Editorial

Welcome to the final issue of 2010. Our opening article by Beverley Best is a theoretical reflection on the affective dimensions of life within capitalism and neoliberal economics, “The Problem of Utopia: Capitalism, Depression, and Representation.” Best argues, from a feminist perspective, for utopian thinking and activist sensibilities and actions. With this is mind, it is fitting that culture jammers par excellence, The Yes Men, grace the cover of this issue. Known for their infiltration of the BBC World News in 2004, the Yes Men have consistently addressed the need for government and corporate responsibility and found humorous ways to point out when it is absent. In addition to their performances at corporate trade-shows and meetings, such as “GO-Expo,” Canada’s largest oil conference held in Calgary, Alberta (2007), the Yes Men’s collabo-rative projects have included the production of versions of major newspaper campaigns that present the news they would like to see.

Also included in this issue are two other articles that speak to the intersection between communication, public discourse, and the politics of everyday life. In “Reading Chatelaine: Dr. Marion Hilliard and 1950s Women’s Health Advice,” Kaitlynn Mendes provides both a detailed analysis of Hilliard’s best-selling advice book and her columns for Chatelaine. Building on the fine work of Valerie Korinek, Mendes teasing out the nego-tiation with the values of femininity and motherhood in that era, pointing out the ironies and contradictions this produces in Hilliard’s texts. Alissa Sklar and Jeffrey Derevensky round out the contributions in this section with “Way to Play: Analyzing Gambling Ads for Their Appeal to Underage Youth,” which examines advertising campaigns for gambling in Québec and their potential appeal to younger audiences.

The Yes Men’s subversive critiques of politics and the news media also speak to our special sub-theme on Media Convergence in Québec, co-edited with Colette Brin of Laval University. A decade after a series of major cross-media transactions in the Canadian media industry shifted the focus of the concentration debate toward convergence, the future of media ownership and news production remains uncertain. Faced with the inexorable and steady decline of audience and advertising revenues, particularly in daily newspapers and conventional television networks, coupled to the immediate impact of a recession, media companies have undertaken to rationalize and restructure their news operations. This special bilingual section on newsroom convergence examines the implications for journalism, forced to reinvent itself in a context of rapid change and professional precarity, as it relates to issues of occupational culture, newsroom management, and public policy. Several of these articles are follow-up studies to previous research.

The section opens with Éric Georges’ incisive examination of the term convergence, “Re-reading the Notion of ‘Convergence’ in Light of Recent Changes to the Culture and Communication Industries in Canada,” which provides a theoretical and
historical framing for the series of short reports and empirical studies (the French-language version of this article is available online at cje-online.ca). In 2007, Marc-François Bernier conducted a large-scale quantitative study of the rejection, by Québec journalists, of media convergence. His article in this issue, “les journalistes face à la convergence des médias au Québec : un aperçu des raisons d’un rejet massif,” provides qualitative data that articulates the reasons for this rejection in more granular detail. Colette Brin and Walter Soderlund’s “Innovating in a Crisis: Canadian Media Actors Assess the State of Convergence” gauges the current situation and speculates about the future of convergence in Canada. Based on interviews, conducted in 2009 and 2010 with executives and journalists of various media groups and other stakeholders, this report builds on their 2007 content analysis of convergence practices in television networks and newspapers owned by Canwest Global, CTVglobemedia, and Quebecor. Renaud Carbasse’s “Du solide et du concret: concentration de la propriété et convergence journalistique au sein du groupe Quebecor Média” provides a timely analysis of Quebecor’s multi-platform strategies. David Pritchard and Marc-François Bernier’s “Media Convergence and Changes in Québec Journalists’ Professional Values” is a longitudinal study, drawing on survey data, on how the technological and business aspects of media convergence may have influenced the professional values of unionized journalists working in French-language news organizations in Québec. Their article traces the evolution of journalists’ values during a period of rapid change.

Commentaries have provided a way for members of the intellectual community to present timely interventions in public issues or to raise scholarly debate. This issue features two commentaries. The first, “Losing our Census,” by Michael and Gordon Darroch reflects on the demise of the compulsory long-form census. We end with Ira Wagman’s provocative reflections on the default to policy pronouncements “On the Policy Reflex in Canadian Communication Studies.” Both articles address the methodological issues of how we do communications research. Darroch and Darroch’s commentary addresses some of the research challenges we will face in our field as a result of the loss of accurate statistical data while Ira Wagman’s commentary, “On the Policy Reflex in Canadian Communication Studies” asks what source materials we might need in order to better understand how policies are made.

Finally, it is with great pleasure that the Canadian Journal of Communication introduces Dr. Michael Dorland as our next editor. Dr. Dorland is a pre-eminent communications scholar with both a national and international reputation who will bring new energy and ideas to the journal. I look forward to working with Michael over the next year, as we make the transition into a new editorial era.

Kim Sawchuk, Concordia University, Montreal

Colette Brin, Université Laval, Québec City