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# Cheap Power

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## **Cheap Power:**

An examination of the Telegraph-Journal – from the time Jamie Irving, the grandson of the paper's owner, became publisher in December 2004 until June of 2008 – focusing on the extent to which the paper's agenda came to reflect the industrial agenda of the Irving family.

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The first thing you have to realize about Jamie Irving is what a good storyteller he is and how charming he can be. He has an open, friendly face, which can be all the more disarming because of the highly secretive – he himself would even say paranoid – family that he was born into. As the warnings go in the Telegraph-Journal newsroom, Jamie is like a polar bear. Large, fair haired and skinned with a plutocrat's bulk – from a distance he may look awkward, even cuddly, but it's best not to get too close.

That was not an option for me. As the editor of the Telegraph-Journal, handpicked by Jamie Irving a few months after he was named publisher of the Irving's flagship newspaper in late 2004 at the age of 27, my job was to shape the product. But it was also to advise him, humour him, let him know when I thought he was overstepping journalistic or community standards. Most business days during the year and a half I worked there, we would talk as much as an hour a day in his office or mine. The conversation inevitably started with "Whatchagot?" but quickly turned to the state of newspapers, our thoughts on the business and political figures in Saint John and New Brunswick, maybe a personal demon or two, a morsel of Irving family lore. We laughed a lot; plotted tirelessly (he likes to tinker); occasionally the conversation spilled out of the office and into the bars. He'd say things like "better to be a pirate than join the navy" and I'd hoist my drink.

On one occasion in his panelled office with framed New York Times posters on the wall, he started telling a story about the "Old Man," which by this time I'd come to realize was his grandfather J.K. Irving. (His father J.D. Irving went by Jimmy Boy; the late family patriarch, K.C., by Grampy.)

"Ever tell you the story of the Old Man and the log drive?"

It's one of the conceits on J.K.s side of the family that they are

simple lumberjacks at heart. Anyway, as I remember the anecdote, when the "Old Man" was a very young man he oversaw a drive down the St. John River. Outraged when he learned the wages promised the drive crew, he offered them half or a chance to get off at the next wharf. They stayed, but apparently it was one of the scariest, most miserable experiences of his life.

"You know what he told me he learned from that?" Jamie tended to look down at moments like this. Sometimes he would play with his tie – he loved one with the skull and crossbones on it that an old girlfriend from his college days at Colombia had given him – before looking back up.

"Once you've given something to somebody, never take it back. That's what he told me."

He probably looked away for another second before smiling again, this time broad, white and seductive like a billboard that flashes from the highway and disappears before you can read it.

"Much better in the long run just to fire them."

I tucked that story away, but it didn't register the way I think he meant it to. Six months later, he asked for my resignation.

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According to Senator Joan Fraser, author of the 2006 Senate report on Canadian media, "We didn't find anywhere else in the developed world a situation like the situation in New Brunswick." Bluntly put: nowhere else does one family dominate the economy and the press as the Irving family does in New Brunswick. "The Irving interests are bigger in New Brunswick than the whole federal government is in the whole of Canada, if you see what I

mean, proportionately," Fraser said, in an interview with CBC New Brunswick (2007, October 12). Since all Irving companies are privately owned, it's impossible to accurately measure the size of the Irving economy, but it's estimated that one in 12 New Brunswickers works directly for the Irvings. In a province with an export economy, Irving Oil, alone, accounts for 56 per cent of all exports. While Canadian Business Magazine recently put the combined wealth of the family at \$5.3 billion, the Globe and Mail (A generational divide, December 27, 2007) argued it's likely double that.

Brunswick News, solely owned by J.K. Irving since July of 2005, owns all English language dailies in the province and all weeklies save the Sackville Tribune, The St. Croix Courier and the upstart Carleton FreePress. The 2006 Senate hearings are not the first time the Irving Press has come under the microscope of the Federal government. Both the 1970 Senate Special Committee on Mass Media, chaired by Senator Keith Davey, and the 1981 Royal Commission on Newspapers, under the chairmanship of Tom Kent, expressed alarm at the concentration of media holdings by the Irving family in New Brunswick. At both hearings, the Irving argument, if little believed, was that its newspapers were run at arms length from the other family businesses.

Since Jamie Irving's ascendency to the publisher's chair in 2004, that can no longer be argued.

What also has become clear, from analysis of the Telegraph-Journal's pages, from observances of a wide range of New Brunswick media watchers, not to mention talk on the streets of Saint John, is that the Telegraph-Journal has increasingly become an agenda-driven newspaper and that agenda is much more closely identified with the corporate interests of JDI and the Irving family business interests.

"Editorial, the paper is so blatantly pursuing an Irving corporate interest in an unembarrassed way, with no acknowledgement that it's doing it," said Robert Jones, a CBC-Television reporter in New Brunswick. "Whether Jamie views it that way I don't know. It's so obvious to everyone standing around. It's shocking actually."

Jamie Irving declined to be interviewed for this article.

According to Jones, who has been a leading Irving watcher and critic in the New Brunswick media for 20 years, Jamie Irving's appointment represents a sea-change in the way the family operates the newspaper. "That's very clear. That stuff is all new and all different."

As a former Telegraph-Journal bureau chief, CBC's Jacques Poitras understands how the newspaper works and how some Irving media critics see conspiracies behind every little deadline decision or human error. Media everywhere is evolving, he said, and clearly we're in a new age at the Telegraph.

"I know people who will say every little thing in the newspaper has some connection to the Irvings. I don't go that far. But Jamie being in the chair raises a lot of issues. Now, there are things that you see that are things people were fretting about in the 70s, when they had these overactive imaginations – like an Irving actually being behind the desk or on the phone, saying put this or put that in the paper, which almost never would happen. But now it has happened. It has come to pass. There's no wall."

The paper has become elitist in the broad sense of the word, said Lisa Hrabluk. The freelance journalist and a former provincial columnist for the Telegraph-Journal said it's aimed at the business and political elites, not the average citizen.

"So we're a company town. We know that in New Brunswick and

especially in Saint John. That means there needs to be a balance, between the elites – the business and political elites – and the regular people. Regular people need to think they're a part of something ... Jamie Irving doesn't respect that balance with the Telegraph-Journal and the way he runs it. He does not respect that people need to see themselves reflected in his paper. And so I think people are turning away. The balance is lost."

Perhaps most telling, according to veteran Irving watchers like Jones and Poitras, is how the Telegraph-Journal responded to a series of stories in the Globe and Mail in November 2007 on negotiations to divest business interests among competing wings of the family presided over by K.C. Irving's three sons, James K., Arthur and Jack. One of the articles (The Irving family tree, November 22, 2007) gave Jamie Irving kudos "for not using his influence at the paper to sway coverage of his family." The Saint John paper did not publish the 700-word Canadian Press follow, written by Chris Morris and picked up by papers across the country; nor did it unleash its senior reporters on the story and lead with it as many other media outlets in Atlantic Canada did. Instead, there was a benign 300-word story on the business page, with the headline:

'It's business as usual,' Irving. (November 22, 2007, B1)

### The Devil's Advocate

I first walked into the Telegraph-Journal office on May 3, 1982. I'd hoped I could spend my first day in the newspaper office watching the action and getting to know a few people around the water cooler. Instead, I was seated behind a manual typewriter with sticky keys, handed a story and told to make the police checks and

update it for the afternoon paper. The story was about the kidnapping of a member of the Irving family, Jack.

It's not like there was a lot to update: the victim was unharmed and back home; a suspect was in custody. Regardless, at any given time, three or four guardians of my journalistic freedom hovered over me, sighing and grunting over every tentative keystroke. I remember one noting gleefully that, "11 a.m. this morning" was a redundancy.

The office was painted a sickly institutional green; and it seems there were an inordinate number of people wearing white shirts and brush cuts. They edited my story using scissors, glued it back together and then sent it off somewhere in a pneumatic tube. They grinned at me with slightly odd, knowing smiles. I was just out of university; perhaps I was reading too much Kafka and Orwell at the time.

Despite a history pre-dating Confederation, its share of journalism awards, its association with the great poet, Alden Nowlan – an oppressive fog still surrounds the Telegraph-Journal in the public imagination. Nobody believes it's a good thing for one family to own all the English language dailies in the province; few really believe reporters at those papers have carte blanche to report on the family's Byzantine business interests. And as the recommendations from the 2006 Senate Committee on Media report acknowledge, the political will no longer exists to take on the Irving family's control of print media in the province.

If this is a Kafkaesque nightmare, it is also a peculiarly New Brunswick one – informed by its own self-perpetuating, industrial logic; its own infuriating dynamic of blandness and boldness; the *yin* of paranoia and the *yang* of conspiracy theories. The Telegraph-Journal can seem absurdly modern and stubbornly anachronistic at the same time, like those old newsroom pneumatic tubes or the Irvings themselves.

The modern age of the Telegraph-Journal begins when industrialist K.C. Irving bought the New Brunswick Publishing Co. in 1944, although, not surprisingly, few were aware of his purchase for several more years. It wasn't his first media venture. During his long battle for the city's bus contract, he bought the weekly radio listings in the late 1930s and turned it into his own daily paper, the Saint John Citizen, which he closed a year later. Four years after buying the Telegraph-Journal and the Evening Times-Globe, he seized an opportunity to add the Moncton Times and Moncton Transcript to his stable. It was not until late 1968, that he bought Fredericton's Daily Gleaner from British-socialite and Beaverbrook's confidante, Brigadier Michael Wardell.

Through most of its modern history, the TJ has been the provincial newspaper (read by most Saint Johners only on Saturdays when its sister paper the Evening Times-Globe did not publish), a paper of reach if not always depth; of power if not necessarily profit. It never made much money, but as the generally accepted newsroom knowledge went: it was never about its own bottom-line.

A few legends linger from the old days in the Dickensian Canterbury Street office, stories like the one about publisher Tom Drummie who apparently credited harbour oil spills to an anonymous "local oil company" and refused to have the word "fog" appear in the paper, especially during its early summer omnipresence in the Port City. Still when lifers talk about the old days, they're talking about the era of Ralph Costello, who became publisher in the early 1960s – allegedly after a recommendation to K.C. by Lord Beaverbrook himself – and dominated 210 Crown St. until his retirement in 1987.

Costello was bully-faced and feared around the newsroom; wore pin-striped shirts, and, despite his middle-aged roundness, had a tough, athletic swagger about him – like Babe Ruth, if you took the

carousing out. Even his senior editors called him Mr. Costello or The Publisher.

Under The Publisher, the paper was modernized and professionalized. It also gained a national spotlight and infamy when it became the centre of (and arguably the inspiration for) the 1970 Senate Special Committee on Mass Media, chaired by Senator Keith Davey. Later in 1971, after raids on the offices of the Irving press and the homes of its owners and publisher, charges were brought against the Irving press for operating a press monopoly under the Combines Investigation Act.<sup>2</sup>

The Irvings, represented by famed corporate counsel J.J. Robinette, won on appeal.

The big loser was the Combines Investigation Branch of the Federal government. The courts had delivered last rites on the legislation, already considered toothless. Proving a newspaper monopoly was not enough to prove public detriment.

Five weeks after the federal charges were laid, K.C. Irving left the province in the dead of night, choosing to live six months plus a day of every year in Bermuda. His son Jack bought the Moncton and Fredericton papers. J.K. and Arthur each bought 40 per cent of the Saint John papers, leaving K.C. with 20 per cent.

In his essay "What About the Irvings," Alden Nowlan (Stewart, W. pp. 71) credited Costello with modernizing the paper's appearance, and toughening its editorial stance, especially towards government. At the 1972 trial, columnist Dalton Camp complimented the Irving papers for improving more than any comparable group of papers during the previous decade. "There was criticisms from press critics when the Irving papers expressed no editorial positions," testified Camp. "Once the Irving papers began to express an opinion against the government it became a monopoly."

On the other hand, Russell Hunt and Robert Campbell (K.C.

Irving: The Art of the Industrialist, pp. 177-190) and John DeMont (Citizens Irving: K.C. Irving and his legacy, pp. 101) marshalled evidence that the Irving papers could be quite selective of what Irving stories they covered and the treatments those stories received. They highlight coverage of organized labour, particularly when it came to the refinery strike in the 1960s.

Without trotting out all the old arguments, I'll try to provide a highly subjective, insiders view of the Telegraph-Journal's newsroom culture under Costello, which, to varying degrees under different publishers and editors, remains true to the present.

Were the Irving papers run as a monopoly? No. Certainly not the way prosecutors and Senators tried to portray it with an iron-fisted Costello dictating K.C.'s every whim. We competed against the other Irving papers and didn't like them much either. Even the Telegraph-Journal and Evening Times-Globe didn't always play well together. There's much more co-ordination and copy sharing, if not love, now.

Did the newspapers have any special access to the Irvings and their stories? Not really. The Irvings, especially in K.C.'s day, refused to talk to anyone about their business. Often the only source was a union representative.

Did the editorial agenda of the Telegraph-Journal come directly from ownership? Costello denies this vehemently (K.C., Douglas How & Ralph Costello). But the question is academic: Costello had his job because he reflected the agenda of K.C. Irving; where the line between Costello's views and K.C.s are for the most part idle speculation, as they often are between an owner and publisher. Perhaps the most damaging piece of evidence for the prosecution at the 1972 trial was from a notebook seized from Costello's home. In it was scrawled: "The ownership of all English-language newspapers cannot be defended. Dedicated respected newspaper editors and publishers will not agree that it is

in the best interest of the province or people." Costello testified that, in discussions with his bosses, he saw his role as being the "devil's advocate."

Is there a policy at the Telegraph-Journal of not covering the **Irvings?** The advice of editors to young reporters has always been: don't cover an Irving story any different from any other story. However, the reality on the ground is that it's often not worth the effort. Beyond the ownership question, Irving stories are hard to find and verify at the best of times. Since the Costello era, an even handed investigative story about JDI forestry practices would be fair game, analysis of an Irving company business decision would be encouraged; however, I don't think you would ever see investigative stories such as Robert Jones 1999 story about how the lack of competition had led to inflated gas prices in the province. Even when the paper can't possibly ignore a story on one of the family interests – stories most reporters would instinctively put on the front page – they too often end up in edited form at the bottom of Page 3 or B1, usually topped by some innocuous headline. This was Costello's template, which the family, apparently, learned to live with.

Does the Irving family control newspapers in part to limit close scrutiny of, and when necessary promote, their business dealings? Of course. They don't mind the profits they've been making in recent years either. In 2005, Brunswick News made approximately \$24 million.

The big mistake outsiders and academics make is that they think New Brunswickers don't understand any of this. They do; but they've seen Senate commissions and the occasional feisty competitor come and go as well.

Despite its shortcomings, the Telegraph-Journal has often been a good small city newspaper, occasionally flirting with greatness. Under Neil Reynolds' tenure as editor and briefly publisher from

1992 to 1996, the paper had a justified reputation for investigative journalism, dominating the Atlantic Journalism Awards and competing with the big boys at the National Newspaper Awards. These were the days when Jamie Irving started hanging around the newsroom and caught the bug. Many top-notch reporters came and went. Those who stayed refer to the Reynolds era as "Camelot."

Reynolds was not afraid to talk about journalism as a noble profession, of stories as parables, and newspapers as first drafts of novels. Similarly, the spirit and words of Alden Nowlan – journalist, poet and the greatest cultural force of a generation of Maritimers – have never quite been extinguished in the newsroom. He was a stringer in Carleton County before joining the desk in 1963. By all accounts he was an excellent editor and manager. In *The Night Editor's Poem*, he captures the drama and the drudgery, the excitement, and disappointment of the night desk, and turns it into something greater:

...and it's not until later hours later,
eating ham and eggs
at an all-night diner,
shrugging my shoulders
to work some of the ache out of them,
that I pick up the paper
again and understand
that Martin Luther King
is dead, and that I care.

Nowlan, if I read him right, understood that the Telegraph-Journal could not simply be a conversation among the business and political elites as it threatened to in the days of the Equal Opportunity debate; or for that matter, strictly adhere to the interests and prejudices of journalists and academics. (Stewart, pp. 72)

Although I have no doubt that the Irving family honestly believes that what is good for the Irvings is good for New Brunswick (if a little better for them), the old Telegraph-Journal gave voice to small-town New Brunswick, plain-old New Brunswick, even if that was once as corny and outdated as beauty pageants; or as shabby and universal as a Saint John rooming-house fire, like the one Nowlan writes about in "Fire!"

You'd be

astonished how seldom

I saw an unhappy

face, although everyone kept

saying how terrible

it was.

Yes, there has always been the voice of the Irvings in the post-war Telegraph-Journal, often more noticeable when something is not said than said, but Nowlan understood that newspapers should have a sense of communion with their readers, recognizing and finding room for both the low and the high church.

and the

victims, such as them

as survived, seemed exhilarated, standing barefoot on the sidewalk, some wearing nothing more than a blanket, all of them aware that tonight almost anything they said or did would be forgiven of them.

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If you take the night entrance into the Telegraph, off the lower parking, you pass through two large and largely unused floors on your way to the newsroom. The stairwell carries the harsh echoes of the place, its ghostly drudgery. If you stop and explore long enough in the cavernous second floor – littered with dividers and curved space from some out-of-date modern office – and have a nose for ink, you may stumble upon the old press.

It's much smaller than the monster I remember shaking the building twice daily. Still, there's something wonderfully Dickensian about it. Yellowed newsprint still snakes through some of its rollers. The date on it is March 9, 1998. A paper called the Times Globe.

The next edition rolled off the large, modern Moncton press.

The shabby grey afternoon paper aimed at the Saint John audience,

Monday to Friday, survived a few more years, but in November 2002, under a new publisher, Jonathan Franklin, the Times Globe was no more. The profit-meagre Telegraph-Journal, long rumoured to be getting the short straw, survived, likely on the strength of its strong provincial brand.

There were still two daily papers – a Saint John Telegraph-Journal and a New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal, both morning – but the days of the doppelgänger papers were numbered by the time Jamie Irving became publisher. In July of 2005, when the family interests in Brunswick News came completely under J.K. Irving's control, the provincial and city editions were merged.

So this – for now – became Jamie Irving's inheritance, the Telegraph-Journal.

And what kind of paper would he fashion?

A Telegraph-Journal for the owner, the Old Man, a paper with a strong Irving voice, but lively and playful with a strong sense of place – one that would reflect but modernize the Costello era.

A paper for his blunt, all-business, information-gleaning, controversy-avoiding father?

Or maybe a newspaper of his own, one that could replicate the excitement, perhaps the naughtiness, he felt sitting in the Reynolds newsroom. Maybe one with the talent to drill down on occasion into the broader recesses of New Brunswick and Saint John culture as Alden Nowlan had. A paper, sure of its authority and integrity; unembarrassed that it comes from Saint John and is owned by the Irvings.

It would not take long for these theories to be tested.

## **Cheap Power**

"The thing with Jamie," said the CBC's Jacques Poitras, who got to know the publisher back when he was a student hanging around the newsroom, "he obviously loves the business. He went to journalism school. He drank the Kool-Aid. So I kind of thought he might be the person who would be like the Gorbachev to reform the system from within."

Those thoughts are echoed by Bob Rupert, a retired Carleton University journalism professor who taught the publisher. "I'm a bit of an idealist, but I really saw Jamie Irving as the hope for those New Brunswick papers. I was quite naïve and I really see that now."

I was steeped in both hope and naïvety when I stepped into the office as editor in March of 2005, but had no problems with the publisher's first order of business, reinvigorating the editorial pages. The paper was not going to be afraid to lead and exercise its authority.

Under the previous regime (publisher Jonathan Franklin and editor Peter Haggert; both refugees from the Thomson newspaper diaspora) the opinion section had been orphaned to the back pages of D-section, after Sports. You had to be committed to go there and; even then, the editorials, which for the most part had become non-provocative and uncontroversial, were not considered must reads.<sup>3</sup>

The public, even in media-sophisticated circles, are often aghast to learn that owners impose their will on the opinion pages; this is not the thinking within the journalism profession. Editorial pages are the publisher's pages, and the publisher ultimately reports to the owner. This is their playground if they choose to play, although

some newspapers have editorial boards with community members which operate largely independent of the owner. Most reporters just do their jobs, which is the right thing to do. Some reporters recognize that a paper's editorial stance is a compass, worth keeping an eye on as long as it does not skew news judgment and values. There's nothing wrong with that either.

Neither Jamie Irving nor I had much time to work out the niceties of the relationship between the publisher and the newsroom. Two weeks after I started as editor, a bombshell was dropped at the weekly Saint John council meeting. A plan to build a liquified natural gas terminal in Saint John – that would process tanker-supplied LNG and then ship the natural gas by pipeline to industrial customers in New England – was officially put on the table. As the story in the next morning's Telegraph-Journal (March 15, 2005, LNG terminal gets tax break for 25 years, pp. A1) began:

Common Council had agreed to lock in the tax rate for a proposed LNG terminal at a fraction of the actual value for 25 years – costing the city between \$63 million and \$112 million in tax revenue.

Without the tax break, Irving Oil's partner, Repsol, would have built the \$750-million terminal somewhere else, said Mayor Norm McFarlane, who had been negotiating behind closed doors with Kenneth Irving for months.

The tax deal was destined to be an explosive issue in Saint John, where long memories of deals with Irving, particularly a water contract negotiated by K.C. in the 1950s, linger.

That morning, Jamie Irving told me he knew the LNG deal was in the works. He cautioned the editorial board he presided over to be cautious before passing judgment. A few days later, he confided to me: it looks like the mayor "got snookered."

The paper wrote an initial editorial critical of the manner in which the deal was negotiated and was then sprung on council as an eleventh-hour, take-it-or-leave-it proposition. In the Saturday edition, we wrote a much tougher editorial (Tax incentives must be fair, March 19, 2005), which the publisher read and signed off on. It asked council to revisit the deal before it was taken to the province to be approved. The editorial reflected the reporting done by the paper and CBC-New Brunswick during the week:

...The 25-year timeline seems extreme. The fee is not indexed to inflation, as it ought to have been. Council was given too short a deadline to make a confident or well-informed decision, and was asked to deliberate under duress. For whatever reason, the information provided to councillors about competing LNG projects was inadequate and inaccurate. In combination, these factors give taxpayers reason to believe the city did not reach the best possible deal...

The city's resolution has been passed, but the deal won't be completed until the provincial government gives its seal of approval. We urge the city of Saint John to revisit the deal's most troubling aspects – the 25-year term and lack of indexing to inflation – and seek an arrangement with Irving and Repsol, or with the provincial government, that will put more money in city coffers in return for this valuable tax concession.

The editorial stance might not seem extraordinary given the noisy public disapproval of the tax deal. But it's a marked contrast to how the paper would treat Irving family matters only a few months later. As far as I know, however, there was no blow-back from Jamie's family on the coverage of the Telegraph-Journal.<sup>4</sup>

Trying to understand the actions and the relationships in the Irving family is much like Kremlinology, but in the months following the announcement of the LNG deal and the resulting public outrage, the paper was not averse to criticizing Irving Oil, as well as the deal.

After a week when the anti-LNG group Concerned Citizens for Fair Taxation had disrupted a council session and Irving Oil had countered with an obnoxious press release, the Telegraph-Journal wrote an editorial under the headline: Two steps back; one step forward (May 20, 2005):

Equally disconcerting over the last month has been the public relations of Irving Oil. The company has every right in the world to negotiate the best deal it could for the LNG terminal it will build with its partner, Repsol. But the company should not be surprised

that the deal had a price. It opened old and deep wounds in this city.

What's worse is that rather than trying to heal these wounds, the oil company has exercised an aggressive and defensive public relations strategy. Thursday, the company issued a press release with the headline "Irving Oil announces multi-billion-dollar growth fund for Saint John." It turned out to be a list of Irving Oil economic contributions to the community since 1924.

The tone was facetious; the image it portrayed, unprofessional.

Like the Concerned Citizens for Fair Taxation, Irving Oil appears to believe there is some grand conspiracy at work that justifies its use of bully tactics to counter real and perceived threats.<sup>5</sup>

The paper's coverage of the LNG deal was far from perfect. But in these early days of Jamie Irving in the publisher's chair, the paper did show that it could cover Irving family business interests with a critical eye, as demonstrated by its nomination for an Atlantic Journalism Award in the continuing coverage category.<sup>6</sup>

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What sparked the drift to a more corporate news agenda at Jamie Irving's Telegraph-Journal? Perhaps, cheap power, or more precisely, subsidized power rates for large industrial users in the province, such as the Irvings.

It started with editorials promoting the policy; soon after, the editorials found their way to the front page; within a year, the paper industry's and the newspaper's agenda had clearly converged and began affecting front-page news coverage.

In early 2006, NB Power was seeking 13 per cent increases for both large industrial and residential users. Until this point, the editorial position of the paper had been to support NB Power's mandate to bring energy rates in line with the costs of production and transmission, albeit acknowledging a provincial government role to protect against rate shock.

Jamie Irving made it clear to the editorial board (myself, editorial page editor Ron Barry; and editorial writer Eric Marks) there would be no room for argument on this one. The paper would be advocating below-cost power rates for large industrial users. On January 26, an editorial headlined, A wake-up call for rate shock, called on the provincial government to recognize the potential downside of rate increases. Two days later, a much more strongly worded editorial appeared on Saturday's front page (Avoid energy's 'perfect storm', January 28, 2006). In it, the Telegraph-Journal called for a two-year moratorium on industrial power rates more than 3 per cent per annum to save the forestry industry. Less than two weeks later (Electricity's special case, February 11, 2006) another editorial called on the province to look at subsidizing rates so that they were competitive with hydro rich Quebec, to save the New Brunswick forestry industry.

None of these editorials carried any disclaimer that JDI, run by Jamie Irving's father, Jim Irving, and overseen for decades by his grandfather J.K. Irving, is the largest industrial user of electricity in the province.

For CBC journalist Robert Jones, the lack of disclaimers in the Telegraph-Journal is unprofessional to the point of arrogance.

"Obviously, a subsidy for pulp mills is a direct benefit for the company that owns the Telegraph-Journal, a personal benefit for the owner of the pulp mills and his potential heirs. So there are huge conflicts of interest unacknowledged. There's absolutely no disclaimers, no attempt to say this does affect us and our parent company, but it's still a good idea. It's just treated like any other issue."

Regardless of whether the Irvings or a multinational own the mill, the forestry industry in New Brunswick has similar clout to farmers in Saskatchewan or perhaps auto workers in southern Ontario. Not only does forestry remain the largest industry in the province, accounting for about 11 per cent of GDP, but there is a cultural attachment to the lumberjack that stretches longer than a Miramichi folksong. It's a populist cause in these parts.

All this to say that a provincial debate on how or whether to prop up forestry was inevitable given the industry's economic downturn. Subsidizing power rates had been the traditional, if largely invisible way of doing this. However, the vehemence with which the Telegraph-Journal made this argument linked measures to rescue the industry more directly to the welfare of Jim Irving and other mill owners than they ever had been before. If anything, the lack of disclosure about the paper's connections to the pulp and paper industry only further watered down what could have been a populist argument.

As environmentalist Janice Harvey wrote in her regular column in the Telegraph-Journal on January 30, 2008 (Why is New Brunswick addicted to forestry):

I am not disputing the difficulties the industry finds itself in. However, to lay the blame and the responsibility at the feet of the provincial government is a public relations tactic seemingly designed to extract ever greater concessions from the public purse.

The message is predictably reminiscent of the tactic Kenneth Irving used to extract a 90-per-cent tax reduction from Saint John Common Council for the LNG terminal, now under construction. Time is short; without the concessions all will be lost. Make the decision and deal with the implications later.

Ultimately, the Conservative government of Bernard Lord, barely maintaining a majority in the house and about to face the public in a fall election, overruled the public utilities board and capped power rate increases at 8 per cent for both residential and large industrial users.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, the publisher has the right to express his opinions on the editorial page. Those opinions, however, were a harbinger of what

was soon to spill onto the paper's front page.

The January 25, 2008, issue of the Telegraph-Journal epitomized the extent to which the front page had become focused on business and politics, reflecting the corporate interests of Jamie Irving, his father and grandfather.

After an editorial board, with forestry industry CEOs Jim Irving of JDI; Kelly Shotbolt of Flakeboard Inc.; and Peter Gordon of Fraser Papers Inc., the paper ran lead stories on both its front and business front. The Page 1 story was headlined 'Let's be aggressive'.

The headline quote came from Jim Irving. While the forestry executives were advocating a broad-range of policies, including lower stumpage fees, the cornerstone of the proposal was a call for significantly lower power rates for industrial users:

"The industrial savings would mean an annual drop of \$44 million in government revenue, they estimate."

According to the proposal, government could absorb that cost. Or, the difference could be made up with a rate hike for all other users.

They estimate a 4.5 per cent rate increase would mean a yearly jump of \$105 for the average home.

The result, they argue, would be the retention of thousands of jobs, and an environment that would entice outside companies to set-up shop.

"We know that's a controversial approach," Irving said, while stressing local homeowners enjoy some of the lowest power rates in Canada."

The idea that homeowners should subsidize an industry dominated by the Irvings – an idea that six months earlier had the Telegraph-Journal foaming at the mouth about the Opposition Leader's "fear mongering" – was now, quite openly and uncritically, being put on the table by Jim Irving, with no countering opinions.<sup>9</sup>

Robert Jones can't hold back his sarcasm at how one-sided and unquestioning the coverage in the Telegraph-Journal had become.

"Then there's a big article on Shawn Graham's response to these *stunning proposals*. Then an editorial that endorses these *bold initiatives*. The funny thing about the editorial is that it said: 'Mills in New Brunswick aren't going out of business, they're moving to less expensive locations.' That's a statement of fact in the editorial. In the original article, Jim Irving said: 'these forestry companies aren't leaving the business, they're leaving the province.' So this editorial is almost a verbatim lifting of Jim Irving's comments and it just becomes fact. It's hard to read that without wondering what's going on there."

Jones also notes that the editorial board has become one of the primary methods by which the agenda of the Jamie Irving editorial pages have leaked into news coverage.

"You have sympathy for these reporters who are assigned to the editorial board to go listen and report on what they're saying. The unspoken pressure. I mean you can't write: 'These corporate welfare bums showed up and asked for handouts. I mean there's nothing critical or analytical at all. It's just all corporate boosterism for JDI."

A government insider contacted for background said there's no doubt that editorial boards have taken on an added dimension since Jamie Irving became publisher.

"There are ministers they like and they don't, but yea, there's a sense that when you go down to Saint John that you're being called into the boardroom and there's no question that when you're dealing with the Telegraph-Journal, you're dealing with the Irvings. That's clear. Because of Jamie. He's the gorilla in the room."

And news coverage following editorial boards can push the angle

of a story to distortion. For example, after a meeting between the provincial health minister and the Telegraph-Journal, a Page 1 headline (May 6, 2008) read: It's all Shawn's fault; Health minister Mike Murphy blames Premier Shawn Graham for delays in medical school launch.

The story itself is straight enough, but given that the strongest comment made by the minister was: "I'm not here to second guess the premier's decision," and given that the minister in question was not even directly responsible for the file, the headline is excessive and misleading.

The Liberal government has not as of yet overturned NB Power policy or provided special subsidies for forestry. The Telegraph-Journal, so far, has not complained too loudly.

Perhaps a lesson was learned. Back in 1965, the City of Saint John had just proposed building the Harbour Bridge, despite concerns by K.C. Irving that it would be charging his trucking fleet and everyone else tolls to cross it. A "Citizens Committee" headed by an Irving company lawyer and an Irving son, was formed and began pushing for a highway bypass instead. Publisher Ralph Costello, apparently convinced by the logic of the Citizens Committee, positioned the Saint John papers to block the bridge. (Hunt, R., Campbell, R. p. 181)

Common Council considered the Irving proposal, but in the end voted unanimously for the toll bridge. As Hunt and Campbell write in The Art of the Industrialist: "The publicity blitz – perhaps precisely because it was a blitz, and everyone recognized it as such – failed."

Of course, 40 years later, Saint Johnners are still paying the tolls.

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And how does this business oriented paper cover the Irvings as a business?

Lisa Hrabluk was a business reporter when she arrived at the Telegraph-Journal in the late 90s. She said when JDI sold off a few small, periphery businesses back then, the business page story probed the significance of the move for a family known for buying but never selling. Fast forward 10 years to the Irving Oil announcement in the spring of 2008 that the management of its gas station convenience stories and restaurants had been leased to Quebec-based Couche-Tard. (Irving Couche-Tard swing Convenience Store Deal, May 9, 2008) – a move that seemed to reinforce the conventional wisdom that the oil company sees itself less as a vertically integrated regional distributor and more as a refiner and exporter on a global scale.

"I mean, Jesus, we used to read the tea leaves and phone every analyst known to man when they sold off Maritime Tire. And they're getting rid of the Blue Canoes for god's sake! And the Telegraph-Journal writes it straight!"

For reporters like the CBC's Robert Jones, the tepid follow by the Telegraph-Journal on the Globe and Mail's story of family negotiations to divvy up K.C.'s empire speaks volumes about Jamie's approach to covering his family's businesses.

"What does that say?" Jones said. "If you're saying, 'we're too close to it, we can't do it," you're saying what everyone has said for years anyway: 'You guys shouldn't be owning the paper because you won't report on Irving.' You certainly can't say you don't have any sources."

Still, as Alden Nowlan writes in his essay "What about the Irvings?" (Stewart, W. pp. 68):

...Those who make the charge (that nothing unfavourable to the Irvings can make it into the Telegraph-Journal) would be satisfied by nothing short of the Irvings mounting an editorial campaign against themselves – and that strikes me as being a little unrealistic,

even on the part of the liberal intelligentsia.

Since the companies are all privately owned, stories on the Irvings are difficult to come by for any media outlet. Nonetheless, how the newspaper covers Irving news that does surface can be illuminating.

A story that gained considerable time and high placement on CBC-Radio and CBC-Television in 2006-2008 was the destruction of a heron nest colony by JDI forestry operations near Cambridge Narrows.<sup>10</sup>

The Telegraph-Journal did not publish news of the Canadian Wildlife Service investigation and subsequent charges under the federal Migratory Bird Conventions Act. It did, however, pick up two stories by the Daily Gleaner when JDI went before a provincial court judge with a pre-trial motion to have the charges thrown out because the 1918 federal legislation was "vague" and should be ruled unconstitutional. The Saint John paper also carried the CP story when the judge dismissed JDI's arguments and ruled the trial should go ahead. All stories were placed on inside pages.

In the wake of the Telegraph-Journal campaign for subsidized power rates, a CBC story (Irving considers moving paper mill to Quebec, March 10, 2008) quoted Irving Paper vice-president Mark Mosher saying: "We've done enough analysis to say that if we were to move our paper mill to Quebec, we would have a significant advantage over our operation here in New Brunswick, quite frankly." It was not picked up by the Telegraph-Journal.

The biggest Irving story of 2007-08 was the one that hit closest to home for the Irving press. News of the Carleton FreePress, and attempts by J.K. Irving-owned Brunswick News to prevent the start up of a weekly newspaper competitor in the town of Woodstock, made it to the pages of the New York Times and Globe and Mail, although never gracing the front page of the Telegraph-Journal, Daily Gleaner or Times&Transcript.

Here's a summary of events from a letter from FreePress publisher Kenneth Langdon to the Federal Competition Bureau:

Until September 2007, I was employed as the publisher of the Bugle-Observer, an Irvingowned English weekly publication serving the Woodstock area. When I resigned in September I notified my employer, including Mr. Jim Irving directly, that I intended to start my own weekly newspaper in Carleton County. Over the course of the following 2 weeks, I had telephone conversations with an Irving family member. He encouraged me to accept a separation package and agree not to compete with them, and "reminded" me that New Brunswick was a "small province" and that the consequences of me starting a newspaper in Woodstock would be that "it would be a bloodbath up there." Our discussions did not result in an agreement, and shortly thereafter Irving obtained an exparte Anton Pillar order. A team of investigators, accompanied by police officers, presented me with a search warrant at 8 am on September 27, 2007. The student residence building that I own, as well as my office, home office, garage, wood-working shop, truck, and entire house and personal effects were searched over two days. At the same time, I was slapped with a lawsuit and an interim order prohibiting me from starting a competing newspaper. This was clearly Irving sending me a message about the consequences of launching a competing newspaper.

The grounds of Irving's claim was in essence that I was using "confidential, proprietary information that I had misappropriated" to compete with them unfairly.

Brunswick News originally applied for a court injunction preventing Langdon from starting a new publication. That request was withdrawn and replaced by one asking the court to prevent Langdon from approaching Bugle customers, advertisers and employees. After CBC ran with the story for a full week, Brunswick News finally acknowledged it. Although the injunction hearing was held in Saint John, all Brunswick News papers ran identical stories, written by a Times&Transcript reporter, Rod Allen.

"The coverage in newspapers of Brunswick News has been quite, very much in favour of the company," said Kim Kierans, director of the School of Journalism at the University of King's College in Halifax, told CBC. "It's been giving the company side." (CBC.ca; Irving providing one-sided story: media critics, October 25, 2007.

Concentration of ownership, or the extraordinary use of the Anton Pillar Order – a legal device never before used in New Brunswick

and normally only granted in the most serious of corporate espionage cases— were not explored in the CanadaEast News Service articles. For the Irving press, the stories were about Langdon "misappropriating material" from the Bugle. Those words were continually used in the newspaper stories without the modifier "alleged."

In the end, Brunswick News watered down its injunction request to prevent Langdon from soliciting business from 15 key advertisers. Regardless, Mr. Justice Peter Glennie rejected the injunction request, saying the principle of free speech trumped the request to restrict Langdon from soliciting advertisers. The judge did offer a partial injunction prohibiting the FreePress publisher from using confidential Brunswick News information or enticing Bugle employees to breach their work obligations. The Brunswick News papers played up the partial injunction in leads and headlines, including the Telegraph-Journal. (Paper publisher wins partial injunction; November 3, A2) While Glennie never ruled that the documents found on Langdon's home computer had been misappropriated, that allegation was again made in the Brunswick News story of the court's ruling.

Did Jamie Irving show his true Irving colours through coverage of the injunction request?

Coverage was handled out of Moncton, which almost certainly means that Victor Mlodecki, Jamie's boss and mentor, was holding the reins. Mlodecki, another ex-Thomson publisher, is known around the Moncton newsroom as "The Hawk" for his sharp features and watchful eyes. Jamie told me Mlodecki calls his business philosophy "The Law of the North: When there's a lot, take a lot; when there's little; take it all." Regardless of whether the news coverage was co-ordinated by Mlodecki, the headlines in the Telegraph-Journal were as misleading (or vague and confusing) as in the other Brunswick News dailies. Certainly, the name "Irving," never appeared.

Some commentators (and the Carleton FreePress in its "Case for an Inquiry" submitted to the provincial government) have used the Brunswick News coverage of the injunction to warn about the dangers of news being dictated from head office. Yes, it happened in this case, so close to the interests of Mlodecki and Irving, but the use of identical stories in the Brunswick News dailies coverage of the injunction hearing is the exception to the rule.

Nonetheless, the news coverage indicates that the Telegraph-Journal publisher was unable or unwilling to put a more balanced journalistic stamp on what appeared in his paper.

The Carleton FreePress was not about an Irving family member finally showing his true colours. But it's fair to say that when it came down to the core issue of how the Irvings and the Irving papers react to competition, the tiger didn't change its stripes.

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## In the forest of the night

Only the Irving family knows for sure why, but the more aggressive corporate agenda of the Telegraph-Journal coincides with a particularly busy time in the family's history.

The Irvings are on the move. As a family, they are moving apart, although a slow continental drift is more likely than a seismic split; as relatively small companies on a global stage, they are also repositioning themselves to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. Both the oil and wood divisions of the family empire need capital and don't want the other side holding them back.

The big investments are coming on the oil side. Irving Oil owns 25 per cent of the \$750 million Canaport LNG terminal with Spanish energy company Repsol YPF. The plant has a billion cubic feet a

day capacity, which it can begin shipping to the Eastern Seaboard when the pipeline to the American border is complete, likely late in 2008. There is talk of expanding the terminal to double production.

Irving Oil, already the sole owner of the largest refinery in Canada, has announced plans for a second oil refinery in Saint John. With its partner, British Petroleum, it's spending \$100 million in engineering and design in anticipation of starting the \$7 billion construction project in 2010.

A \$30-million Irving Oil "world headquarters" was proposed for the Saint John waterfront in late June 2008. 11 City Council approved the proposal in late summer, 2008.

By comparison, forestry operations may have drawn the short straw. But don't underestimate the Irvings; they can see the forest for the trees. They look to the long-term and they invest in machines that will make them money.<sup>12</sup>

Still, James K., Jim and Jamie might be feeling vulnerable. According to the Globe and Mail (A generational divide, December 27, 2007), the Irving brothers are now trying to disentangle their business interests from the complicated trust agreements created by K.C. and sealed in wax by his will. The next generation, Jim and Kenneth, don't see oil and wood mixing. What is complicating the split – according to the gossip around town repeated by the Globe and Mail – is John Irving, the son of K.C.'s youngest son, Jack. John has not forgiven Jim after being removed from JDI-controlled businesses a decade ago. Similarly, his brief involvement with the operations of the newspapers ended when Jamie came into the picture. If Arthur and Jack team up against J.K., everything, including control of JDI could be on the line. However most Irving watchers expect the Three Wise Men (as their progeny call them) to show solidarity and avoid the public battle that ensued when Wallace and Harrison McCain went their separate ways. Still, it could take years. Or it could be settled

already. A press release is unlikely.

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Regardless, it is in this dynamic and delicate business environment that Jamie Irving has been given control of the family's flagship newspaper.

What can I tell you about Jamie and his relationship to his family?

He fears his father. ("The only person that can make me piss myself," he once told me). He was raised to be in the forestry business, but by the time he was 16, was insecure in his role as "an Irving," – and told me the first time I had coffee with him – that he considered himself a communist back in his teenage years. When the forest is your dominion, growing up must be both magical and frightening.

Still, Jamie seemed like a different kind of Irving when he took over at the Telegraph-Journal. It was easy to find hope in his practised disdain towards his family's Protestant work ethic and catholic business interests, its devotion to abstinence; his interest in producing news rather than newsprint; the way he distanced himself from his family without ever giving anything up.

His father resisted the path of journalism for his first born, but Jamie insisted, although he likes to joke that he went into newspapers because his father fired him from woodlands. While his undergraduate marks were not exceptional, Bob Rupert, then a professor at Carleton, thought he showed enough promise and passion to gain admission to the Ottawa journalism school. "He deserved to get in," said Rupert. "Everything he did was sound." He later attended the Columbia School of Journalism.

After university, Jamie oversaw the weeklies for Brunswick News, hiring Rupert as a consultant to toughen journalism standards and expand circulation. After a few years in the wilderness, he finally

received his father's blessing to come home to the Telegraph-Journal.

The speculation in the journalism profession in New Brunswick revolves around this: To get the job, did Jamie have to make a deal with his father to produce the kind of newspaper he wanted?

I can tell you that early in my tenure as editor, Jamie told me he wanted the paper to be a Wall Street Journal for New Brunswick, a business-driven political newspaper. I expressed my doubts. With that strategy, I told him, he could capture the billionaire market but most of them already had free subscriptions. He didn't press it in those early days. Still, he would tell me how much his father liked it when the front page was dominated by business and political stories with good take-away information.

His grandfather, on the other hand, has a much deeper love of newspapers. Where Jim sees controversy as being bad for business, J.K. likes a more exciting paper, one that is combative and occasionally titillating, one unafraid to go on crusades or tilt at windmills. He would let Jamie know how much he enjoyed it when the paper first started writing editorials targeting the "Irving haters" in Saint John.

A third major influence on the Jamie Irving Telegraph-Journal comes from outside the family. Stuart Baker established Branding Merchants in Saint John in 2005, but Jamie had come under his sway years before when he'd set up shop in P.E.I. The publisher insisted his editors spend time with his branding guru. If ownership truly wanted a paper that would stimulate debate, propose new ideas and transform the province, then the paper needed to be branded that way.

Much to the derision of the reporting staff, the front and the business sections, aimed at the provincial elites, were to be "Starbucks," the city and sports sections were to be "Tim

Horton's." News judgment be damned; crime and Saint John stories, no matter how interesting, important or talked about, were "Tims." Even after the Boston Globe and CNN began running the story about Gregory Despres, who was allowed to cross the U.S. border with a Mohawk haircut and a bloody chainsaw he had used to decapitate his neighbour, it was a major fight to get the story on A-1 of the Telegraph-Journal. Sure Despres could get across the border, but he'd never be allowed in a Starbucks.<sup>13</sup>

The Irvings have been described as relentless, long-sighted, industrious, mechanical, data-driven, plain, Presbyterian; stubborn, square, ruthless. While it's fair to say they have little time for subtlety or nuance, it's also accepted that they pay obsessive attention to detail.

Jamie is an Irving. But unlike his no-nonsense father, grandfather and great-grandfather, <sup>14</sup> Jamie wants to be respected for his good taste. This distinguishes him from his grandfather, nearing 80, who now wants to be known for his community philanthropy; and his father, who seems driven to be recognized as the heir to K.C.'s hard-nosed expansionism. As Jacques Poitras, CBC-Radio's senior political voice in the province points out, Jamie's actual role model may come from Fleet Street.

"I think Jamie likes the crusading press baron thing a bit," said the author of *Beaverbrook: A Shattered Legacy*, which chronicles the fight between his heirs and the Fredericton art gallery that bears his name over the ownership of paintings.

If his father is the person Jamie Irving most wants (or needs) to please, Poitras thinks Lord Beaverbrook, the Miramichi-raised, Fleet Street titan, is the man he wants to emulate. He sees it in the retro feel of the Telegraph-Journal's screaming, all-caps headlines, the old-school feel of the newsboys who paraded during the launch of the paper's redesign; in the over-the-top way the paper trumpets its causes and hammers its enemies.

But unlike Beaverbrook, who championed the cause of free trade and the British empire, Jamie Irving owes his allegiance to a different empire.

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#### The Carrot and the Stick

"I don't think business and politics mix in New Brunswick," K.C. Irving once said. "New Brunswick is too small for politics."

Maybe. But if you were to read the Telegraph-Journal between May of 2006 and June 2008, you would think there was nothing but business and politics in New Brunswick.

Jacques Poitras describes the front page as an "elite newsletter."

"If you're in government or business, the stories in there are the ones you want to read, but there's no sense of fun," he said. "It's pretty transparent. Obviously, this is something they decided to do."

CBC-TV's Robert Jones said, "It's dense and dull and no good in the end. It doesn't give you anything.

"It's like they're talking through the newspaper, almost one on one, with these individual cabinet ministers. And ultimately you feel the paper is continuously pursuing the government for its corporate interests. The entire paper seems to be geared to this relationship building with the government. The public is out of the conversation because this stuff is not relevant to anybody. Half the articles on the front page you wonder: who is reading this stuff? I can barely read it myself, and I know I'm much more interested in that stuff than the average guy in the street would be."

"It's those 'War Declared!' headlines that get me," said freelance

journalist Lisa Hrabluk. "Every day they're declaring war on someone. It's like it's still 1942 and women are all dames. It could be the newspaper on the set of Guys and Dolls. It's just the strangest little paper."

So what defines the Telegraph-Journal of Jamie Irving? What does it say about the relationship of the Irving family with the provincial government? And, most importantly, what does that say about the state of democracy in New Brunswick?

To the first question: Yes, it is a strange little paper. Well-designed, with two or three-word, cryptic or opinionated banner headlines, it comes across a bit like a sleek foreign sports car with a Texas longhorn hood ornament.

The front page is devoted to provincial business, with a dearth of people oriented stories. Even in the spring of 2008 when the St. John River flooded forcing hundreds to leave their homes, the TJ, rather than putting a handful of reporters in the field talking to victims as it almost certainly would have in the past, seemed content to cover the official press briefings and ask questions about the bottom line. Similarly, stories played up and pursued by the electronic media (a man who froze to death after his power was turned off with an email trail that made it appear as if provincial officials knew about the possible consequences much earlier than they originally said; and news that a 100-year-old clerical error could mean that the Tobique First Nation may own the neighbouring town of Perth-Andover) were downplayed or ignored by the newspaper. <sup>15</sup>

"What those stories share is that they're about the downtrodden, stories that remind you not to be too comfortable with your contentment," said the CBC's Poitras. "The stories that they do are for people who are comfortable enough to have debates about tax policy."

One reason for the change of coverage is the paper's reach. For much of its history, the Telegraph-Journal's bread-and-butter was its network of part-time correspondents and, later, staff reporters across the province. Under Jamie Irving, bureaus in Bathurst, Miramichi and Edmundston have been eliminated. Now political reporters are assigned to the legislature in Fredericton; the two reporters at the Moncton bureau, located in the Times&Transcript newsroom, focus on business stories. As well, since the spring of 2006 when Jamie Irving made David Stonehouse his senior editor overseeing provincial coverage, assigning stories has become a topdown operation. As one government insider said, "You go down there and there's no point in pitching ideas until they're told what they're doing for the day, but there are papers all across the country that operate that way."

If you ask Jeannot Volpé, the acting Tory leader from the defeat of Bernard Lord until November, 2008, he'll say Premier Shawn Graham is little more than a "puppet" of the Irvings.

That's a little strong for most observers of the New Brunswick political scene.

For the CBC's Poitras, the symbiotic relationship is more of a natural convergence.

"The current government's philosophy happens to be one that would dovetail with a lot of the Irving priorities."

What Poitras is getting at is the Liberals, still strongly influenced by former Premier Frank McKenna, are more disposed to big economic development projects than the Tory government of Bernard Lord would have been.

Which is to say, New Brunswick economic growth during the next 10 years is expected to be concentrated in the Saint John area, much of it flowing through Irving Oil energy projects. According to a province-funded study by the Toronto consulting firm Hardy

Stephenson and Associates, \$44 billion could be invested and 30,000 jobs created in the next decade. Whether all or much of that comes to pass, the Graham government isn't one to look a gift horse in the mouth.

"It's New Brunswick, right?" said one government insider. "You have to deal with the Irvings whether it's this government or any government."

Moreover, in the energetic fashion of Frank McKenna, the 40-year-old Liberal premier is inclined by disposition and philosophy towards consultation with the titans of New Brunswick. Whereas former Premier Lord would insist that the Irvings or McCains or Olands or Ganongs were welcome to make an appointment to meet him in his office (and famously turning down a beer with lunch while opening a Moosehead expansion), these Liberals are neoliberals, even if no one in New Brunswick would ever use such a word.

Historically, the Irving family leaned towards the Liberal party, at least before fights with Louis Robichaud over the implementation of Equal Opportunity and control of Brunswick Mining. Jamie Irving has probably the strongest ties to the Liberals; his uncle, Saint John MP Paul Zed, strongly influenced him during his teen and college years. While Arthur and Jack have at times certainly seemed more comfortable with Tories, this is a family of pragmatic capitalists, not ideological ones.

And there's a pattern to Irving-provincial government relations. They tend to start off swimmingly, but somewhere down the course of a mandate, some government decision on tax policy or Crown land allocation or energy subsidies disturbs the waters. At this point, the Telegraph-Journal, particularly in the Ralph Costello era and now the Jamie Irving era, starts pounding the drum of dissent. If they think a premier's or a mayor's days are numbered, they unflinchingly throw them under the bus, as they recently did

to Saint John Mayor Norm McFarlane. As crude and vitriolic as the newspaper criticism can become of government or the opposition, they tend to hedge their bets as the odds change on the outcome of a coming election.

That doesn't seem to be changing. Jeannot Volpé was a constant target in the paper's editorials while acting as opposition leader, and he feels the news pages also gave him short-shrift. However, as the Graham government stumbled over the issue of early French immersion in the spring of 2008, the then Tory leader said the paper began to make overtures to him, asking him to write op-ed pieces.

"They are trying to reconnect because they think maybe they went a little too far with Shawn. Maybe we should protect what we got and be a little careful. They've also realized that people in Saint John have given them a real message in the last municipal election."

So far, the paper has editorially supported most of the government's controversial policies: the pending decision to end early French immersion in a bilingual province; <sup>16</sup> plans to reform post-secondary education; and the recent talking paper on tax reform, which would introduce a flat income tax and a carbon tax while lowering corporate taxes and increasing consumption taxes.

Of these, the most worthy of closer examination is the province's post-secondary education report. It's worth spending a moment, understanding its genesis.

With \$50,000 in seed money from Irving Oil and backing from city's business development agency, Enterprise Saint John, a task force is established to study post-secondary education in the Saint John, though six-months of spade work had already been done by that point. The task-force plan, Enriching our Future: A Strategic Plan for Post-Secondary Education, Research and Development

and Technology Commercialization was released in May 2007. Essentially, it called for the replacement of the UNB campus in Saint John with something called the Knowledge and Technology Institute, specializing in training for the energy, advanced manufacturing and health services industries.

"We need to eliminate the distinction between education and training," explained task-force chairman and Moosehead Brewery heir Andrew Oland. "The single most pressing issue facing New Brunswick and Saint John businesses is the growing labour shortage and addressing it will require a targeted economic development strategy that includes a strong post-secondary education sector willing to meet the region's employment needs."

In September, the government released its own post-secondary education report that called for the replacement of the Saint John campus with a polytechnic institute.

As Janice Harvey writes in her Telegraph-Journal column of September 19, 2007:

From where I sit, the unfolding of the new agenda for post-secondary education looks an awful lot like the unfolding of the energy hub agenda. The business community lines up behind it, Premier Graham quickly comes on side (he has been well-primed) and the primary newspaper in the region dedicates an overwhelming amount of both news and editorial space to convincing the rest of us that this is the best thing since sliced bread. It is not an accident that the post-secondary commission recommendations follow many months of public hand- wringing about labour shortages anticipated as the energy hub agenda rolls out in Saint John.

The paper, to its credit, provided plenty of room in its letters and op-ed sections to critics of the report. Its coverage of the protests was fair. However, the paper's four-part series on the issue was less an in-depth investigation than a reflection of community opinion that supported the paper's editorial position. Too often, it seems, Telegraph-Journal series have become one-sided campaigns to buttress editorial campaigns rather than genuine explorations of issues.

Still, while some, like Janice Harvey, saw an attempt to manufacture consent, the paper provided a lively forum for debate that, of course, included her own thoughts.

Both big industry, which is dominated by the Irving family, and the Liberal government, wanted to reform post-secondary education to better reflect the province's training needs. But the newspaper's connection to industry, as noted by Harvey, only made its agenda, as reflected in editorials and its news pages series, suspect with much of the public. Perhaps, the one thing the Irvings aren't good at manufacturing is consent.

The real damage may not be the obvious one trotted out by media critics since the 1960s – that the Telegraph-Journal is largely a conduit for a powerful family to affect public policy. While New Brunswickers have always read the Telegraph knowing whose flagship paper it is, the merging of corporate, government and newspaper agendas could be creating a perfect storm of distrust in the whole system, said Robert Jones.

"I mean you really have to ask yourself: who's watching the decision makers? The people who are supposed to be watching them are lobbying them for specific things. It's a terrible situation. The news media fulfills an essential role in democracy and the media, in this situation, they're pursuing a different role."

That distrust could be heightened when tax reform is debated in the legislature.

Significantly reducing corporate taxes and increasing consumption taxes, as a means of economic development, was not invented by the Irvings. Indeed, the two spiritual leaders of the New Brunswick Liberals, former premier Frank McKenna and U de M professor Donald Savoie have both argued for it. Nonetheless, some, like Robert Jones, wonder whether the government just finds it easier to pick its battles with the Irvings.

"By responding to whatever the demands are, you get very favourable coverage, very positive portrayal of yourself in the newspaper. If you reject what's being proposed, you run the risk of being attacked. Those are real calculations a government has to make."

Maybe. The tax proposals now on the table represent a change of direction for this first-term government. Nonetheless, a government insider said it's taking things way too far to view an idea supported by many economists as some Irving conspiracy. If anything, the government can use the situation to anticipate and plan for the reaction of the Irving-owned newspaper.

"You know what their position is going to be. Let's say tax policy. You know they're going to be in favour of tax cuts generally. You know they'll be supportive of a flat tax because that's the income level to which you're speaking. And you know they're going to be against a carbon tax. [laugh]You know that going in.

"It's helpful in terms of [knowing] what the reaction is [going to be]; but it doesn't dictate. It doesn't solely dictate. Now you're talking about how cabinet decisions are made. I wouldn't say the paper has that influence."

Yes, ministers and bureaucrats read the paper carefully. But having the odd tiff with the Irvings can also lead to populist support as often occurs in Saint John, he said.

"What's different here is the Irvings. They have their corporate agenda. It's basically clear what it is. It kind of makes it easier for government, Liberal or Conservative. You know what you're dealing with.

"Whether you like them or not, they're really important to the provincial economy ... that's what pays the bills in the province. Any politician has to pay them more than lip-service. Shawn (Graham) will speak with them, meet with them, listen carefully to

them, but ultimately he's going to make what he thinks is the best decision."

And there's still good reporting being done at the paper. Yes, editorially, the paper backed Education Minister Kelly Lamrock's decision to end early French immersion, perhaps too easily accepting the minister's initial arguments and accepted the government's research at face value. But it also published a right-to-information request that uncovered emails suggesting that the province had a predetermined conclusion to its French immersion study.

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Also noteworthy is the change of attitude toward in-house columnists. Provincial political columnists and analysis have long been a staple of the Telegraph-Journal. Starting sometime early in 2006, Jamie Irving became increasingly anxious about what provincial columnists Lisa Hrabluk and Carl Davies were writing about. He said Lord government representatives, including Jeannot Volpé, were complaining to his father about what they perceived as a Liberal bias in some of the columns and suggested it was complicating JDI's business with the province. Jamie didn't want the government of Bernard Lord to think that the columnists' views represented the newspaper's positions. Eventually, both Davies and Hrabluk were forced out.

Instead, the TJ readership was treated to columns in the Saturday paper by both the president of provincial PCs, Robert MacLeod, and former provincial Liberal cabinet minister, Marcelle Mersereau. Eventually, after the election of Shawn Graham's Liberals in September 2006, Marty Klinkenberg, an excellent feature writer, became the new political columnist. Similarly, John Chilibeck was reinstated as a Saint John columnist. From an outsider's perspective, the political columnists are more narrowly focused than they once were.

Chilibeck doesn't see it that way exactly, but acknowledges that his three-time a week *Public Eye* column has a different scope from the column he wrote once a week when he was the city hall reporter in 2006. Chilibeck has a solid reputation as a tough, nononsense reporter. Since becoming a full-time columnist, he has also become feared, at least by city hall staff. "I don't know if they're scared or pissed off, but I don't get a lot of calls returned." Nonetheless, the column appears to be well read, at least among political junkies, in a city that takes more interest in municipal politics than most.

Chilibeck said, Jamie Irving and his city editor, Ron Barry, warmed up to the idea of reinstating staff columnists in 2007.

"They wanted to have a writer writing a hard column. In a lot of ways, my opinion is similar to theirs. I think that's why they put me there."

Often Chilibeck columns, always played on the city front, mirror the paper's editorial position; most noticeably on the need for a lower municipal tax rate, and criticisms of the power of city unions and the management style of the city manager, Terry Totten.

"There are key things that I agree with Jamie and Ron, so I can pound on those almost repetitively. But they've never told me not to do something. There has been the odd time when I've looked at the editorials and I don't agree with that. I've danced around it, I guess. There's a bit of self-censorship involved. I'm giving them what they want."

Chilibeck said the managing editor often makes suggestions for columns or asks him to "ramp up" a particular argument. "I get the sense that Ron believes in what he's saying, but he's reflecting the values that Jamie Irving has."

While Ron Barry often shows the columns to Jamie first, said Chilibeck, only once was he called into the publisher's office and had a column rejected before publication. In that spring of 2008 column, Chilibeck had argued that the new mayor, Ivan Court, should essentially put his money where his mouth was and call a public inquiry into the city's handling of the LNG tax deal.

"Jamie wanted to know what constructive purpose this would have. He said it would seem like we were out to get [the new mayor]. 'Why would you write this?'"

Chilibeck said he ultimately agreed to change the column, accepting the argument that it may set the wrong tone with a mayor who had just been elected to office. However, given that the Telegraph-Journal wrote several editorials harshly critical of the mayor in his first four months of office, perhaps Jamie Irving had a more self-serving reason for rejecting the column. It's certainly arguable that the publisher did not want the LNG issue, which in 2005 had led to a rash of public and occasionally violent demonstrations against his family, back on the table.

And does Chilibeck think that he could now write a column, as he did on February 17, 2006, critical of the pipeline company's decision to run the pipeline from the LNG terminal through Saint John's Rockwood Park – a column that resulted in an angry call, as I remember, from the pipeline company president to Jamie Irving?

"Good question," said the columnist. "I honestly don't know, because it hasn't come up."

John Mazerolle was the Telegraph-Journal's city hall reporter before quitting to go back to school in August of 2008. He said the page placement of columns of freelancers Herb Duncan, a local merchant who writes an ultra-critical city hall column; and retired editor-in-chief Fred Hazel, are also worth noting. Since Hazel's column moved from the editorial pages to the city section in August of 2007, he has made C1 twice: both for columns supporting the location of the Irving Oil building on the waterfront.

Duncan, whose columns are repetitively anti-city hall and prodevelopment, are usually on the Saturday city front.

"We don't give good placement of columns based on merit. We give placement to columns based on whether they reflect the editorial board's position."

Marty Klinkenberg, the in-house provincial columnist, is a different animal. His contributions are almost invariably put on the front page with his column sig. Sometimes he writes features, adding much needed colour to the front page; sometimes it's an opinion piece on the performance of the government with the column head, "In the Legislature." If he has been assigned to an important city story, it will say, "In Saint John." Sometimes, the Klinkenberg column will serve as the newspaper's front-page news coverage.

As a columnist, Klinkenberg has a mandate to be colourful and opinionated, but when his pieces appear on the front page under headlines that are newsier than the banner stories, the line between opinion and news coverage can be blurred for readers. For example, on August 19, 2008, under the headline: Land swap gets nod; Saint John common council approve deal with Irving for Long wharf in 9-1 vote, Klinkenberg covered the meeting where Saint John council approved the building of the new Irving Oil headquarters on the Saint John waterfront. Klinkenberg led with: "The cries of protest were muffled by democracy in Saint John on Monday night," in a piece that called the longshoremen, who opposed the deal, "cranky," and the reasoning of the one councillor to vote against the deal as "preposterous and myopic."

If the paper's editorial backing of Liberal policies is the carrot, the columns of Marty Klinkenberg can be seen as the stick. A provincial government insider said the tone is significantly different from the columns written during the seven years of the Lord government. Less analysis, more attack – all on the front

page. The Full Marty.

"I think that the stuff written right now is a lot more vicious than was written about the Tories, particularly in their first term. Even in their second term. Before, the [Telegraph-Journal] columns were critical of policies. Now, we're getting these columns [attacking government and ministers] once a week. I mean, 'what is it Marty? Are we doing too much or are we doing too little? What is it today?' That's not analysis."

Klinkenberg's "In the Legislature" columns often run topped with hectoring headlines, such as Arrogance is getting Liberals in hot water or Grits are frittering their lead away, or this one from July 3 (Ground gets shakier for Liberals):

Too often, they acted defiantly rather than cautiously...Too quickly, they pushed for dizzying change. Too dismissively, they rejected the concerns of anyone who thought differently. Too stubbornly, they dug in when New Brunswickers dared not share their vision.

Given the blurring of lines between opinion and news coverage on the front page; between Irving interests and government policies, it's hard to read that and not imagine the scene in Taxi Driver where Robert DeNiro's Travis Bickle character is talking to his mirror.

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## The Bully Pulpit

In the early days of Jamie's tenure, he talked a lot about "doing the right thing." Indeed, it became the mantra of the editorial board meetings.

According to Chilibeck and Mazerolle, who both have filled in as editorial writer when Eric Marks is off, Jamie still talks the same game.

"He said, 'we're a political party," said Mazerolle. "That's the attitude with the editorials. He didn't mean that we're Liberal. He means the paper should take stands. [Managing editor] Ron [Barry] will say, 'this is about right and wrong."

That's all fair game, even admirable, on opinion pages. There's no glory in a newspaper being wishy-washy. It's worth noting, however, which public figures have been singled out for personal attacks by the paper. Usually portrayed as "bullies" and "clowns," they are, with a few exceptions, people who have stood up to the Irvings or disagreed with Irving projects. If the Irvings have a reputation for vigorous competition, as witnessed by their reaction to the start-up of the Carleton FreePress, it can also be argued that the Telegraph-Journal editorials strike quickly and ruthlessly to quash dissent of any projects and positions of companies owned by the family.

This more pugnacious and personal editorial tone can probably be traced back to October 2005. After an editorial (Out, out, out with the louts, Oct. 20), which criticized the anti-LNG tax deal group for its increasingly mob-like tactics, Jamie told me how much his grandfather liked how the paper struck back at adversaries of the family. A few weeks later, after a comment on the phone-in radio show "Talk of the Town" overheard by a reporter, Jamie insisted an editorial be written (Leave Santa alone, bullies, November 18), although the paper did not write a story confirming the facts. My advice to the publisher was: "Don't swing at pitches in the dirt." When I delicately suggested to him that some may find it ironic that an Irving paper, the biggest bully pulpit in the province, was accusing others of being "bullies," he made it quite clear that I should never make that suggestion again.

Increasingly over the next few years, these editorials targeted councillor Ivan Court, the brother of the leader of the protest group and the councillor who led the anti-tax deal group on council. It would take too much space to explain the issues behind each editorial (and like any public figure, Court is fair game for fair comment), but the headlines of a few of the editorials reflect the nasty tone: Councillors are being bullies; Ivan the Terrible; The principled protest of Council's bullies; Court's leadership smacks of status quo. By the municipal election in the spring of 2008, in which Court ran for mayor, the headlines of these editorials had reached the juvenile and ridiculous, Santa not voting for Court (May 8, 2008).

The editorial tone has been maintained since Court's easy win in May.

More recently, the paper has hounded Abel LeBlanc, the Liberal MLA for Saint John West and former longshoremen's union president, who opposed the building of the Irving Oil headquarters on port-controlled land. LeBlanc made some ill-advised anti-Irving remarks along the way that deserved censure. But the editorial campaign to have the Liberal government expel the MLA from caucus reeked not just of wanting to censure an Irving critic, but to silence one.

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#### Talk of the town

There it was on February 8, 2008, on the city front of the Telegraph-Journal – smut.

In his column, Public Eye, headlined: Skeletons come out of the city hall's closet, John Chilibeck wrote about the relationship between the city manager, Terry Totten, and his wife Margaret, then holding down the \$90,000-a-year job as the city's tourism manager:

The story of her rise in the ranks speaks to the culture at Saint John city hall, one that

doesn't put a premium on accountability or transparency. It's a perfect example of the city operating at its worst.

Before her appointment, she was a convention and event officer with the city who made a modest salary close to what a starting school teacher would earn. Her name was Margaret Hackett, the daughter of Win Hackett, once a very powerful man in New Brunswick who served as deputy minister and right-hand man to Conservative Premier Richard Hatfield.

Ambitious, pretty and smart, she was still married to her first husband, a prominent Saint John lawyer, when she met city manager Terry Totten, who was also married. The two had a messy affair, their marriages broke up, and they eventually wed in March 1997.

It was by no means the first time Chilibeck had written about the Tottens. Since March of 2007, the city manager said the story of how Margaret, on sick leave, had planned to accompany her husband to Florida where he was representing the city in her place at a cruise ship convention has been repeated at least 60 times<sup>21</sup> by Chilibeck, other city hall reporters and editorial writers, but it was the first time that the words "messy affair" were used. It got the attention of the public and many powerful people in the city.

"I had Mr. J.D. [Jim] Irving call me here in my office," said Terry Totten, recounting the story in his eighth floor office overlooking the harbour. "And he was raging. He called to apologize. He said: it's just not right what's going on down there. [He said] 'I made a call down there to say how upset I was about this foolishness.' But he said: 'I can't do anything about it.' And my comment to him was: 'If it were my son, I could do something about it."

Chilibeck, quoting an email he received after the column was published, said: "As soon as that was out, there was the sound of zippers going up all around the city."

According to former Telegraph-Journal columnist Lisa Hrabluk, that was the day the paper "jumped the shark" and "stopped being a credible newspaper for a lot of Saint Johners. It made a lot of women cringe."

The CBC's Robert Jones said the story exposed the paper's lack of

authority.

"With the Totten story, there were legitimate issues to be explored. But when the paper does it, people don't accept it as a legitimate journalistic activity because the paper has ruined its credibility through this other stuff. People don't buy it anymore. When you read that paper now, you read for the undercurrent of what they want to achieve. So much of the news coverage in the last year has had an agenda, so obvious a fifth grader could tell what it is, so even when there's no apparent agenda, you figure there must be one somewhere and try to figure out what it must be."

So what does the Totten story say about Jamie Irving's approach to city coverage? More to the point, is there an Irving agenda on municipal politics? And if so, how effective has it been?

First let's review the Totten file.

In March 8, 2007, the Telegraph-Journal broke the story of the Florida trip under the headline: Out sick, but fit for Florida. City hall reporter John Mazerolle detailed how Margaret Totten, on sick leave at that point for five weeks, would be accompanying her husband, her stand-in for selling the city as a cruise ship destination. Mayor Norm McFarlane had okayed the arrangement, and several other councillors knew about it. However, after the story was published, the mayor changed his mind and told the Tottens not to go.<sup>22</sup>

Undoubtedly, the newspaper had found the city manager's Achilles heel and was going to pound away. (Indeed, Mazerolle confirmed the paper had booked a flight for one of the paper's police reporters to spy on Margaret Totten if she had gone to Florida.) But Margaret's resignation, her subsequent human rights complaint and threats to sue her former employer led to a year of salacious news stories and Chilibeck columns with headlines such as: Totten vs. Totten; The Margaret Totten saga; Here's why

bosses shouldn't date or marry employees; Thumbs down for Terry Totten; and An embarrassment of a leader at city hall.<sup>23</sup>

"You won't get any complaints from me about the Irvings," said Totten. "I've had a great run with them. The newspaper, well that's a mystery to me.

"With Irving Oil [Kenneth Irving] and Commercial Properties [John], I'm on the phone with them all the time. We do business. From the principals in those companies, I've had calls to my home saying this is not right."

Given the apologies the city manager received from important members of the Irving family, it's difficult to argue an Irving agenda is at work here.

Columnist John Chilibeck said the city hall agenda has been set at the paper by Jamie Irving and his managing editor, Ron Barry.

"Ron is essentially the editor-in-chief for the city section, and he has very strong opinions on city management: it's badly run; almost a clique within city management running the show; and we have a lot of problems because of that. He can get very emotional about it, but he said it's based on fact. He said: look at our tax rate, it's the highest in New Brunswick; look at our roads. Basically, the instructions he's laid out to staff covering city issues is: we want to cover these things. Use all these facts but don't be stenographers.

"He said he's tired of hearing the same old explanations over and over. We have to ask better questions to find out why we have all these systemic problems. So that's where we're starting from. He feels management has been too lax in its duties and therefore the unions have become too assertive."

Chilibeck was city hall reporter and once-a-week columnist when he rejoined the paper from CBC in the summer of 2005. After a stint on the city desk and a paternity leave, he became a threetimes-a-week columnist in 2007. The lanky Ottawa native said he fit the bill for the type of columnist the publisher and managing editor were looking for, someone who writes sharply and shares most of their views on city hall.

Chilibeck takes responsibility for the "messy affair" column.

"So as we were advancing these stories, I came in and said, 'everyone in this community talks about this affair and how it's infected city hall and we're talking about how he's set a bad example, so why don't I just write about that? Why don't I write about something that everyone talks about but no one has written about?' Ron chuckled. I think he asked Jamie and Jamie said, 'why not? Sure.' So I wrote it. They read it and said ramp this or that up. We printed it and then, well, the shit hit the fan, right?"

John Mazerolle, the city hall reporter, said he read the column before it was printed and was surprised by the reaction it received in the community.

"I think there is a legit belief on Jamie's and Ron's part that city management is really, really bad. I think they got overly excited. They were really surprised that they got that much backlash."

Beyond the occasional short update on Margaret's Totten's human rights case, the paper has laid off the story since the public outcry. The makeup of the new mayor and council, with much stronger ties to organized labour, likely makes Terry Totten's job safe for another term.

So what was that all about?

Terry Totten thinks it's simple. Jamie Irving wants to set the agenda for the city.

However, Councillor Stephen Chase takes a contrary view. Whether everyone at city hall likes it or not, the paper is pushing issues that will ultimately move the city forward, he said.

"I think the issue focus is very important to this city at this time. If the paper's not flushing these things out, then you have a city administration locked in a particular time, unable to move forward. It forces people to think, to explore. As much as people may say they don't like the newspaper, everybody reads it. It's grabbing people's attention, which is a good thing.

"I think Jamie Irving has done quite a good job. The fact that he comes from a family of innovative thinkers, focused on growing business has had an influence on that paper. And I think that is probably the only influence. Not an Irving agenda."

Others, including Michelle Hooton, the former councillor backed by the paper in her mayoralty bid in the spring, think making the city manager a scapegoat for everything that's wrong with the city is fundamentally misguided.

Nevertheless, while the paper sometimes angers her, goes over the top, misreads situations, is a little too cavalier with other people's lives, she reads it.

"Like I'm not exactly happy with the way they're handling the Long Wharf discussion right now,<sup>24</sup> but I think that's kind of fun. I'm reading something that I'm really emoting with rather than just boring, stale reporting."

But if you're one of the targets of the newspaper – the city manager, or a politician or a union leader, in an economy dominated by one family – you can be excused for thinking it's a one-way mirror, with big brother behind it.

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### The Machine

The Irvings like machines; and for their businesses to run like ones.

K.C. Irving bought his first car at age 10, although his father forced him to sell it, albeit for a 30 per cent profit. Perhaps his most famous quote, from an NFB documentary of the same name, is: "I like to watch the wheels turn." Even when it comes to human resources, the family's unofficial credo appears more mechanistic than humanistic: "Everyone has a round side and a flat side. Find the flat side and slide them against the wall."

Given the run of publishers and editors since the age of Costello, the family's newspaper holdings, especially in the wake of the Davey Senate committee, have frustrated their management instincts. As J.K. Irving reportedly said after Reynolds-era editorial editor Don Cayo asked him how he felt about the newspaper: "It's like having a family pet that jumps up and bites you every once in a while – of course, my family has been known to shoot dogs."

Whether readers like the new direction of the Telegraph-Journal, John Mazerolle said Jamie Irving deserves credit for managing the change.

"We're an advocacy paper for business," said Mazerolle, the Telegraph-Journal's city hall reporter, who quit in August to go back to school. "It's a competent, sometimes very good newspaper that unfortunately has a tendency to undermine itself. What's that quote? Nothing bothers me more than an opinion I hold being argued poorly."

As the old writing saw goes: show me; don't tell me.

Many newspapers have agendas. Indeed, papers that make it their mandate to fight corruption, or champion the less fortunate and the necessary legislation to protect them, are routinely commended by other journalists. They win awards. Good journalism means not only fair and balanced coverage, but asking the right questions

about how to improve government, stimulate economic growth and alleviate social ills. Of course, the ownership of the Telegraph-Journal makes the paper's agendas suspicious, or at least in need of more transparency, even though papers tend to be owned by capitalists.

Regardless, it's one thing to have a vision for a newspaper; it's quite another to execute it, given the notorious independence of reporters who chafe at too much editorial control, not to mention the dozens of spontaneous decisions required by reporters and editors daily. Mazerolle said Jamie Irving has succeeded in ensuring his business and political agenda is reflected on the paper's pages by exercising the techniques any news organization, particularly one with a strong agenda, uses.

"It's not like they're always saying: do this, don't do this," he said. "It's like Fox News. If you look at the stories the reporters file on the website, it's fine. It's all headline and placement, right?"

The Telegraph-Journal's headlines stand out. Often they are vague, even bizarre, and give little indication of what the story is about (For the week of Sept. 15, the all-caps front-page headlines included these: BETTING THE FARM; GASEOUS INTERUPTUS; TAKING STOCK; CONFLICTING VIEWS). But sometimes, the headlines editorialize, particularly on stories of interest to the Irving family or the newspaper. Thus, when Michelle Hooton, the newspaper's choice in the mayoralty race in the spring of 2008, held a news conference to announce her plans to lower the tax rate, the city-front headline read: Hooton hits home run (April 15, 2008.)

Similarly, when the results of a newspaper-commissioned poll on the municipal election campaign were published, the Telegraph-Journal headline was: Mayor's race: Where's Norm? (April, 26, 2008), highlighting the incumbent Norm McFarlane's expected poor showing, rather than Ivan Court's (much maligned on the paper's editorial pages for his anti-Irving stands) lead.

"Jamie and Ron were stunned by that," said Mazerolle. "Jamie said, 'who are these people' [voting for Court]?"

After Irving Oil announced its plans for a new oil refinery (a day after the CBC had scooped it), the banner headline read like an employment page ad (and a sexist one at that): Come East, young men (Oct. 5), followed the next day by OUR BLACK GOLD. Within a few weeks, a city page headline trumpeted: Welcome to Calgary East.

More recently, on July 24, 2007, the banner headline reads: Doubters wrong. What follows is a fair story by Ottawa correspondent Rob Linke about the concerns by American analysts about the state of the LNG market as the Saint John plant readies to go on line, including the information that a plant opened in Louisiana in April still sits idle. The story is fair and well researched, but what's with the headline?

Robert Jones thinks it's obvious why the paper acts as if the only real question the city has to contemplate about proposed energy projects is which streets to pave with gold first.

"The paper's constant positive coverage – it's manufactured consent for the mega projects. The guy in the street might see it as being a good hometown newspaper but a more independent person would view it as having an agenda attached to it," said Jones. "We had the frigate program. It came and it went. We have a refinery. How come we're not all rich because of that? There's been no serious questioning of the hype around all this stuff. It's all just a celebration of what's to come. That's not journalism."

Mazerolle admits he accepts all the stories of the looming Saint John "energy hub"<sup>25</sup> "as gospel", although he, like Chilibeck, feel the city pages have been clogged with too many business and trades training stories. Still, Mazerolle, an award-winning

commentator at CBC Radio before he joined the paper, said it's ridiculous to suggest that the Telegraph-Journal has an agenda while other outlets are paradigms of journalistic objectivity.

"It's the same at CBC. When you're at CBC-Radio, to a certain extent, it's very left. But you don't notice it when you're working there because everyone is thinking the same way. The point I make ... is let the Telegraph be the Telegraph. Let the CBC be the CBC. But the point in Saint John is that you have to read both of them to get the full picture."

Nonetheless, he doesn't dispute that editors make it clear what they expect an angle on the story to be before it's researched and written.

"They never go into my stories after they're written and try to torque them up. You can't argue with facts. It's the way the story is pitched to you. The angle is already decided."

Mazerolle said most reporters at the Telegraph-Journal do their best to keep the stories balanced, although some are more likely to run with the editor's pitch than others.

"I happen to agree with the newspaper that the Irving deal (to locate the Irving Oil building on Long Wharf) is a good one. But sometimes I read the stories and roll my eyes."

Only once was the city hall reporter summoned into the publisher's office because he wasn't taking direction well.

"They were concerned. They were going to throw all this money to go after city management and 'you don't seem into it.' And I wasn't."

But Mazerolle was not taken off his beat or demoted in any way.

With any paper, agendas become clear with issue-based series run prominently on fronts. It's not uncommon for an editor to have a clear idea of what ground he wants the reporter to cover. Whether the series is viewed as good journalism or simply a publicity campaign depends on what new information is unearthed and how fairly the product succeeds in addressing the questions readers have – whether it makes readers think. Mazerolle said Telegraph-Journal series don't pass that test. They stick closely to the editorial line.

"Most of the series [managing editor] Ron [Barry] draws up. The ward one was a great example.<sup>26</sup> Most of the anti-ward stuff was token. You could read any one story, it was me, it was balanced. But the overall arc of the series, well, there was like one story that acknowledged there was an argument against it."

While he doesn't doubt that editorial direction flows from the publisher's office, he said Jamie gets excited about good stories, for better or worse is "awards driven"; and rarely interferes in the newsroom.

"In fact, Jamie's careful about that. Both Ron and [city editor] Peter (McGuire) were on vacation and there was something he was really interested in, but he told [editorial editor] Eric he didn't want to go into the newsroom. So Jamie's interested in stories, but he doesn't say: 'do this now!"

Mazerolle considers Jamie Irving a "good publisher": he has established an editorial direction and put managers in place who execute it; he's reorganized the night desk and cut down on errors; the newsroom has 12 fewer employees, yet the product has improved, at least in comparison to the one put out by the previous publisher, Jonathan Franklin, between 2000 and 2005.

"If he could figure how to get the morale of his newsroom up, he'd be a great publisher."

Mazerolle notes that a recent human resources survey revealed that the Telegraph-Journal newsroom had the lowest job satisfaction rate, not only within Brunswick News, but JDI. Sixty per cent said they were actively looking for other employment.

"The newsroom were giddy when those came back. I guess it's like misery loves company. I said to Chilibeck or someone 'I've never seen the newsroom happier."

When the publisher addressed reporters and editors to announce changes to the work flow on the night desk, Jamie tried to fire up the troops with "I just want the machine to work better."

Said Mazerolle, "He didn't see the irony in that."

Jamie Irving is a big film buff, particularly fond of gangster movies. In discussions with editors and, occasionally reporters, he likes to quote from them to illustrate a point.

"He'll say," said Mazerolle, "it's like that scene from [Martin Scorsese's] "Casino" where the guy gets all mad because some of the muffins have a few blueberries in them and some have a whole lot of blueberries. 'And I want them all to have the same number of blueberries!'

"I find myself talking to myself," said Mazerolle. 'That guy was crazy.' That was the point of that scene."

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# The family newspaper

On the day of my job interview for the editor's position at the Telegraph, I met Jamie Irving and Victor Mlodecki in the lobby of the J.D. Irving building in Saint John. They wore business suits; still working a regular shift at CBC, I was dressed casually. When the elevator door opened at the fifth floor, standing there was Rino Volpé. I sensed the awkwardness from Jamie and Mlodecki immediately. (As I later pieced together, Rino had been fired as Brunswick News vice president and Mlodecki became his

successor.)

Rino didn't act nervously though. It was like he was meeting old war buddies. He mentioned something about doing contract work for JDI, labour problems at some mill somewhere. He was laughing and gesticulating, moving like a bantam, and reminded everyone, in his rural rough French accent, that he'd learned his business style on his family farm.

"When the chickens are squawking and running round all crazy, you know what you do? You grab the craziest one," he said, putting his fists up in the air to demonstrate, "and snap the neck."

Rino took the elevator down. I was ushered into the J.D. Irving boardroom.

So what can I tell you about the family and their newspaper in my year and a half inside?

The Telegraph-Journal, despite its ownership, is not nearly as bad a newspaper as its worst critics suggest. While not, as it clearly was for much of the 1990s, the best newspaper in Atlantic Canada, it still breaks more stories than its media competitors and successfully brings important issues to the forefront of public discussion. Columnists John Chilibeck and Marty Klinkenberg (Klinkenberg, part of the Miami Herald's Pulitizer Prizenominated team for environmental reporting for coverage of the Exxon Valdez oil spill), won the NNA for entertainment writing for 2007) are worth reading whether you love them or hate them. The writing, while often obtuse on the provincial side, still reaches a higher journalistic standard than many papers in the region. While the front page has often become eye-glazing, the city section slums in the tabloid world of crime and corruption fighting. It's sharp looking. Like a controversial work of art, at least observers aren't indifferent to it.

Moreover, since Jamie Irving asserted his will as publisher, the

family has more control of the paper's content than at any time since the Davey hearings.

Yet a question for Jamie Irving would be: has this been a pyrrhic victory? With the paper drifting in the direction of advocacy journalism too often connected to the economic interests of the owner, has it tarnished what's at the core of its brand, its authority?

As interviews for this piece suggest, it's by no means unanimous. Many readers believe that the paper's industrial development agenda is exactly what New Brunswick and Saint John needs at this time. But you don't have to go too far to hear former subscribers talk about why they don't read the Telegraph-Journal anymore. People are talking about the paper's agenda; and, once again, people are talking about the Irving Press.

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Okay. Here's my primer, based on my observations of the paper and discussions I had with Jamie when I was editor, on how, and to what degree, the Irving family has impressed its will on the paper since Jamie took over. (I have tried to be as fair as possible and would have liked to record Jamie's response to my informed speculation, but he declined to be interviewed.)

The front page. Think Jim Irving. As the chief operating officer of the forestry giant JDI, Jim Irving has more at stake on an ongoing basis with the provincial government than other Irving companies. Jamie's immediate family is intensely interested in the operation of the province. Jim, Jamie and J.K. all have a huge appetite for what most readers consider boring: the dry data of political and business news. (Jacques Poitras also thinks the newspaper is designed for Jamie's father. "You know how Stephen King in his book on writing said you need to have an ideal reader ... Jamie thinks in terms of what his father wants to read the next day.")

Does Jamie love holding court at editorial boards? Of course. By

producing the paper that power brokers read and respond to, Jamie has become a power broker. To be fair, the publisher believes the province can be run more professionally and efficiently and feels the paper has a duty to document government in its minutiae.

Since Shawna Richer, a former Globe and Mail reporter, became editor in the spring of 2008, the front page has started to loosen up. Politics and business still dominate but human interest and even cultural stories are starting to reappear. <sup>26</sup>

Why is the Telegraph-Journal inching back into the mainstream? Perhaps a realization by editors and the publisher that the front-page was not being read widely outside of business and political elites.

Economic boosterism. Think Irving family. Economic cheerleading is in the family's DNA. As K.C. Irving told the Davey Commission, what's good for Irving is good for New Brunswick. Short of doing morning exercises together, employees at businesses like JDI exude a positive outlook and loyalty to company foreign to most journalists. As Jamie took over editorial direction in early 2006, I tried to argue with him that there's a line after which reporting economic development becomes Board of Trade boosterism. He answered me by saying that Saint John had never had a positive newspaper as fast-growing Moncton has. What is important, he said, is not how journalistic wet blankets thought, but what the average citizen believed.

If some of the worst excesses of Jamie Irving's Telegraph have been toned down in late 2008, that can't be said of the economic boosterism. (On the day I'm writing this, a time in which a worldwide recession increasingly appears likely, the banner headline on the city front reads: Exciting times ahead: New \$50 million, 350-home subdivision proves city is engine of N.B.'s growth (Sept. 26, 2008), all of which might turn out to be true, but can hardly be extrapolated from the building of eight homes, four

of which have been purchased.)

City hall: Think Jamie. This is the sandbox the publisher has the most room to play in. As his family's reaction to the Terry and Margaret Totten stories suggests, no Irving conspiracy is in play here despite what critics read into it. Jamie's favourite magazine is Vanity Fair; that combination of seriousness, celebrity and muckraking, as well as his mercurial personality, are most reflected on these pages.

Jamie has thrown around his weight in the city, but has been a bit of a cannonball in the pool: big splash, little depth. Take the mayoralty race of the spring of 2008. Despite the tone of coverage, which manifested itself with "Hooton hits a home run" and "Santa Claus not voting for Court," Ivan Court nearly doubled Michelle Hooton's vote total. It's probably true, as John Mazerolle contends, that the paper supported Hooton simply because she was the best candidate; but it's equally true, as Robert Jones said, Hooton became "Mr. Irving's candidate" in coffee shop talk around town.

As St. Thomas University journalism lecturer Julian Walker said, "if there's anything about New Brunswickers – normally they're very quiet, even deferential – but they'll assert their independence when kicked, scratched, bullied or whatever."

**Diversity of opinion.** Think Crown lands versus private woodlands.

It's simply not true that the Telegraph-Journal smothers the debate of ideas in New Brunswick. Jamie Irving encourages the publications of op-ed pieces by political and community leaders. He wants the page to be the forum for ideas in the province. Despite his complaints about the Telegraph-Journal's news coverage, the Tories interim leader (until November 2008) Jeannot Volpé had 10 op-ed pieces and a handful of letters printed in the paper in the last year. (Beyond that, the Liberal and Conservatives

have Saturday columns that amount to little more than the parties' spin on the previous week.) From an outsider's point of view, it's impossible to know what letters-to-the editor or op-ed pieces have been rejected for publication, but I see a wide range of letters from all sides of the political spectrum. (Letters undoubtedly have been rejected, but you can hardly blame them for not printing vitriol about the family, as you wouldn't for publishing personal attacks on any other family or public figure.) On the other hand, Irving ownership of the media, despite becoming an issue in 2007-2008, has not been debated on the Telegraph-Journal pages.

To take a cynical view, you can come to the throne and leave your petition.

On the other hand, news coverage has become much more of a monoculture. Because the publisher has narrowed the paper's focus to business and politics; because he has established a top down approach to story ideas and put editors in place to bluntly carry out that agenda; and because, I believe, management has chosen in-house columnists inclined by their views to follow the editorial compass, the range of discussion and issues has narrowed on the news pages. (As Jacques Poitras notes, "it's almost like Marty [Klinkenberg] is in a category of his own. He gets to do people stuff and no one else does. It's a strict division of labour.) Most disappointingly, a Telegraph-Journal series can no longer be expected to explore an issue and stimulate discussion; they are often little more than publicity campaigns to support editorial positions.

Two points here: Jamie Irving is giving his immediate family what it wants, and what he thinks the province and city need. Jamie's father and grandfather do not like to be surprised at the breakfast table by finding their names in the paper. Their business is private. They do not want to be named, except for accomplishment and philanthropy; they do not want disclosure of conflicts of interest – they are like children who cover their eyes and believe no one sees

them. The Irvings have been uncomfortable exercising this degree of control over the newspaper since the days of Ralph Costello. Order has been restored.

Moreover, there's a co-opt-and-conquer strategy at work here. Give political, business and community leaders a say on the op-ed pages (and the arts community with the Saturday arts supplement, Salon), but ensure the message from news pages is clearly representative of the family interests and positions. The family does not want provincial politicians threatening them behind closed doors, as happened in the late years of the Lord government; but also when columnist Dalton Camp criticized the Liberal government before the 1999 election, which it ultimately lost to the Tories. (Stevens, G. pp. 324)

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Jamie Irving wants to put out a good, if agenda driven, newspaper. His definition of a good newspaper isn't the same as most journalism professors, but that doesn't make it a bad paper. Putting aside the merits of the business model in a predominantly rural province of 750,000, the Telegraph-Journal can champion an economic development agenda, as surely as it can have a political or social agenda. Jamie and his branding guru, Stuart Baker, made it clear to me that they wanted to use the authority and integrity latent in the Telegraph-Journal brand to create a newspaper that would lead and modernize New Brunswick.

But the key to exercising authority is having it. And this is the double-edged sword any publisher or editor of the Telegraph-Journal has to manage: How can the paper be authoritative, a newspaper that readers consider thoughtful and trustworthy; and at the same time be so obviously on so many occasions the political organ of a family with vast economic interests in the province? Too many people look at the paper now, as Robert Jones said, and see conspiracy, not authority.

"This is the city's newspaper and the province's main newspaper and it really should be a public trust. It's an important thing. It's a shame to have to worry about having to sift through it for corporate messages and agenda messages that have nothing to do with the news; and trying to figure out what the real story is. I'm sure 80 per cent of the time the stories are just stories but you don't know."

While the paper can never be inoculated from Irving conspiracy theorists, it can be grounded in quality reporting. It seems to me that Jamie has (until the summer of 2008 at least) leaned more towards pleasing his father than practising rigourous journalism, or even selling newspapers. Often the Telegraph-Journal asks the right questions; too often under Jamie's stewardship it doesn't appear to have the curiosity or perhaps the talent to adequately explore the answers. The management tools at this disposal – editorial boards, series, headlines and placement – require a craftsman's eye and touch; he has wielded them bluntly – too obviously impressing the editorial positions of the Telegraph-Journal on its news pages. News is nuanced; the Irving way is not.

Although the hard business-political focus of the paper seems to be softening, it's naïve to think Jamie is about to rediscover his inner Gorbachev.

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Once, Jamie pulled my Saturday editor's column, one I'd written after J.K. Irving made a rare visit to the office. I wasn't surprised, just a little disappointed. My point was simple and seemingly benign: The paper should not apologize for being Irving-owned. Like other Irving products, its reputation should rest on the quality of its product and people.

Jamie argued that his family wasn't quite ready for that kind of openness about its newspaper holdings. He gave me the old line that, "just because you're paranoid doesn't mean people aren't out

to get you."

We chuckled. I couldn't figure out for the longest time what I found so disturbingly familiar about my laugh, but it finally struck me.

Back in the mid-1980s, I was the lone reporter working the weekend shift. I hardly had a chance to sip my coffee before the police scanner started going berserk. It seemed fires were starting all through the uptown business district.

I spent most of the morning and afternoon on the street getting the facts and the colour nailed down: the tanks below the Irving gas bar on King Square had leaked: the gas had run downhill and entered the basements of dozens of businesses. Half a dozen shop owners had turned on the heat when they opened for Saturday business and been greeted with an explosion. A few buildings had burned to the ground. It could have been much worse.

When I got back to 210 Crown, Costello was waiting for me. He'd called in a couple of other reporters to work the phones, as well as his best rewrite man.

"What happened?" he grouched, as I rounded the corner into the newsroom.

"What happened!" The question surprised me and I forgot my usual deference toward him. "The Irving station leaked and the whole damn city nearly blew up!"

Costello stared me down and scowled:

"Esso! – you mean to say Esso! Get it right!"

Then I heard something from him I hadn't until then – a weary and sad laugh.

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### **Endnotes**

- 1. The Carleton FreePress published its final issue on October 28, 2008. Editor Bob Rupert was quoted on CBC.ca as saying, "When you're facing that kind of money and that kind of monopoly in a bad economy, it's very tough." The closing was not covered in the Telegraph-Journal.
- 2. In the rest of the country the trial was about concentration of media ownership; of course it's seen that way in New Brunswick too. But it's also understood in these parts as an epic brawl between K.C. Irving and the Liberal Party over Premier Louis Robichaud's policy of Equal Opportunity that spilled out onto the national stage. The combative Senator Charles McElman spearheaded the case against the Irvings. The former Robichaud executive assistant never forgave the newspapers for their attacks on the program and (in case of Wardell's Gleaner) borderline anti-French sentiments.
- 3. The Telegraph-Journal has some press configuration issues that were probably argued for the D section placement, but my guess is that downplaying the paper's opinions was, at least in part, an attempt to avoid the obvious conflict of interest running an Irvingowned newspaper.
- 4. The flagship of the Irving press has been controlled by J.K. and Arthur Irving (born 1928) since the Davey Commission, and J.K. was, at this time, in the process of buying all other family interests in the Irving newspaper company, Brunswick News. The deal went through in early July 2005. As Jamie told me, his side of the family, which controls the Maritime forestry giant JDI, had reservations about the LNG deal from the start. Moreover, as the

- anti-LNG, anti-Irving sentiments grew to near mob levels in Saint John including racist vandalism on a pro-deal councillor's car, J.K. Irving was furious that Irving Oil was undoing all the good community relations and philanthropy his side of the family had undertaken since the death of K.C. Irving in 1992. (Sawler) Adding to all this, there's not much love lost between the large, hard-drinking publisher and his svelte and sophisticated cousin Kenneth, the chief executive officer of the oil company.
- 5. From the perspective of the media at least, JDI is by far the most accessible of the principal Irving-owned companies. Its vice-president of communications, Mary Keith, is a tough nitpicker, but accessible and respected. Irving Oil, although it has loosened up somewhat in recent years, is still dominated by the presence of K.C. Irving's second born, Arthur (born 1931), who while generally considered the most charismatic of the Irving brothers, most resembles the patriarch in his inclination for secrecy and his indifference to public opinion. Government officials at the legislature and Saint John city hall, however, tend to speak favourably about doing business with Kenneth Irving.
- 6. CBC beat the TJ to the punch on some stories including the revelation that the information provided to council by Enterprise Saint John on the tax breaks offered by other communities for LNG terminals was inaccurate and misleading. And an exclusive Telegraph interview with Kenneth Irving (March 16) turned out to be a total puff piece and was viewed as such in the community, although I will testify that this was a result of editorial neglect not control.
- 7. To be fair, no one argues that the combination of the rising Canadian dollar and power rates hasn't strained the fortunes of the New Brunswick forestry industry and, in particular, pulp and paper producers. Since 2005, pulp or paper mills major employers in company towns such as Nackawic, Bathurst and Campbellton –

went under. In some cases, a generation-long lack of investment in new equipment has to be factored into the decision to close up shop in New Brunswick. In the case of UPM-Kymmenne pulp and paper mills in Miramichi, business conditions in New Brunswick have a more obvious connection to the closure. A few days after the Finnish forestry giant put 600 Miramichiers out of work with its pre-Christmas 2007 decision, it announced plans to invest \$1.3 billion, building new mills in Russia.

- 8. A week later, the Graham government announced some relief for those hit hardest by rising energy costs. The hundred-dollar-ayear rebate for low-income families was renewed; with an additional \$16 million made available to pulp and paper mills through property taxes reductions. As reported by CBC New Brunswick on November 13, 2008, Irving Paper alone has received more than 60 per cent of the \$10 million doled out by the program so far. Altogether, JDI has received about 70 per cent. Pressures of rising fuel prices did not go away. In 2007, when the new provincial government of Premier Shawn Graham refused to turn back NB Power's 1997 rate increase of 9.6 per cent, an editorial (The power rate is the problem, June 23, 2007) called the government's principle of cost-based power rates a "narrow, ideological position." In an editorial a few days later (Focus energy debate on the core issue, June 29, 2007) after acting Leader of the Official Opposition, Jeannot Volpé, raised concerns that residential users may end up footing the bill if industrial rates were subsidized, he was accused of "stridency" and "fear mongering."
- 9. The January 25, 2008 article contained no sources other than the three forestry executives. A January 26 article (Forestry sectors say industry in crisis) compiled the province's reaction to the proposal. Premier Shawn Graham said there would be help for the industry. In the ninth paragraph, he's quoted as saying, "It's not an issue that NB Power can deal with. It's an issue that government must deal

- with." On January 30, an article (Fiscal policy experts cool to forestry execs' proposal) appeared on the business page.
- 10. While it certainly should be asked whether CBC would have devoted as much coverage to the story if the offence had been committed by another forestry company or the McCains, the dominant market position of Brunswick News and its owners has created, as Lisa Hrabluk notes, a kind of "asymmetrical journalism" in New Brunswick media where CBC often overplays Irving stories.
- 11. The longshoremen's union has vehemently protested the tentative deal between the company, the port authority and the city, with former union local president and now Saint John West MLA, Abel LeBlanc, saying the Irvings would be better off on Partridge Island, the 19<sup>th</sup> century quarantine site for sick and dying Irish immigrants.
- 12. With little fanfare, JDI invested \$550 million in its Saint John paper mill during the last 10 years, weaning itself off newsprint in favour of higher grade papers suitable for catalogues. Moreover, with the industry downturn thinning its forest competitors in New Brunswick, JDI has increased its Crown land wood allotments. In the last 10 years, it has also widened its vast private land holdings in New Brunswick to over 1.5 million acres.
- 13. Shawna Richer was named editor of the Telegraph-Journal in June of 2008. While the Starbucks-Tim's branding plate still seems to be in place, the paper has shown more inclination to put people-oriented and in-depth stories on its front page. From May 2006 until Richer's appointment, there was no official editor. Jamie Irving ran story meetings and oversaw a triumvirate of editors: David Stonehouse, senior editor in charge of the province and business; Ron Barry, senior editor overseeing the city and sports; and Richer as Saturday editor.

- 14. Lord Beaverbrook took K.C. Irving to his gallery in Fredericton to view his latest purchase, a miniature of Queen Elizabeth I. Irving asked if it was true that he had spent \$150,000 on something so small: "Just think of how much pulp wood you could have bought with that." To which Beaverbrook replied: "Oh Kenneth, you have no soul." (Demont, pp. 58)
- 15. For example, on the day after major swaths of downtown Fredericton were flooded, the front page story included quotes from the Emergency Measures Organization, the Premier and the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce, but no flood victims. The death of Paul-Emile Durelle was covered on A2 as a 300-word legislature story on the home-heating assistance program. The Telegraph-Journal did not staff the Tobique land claim press conference but picked up the CP story.
- 16. In August of 2006, the Liberal government dialled back its early French immersion position. Early immersion will now start in Grade 3 rather than Grade 5 as Education Minister Kelly Lamrock had proposed. The program had begun in Grade 1 until the fall of 2008.
- 17. The series ran after the province decided that Saint John could keep its university. Part 1 (Destiny's child: Community leaders believe Saint John needs a university one that's controlled locally) focused on whether the Saint John campus should become an independent university. It didn't include any comment on the downside of severing ties to a nationally and internationally recognized institution; Part 4 (Miner's misunderstanding; Education Report's co-author contends that 'polytechnic' was undervalued by those who reacted negatively to its use over 'university') was essentially an interview with the PSE report's author, Rick Miner, who attributed the poor reception of the report to the public's misunderstanding of the word "polytechnic,"

without exploring any failings of the report itself. Despite the Telegraph-Journal's insistence that the report on post-secondary education is "a detailed, comprehensive and fairly dispassionate argument" (A Pox on Politics, September 19, 2007) it was the lack of detail that doomed it. Protests, initially dominated by faculty and students, grew to include a broad swath of the city's establishment. The people of Saint John did not want to lose their university.

- 18. A similar situation occurred in 1998-99 before the provincial election. Dalton Camp was writing a column on New Brunswick politics exclusively for the Telegraph-Journal. As the column increasingly targeted the governing Liberals and, more often than not, found its way to the front page, members of Premier Camille Theriault's office began complaining to TJ editor Philip Lee. A cabinet minister, rumoured to be Alan Graham (the father of Shawn Graham), phoned the Irvings complaining about Camp's column. As natural resource minister, Graham would have overseen forestry licensing, as well as contracts for coming natural gas distribution. When Lee lost his job, J.K. and Jim Irving made it clear that his refusal to deal with the Camp column contributed to his dismissal. Camp was then moved off the front page. (Stevens, G. pp. 324-327)
- 19. The one independent columnist who consistently questions industry and provincial government policy, Janice Harvey, writes on the environment and is apparently untouchable because, as Jamie told me, J.K. Irving likes to read her.
- 20. As well as saying the Irvings would be better off on Partridge Island, the 19<sup>th</sup> century quarantine site for sick and dying Irish immigrants, LeBlanc suggested, the day after the deal was approved by council, that violence could erupt over unions losing power and influence in Saint John. LeBlanc argued it was an overheard "private remark" not meant for publication.

- 21. A search of the Telegraph-Journal archives produced 30 stories including Margaret Totten and Florida; and 60 with a reference to Margaret Totten since March 2007.
- 22. The city's top administrator argued that he was asked by the mayor to replace his wife; that the Tottens, not the city, were paying for her airfare; that he and his wife were staying miles away from the convention hotel; that Margaret's doctors had approved a rest and relaxation trip; and that since Margaret had an appointment at the Lahey Clinic in Boston the next week to discuss her migraine headaches when her husband would be on holidays, it was convenient for them to travel together to Florida.
- 23. Totten vs. Totten (John Mazerolle news story); The Margaret Totten saga (Chilibeck column); Here's why bosses shouldn't date or marry employees (Chilibeck column); Thumbs down for Terry Totten (John Mazerolle news story); and An embarrassment of a leader at city hall (Chilibeck column)
- 24. The paper's coverage of Mayor Ivan Court's every move secret meetings, leaked briefing notes leading up to the council vote on Irving Oil's waterfront proposal bordered on the hysterical especially since everyone in the city, except perhaps the paper, knew the mayor would have no choice but to vote for it. Nonetheless, it was entertaining in a "Where's Waldo" way.
- 25. Saint John voted at large for city councillors until the spring 2008 election. John Mazerolle wrote a series of articles promoting the idea of a ward system prior to the fall 2007 referendum.
- 26. On Saturday October 4, 2008, the front page featured the story of Paul-Emile Durelle, the man who froze to death the previous winter when his heat was cut off; a story the paper seemed to have

gone out of its way to ignore or downplay when it was actually news.