of a rapid education and arranged lunches, dinners, and meetings for him with business and community leaders. Crawley had visited Canada

only once before, on a two-week vacation.

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The Post's approach to news, features, and photographs had been developed over many hours of conversation between editor-in-chief Kenneth Whyte and his deputy, Martin Newland. Whyte, a small-c conservative but not, he insists, an ideologue, had a clear idea of the issues he wanted the newspaper to emphasize, and Newland, who has an a-pox-on-all-their-houses approach to party politics, had no doubt how it should be done: irreverent but with a seriousness of purpose.

Whyte had seven or eight issues he wanted the Post to focus on:

– Parliament and the lack of democratic accountability in Ottawa.

– Taxes, which were too high.

– The brain drain, which was sucking away Canada's future.

– The United Nations (in Whyte's opinion, "one of the most bloated, inefficient bureaucracies ever devised").

– The Supreme Court, whose decisions were not getting the critical analysis they warranted.

– The Chrétien government's use of public funds for political purposes, which siphoned cash from much-needed improvements to infrastructure in cities and towns across the country.

And there were other ongoing issues, the type that former Hollinger president David Radler describes as radio talk-show topics that no other newspaper in Canada was writing about in a critical way – issues such as the rights of divorced fathers, human rights tribunal decisions, Supreme Court decisions, immigration and Crown corporation spending, all of which would find plenty of space in the Post.

In essence, they were on a mission to rescue Canadian journalism from what they perceived as drab, humourless, institutionalized reporting that wallowed in the woes of victims of all kinds. Theirs was a newspaper intended to shock, amuse, intrigue, and, when necessary, horrify. They wouldn't be afraid of sex and totty, a word Newland imported from England that became part of Post lexicon. Totty, which in earlier generations would have been called cheesecake, is photography of beautiful women, personified in the Post by tennis star Anna Kournikova. As columnist Scott Feschuk was to record in an article commemorating the Post's one thousandth edition, large photographs of Kournikova appeared 109 times during that period, and with most of those photographs there was a story that referred to the Russian beauty, who had never won a Grand Slam, getting more press than any other tennis player.

Tabloid editor Michael Cooke, who exhibits a remarkable ability to sum up complex subjects in four words or less, said it was the "Holy shit, Martha" stories that would remain unique to the National Post. These are stories that provoke outrage or highlight the bizarreness of human behaviour – stories that people are moved to share and talk about at home and work. In more polite company, they are referred to as "water-cooler" stories. Two of Ken Whyte's favourite examples are stories his team used in many of their prototypes. One involved a Saskatchewan boy who was caught shoplifting in a mall. As punishment, the boy's father sent him back to the mall for the afternoon wearing a sandwich board that read, "I Am a Thief."

"Everybody who has a kid or has been a kid knows the shoplifting story," says Whyte. "It was a perfect water-cooler conversation piece. Everyone would think either, 'Hey, good on the father,' or, 'How can you humiliate a kid like that?' The other was a story about a knife fight in a

monastery involving two monks in a monastic order where they don't talk but somehow got on each other's nerves in the kitchen. We wanted that sort of story on the front page all the time."

Above all, Whyte wanted to tap into ideas that he sensed had a ready, under-served audience from coast to coast. "There are big problems with the country that people like me have been thinking about for a long time. None of those ideas was original, because there are large pockets of dissent in books, think tanks, universities, and political parties. There has always been an orthodoxy in Canada, on one hand, and people who dissent on the other. It was part of our job to gather all those people who didn't take the official line on things."

The news of the day, how it would be approached, and where it should be placed in the daily newspaper was decided at news meetings, the first of which was scheduled daily at 11 a.m. but rarely started on time because the editor-in-chief was invariably late. News meetings are usually formal, structured affairs with department heads taking turn to list their best story prospects for the following day's edition. The Post meetings, held around a ping-pong table in an office adjoining Whyte's, developed early in the newspaper's life into emotional, irreverent, often hilarious, politically incorrect gatherings and a melting pot of ideas. The results were consolidated at another meeting in the afternoon, from which an early form of the daily newspaper emerged. During one period, the meetings were announced by the banging of a Chinese gong, but was ditched because it irritated people.

Whyte would use his favourite phrase – "What if we do this . . . ?" – to push basic stories into different, offbeat directions. Deputy editor Newland educated his Canadian colleagues in profane Fleet Street newspaper language – wanker (loser), bollocks (bad idea), dog's bollocks (good

idea) – but whatever was said in the Post news meetings, nothing leaked to the satirical press – otherwise known as Frank magazine, which was feeding copiously off misery at the Globe and Mail and would for several years to come. It was indicative of the happy, collegial nature of the Post.

Despite the atmosphere of apparent anarchy, the Post meetings were strangely hierarchal, recalls sports editor Graham Parley. "Ken was always very much in charge, and even if he wasn't there people would cram into the room but nobody would ever sit in Ken's chair. It was an ordinary chair at the head of the table, but it was sacrosanct. And Martin would always sit to his left. The mood of the meetings was dictated by Ken's mood. If Ken was looking like thunder when he came in, it would be more subdued, but mostly they were Seinfeldian discussions like a bunch of people would have over a beer."

There was competition at the story meetings to be the funniest person that day, says former Toronto section editor Peter Scowen, who left in August 2002 to join the Toronto Star. "It was a freewheeling, fun place and you looked forward to those story meetings. You could say anything. They wanted to hear about the top report of the day but also the stuff that could provide the outrage or fun story. You knew you could get Ken's attention if you had those fun, controversial stories. But we all learned that Ken's attention was too unreliable to vie for, because sometimes he wasn't in the same room as you even though his body was there."

Scowen's quintessential meeting moment came after one of the editors suggested a story about Prince Edward and his wife, Sophie. "The editor who made the pitch finished and then John Racovali, the foreign editor, started delivering this impressive and earnest pitch of great stories. Ken was sitting there with his feet up on the table. John reached the end and there was a long pause. Ken looked across at the person who had made

the Edward and Sophie pitch and said, 'Which member of the royal family was it you were talking about?' You just never knew where his mind was. But he and Martin Newland knew exactly what they wanted. You didn't have to agree with the politics of the paper, and a lot of people who work there don't, but they still enjoyed working at the Post because it had such a clear vision of what it wanted to be."

It was Scowen, with a half-serious aside at a news meeting during the Stanley Cup playoffs in the spring of 1999, who inspired one of the Post's most successful stunts during its early years – a stunt, for sure, but a brilliantly simple idea that produced irresistible reading. It was, essentially, a copy of a series of beer commercials, broadcast during playoffs, in which a group of hockey fans purloined the Stanley Cup and showed it off around town to incredulous ordinary folk.

Parley emerged from the meeting smitten with the idea and determined to make it happen. He called the National Hockey League's Toronto vice-president Gary Meagher.

"Gary, we want to borrow the Stanley Cup," said Parley.

Meagher listened to the story proposal intently. "That's the strangest request I've ever received," he replied, "but I like it. Give me an hour or so."

The Stanley Cup assignment fell to sports reporter Dave Feschuk, who travelled from Toronto to Buffalo with the trophy strapped in the passenger seat of a rented gold-coloured Chrysler convertible while photographer John Lehmann brought up the rear with the Keepers of the Cup – two guards, one from the Stanley Cup's home at the Hockey Hall of Fame and another from the NHL. The Holy Grail is never left alone.

Crossing the border, Feschuk was stopped by a U.S. customs officer, who didn't believe his claim that his passenger was, indeed, the Stanley

Cup. After a brief interrogation, Feschuk took the Cup to a chicken-wing emporium in Niagara, New York, before heading back across the border, where a Canadian customs offcer phoned down the line urging all his colleagues to come look, then proceeded to pose joyously with Lord Stanley's treasure while Lehmann photographed him. The story ended with the cup back on the Ontario side and a young boy refusing to touch it. He knew the superstition that he who touches the Stanley Cup will never win it. And he had ambitions.

The idea was subsequently copied by Sports Illustrated columnist Rick Reilly and then by Time magazine, which credited Reilly for the original idea. Parley assigned reporter Scott Burnside to do the same thing with the Grey Cup, but despite hauling the Canadian Football League silverware on journeys through the Toronto subway system, it didn't quite create the same excitement.

"The Stanley Cup story was one of the few stunts we did at the Post that didn't produce a single negative comment," recalls Parley, "and it cost only the few hundred dollars in car rental fees and a few bucks for the chicken wings. Any newspaper would have done the same if they had thought of it, but it was a good example of the pizzazz of the Post. That kind of thing came out of the informality of the meetings when people often just sat around talking about their favourite movies, TV shows, or, in that case, commercials."

The creative approach extended to political coverage. Former Canadian Alliance leader Stockwell Day caused a fuss, and was ridiculed by government MPs, when he suggested that the House of Commons should run on a four-day week, closing on Fridays. The Post, looking for an offbeat angle on the story, sent Ottawa reporter Jane Taber and photographer Dave Chan to Ottawa Airport on a Thursday afternoon to interview MPs

leaving for a long weekend. It may have been news to Day, but it was well known among Parliament Hill journalists that MPs often left the capital on Thursdays if there was no critical House of Commons vote on the agenda. Taber's story, while hardly news, was an entertaining piece of work – "gotcha" journalism with a humorous twist. Underneath a photograph of each MP was "The Excuse," the reason given to Taber for the early departure. If MPs wanted to save money, she suggested in the story, maybe they should share cabs to the airport on Thursdays.

The Post also made much of Julia Roberts's armpits. By happy coincidence, Roberts had flashed an armpit full of hair to photographers in London around the same time Australian researchers emerged with a study suggesting that women who didn't shave their legs and armpits had higher self-esteem than women who did. It brought Roberts the handle "Pretty Hairy Woman" in one British tabloid headline and the story and picture gave the Post perfect front-page fodder.

Deputy editor Newland is particularly proud of the page-one story about a cat in Orillia, Ontario, that got stuck in a tree for a week and refused all appeals from neighbourhood cat lovers to come down. Tales of cat-stuck-up-tree are among the most basic of local stories and are routinely ignored by the smallest of city weeklies. But the cat's determined attitude and the bizarre human distress on the ground below made the story, in Newland's view, a natural page-one item for the Post. The story included quotations from locals who reported minute details of the cat's rare movements.

"News, to an extent, is what people are talking about and what they are curious about," says Newland. "And for all the tut-tutting that went on, Julia Roberts's armpit hair was something people were curious about and talked about. A lot of people read us because they like to get pissed

off. All of us live with popular culture and, if we're honest with ourselves, are fascinated by it. Good coverage of pop culture is good coverage of news. We can't be so proud, or so far up our own arses, that we ignore a vast tract of the lifestyles of half the population. And just once, before my career was over, I wanted to put 'Cat Stuck Up Tree' on the front page. It got a huge reaction from readers. Half were slightly baffled and half were genuinely wanting to know what happened to the frigging cat."

As a newcomer, Martin Newland saw Canada as a country of infinite possibilities and, as he put, "one of the highest standards of living in the world, where you have two-car garages and garage doors that go up and down by themselves." He didn't see that country reflected in the newspapers he read when he arrived in Toronto during the early summer of 1998.

"Reading the papers and listening to the CBC, there was such an unbelievable victim-based brand of journalism. News was something that had to leave you rubbing your chin and saying, 'Hmmm, that was a good lesson.' So much of Canadian journalism was based on misery. I remember being struck, during my first month here, about the number of items about cancer on the CBC. It was like you needed that sprinkle of cancer every day to make the cake rise. I find it so hard to define news, but it can be a strange event that evinces a reaction in people – outrage, fear, laughter, even sexual reaction. There is a degree of exploitation in it, because I know the readers we want and I know the readers we need reading the paper. All newspapers target stories to achieve that."

Newland brought a racy, pugnacious tabloid style of writing to the Post that had been perfected by Conrad Black's Daily Telegraph. It's a no-frills, often adjective-free style of news writing that can make the most salacious of news stories sound respectable without losing any of the spice. The more understated and subtle the story, the more powerful the impact

and the greater chance of getting readers outraged or amused, depending on the topic.

John Bentley Mays, one of the earliest defectors from the Globe and Mail, says page one of the Post was pure Newland. "You'd walk past a National Post box and you'd feel fangs in your legs, like a mad dog had just bitten you. That was Martin Newland, and it was what the Globe got so sniffy about. The front page was vulgar, but it was great, and Newland managed to do it without cheapening the product. He flew in the face of every prejudice that is held by the ruling elite in this country."

The Post's obsession with the United States, exemplified on a daily basis with stories about the brain drain and tax cuts, seemed to get totally out of hand with the eighteen pages devoted to the death of John Kennedy Jr. and his wife and sister-in-law when their aircraft plunged into the ocean off Cape Cod. Newland says it was a subtle way of riling Canadians by prodding them to face the fact that the United States plays a huge role in Canadian lives. "For someone like me, who just floats in never having been to Canada, you all look like Americans; you all dress like them and there on TV is Friends. So what is it that you are? For me, one of the biggest questions about Canada was do they love the Queen, or do they love the Queen because the Americans don't have her? Do they love medicare as it is, or do they love it because the Americans haven't got it?"

The persistent pro-American pursuit was a strategy that tarred the Post's reputation, and even Conrad Black, loath though he is to criticize the Post under his ownership, was somewhat uncomfortable with that aspect of his newspaper's journalism. Given the chance to start over, it would be one of the few things he would change. "Too many people got the idea that the paper was always critical of Canada," he says, "and it

certainly wasn't what Ken and I wanted the perception to be. I think I would assert myself more than I did to try to avoid that perception."

The Globe and Mail came in for bouts of ridicule at National Post news meetings for its apparent efforts to copy their racier style, but in the months after the Post launch, Globe editor-in-chief Thorsell decided the competition was surprisingly conventional in its look and biased in its political news coverage – similar, as he saw it, to the Toronto Star but conducting its mission at the other end of the political spectrum. The Post was allowing its right-wing bias to enter into its news coverage, breaching the traditional wall between impartial news reporting on one side and editorial page comment and opinion columns on the other. Reader surveys, which the Globe commissioned continuously on orders from Thomson chief executive Stuart Garner, suggested to Thorsell that people were suspicious of the Post's political mission.

"It was good for the Globe," says Thorsell, "because it came back to us in surveys that people saw that as transparent and manipulative and didn't trust it."

Thorsell and his fellow Globe executives knew that the Post was spending heavily to make a big splash but were still surprised at the daily Avenue section, a double-page photographic or graphic spread and one of Whyte's favourite features. Despite the extravagance, Thorsell figured that the Post was doing what it had to do to get noticed.

There is no such charity from Phillip Crawley, brought in by Stuart Garner three weeks before the Post launch as president and COO and, in June 1999, formally replacing Parkinson as publisher and CEO.

Crawley and Garner had worked together as reporters and editors at the Newcastle Journal in England during the 1960s and 1970s, and at one point in their careers, before heading off to become executives, Garner

had been Crawley's deputy. The two men share a passion for soccer and are ardent supporters of the storied English premier league club Newcastle United. They know each other well and speak in the precise, clipped manner of those who have had to work at being understood. The regional "Geordie" accent they share is one of the more attractive in the English language but a decidedly foreign tongue to most ears outside England's northeast. It's also an accent that can be especially chilling when raised in anger, as Globe employees would discover when Crawley decided they had to have the fear of God put into them.

Either out of genuine conviction or competitive posturing, Crawley became relentless and brutal in his criticism of the National Post and of Conrad Black – a sentiment that quickly became fully mutual. From his arrival in Canada, Crawley considered the new daily as little more than an irresponsible indulgence. He still refuses to be impressed by anything the Post did or does and considers the Post's design rather old-fashioned rather than radical or revolutionary.

"I detested the Avenue centrespread, which I thought was the biggest waste of space I have seen in a daily newspaper since my time in newspapers, which goes back to 1965. It was a classic example of a magazine editor trying to run a newspaper and seemed to be wholly self-indulgent. You have to question Conrad Black: Why allow that kind of thing to happen when there wasn't the advertising to support it? The amount of space thrown away by the Post was incredible. I regard myself as a professional newspaperman, and to me it was unprofessional. There was no business logic being applied. They were being allowed to play with their train set and had a proprietorial indulgence to do so."

Six months after the Post published its first edition, the Globe began looking for reinforcements from the United Kingdom. The Post was

wounding the Globe journalistically and financially, and after watching Thorsell try to compete on his own terms, Crawley decided he needed a new editor-in-chief to give the opposition a taste of its own ammunition.

CHAPTER 14

THE GLOBE UPS THE ANTE

"The ghastly, appalling public-school boy that I am,
I have to make things appear effortless. You can paddle hard underneath,
but on the surface you must be a swan."
– Richard Addis, editor-in-chief, Globe and Mail

Word soon spread around the Globe and Mail that Phillip Crawley hadn't come all the way from New Zealand to be Roger Parkinson's helper. There had been a meeting of managers to which Crawley had arrived early, ahead of Parkinson, and settled into the chair at the head of the table. Parkinson arrived next, looking a little irritated. This was interpreted, rightly or wrongly, as Crawley making a point, and the speculation travelled rapidly.

Confirmation of Crawley's role as de facto publisher came barely three months after his arrival, when he called a staff meeting at the usual mass meeting place, a disused garage next to the Globe's main offices.

It had been a collegial habit at the Globe for management to share the newspaper's business data with the newsroom, urging recipients to keep the information to themselves, which, predictably, not everyone did. Crawley made it clear that the days of sharing financial information with staff were over and threatened dire punishment for anyone caught leak-

ing information to, or gossiping with, the competition. The benign, gentlemanly days were over. For Crawley, this was war.

Columnist Jan Wong, a former China correspondent who had long before decided there were reasonable comparisons to be made between the ruling elite in Communist China and Globe management, was shocked by Crawley's blunt presentation. She decided to exercise her democratic rights and push back. "He used military terms and said, 'In this war if you betray us we will execute you.' He talked about executing people who weren't loyal foot soldiers, and I was, like, 'You're telling a bunch of journalists this? It was, like, Hello!' I think he wanted to rev us up, but he certainly revved me the wrong way."

Wong, author of the much reviled, irresistible Lunch With column, was one of the Globe journalists Kenneth Whyte had courted and Thorsell had proactively compensated with a pay raise and cellphone. She raised her hand and asked Crawley, "So, how exactly are you going to execute us."

"Hanging," snapped back Crawley without missing a beat.

Reporter Susan Delacourt recalls there had been a mix of bravado and curiosity among her colleagues as they made their way to the meeting. "We were all saying that this Brit would know he was in a room with a hundred bullshit detectors so he wouldn't try to put anything over on us. So then he made this speech about treason and about fraternizing with the enemy being a hanging offence. He said the Globe was now at war with the National Post and then used lots of military analogies. He was very serious and he scared the bejesus out of all of us big brave reporters. After he finished, we just quietly filed out and went back upstairs. It was something we had been waiting to hear, and wished someone had said it months before."

Crawley laughs when he's reminded of his bellicose lecture but said he decided soon after he arrived at the Globe that it was something he had to do:

> I just wanted to stiffen the backbone a little bit. At times like that there are usually two groups: one group who are frightened to death and think the end of the world is nigh, and the other group who will think, "We don't have to worry about the opposition; they can't touch us because we're so good." And in between there is some sensible middle ground. I was talking mainly to the two ends of the spectrum, which needed to understand that change had to happen and I was there to deliver it and if they didn't like it, then tough luck. We wouldn't be operating on a democratic principle. We had been in the habit of being very open – divulging lots of business information to the staff, and I made it very clear from the word go that I would not be doing that. It was confidential information that could be useful to the enemy and I would not be disclosing it in the future because it was ammunition. We were on a war footing, and I said that if anyone wanted to bale out because they couldn't stand the pace, then okay. And if people behaved treacherously and betrayed secrets I would know what to do with them. Journalists and sales people are great gossips, but by and large we protected ourselves quite well.

Shortly afterwards, on January 20, 1999, Crawley visited Ottawa to meet the Globe's parliamentary reporters and take them to lunch at the National Press Club. Word had travelled quickly from Toronto that the new guy, publisher in everything but name, was tough and scary and

should be treated with caution, but Crawley's sardonic wit and impressive knowledge of the newspaper business, especially the news side, came more as a relief.

He told the parliamentary reporters that the Globe's use of photography was poor and he intended to do something about it.

Deputy bureau chief Anne McIlroy protested mildly and suggested Crawley was being a little unfair. She cited the photograph on the Globe's front page the day after Pierre Trudeau's funeral the previous October as an example of a good image beautifully displayed.

Crawley fired back. "Do you know who chose that photo?"

"Er, you, I hope," replied McIlroy.

"Yes," he said, much to the reporter's relief.

Before he left, Crawley spoke privately with bureau chief Edward Greenspon, who complained about the newsroom management in Toronto and said that too many good stories from the Ottawa bureau were getting short shrift or falling through the cracks altogether. And the Globe, he said, wasn't competitive enough.

After he turned down Kenneth Whyte's offer to join the new Black newspaper, Greenspon had received a mixed reaction from his friends at the Globe, some of whom said they were glad he stayed but sorry, too, that he hadn't given management a kick in the pants by leaving. In the nine months or so since, he had developed a better relationship with Thorsell and Wente, but the frustrations never fully disappeared, and the apparently waning interest in political stories from Ottawa was a constant irritant.

Shortly before the Post launched, Greenspon and his Ottawa colleagues had been hearing whispers about the new daily's plans for covering the vitally important federal political battleground. In particular, they

had heard that the Post was in the throes of investigating Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's personal financial links with taxpayer-funded projects in his home riding, what was to become known as Shawinigate. Greenspon wanted to put together an investigative team to prevent the Post from scooping the Globe on the Chrétien story. The suggestion was rejected by his bosses in Toronto.

At their meeting, Crawley asked Greenspon about his future plans and whether he might be interested in being editor-in-chief. Greenspon said, yes, he certainly would be interested in replacing Thorsell, but he was in no hurry. They left the subject, but Crawley seemed to be struggling with how the newspaper should look and be organized. (Greenspon didn't know that the weekly national surveys ordered by Stuart Garner to keep close tabs on the national and Toronto-area newspaper markets were showing a troubling downward trend in Globe fortunes.) Crawley hinted to Greenspon that a crunch could be coming and he might have to make a decision to move from Ottawa to Toronto, sooner rather than later.

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Greenspon was enjoying a short family vacation to celebrate his daughter's birthday when Crawley phoned him at the upscale west Quebec resort Chateau Montebello barely two months later. Changes were afoot and he wanted Greenspon to move to Toronto to replace Peggy Wente as executive editor, Thorsell's second-in-command, and run the newsroom. It was Tuesday, and Greenspon asked for time to think. Crawley was holding a management retreat the following weekend and wanted to introduce him then as the new executive editor. Now was the time either to put up or shut up.

Greenspon's wife, Janice Neal, was reluctant to uproot herself and the couple's three children, especially given the turmoil that had become a hallmark of life at the Globe and Mail.

"I wasn't happy with the way things were going," says Greenspon, "but nor was I scheming behind anyone's back. On one hand, I had been a critic in the bullpen, bitching about people; now I had the chance to go in and pitch the next few innings. And it is the World Series, because the National Post is out there and we are floundering. We are all a bunch of whiners, but there's whining and there's really soul-sapping kind of stuff that makes people not work as well as they should. We were well into that."

Greenspon agreed to take the job if he could keep his home base where it was, returning to Ottawa on Thursday evenings and working there on Fridays. Crawley agreed and they signed a contract.

The changes were announced by Thorsell without much enthusiasm on April 9, 1999, in an internal memo to staff. He thanked Peggy Wente "for the role she has played in leading the changes to the A-section to date" and that she was "currently considering her options." He added, "These changes are being made to ensure we have the most effective organization and processes in place to deliver the best news package to our readers."

Crawley had not promised Greenspon the editor-in-chief's job and was now hinting that he had plans to bring in a senior British journalist with production experience who could produce the consistent daily design of the newspaper Crawley considered necessary to combat the bright displays in the spacious National Post. Greenspon understood that the new person would be Thorsell's deputy.

Like most monopoly businesses, the Globe and Mail had institutionalized bad habits, and Greenspon found a structure that was often unable

to react quickly enough to accommodate new or changing stories. He arrived in the Globe newsroom one Sunday evening in May 1999 when staff was trying to decide how to accommodate an exclusive interview with escaped convict Ty Conn, a career criminal and chronic escapee who, two weeks earlier, had slipped out of Kingston Penitentiary in Ontario – the first convict in forty years to do so – and now had apparently killed himself while on the lam. It was the hot story that weekend, and broadcaster Lyndon MacIntyre, who had conducted the interview (and would go on to co-author a book about Conn), was offering the Globe a preview. But the space in the Monday edition was spoken for; in some cases, it was filled the previous Friday. Plans were in place to hold the MacIntyre interview and run it in the Tuesday edition, whereas the Post, given a similar opportunity, would likely have devoted two or three pages to it on the Monday. Greenspon cleared one page and ran it the next day.

He remembers the Ty Conn story as a breakthrough of sorts. "They needed someone in the centre to say, 'Yeah, I really care about that story. Let's go for it.' So that's what we did. The Globe mentality was that if the newspaper is already planned for the next day, you don't tear things apart."

It was a good summer for news, especially in the West, where B.C. Premier Glenn Clark was being accused of ethical indiscretion, Chinese boat people were landing off the coast, and there was scandal at the world-famous Montreux eating disorder clinic, where staff was alleged to have been force-feeding anorexics.

Six weeks after becoming executive editor, Greenspon got an encouraging letter from Stuart Garner, whom he had never met, expressing satisfaction in the change in the Globe's first section and congratulating him on a job well done. Garner's letter may have also been prompted by new

research which showed that Globe circulation was doing better and readers were more positive about the newspaper.

In the meantime, Phillip Crawley was busy making changes. "I arrived with a fairly clear idea of what needed to be done and knew I would have to move quickly in some areas. It took a little while to effect all of the changes, but within two weeks of getting here I made sure there was a sports section in the newspaper every day. We didn't have a sports section, just a small space at the back of the paper allocated to sports. I knew that sports was going to become a battleground in terms of reader appreciation, and we had some very good sports journalists, but they didn't have a very good platform. Other things took a little longer. We needed some new leadership across the company and some of it was back office and some of it was in the public eye. So, during the first six or nine months, I made some of the changes, and I suppose the most important one was appointing Richard Addis editor in the summer of 1999."

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Richard Addis was not the first choice to succeed William Thorsell as editor-in-chief.

They had tried, within weeks of Crawley taking over at the Globe, to entice Scottish newspaper editor Andrew Jaspan to take the job. Jaspan had been editor of the Scotsman, a newspaper in many ways similar to the Globe, and Lord Roy Thomson's first newspaper in the United Kingdom.

Stuart Garner, head of Thomson operations in Britain, had persuaded Jaspan to take the Scotsman job, but eight months later Jaspan got an enticing offer to edit the Observer, a "quality" British Sunday newspaper,

and much to Garner's chagrin he accepted. That job, one of the more desirable in British newspapers, lasted barely one year, and after an acrimonious departure Jaspan found himself on the street, so to speak, as publisher of the Big Issue, a magazine for street people. In a story typical of the ups and downs of a British newspaper editor, Jaspan was then asked to develop and launch a new Scottish Sunday newspaper, a $30-million project he was in the midst of when Phillip Crawley called him in December 1998 to ask him to become editor of the Globe and Mail. Apparently at the suggestion of Garner, Crawley offered the fluent French-speaking Jaspan a lucrative three-year contract, with handsome bonuses, along with the clear message that the war with new National Post was not one the Thomson family intended to lose.

They sent copies of the Post to Scotland for their chosen editor to peruse. Jaspan, who had visited the Globe and Mail three times and had come to know and like William Thorsell, insisted that any new arrangement would have to accommodate the current editor-in-chief. Crawley and Jaspan worked out those details, and despite some mild reservations about the optics of being a British editor running Canada's national newspaper, Jaspan was sorely tempted. He had a written contract, but with the launch of his own Sunday Herald only weeks away, he turned Crawley down.

Undaunted, Crawley and Garner invited Jaspan to stay with his Scottish project for a couple of months and then come to Canada. He again refused, offered Crawley a few alternative names, and left the Thomson executives to search elsewhere – a search that would eventually lead them to Richard Addis.

Conventional wisdom, not always the most accurate barometer of things to come in the newspaper business, was that Garner and Crawley

were searching for a deputy for Thorsell, not a replacement. The theory had some credence, because Thorsell was to be part of the final interviewing team along with Garner and Crawley.

But former Thomson executive Jim Jennings, who had helped guide the newspaper through its colour conversion and redesign, was not surprised that the demise of editor-in-chief William Thorsell was at hand. "William wanted the paper to go one way, and he and the publisher apparently disagreed, because he was there and then he was gone. William was an imperial editor who would grace the newsroom with his presence but really didn't run the newsroom."

Jennings recalls a discussion about rearranging the design of the Globe newsroom to have a central news desk that would allow people easier access to one another, including improved contact with the Report on Business department, a floor above the main newsroom. Jennings got the distinct impression that Thorsell was more interested in the look of the staircase than any practical improvements the new set-up might provide, and began to imagine an elaborate Broadway musical set.

"William, I have this vision of you descending the staircase in a long white robe surrounded with smoke from smoke machines," said Jennings.

"Mmmmm," mused Thorsell, "that's a thought."

Crawley had, indeed, decided that the Globe needed a different kind of editor-in-chief. Whatever else Crawley felt about Thorsell, he considered ten years editing the same daily newspaper too long. "It is an extremely demanding job, both physically and mentally, and you have a very high burnout rate. We needed a hands-on editor who would take charge of the day-to-day running of the paper, and William was more detached. It was very important to have someone from outside the Globe, because anyone from inside would carry too much baggage. The newspaper needed an

outsider's eye to see what needed to be done, to drive change – to change the internal culture."

Associate editor Sarah Murdoch saw the relationship between Thorsell and Crawley start well and slowly deteriorate as the imported executive grew less and less enamoured with his editor-in-chief's serious-minded, somewhat eccentric view of what the Globe and Mail should be. "Crawley found the Globe boring and wanted to make it more sexy and entertaining. I was a big supporter of William's, but he would come into my office saying he wanted a five-part series on productivity or something, and I would talk him down to three parts, but Crawley wanted no parts at all. William loves events like the Giller dinner, and enjoys flitting around Toronto. Crawley is a smart, working-class Brit and hates the poncey, elitist thing that makes life worth living for William. So it was quite obvious that William and Crawley were on different planets and the relationship wasn't going to work. It was plain to all of us that our time on the masthead was limited."

Thorsell said he wanted to hand over the news side of his job by New Year's Day 2000, and, while there might have been confusion over titles, he took part in the recruiting process knowing that the person being hired would take control of the news pages of the Globe. It was, he said, all in the cards when he flew to London, met with the headhunters, and then eventually with Addis.

Thorsell hints that he didn't really have the stomach or experience for the different style of journalism he knew Crawley wanted to bring to the Globe – a match for the British sensibility that was driving the National Post. Thorsell and his managers had a running joke about the amount of female cleavage and space devoted to furry animals on the Post's front page, but the reality was that the Globe would be heading at least par-

tially in the same direction and he didn't like it. "It's not really my nature and my sensibility and I'm not going to be very good at producing that. I'm just not that kind of person, and if I went out there and tried to pretend, I'm sure I would have embarrassed myself."

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The decision to hunt for a new editor in the United Kingdom was a clear admission by Garner and Crawley that they were deeply worried about the journalistic and financial damage the National Post was inflicting.

Richard Addis had been editor of the high-profile Express tabloid, but like most Fleet Street editors he hadn't lasted long in the position and was soon labouring as a section head at the Daily Mail, a job that bored him and was made extra discomforting because his boss, in better times, used to work for him. The knowledge that Fleet Street editors often met in similar circumstances on the great elevator ride of ambition did little to soften the indignity.

The headhunters' call came out of the blue for the ambitious Addis, an upper-class Cambridge graduate and a divorced, devoted father of three young children. He was cool at first, and rejected the first approach, but chronic boredom, and exotic imaginings of the Great White North, gradually warmed him to the idea. Two months later, he got another call from the headhunters, who wanted to tell him more about the Globe and Mail and explain how important it was.

Aside from his initial comical ignorance of Canada, Addis was from such an alien personal and professional culture that, in pre-Post times, he would have escaped the headhunters' radar altogether. He was the antithesis of a "Globe person," and while "Globe people" were never

above knifing each other in the back when the opportunity arose, they would at least be polite enough to tend each other's wounds. Addis was content to step over the bodies until the human resources personnel dragged them away.

The Globe's new man had been a prominent Fleet Street editor – a misnomer really, because Fleet Street, once the centre of British daily newspaper journalism, has long since ceased to be so. After the once-powerful unions were crushed and new technology took a grip, newspapers moved their London operations to other parts of the city. But the words Fleet Street still serve as recognizable shorthand for the merciless world of British tabloid and broadsheet daily newspapers – a brutal world where the average tenure of a tabloid editor is around three years.

Addis had held a variety of journalism jobs, the first of which was editor of a magazine called Homes and Jobs, which was run, Addis later discovered, as a front for a petty criminal organization by two men who had served time in prison for assault.

He went on to write a regular column for Marketing Week, a respectable publication that provided him a luxurious life of irresponsibility and long lunches. "I got invited to everything in the advertising business – lunches in Nice, parties in Rome. Quite often I would get up in the morning and meet some tycoon for lunch and have a very good lunch from 12:30 to 4:30 and go back home. My job was to keep in touch with these people, to mock, tease, and interview them, so I lived on caviar and champagne for two years."

He moved to Rome to learn Italian and worked for two years as sports editor for a small expatriates' newspaper called the Rome Daily American, even though he knew absolutely nothing about American sport. But his real Fleet Street baptism came as a freelance reporter for

Britain's Daily Mail when he was sent with a battle-hardened photographer to stake out Sarah Keays, the pregnant mistress of one of Margaret Thatcher's favourite cabinet ministers, Cecil Parkinson, whose contemptuous attitude toward his parental responsibility had earned him the wrath of Fleet Street and the loathing of almost everyone except, apparently, his boss. Addis shudders at the memory of the Keays stakeout:

> The photographer was a vile barbarian I had never met before, but he taught me how to do a stakeout. Under cover of darkness we invaded the garden of this house, found a little chicken house, got inside, and prised open the wall so there was a little crack we could see through. We stayed in there all night long. I had a new suit that I had bought for my first day at work and it was freezing cold. We sat there for three days, going to the pub occasionally to eat and get warm, and then, shortly after the photographer had left for another job, Sarah came out of the door, and I called the office as instructed and they said, "You have to follow her now." She got into a Lagonda or Maserati or something and I had a Citroën and couldn't keep up with her. I got back to work and was fired. The penalty for failure on Fleet Street is death.

Addis was eventually forgiven and gradually climbed the Fleet Street ladder. He had been executive editor at the Daily Mail for a couple of years when, as he tells it, he was at a dinner party in London seated next to a beautiful and charming Iranian woman who claimed to know Lord David Stevens, chairman of the Daily and Sunday Express.

"He's looking for a new editor," she said. "Do you know anyone who might be a candidate?"

"I would be a good candidate," replied Addis, without hesitation or expectation.

Lord Stevens, who doubtless hadn't yet told the incumbent editor he was being ousted, phoned Addis the next day and invited him to the first of a series of secret interviews at luxury hotels and houses in London's Mayfair district during which the ambitious thirty-nine-year-old met members of the Express board of directors.

Three weeks later, Stevens offered Addis the job and a crack at instant celebrity with a salary of £200,000, £50,000 in bonuses, and limitless expenses, countless parties, and fine dining at only the very best restaurants. Addis also got a chauffeur-driven bullet-proof green Jaguar.

He loved the life and lived it to the full, partly because he knew it wouldn't last too long. It was the existence, he says, of a firefly – glorious for a while but destined for an early end:

> You are expected to act in a very autocratic way. You have armies of secretaries and can order the chauffeur to get you a toothpick if you want one – not that I did that sort of thing. I had a drinks cabinet and champagne in the fridge and my feet on the desk. There is a degree of theatricality about being an editor in England. You have to wear really nice suits and have the occasional dramatic scene in the office, like ripping up the front page or standing on a desk in the newsroom and exhorting your troops to fight harder, or hurling a typewriter though the window. It all goes with the job. You get to meet anyone you want – prime ministers will see you about once a month, the Queen will see you from time to time, and I lunched occasionally with Princess Diana. Celebrities and pop stars will see you, if you want to see them, and you get at least ten lunch invita-

> tions a day. It's very glamorous, very thrilling, and if you're thirty-nine and ambitious it's like heaven.

The longevity of a Fleet Street editor depends on two things: circulation, and the ability to stay on the good side of the right people. The job is long on both hours and intrigue, as Addis discovered:

> Twelve hours is a short work day, and it's very cutthroat, because everyone is out to get you one way or another. You have to be tough, resilient, charming, and cunning just to survive. Everyone around you wants your job, because it's such a good job, and they will find any way they can to manoeuvre into position to get it. The rival newspapers are always trying to hire your best people or ruin your best projects and leak personal stuff about you to Private Eye or one of the rival gossip columns to damage your character. If you're at a party doing or saying something foolish, it will definitely be in the gossip columns, because the point is to get it on the daily clippings file produced for your proprietor. He won't read the column itself, but he'll have the item provided on this daily file of clippings, and he'll see something like "Richard Addis was seen at the National Gallery last night. He went up to the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and called him by the wrong name." In our weekly meeting with the proprietor, he would say, "I hear you couldn't remember the culture secretary's name." You could say, "That's absolute rubbish, I got it right." And he would say, "Well, that's not what I read in the Mirror." You have to accept the job for what it is and enjoy it, and I enjoyed it a lot.

Addis increased his power at the Daily Express in the fall of 1996 when new owner Lord Clive Hollick decided to merge the daily title with the Sunday edition, which, in the British tradition, had operated as a separate entity. Hollick told his two editors to prepare presentations detailing their plans for the merged Express. In gladiatorial tradition, the winner would get the big job and the loser would get nothing. Addis won, and as editor of two newspapers with a combined circulation of more than two million copies, he became one of the most powerful editors in the country.

He became notorious for what came next: the laying off, in one day, of eighty newsroom staff, all of whom were angry. Several of them grew loud and threatening before being led away by human resources people to get their severance packages.

A month later, Addis was in the London restaurant Caprice. "A really vile blonde journalist from the Daily Mail, who I'd never got on with, came over and said, 'Oh, Richard, it must have been so awful having to fire all those people!' Because I disliked her so much, I said, with heavy sarcasm, 'It was just like cleaning out an old sock drawer.' The quote, of course, went straight to Private Eye, as it would have gone into Frank magazine. It lived on as a horrible thing to say, but I was just trying to undermine her unctuous sentimentality, which annoyed me. If I had been a really clever person I wouldn't have said it, but there we are."

Addis learned of his own execution at the Express in April 1998 when he read a story in the Times reporting that Rosie Boycott would be his successor. (She was fired in January 2001.) He called Lord Hollick, his boss.

"I just read that I've been fired," said Addis.

"I can't talk now," said Hollick, essentially confirming the news. "Come and see me at eleven."

Addis got the two year's severance he had negotiated into his contract,

packed the contents of his office and left the same day, to the noise of the traditional "Banging Out" by reporters and editors knocking heavy objects on their desks. Banging out is an ancient ceremony, a throwback to the days when compositors in newspaper print shops used lead, which they would bang in unison when a fellow union member retired.

"There was this loud crashing noise as I walked out of the newsroom, because everyone knew what was happening. It was quite moving. So I got banged out, had a party in a nasty big pub across from the Express. It was a very Fleet Street party, with lots of tears and hugging and stupid emotional speeches. That evening, I went to a book launch and met Margaret Thatcher, and she said, 'Bad luck.' I went home and didn't have a job."

Addis lived off his severance for nine months before taking a job back at the Daily Mail, where he launched a new arts section and ran it unhappily while he wondered when, and if, another editor's job would come his way.

The Globe and Mail's headhunters put an end to his wondering.

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Garner, in transit, met Addis at a hotel near Heathrow Airport, and Crawley interviewed him three times, with and without Thorsell. Addis flew twice to Toronto and met Thomson family scion David Thomson and, in an unofficial side meeting, chatted by his hotel pool with Kenneth Whyte, whose phone call shortly before had been "a total surprise."

During negotiations for the Globe job, Addis had visited Conrad Black at his mansion in Kensington to ask his opinion. Black had phoned Addis, a former employee at the Telegraph, to offer his condolences after the edi-

tor was fired from the Express. Addis recalls,

> We met at his house in a very Conradian room about 300 metres long, lined with Napoleonic history and heavy Sun King–like furniture. There was me, feeling about three inches tall, sitting in a vast chair at one end of the room and Conrad, about nine foot tall, entering through the far door and walking slowly toward me. I told him that I was getting really interested in the Globe, and was it a good job. Obviously, I knew he owned the chief rival, but I wanted to know how honest he would be. If he had recommended against it and said it would be a downward step in your career I wouldn't necessarily have believed him, but I would have been interested in hearing it. But he said the opposite: he said it was a very good job and a great thing for me to do. He likes journalists and, like a good warrior, will come and help when you're wounded on the battlefield.

They chatted for half an hour, and Black briefed him a little on Canadian history, focusing on one of his favourite subjects, the late Quebec premier Maurice Duplessis.

In a jocular aside, Addis suggested that the newspaper war in Canada was about to get hotter and more expensive.

"Are you warning me?" asked Black.

"Yes," smiled Addis, "I think I am, because if I do get this job, it will cost you a lot of money."

Black wished him luck and Addis left to consider his options.

When Whyte visited Addis at his hotel in Toronto, the Englishman decided it was an effort on Black's part to scupper the Globe's efforts to

hire him. "I think I was in Toronto for just one night, and there was a window of an hour or so. Ken basically offered me the job of their comment editor and had been instructed by Conrad to try to head off the appointment. It was nice to meet him and I was very polite, but it was a pointless offer."

Addis says he was never clear how Whyte knew he was in Toronto, let alone where to find him. "But I think everyone in Toronto knew I was there."

Kenneth Whyte's recollections are different. The impetus for the meeting, he says, came from Addis, not the other way around. Crawley and Garner were genuinely searching for a deputy for Thorsell, and Addis was dissatisfied with that scenario and had contacted Black to sound him out on job opportunities at the Post.

According to Whyte, "Conrad said, 'Go talk to Ken Whyte.'"

> Addis and I met for about an hour by the pool at his hotel. He had come with his girlfriend and they were taking it easy. He was very interested in what we were doing and had already sized up the Globe. The way he viewed London was like this: there were nine or ten senior editing jobs and about fourteen or fifteen people capable of holding them, and it was a game of musical chairs. You had to keep yourself in play until your turn came up again, and if you had to spend some time in the colonies while you were waiting, so be it. He was very frank about what he was trying to do with Thomson. They were offering him a number-two job, but he wanted it to be the number-one job or have it lead to a number-one job. He told me he was going to tell them he was interested, but only in the number-one job. And it worked. I think Thomson wanted to treat

> William well, but the only way they could get Addis was to make him the number one. He was looking probably to play one side off against the other and wanted to explore his options.

Whyte sensed that if he had offered the job as deputy editor – the job already filled by the other Englishman, Martin Newland – Addis might have taken it. "If I am Richard Addis doing calculations and my goal is to get back to London as a number one, you're far better able to do that from Hollinger than you are from Thomson, because Conrad owns two number-one titles in the Daily and Sunday Telegraph plus the Spectator."

Addis concedes that the original plan might have been the plan to hire a deputy to Thorsell:

> I successfully turned it around during the interviews with [British headhunter] Spencer Stuart and made it clear that I was not interested in any job in which I was not going to be the editor in the British sense. Which means editor of everything. I wasn't that interested in the job in the first place and certainly would not have become interested had it been anything less than editor. I think that Spencer Stuart told Thomson that they would not find anyone good unless they made them editor. So throughout all the interviews it was understood that if I got the job I would be the editor. There was this thing called the Editorial Board, which we don't have in England. We have leader writers who report to the editor and do whatever they are told. They told me there would be a chairman of the editorial board who would report to me, and that would be William Thorsell. That was fine. As long as he reported to me, I could live with that.

After a week's negotiation, conducted through his Toronto lawyer, Addis eventually got a contract that spelled out clearly that he would be in charge of everything on the editorial side of the Globe and Crawley would take care of business. "I had to have it spelled out in British terms so I knew exactly what being the editor meant. Because I knew I had that power, I was more relaxed about it than I would have been had I had to fight William. I was very gentlemanly toward William in the sense that I didn't interfere with him at all. In the six months he ran the editorial board I never interfered, so we got on quite well."

Garner and Crawley showed Addis a circulation chart and told him it was his job to rid the Canadian newspaper market of the National Post. In turn, they promised to supply him with the money and troops to do the job.

Addis had already given them a detailed plan of how he intended to do the job. "I gave them a dozen areas that needed to be improved: We had to strengthen the Globe, undermine the Post, and lock them into a corner and wait for them to shrivel up and die. The strategy I proposed was to keep the high ground in Canadian journalism, which we already had, though it was dwindling, and then push downward. The way I saw it, we were on the top of the mountain and the Post had a big army coming up the mountain, so what we needed to do was keep the top and drive them back down by occupying some of their territory and broadening the Globe's appeal. They were a U.K.-style newspaper based on tabloid principles, whereas the Globe was a hopelessly slow-witted, cumbersome, boring operation that would be dead in months if it didn't react quickly."

During the course of the hunt, Spencer Stuart had been considering another candidate who had told them that if he got the job, he would bring a young Canadian woman, Chrystia Freeland, to Toronto as his

deputy. "The headhunters were very clever," says Addis, "and decided not to hire the person who put himself forward, but they did like Chrystia and said, 'Why don't you take her?' I didn't know her, but I liked her, and she had a tremendous drive and that Fleet Street ruthlessness that I liked. I decided very quickly that we could change things more quickly together than I could on my own."

Ed Greenspon was holidaying with his family in Nova Scotia when Crawley phoned to give him the news about Richard Addis, the imported British editor Greenspon had expected. But there was a sting in Crawley's message: Addis would not be Thorsell's number two; he would replace Thorsell, who was being bumped down to become chairman of the editorial board, where he would be in charge of the editorial and opinion pages, the job he had before becoming editor-in-chief. Greenspon, uneasy at the prospect of working directly for an imported editor, told Crawley he disagreed in principle with a foreigner being editor-in-chief of Canada's national newspaper. They agreed to disagree, but Crawley, offering small consolation, did assure him that Addis had signed a three-year contract and would be gone at the end of it.

But for Greenspon, there was worse news to come. He was walking with his family through a fort when his cellphone rang again. It was a colleague from the Globe. "They've hired a deputy editor," he was told.

A call confirming the appointment of thirty-year-old Alberta-born Chrystia Freeland as Addis's deputy came about a half-hour later from Crawley. Greenspon was stunned. Richard Addis, or someone with his professional pedigree, he had sort of expected, but a new deputy, especially one so young and inexperienced, came as total shock. "I wasn't sure that I was totally ready to be editor," says Greenspon. "Richard had a lot of knowledge, and I thought I could work with him and learn things. My

unhappiness was with Chrystia rather than Richard – until I started dealing with him."

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Greenspon, disappointed and angry, felt he had a decision to make.

Ottawa bureau chief Anne McIlroy called to say she would step aside if he wanted to exercise an option in his contract and return to Ottawa. But Greenspon had only been on the job in Toronto for four or five months and feared that leaving so soon would be interpreted as failure, and he did not feel like he had failed.

Greenspon and Addis met for ninety minutes in the Globe boardroom, and Greenspon, figuring that Crawley had told Addis to go gently, agreed to try the new arrangement. But until the new editor and his deputy settled in, Greenspon would continue running the news section alone. "I had a lot of power when Richard arrived, and probably I was reluctant to surrender it, but I didn't see anything wrong with that, because I was working for him not against him. But he was very jealous about having all the power."

Addis came to Canada with prototypes for a new-look Globe and Mail in his suitcase, created for him by London designer David Hillman, who had, fifteen years before, radically overhauled the Guardian. Addis's own redesign plans became a long-running saga, colliding with lots of resistance before appearing in a milder form a year later. In the meantime, he rejigged some sections, shuffled some editors, and, in September 1999, spoke to his highly skeptical troops about his intentions.

While none of them expected Addis to say, "Look, you lot, Garner and Crawley think you need whipping into shape and they've hired me to do

it, so let's just get on with it," his was a presentation directly out of the Speeches for New Executives textbook, beginning with some requisite self-effacement: "I hate speaking in public and am very bad at it." And then:

> **Empathy for the long-suffering staff:** "You have all had too much change and uncertainty in the last few years. Plans and people have chased each other's tails. I want to stop all that . . ."
>
> **The (sort of) open-door policy:** "People with something important to say are welcome to come in and talk. E-mail is an excellent way of getting a decision . . ." (He did not define "important.")
>
> **Tepid praise for the Globe as it was before Addis:** "We have integrity and quality . . . a wonderful reputation and great strengths. . . . Our stories are accurate. These are precious jewels. I firmly support our long-held commitment to clarity, elegance and accuracy. . . . We are different from the other papers in Canada and the world. But we need to feel more different and enjoy our differences."
>
> **A light whack at the National Post:** "Our boast should be the same as the Costa Rica Tourist Board – No Artificial Ingredients. How different from another newspaper, whose main aim is to be 'provocative' – what could be more artificial than that?"
>
> **But let's not kid ourselves:** "While I think we should never set our sails by the wind that comes from the Post, we should admit that it does some things right. I know it is often very hollow and delivers an awful lot less than it promises, but it is winning credit for being bright, fresh, and new. For reasons that we all know, the national edition has some advantages over us. The Saturday offering is acknowledged to be pretty strong . . ."

This-is-why-they-hired-me criticism of the Globe: "Against this, the Globe often looks so forbidding. Despite the improvement that came with the introduction of colour, we somehow still have the problem of 'the great grey Globe' – as grey as a prison wall, some I know described it."

Emphasis on new lines of authority: "Chrystia Freeland is coming this month as deputy editor, and she and I will work together on most things. She will edit the paper when I am away. She has great qualities that make up for my defects and vice versa."

But confidence in the old guard: "Our number three will be Ed Greenspon, who is promoted to executive editor from tomorrow. He will also edit the paper and be totally involved in our inner councils. . . . He has done a wonderful amount for the paper this summer. I am giving him a huge job, which reflects the confidence I have in him."

Tangential self-association with greatness: "Arthur Christiansen, who was Lord Beaverbrook's greatest editor, summed up his memoirs by writing something like this: 'And, with strong language, laughter, and a passion for news, the Express came out day after day.'"

Upbeat ending: "I want people to be free to air their passions. I want there to be much laughter as we toil away. At its best, a thriving newspaper is like a good party . . ."

After Freeland's arrival it became clear to Edward Greenspon that he was not going to be part of any triumvirate. "Richard and Chrystia met every morning by themselves. She would go into his office in the morning and close the door and do whatever they would do, and I wasn't part of

those conversations. I wasn't taken with Richard's management style, and there were lots of promises unkept to people we would offer jobs. I didn't know whether I wanted to be around this guy."

It was during the first week of the Addis tenure that he made one of many faux pas that would reveal his almost total ignorance of Canada and its geography. "Who's Wayne Gretzky," he asked Greenspon, "and why would we put him on the front page?"

Another hockey faux pas came when Montreal Canadiens great Maurice (The Rocket) Richard died and Addis famously asked, "Who is this Maurice Richard fellow?" (as in King Richard). And he was confused about whether Alaska was in Canada.

Greenspon also grew to loathe the way Addis was prone to treat people beneath him. Not long after Addis's arrival a department editor came into a meeting and sat in the chair next to the new editor-in-chief, who immediately told him, "You're not important enough to sit there."

Addis thought he and Greenspon were getting on reasonably well in the first months of their working relationship, and the endorsement he gave Greenspon during his speech was not totally disingenuous. At first, he considered Greenspon enthusiastic, bright, and energetic, but his opinion gradually changed. "I got impatient with him after a month or two. He was stupid in that he was too ambitious and thought he could somehow win a power struggle with me. And, of course, just having that thought is fatal. I could see it was slipping through his mind. He didn't have the skills that were necessary at that time to repair the newspaper. He didn't have a clue how to do it. So it wasn't the right time for Eddie. He was very upset that Chrystia was coming in over his head, and we had long negotiations about what he should do next, and he agreed to be number three, but obviously he wasn't going to be allowed to run things

as he had before."

Addis and Greenspon were two cultures, and two specific upbringings, colliding. The Englishman conceded that Greenspon could sometimes be a warm, understanding person, but the rest of the time, he just didn't like him. "That's when I'm more aware of this very ambitious hustler, and that gets right up my nose," says Addis. "Part of it is a cultural thing, because it is not the way anyone I know, with any style, operates. He might say, 'I really like that watch. Can I buy it off you? It looks great.' Whereas I would not mention your watch, but would buy a slighter better one and never mention it. The ghastly, appalling public-school boy that I am, I have to make things appear effortless. Victories must seem effortless. You can paddle hard underneath, but on the surface you must be a swan. It's a chemical difference between us, so when I was editor, if he annoyed me I would give him a kick."

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One Globe veteran in whom the former editor-in-chief occasionally confided says Thorsell was shocked to be fired, because he had assumed he was doing what Garner and his other bosses wanted. "He had never been a hands-on editor but more of a big-picture guy and accepted that the Globe needed a hands-on person to drive the newsroom. He went to London as part of the search-and-interview process with Crawley but always under the assumption he was looking for a number two. When it became clear that Addis was being brought in as the editor, William was shocked and saddened but seemed to get over it quickly and was never less than graceful about his demise. But I imagine the blow was cushioned by a pretty good settlement. So he had his column and was back

on the editorial board, but nobody ever imagined he was doing anything other than waiting for something else to come along."

The departure of Thorsell, who found a second successful career as head of the Royal Ontario Museum, was expected, but those already uncomfortable with an Englishman running Canada's venerable national newspaper were outraged when Addis, contrary to Canadian journalistic tradition, assumed direct control over the comment and opinion pages. "It's one thing to have someone come from Britain running our national newspaper," one Globe editor complained, "but quite another to have someone come from Britain to tell us how to run our country."

National Post editor Ken Whyte admired Thorsell and figures he was lucky to get out when he did:

> He had the last great run of being the last great newspaper in the country. It had better writers, better talent, everyone wanted to be there, and it had a dominant voice in the national conversation. It's like comparing the original six to the expanded NHL. The Globe did some things better then than it does now. It had integrity then. I don't think it has integrity now. It had a real sense of what was important in the country and what the important stories were. It had a political point of view under William, and I think it all hung together pretty well. It's certainly more readable now, but that is only part of the game. I think it had more authoritative voices then than it does now – Andrew Coyne, Terence Corcoran, Michael Coren as a counterpoint to Michael Valpy. Rick Salutin was always an effective in-house critic who argued with all those guys. There was a lot going on in Thorsell's Globe.

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In March 2000, while Greenspon was taking a week off with his children, Addis announced that newly hired news editor Fred Kuntz from the Toronto Star would take charge of the front section on the afternoon and evening shift. Addis had not discussed the changes beforehand with Greenspon, but it was clear that he was being squeezed out, and not too diplomatically. "I had been stripped of all my power," says Greenspon, "and for the second time while I had been on holidays. It was an unnecessary insult to me."

The resilient Greenspon, down but not quite out, had asked Crawley months before about beefing up the Globe's Web site and now asked to be put in charge of the job. After all, with Thomson dumping its newspapers and refocusing on electronic information, it seemed to fit with corporate strategy. Crawley agreed that it made sense and Greenspon had engineered his out.

But aside from getting nervous about taking holidays, Greenspon also decided that too many of his eggs were in one unsteady basket and he couldn't trust his future to the vagaries and whims of other people. He developed what he called a Brand Eddie strategy to give himself a diversified multimedia presence in books, on TV, and online.

Six months later, with an impressive globeandmail.com launched and in good shape, Greenspon exercised his option and returned to Ottawa as a senior political editor and columnist. Despite his irreparable differences with Addis and Freeland, Greenspon would continue to keep regular contact with Crawley – something that Addis, well practised in the art of self-preservation, knew all about.

AUTHOR'S AFTERWORD

The beginning of Conrad Black's end as a force in Canadian newspapers came in the spring of 2000, with the North American economy in a downturn and his corporate debts mounting. "Our company was (U.S.) 1.95 billion in debt," he told me. "We had the assets but we couldn't get any upward movement on the stock price. It's an American listed company and the Americans in the first place are not very impressed with Canada, and in the second place, newspapers were out of fashion. It was the peak of the Internet boom and you couldn,t step out of doors without people telling you that you were like a silent movie or a black- and-white TV set."

Black eventually sold the major newspapers in his Canadian empire to CanWest Global, a network TV company owned by the Asper family of Winnipeg, Manitoba, who were anxious to pursue a future in media convergence. Initially, CanWest wanted just a few of Black's major Canadian metro newspapers but after much haggling during the summer of 2000, the Aspers bought Black's 13 largest titles and 50 per cent of the Post, for more than $3-billion (Cndn). The deal also included 136 smaller newspapers. After a year or so of uneasy partnership at the Post, Black turned the remaining 50 per cent of the daily over to CanWest.

None of this mass sell-out hinted at Black's incredible downfall that was to come three years later in a wave of accusations that the once-powerful media lord and his associates had systematically pilfered millions from his-company coffers. The accusations of illegal dealings have still to be proven but by his own admission they have reduced Lord Black of Crossharbour to a business and social leper. He says he is no longer welcome in the homes of the world's rich and influential and they no longer accept invitations to be a guest in his. By any measure, it is a collapse of remarkable proportions.

August 31, 2004

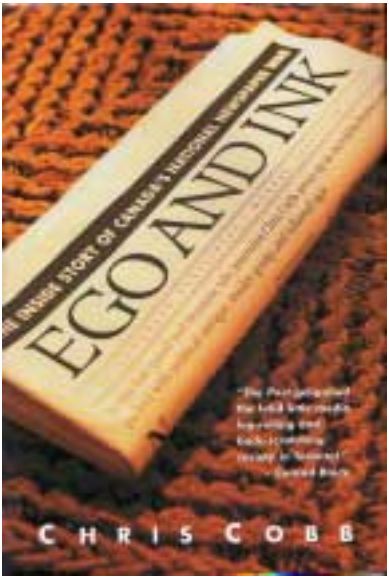
REVIEWS for Ego And Ink

"Chris Cobb's gossipy *Ego and Ink* – based on interviews with dozens of players – provides a compelling post-fight wrap-up of the action, packed with replays of all the choice eye gouges, hair pulls, and vicious kicks to the crotch. … [It] beautifully captures the flavour of the newspaper war and the personalities of its players, from the press barons to the cub reporters. … *Ego and Ink* is required reading for serious students of Canadian journalism." – *Quill & Quire*

"A sensational … tell-all. … It's the story of Conrad Black's ambition to create the *National Post* and the ripple effects it caused across the country's media-scape. The book, filled with enough characters to people a Hanna Barbera park, comes out at the end of the month, but already the scramble is on in news-rooms for the precious few advance copies." – Shinan Govani, *National Post*

"It's the Darwinian struggle of the two 'national' papers, the *Globe* versus the *Post*, that Cobb has sagely adopted as his principle narrative. … His most entertaining stuff is full of chatterbox details." – *Toronto Star*

"A dishy fast paced account of the feud that fired up Canadian journalism." Globe and Mail's Report on Business.



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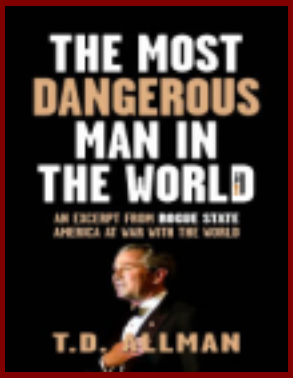

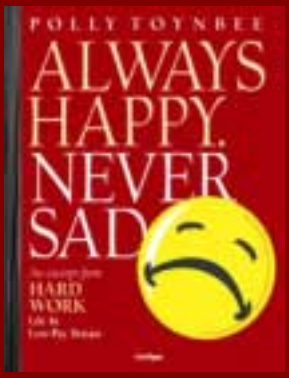

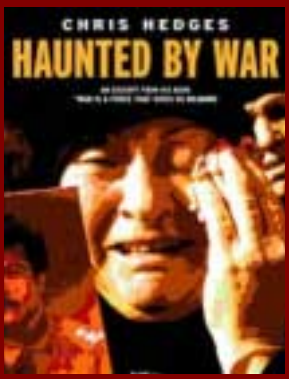

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