MERCY KILLING, cont.

profit pie between the Supplement companies and the local newspaper owners with the latter demanding bigger slices and the result that not enough money goes into editorial excellence; 2. The supplement is actually a giveaway not sought by all readers and coming into homes uninvited it is not valued by them or by advertisers; 3. The automatic circulation increase leads to a built-in law of mass media, the bigger the circulation the more conservative the content as editors respond to a large common denominator, and 4. Backward-marching publishers of many dailies become censors who have the power to throw the supplement out of their papers if they find the articles are too outspoken. As the Biggest Journalistic Gun in Town, the local publisher perceives the Supplement as The Stranger. Even in more independent days, The Stranger anticipated Bigmouth and seldom or never showed his gun. Now he's in the family.

In U.S. weekly supplements such as "This Week," this circuit of Communication and Feedback, whether overt or inferred, has proceeded to the point where the magazine has become mush.

The entire situation raises questions concerning mass media in the modern industrial state, more basic than dealt with here, but discussion of that will have to be reserved for a later issue.

WHAT ARE THE QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS?

Taking Marshall McLuhan's observation that twentieth century man is someone running down the street shouting, "I know all the answers! What are the questions?" I asked students in my class on Communication and Mass Media at York University to submit one question in writing per seminar. Here are some of the questions that are as informative as answers. (Editor)

- If the State enforced tighter controls on property acquisitions and transactions with the newspaper industry, would the public as a whole obtain better news reporting?
- Isn't it sometimes important to stir the emotions in reporting without tampering with the facts because people can then be moved to act, to feel empathy, to understand?
- Don't the editors of Time magazine have strong enough principles to reject distorted news?
- Are the dispatches from local papers to C.P. edited and if so does that mean the news content in Eastern Canada could vary from the news content in Western Canada?
- I disagree with a statement in Media Mosaic that "sensationalism does not sell newspapers anymore." A prime example is the Toronto Sun.
- Senator Keith Davey's report states that media owners say they are mere spectators which of course is not true for they control the presentation of the news, but I wonder...how about the public? Are we mere spectators or can we change what is being presented in the paper?
- In what way can we retain private enterprise in the mass media along with some monopolies and yet maintain open, free and divergent expression of opinion reflecting what is best in a democracy?
- McLuhan has been accepted as a communications philosopher. Many of his phrases, i.e. "The medium is the message" may be interpreted in various contexts, depending on one's own experiences. Is this relevant communication?