

CONRAD BLACK: A TYCOON IN TROUBLE

Introduction

Focus

This *News in Review* module is an examination of the collapse of the newspaper empire of Conrad Black, one of Canada's most successful businessmen. We examine Black's rise to power, his extravagant lifestyle, and the circumstances that led to his losing control of Hollinger International, the source of most of his wealth.

 Sections marked with this symbol indicate content suitable for younger viewers.

The headlines could hardly have been more dramatic. “Black’s Darkest Day” said *The Globe and Mail*. “The Fall of a Media Baron” and “Peer Today, Gone Tomorrow” wrote *The Economist*. “Black Eye for Conrad Black” chimed in *Newsweek*. These are just a few samples of the media reaction to the collapse of Conrad Black’s control of his newspaper empire at Hollinger International.

At the time of his losing control, Black was one of the most powerful media lords in Britain. The London *Daily Telegraph*, the *Jerusalem Post*, and the *Chicago Sun-Times* were his three leading newspapers, but Hollinger International controlled over 200 others, mostly in the U.S. At the height of his influence, however, Black controlled over 650 newspapers, including 58 of the 104 Canadian dailies. Lacking only a Toronto outlet and a national voice, in 1998 Black obtained the *Financial Post*. He incorporated it into a new newspaper, the *National Post*, which became the leading publication of conservatism in Canada.

Black’s attitude toward the Liberal Canadian government, never positive to begin with, soured even further in 1999

when it blocked his appointment to a peerage in Britain. Black, who is notorious for the number of lawsuits he has brought against those he feels have defamed him, sued the Prime Minister, and lost.

The following year, Black began selling off his Canadian newspapers, including a 50 per cent interest in the *National Post*, mostly to CanWest Global Communications. In 2001 he renounced his Canadian citizenship and was appointed Lord Black of Crossharbour. The sale of the rest of his Canadian media assets soon followed.

Canadians nevertheless have remained fascinated with Conrad Black and his wife, Barbara Amiel. As the story of their alleged misdeeds at Hollinger unfolded, few could resist being amazed at the catalogue of expenses the company claimed to have been charged by the Blacks. Duff McDonald (*Vanity Fair*, April 2004) has written: “Charming, erudite, eloquent, and impeccably well-mannered, Black can be arrogant, self-righteous, snobbish, and thin-skinned.” The continuing saga of this complex man—corporate wizard or robber baron—will likely remain newsworthy for years to come.

To Discuss

Most of Black’s media empire consisted of newspapers. Are you aware of any other media barons whose fame is based on the newspapers they own? How much of Canada’s interest in Black do you think is based on his newspaper ownership, and how much on his ability to make his life and opinions newsworthy? Were you aware of Conrad Black before viewing this news item?

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Video Review

To learn more about this Canadian tycoon, record your answers to the questions as you watch the video.

Part I

1. What did Conrad Black have to give up in order to receive his British peerage?

2. Why was Black expelled from Upper Canada College?

3. Why did Black turn to newspaper publishing as his major interest, according to Peter Newman?

4. Which newspaper purchase gave Black the means for his entrance into British society?

5. What percentage of Canada's daily newspapers did Black once control?

_____ %

6. According to Peter Newman, why did Black found the *National Post*?

7. Why did Black sue Prime Minister Jean Chrétien?

8. Why did Black have to sell his Canadian newspapers when he renounced his Canadian citizenship?

9. How much money did Black and his associates receive in management fees from Hollinger International?

10. How much money does the director's report accuse Black and his associates of looting from the company?

Further Research

To learn more about the candidates for Greatest Canadian consider watching some or all of the programs in the *Greatest Canadian* series, which runs from October 17 to November 29 on CBC Television. Information on many important Canadians may be found at www.cbc.ca/greatest.

Part II

At the end of the video, Peter Newman makes the following statement: "It's a perfectly sad story for Canada because we don't have that many people who have that kind of potential, you know. The elements combined to produce a Conrad Black are very rare. I think the gene pool throws up one of these—one Conrad Black—a generation if we're lucky . . . and we lost him."

Newman seems to be saying that Black was a great man (and specifically a great Canadian) who lost (or never fully gained) the respect and admiration of his fellow citizens.

The idea of greatness is one that the CBC is asking all Canadians to ponder in 2004 as it begins a series of programs designed to help the country choose "the Greatest Canadian."

As you watch the video a second time, jot down in the spaces below those qualities and achievements of Conrad Black that you feel demonstrate why he should be considered a great Canadian. Also list any qualities and actions that you feel indicate that he should not be considered a great Canadian. When you have completed your lists, compare the results with those of your classmates.

Why Conrad Black Should Be Considered a "Great Canadian"	Why Conrad Black Should <i>Not</i> Be Considered a "Great Canadian"

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Things Fall Apart

Did you know . . .

The SEC has been rather busy in recent years with financial scandals involving huge corporations such as Worldcom, Enron, and Tyco? Why do you think so much financial wrongdoing seems so prevalent these days?

Further Research

To follow the very complex affairs of Hollinger International, consider a visit to the company's official Web site at www.hollinger.com.

Conrad Black's control over the newspaper publishing empire called Hollinger International made him one of the most powerful newspaper magnates in the world. By 1996, Hollinger owned 58 of the 104 Canadian daily newspapers and was the third largest newspaper chain in the world by circulation. In the first six months of 1997, Hollinger had earnings of \$176-million on revenues of \$1.5-billion. Black sold his Australian interests and most of his Canadian ones by 2001, but Hollinger still controlled the London *Daily Telegraph*, the *Jerusalem Post*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and over 200 smaller publications.

Controlling an Empire

Black's control of Hollinger International was virtually absolute, through his ownership of what are called "super-voting shares." Black owned only 30.3 per cent of Hollinger International's combined equity. However, because each of his shares gave him 10 votes, this meant that he had control of 72.6 per cent of any vote. Thus, in reality, he dominated the affairs of Hollinger International.

Black's shares in Hollinger International, a company based in the U. S., are held by Hollinger Inc., a publicly traded corporation based in Toronto. In turn, Hollinger Inc. is 78.8 per cent owned by Ravelston. Ravelston is a private company owned by Black, his wife Barbara Amiel, and several Hollinger Inc. executives. Ravelston's earnings—hundreds of millions of dollars over the past seven years—consisted largely of management fees paid to a division called Ravelston Management Inc. by Hollinger International.

Enter Tweedy, Browne

Black's problems began in May 2003 with a letter from the fund-management firm Tweedy, Browne, a minor shareholder in Hollinger International. The letter was filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). It claimed that \$74-million paid directly to Black and other executives as part of the sale of newspapers in Canada and the U.S. belonged to Hollinger, not to Black and his associates. Tweedy, Browne demanded that the Hollinger board of directors investigate this claim.

Hollinger International's directors agreed to investigate, and soon announced that they would broaden their investigation to include other areas. A special committee led by Richard Breeden, a former chair of the SEC, was formed. One area was the huge management fees paid to Ravelston. In 2002, \$25.6-million was paid to Ravelston by Hollinger, and \$6.5-million of this went to Conrad Black.

One of Hollinger International's expense items that seemed to particularly upset many critics was the purchase of \$8-million worth of Franklin Roosevelt documents and memorabilia. It was hardly coincidental that Black had spent the previous year writing a biography of that U.S. president. Equally disturbing were the enormous amounts of Hollinger funds that had been spent to support the Blacks' extravagant lifestyle (see "An Opulent Lifestyle," page 23).

Exit Lord Black

By mid-November 2003, Black had been forced to resign his position as CEO of Hollinger International. The

Quote

"Black and Radler made it their business to line their pockets at the expense of Hollinger almost every day, in almost every way they could devise." — from the report, quoted in *The Globe and Mail*, February 14, 2004

Definition

Kleptocracy is a term that suggests a group of people that could not control their greed and regularly stole from others. Much of the Breeden Report uses the same kind of flowery, overripe language for which Black himself is famous. Do you think that this is merely coincidental?

Update

On October 8, 2004, the beleaguered Conrad Black got some good news when a Chicago court threw out a \$1.2-billion (U.S.) lawsuit against him. The "racketeering" charges levied by Hollinger International, Black's own firm were dismissed entirely.

investigation had concluded that Black and three of his fellow executives had received at least \$32-million in improper payments. As well as tendering his resignation, Black agreed to repay the unauthorized payments.

But the investigation rolled on. In December Black refused to testify before the SEC by invoking his right (in U.S. law) to avoid incriminating himself. Hollinger International demanded his resignation as chairman, and, in January, filed a lawsuit demanding that he and his associates repay more than \$200-million dollars. In February, Black countersued with an \$850-million defamation suit against Breeden and the three members of the Hollinger special committee. Among other accusations, Black claimed that "false and malicious representations" had caused him to be "pilloried and mocked mercilessly in the media throughout the world" (*The Globe and Mail*, February 14, 2004).

Breeden and the Hollinger committee struck back. They amended their suit against Black to seek damages of \$1.2-billion, and added two new defendants to the suit. One of these is Black's wife, Barbara Amiel.

Discussion

In an editorial on September 2, 2004, *The Globe and Mail* states that the Breeden Report is likely over-lenient in its criticism of Hollinger International's board of directors. "Hollinger International's entire board," it states, "failed in its basic duty to protect the interests of all shareholders. Yet most of the directors remain. . . . They claim that they were duped, but that doesn't let them off the hook. They should have the decency to resign." How much responsibility do you believe the board had in failing to oversee Black's management of the company—given that he had full power to appoint or fire directors?

The Breeden Report

At the end of August 2004, Hollinger International filed a 513-page document with the SEC that accused Black and his closest colleague, David Radler, of running what they called a "corporate kleptocracy" at Hollinger, literally looting the company over a seven-year period. The report claimed that, between 1997 and 2003, Black and Radler took 95.2 per cent of Hollinger International's net adjusted income (more than \$400-million). The report also slammed some directors of Hollinger International for failing, among other oversights, to review any of the company's \$225-million payments to Ravelston.

As Hollinger International plans to sell its major assets, and Conrad Black's media empire is shattered, Black is not about to give up the fight. In October, the press reported that Black planned to file a \$1.1-billion libel lawsuit in an Ontario court against the Hollinger special committee. Lord Black's newspapers will likely be full of his adventures for years to come.

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An Opulent Lifestyle

Quote

"While some people are offended by extreme opulence, I find it entertaining." — Conrad Black, *Maclean's* November 15, 1993

Quote

"Greed has been severely underestimated and denigrated, unfairly so, in my opinion. It is a motive that has not failed to move me from time to time." — Conrad Black, *Vanity Fair*, April 2004

Conrad and Barbara Amiel Black are notorious for their extravagant and lavish lifestyle. As Duff McDonald writes in *Vanity Fair* (April 2004), "Black and his wife have been variously described as living like potentates, 18th-century royals, and just plain billionaires, which they are not."

The Blacks are the proud owners of four residences. These include:

- An apartment on Park Avenue in New York
- A 1600-square-metre mansion on Ocean Drive in Palm Beach. The house has six bedrooms and a theatre; the property includes a two-storey guesthouse and a private beach. Rod Stewart is a neighbour. The property is valued at about \$18-million US.
- A four-storey, 11-bedroom home in London in the very fashionable Kensington neighbourhood. Among the amenities are eight bathrooms, an indoor pool, and two elevators. The house, which has quietly been offered for sale, is valued at least at \$26-million US.
- A home on a three-hectare property on Park Lane Circle in Toronto. It includes a three-storey library holding 15 000 volumes and a private chapel. It is likely worth \$20-million CDN.

Black is known as a determined collector. His collections include models (battleships), paintings, and automobiles. He has at least a dozen cars, including a 1954 Rolls Royce and a 1967 Cadillac limousine.

Black and Amiel are—or, at least until the current controversies, were—fabulous entertainers. They were especially noted for their London dinner

parties, and most of all for the annual summer party, which saw the house crowded with politicians, artists, and royalty. Many of these people evidently now avoid the Blacks; Black's lawsuit against Hollinger says that the accusations against him have caused him to be "spurned and shunned by persons who had personally accepted his hospitality in London, New York, and Palm Beach" (*The Globe and Mail* February 14, 2004).

Lady Black loves the good life. In 2002, Amiel told a *Vogue* reporter that she had "an extravagance that knows no bounds." This might be demonstrated by a visit to her dressing suite in her London home, where the *Vogue* writer was shown "a fur closet, a sweater closet, a closet for shirts and T-shirts, and a closet so crammed with evening gowns that the overflow has to be kept in yet more closets downstairs" (*Vanity Fair* April 2004). Other extravagances included more than 100 pairs of Manolo Blahnik shoes. She is also very fond of large diamonds, and bought a natural pearl and diamond brooch so big that she can't wear it and has to keep it in a deposit box.

The Breeden Report Accusations

The Breeden Report alleges that the Blacks did not hesitate to use Hollinger money to fund their private expenses. The list of alleged expenses (as detailed in *The Globe and Mail*, September 2, 2004) serves to underline the lavishness of their lifestyle:

- \$530 000 on a corporate jet to Bora Bora for a 10-day vacation in 2001
- \$42 870 for Amiel's 60th birthday party at La Grenouille in New York

Did you know . . .

In spite of the wide range of very serious charges levelled against Conrad Black, his wife, and associates, at this point in time (October 2004) none has been proven in a court of law. Some legal experts suspect that Black will never be found guilty of any financial wrongdoing.

(Black paid an additional \$20 000 himself)

- \$2 463 for Amiel's handbags; \$2083 for exercise equipment
- \$2 057 for a briefcase
- \$1.8-million in 2002 for "non-business" flights by Black and David Radler on the corporation's jets (Amiel is said to have made at least one flight from London to Toronto to have her hair done)
- \$28 480 for three dinners for Henry Kissinger (former U.S. secretary of state) and his wife

- \$24 950 for "summer drinks;" \$2 785 for opera tickets; \$3 530 for silverware for one of the jets
- \$1.4-million in staff expenses at the Blacks' London, New York, and Florida homes from 1997 to 2003

In addition, the report alleges that the Blacks cheated Hollinger International out of the true value of the New York apartment when they bought it from the company in 2000. It also claims that Black and Radler took the credit for hundreds of thousands of dollars in charitable donations made by Hollinger International.

Discussion

1. One of the words that several commentators have used to describe the public reaction to Black's business problems is *schadenfreude*, which *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* defines as "the malicious enjoyment of another's misfortunes." How much do you think the Blacks' extravagant lifestyle contributed to this *schadenfreude* on the part of many ordinary Canadians?
2. Carefully describe your personal reaction to the lifestyle of the Blacks.
3. If you had the opportunity to attend a dinner party with the Blacks, would you go? Explain.

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Profile of a Business Magnate

Quote

"Black is, in many ways, a journalist's dream. If one were trying to design a larger-than-life caricature of a business tycoon to write about, could one possibly do better than this?"
— Linda McQuaig (whom Black once called "a weedy, not-very-bright, leftist reporter") *The Globe and Mail*, May 26, 2001

Conrad Moffat Black, born in 1944, was the son of a well-to-do businessman. His father ran a company called Canadian Breweries, which was a part of the Argus Corporation, one of the most important holding companies in Canadian history.

Black the Scholar

Black himself confesses to having been an indifferent student who did poorly in school and was a "discipline problem." Black was thrown out of Upper Canada College, one of Canada's most prestigious schools, for stealing exams and selling them to other students. Black ensured that he would know which students would most be interested in buying the exams by also stealing the marks list for the entire senior class. Obviously, those at the bottom of the list would be the keenest.

He began his university education at Carleton in Ottawa, and continued at Laval, where he received a law degree in 1970. He also earned a master's degree from McGill University in 1973. Intellectually, Black considers himself first and foremost a historian. As a child he developed an interest in and extensive knowledge of the life of Napoleon (he now owns some Napoleon memorabilia, including a chair that once belonged to the emperor). He is also the author of two historical biographies. One, based on his master's thesis, is a fairly sympathetic portrayal of Quebec premier Maurice Duplessis, a man of considerable controversy in the history of that province. The second, a biography of U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was published to critical acclaim in 2003. He also published a

candid autobiography, *A Life in Progress*, in 1993.

Black the Businessman

Black's father owned a 22.4 per cent share of a company called Ravelston, which was the holding company that controlled Argus. When he died in 1976 he left that share to Conrad and his brother. By the age of 33, Black had control of Ravelston and all of Argus's nearly \$4-billion in assets. While in charge of Argus he made several controversial financial manoeuvres, including a raid on the pension fund of Dominion Stores. Ultimately he was forced to repay \$38-million to the fund.

While living in Quebec in the late 1960s, Black had developed an interest in newspapers when he and Peter White purchased an advertising paper called the *Eastern Townships Advertiser*. Together with David Radler, he and White then bought the *Sherbrooke Record*, and then a group of local and regional newspapers across Canada. After gaining control of Argus, Black again turned his attention to the press.

Black the Newspaperman

Black eventually gave control of all the Argus assets to Hollinger, a former gold mining company he had inherited. Black moved quickly to divest Hollinger of most mining and real estate properties and turned it into his private newspaper company and the source of his fame, fortune, and power. By 1989, as chairman of Hollinger Inc., he had control of a group of 207 newspapers. These ranged in size from the prestigious London *Daily Telegraph* to giveaways like *The Little Giant Shopper* in Canton, Illinois. By 1995-1996

Hollinger Inc. owned over 650 North American dailies, weeklies and community papers. When it took control of Southam, Hollinger became the third largest newspaper chain in the world.

Black's first move when taking over a newspaper was usually to cut staff to the bone in order to ensure that the paper was as profitable as it could be. In *A Life in Progress*, Black described how he told a parliamentary commission in 1980 that his greatest contribution to Canadian journalism was "the three-person newsroom and two of them sell ads."

Black was also determined to use the press to promote his conservative views. He began by revamping the *Ottawa Citizen* at a cost of about \$3-million to give the conservative press a voice in the nation's capital. But his greatest triumph was the launch of a new paper, the *National Post*, on October 27, 1998. The *Post* is said to have lost about \$190-million between its launch and 2004, but it and Black are also credited with having greatly improved the quality of journalism in Canada during that period.

Black the Canadian

After purchasing the London *Daily Telegraph* in 1985, Black began spending more and more time in London,

eventually establishing Kensington as his chief residence. The conservative approach of the *Telegraph* naturally made him a favourite with the influential members of the British Conservative Party. In 1999 the party leader nominated him for a peerage, and the governing Labour Party agreed.

An 80-year-old Canadian rule prevents Canadians from accepting foreign titles. Black believed that he could circumvent this by holding dual citizenship. He immediately applied in Britain (it came through in two weeks, but usually takes nine months). The Canadian Honours Policy Committee, however, presented an objection to the British government, and the offer of a title was withdrawn.

Black blamed Prime Minister Chrétien, and sued him, alleging an abuse of power. The suit was thrown out of court.

Black ultimately decided that the honour was more important than his Canadian citizenship, which he renounced (read some of the reasons why he did so in "In His Own Words," on page 27). He became Lord Black of Crossharbour (an Underground station near his London office) on October 31, 2001.

To Consider

1. What evidence is there that Conrad Black is a very intelligent man?
2. What seem to be the major objectives of Black's newspaper investments?
3. Do you think that Black should have renounced his Canadian citizenship? Explain.

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In His Own Words

Quote

"My first impression of him, apart from noting his excellent tailoring, was of someone who, as a sensitive child, had been locked in a closet with a thesaurus for several months." — John Dizard (*The Globe and Mail*, November 20, 2003)

Throughout his life, Lord Black has never hesitated to voice his opinion on any number of topics, often in colourful and sophisticated language. Some of his statements seem to be coming back to haunt him (see "Poetic Justice?" page 29). Here are some of his often-quoted statements on three of his biggest interests.

As you read these statements, place an "A" beside those statements with which you agree and a "D" beside those statements with which you do not agree. Be prepared to discuss your choices.

On journalists and why he invests in newspapers:

"My experience of the working press is that they are a very degenerate group. There is a terrible incidence of alcoholism and drug abuse. The mental stability of large elements of the press is more open to question than that of many other comparable groups in society. A number of them are ignorant, lazy, opinionated, intellectually dishonest and inadequately supervised." (*Maclean's* July 17, 1989)

"Journalism is a daily impression, a chronicle of events. It's not their fault, but journalists, given the time frame that they work in, are simply not able to see all of the ingredients necessary to

put an event into historical context." (*A Life in Progress*)

"I may be a nostalgic sentimentalist, but I have a feeling that some people will continue to want to be able to tuck a newspaper under their arms to read on the subway, or wherever, for a long time." (*Maclean's* August 3, 1992)

"I'm trying to inform and enlighten our readers at the same time as I enrich our shareholders. I am making a modest contribution to the integrity of the industry, and let me tell you, that is a continuous uphill struggle." (*Maclean's* August 3, 1992)

Discussion

Based on the above statements, what would you say were the reasons Lord Black was in the newspaper business?

On Canadian politics and government:

"The Canadian political system is so jurisdictionally fragmented and the population so regionally fractious, the federal prime minister's role consists chiefly of endless debates with his provincial analogues." (*A Life in Progress*)

"His [Pierre Elliot Trudeau] incitement of ethnic, occupational, regional and sexual groups debased public policy

and ultimately almost bankrupted the country. He, more than anyone, turned Canada into a people of whining politically conformist welfare addicts." (*A Life in Progress*)

"In Canada, elections are essentially a contest for those who can be the more caring and compassionate. I regard myself as caring and compassionate, but I am realistic enough to realize that

I would not be able to convince the Canadian public of that.” (*Maclean’s* August 3, 1992)

“I would prefer the independence of Quebec and more than one other independent country in the rest of Canada—

or the independence of Quebec and the rest of the country in whole or in part joining the United States—to a continuance of this excruciating lunacy we’ve had of Quebec, in effect, pretending to be a part of Canada.” (*Maclean’s* July 23, 1990)

Discussion

On the basis of these four quotes, do you think it’s possible to make any general statement about how Black views the average Canadian voter?

On giving up Canadian citizenship and acquiring a British title:

“I am an even more fervent democrat than an advocate of any particular policy, and if Canadians want the policies and leaders they now have, they have an unassailable right to them. Equally, I have the right personally and financially to avoid the deluge I am confident these policies and peoples are steadily bringing down upon the country.” (*National Post*, August 5, 2000)

“To someone just arrived from Haiti or Romania, Canada is a far more satisfying place to be a citizen than it was to me. . . . Canadian citizenship was merely an impediment to my progress in another, more amenable jurisdiction [Britain]. (*The Globe and Mail*, November 16, 2001)

“Renouncing my citizenship was the last and most consistent act of dissent I could pose against a public policy which I believe is depriving Canada of its right and duty to be one of the world’s great countries.” (*The Globe and Mail*, November 16, 2001)

“I have no need for any name other than my own. I cannot say absolutely that I would not accept [a title] if one were offered because the quality of the debates in the House of Lords is very high and I would enjoy participating.” (*Maclean’s*, August 3, 1992)

Discussion

Do you feel that Lord Black’s renouncing his citizenship was an effective protest against Canadian public policy? To what members of the public might it seem to be?

Summary Analysis

On the basis of his own words, write out a brief character sketch of your impressions of Conrad Black.

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Poetic Justice?

Definition

Hoist with one's own petard means to adversely affect oneself by one's schemes against others [French *pétard* from *péter* (break wind)] (*The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*). You might like to have a dictionary handy as you read through Jim Coyle's article.

Activity

The article reprinted below appeared the day following the release of the report by Hollinger International on the alleged looting of the company by Conrad Black and his associates. As you read through the article, ask yourself the following questions:

1. How does the author of the article use humour to make a very serious point?
2. How does the author use Black's own stated opinions to underline the inappropriateness of Black's own behaviour at Hollinger International?
3. What is the ultimate message that the author of the article wishes to convey to his readers?
4. What is your personal reaction to Coyle's article?

Lord Pompous on His Own Petard

by Jim Coyle

Toronto Star, September 2, 2004

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Conrad Black reaps as he usually sows.

To the legions of commoners Conrad Black has lavishly insulted over the years, probably nothing is quite so delicious as the language of the report that this week painted him as a crook who, along with confederates, allegedly lined his pockets with \$400-million US of company funds.

It appears there really is a God in heaven. What goes around really does come around. What one reaps is, after all, what one usually sows.

What Black ran, said the report by a committee of Hollinger International Inc.'s board of directors, was a "corporate kleptocracy." He and his lieutenants "plundered" and "looted," it said. What was the nature of the looting? It was "self-righteous and aggressive." How often and in what manner did they plunder? "Almost every day, in almost every way."

And why did they do it? To feed, their "ravenous appetite for cash," of

course. Amid the outrage that must prevail in Hollinger corporate corridors, someone has plainly managed to retain a wicked sense of humour, skewering his Lordship with the same extravagant, anachronistic turns of phrase that have long been his stock in trade.

Could it be the authors even plumbed Black's own memoir, *A Life in Progress*, for inspiration?

For there, in 1993, continuing his long-running vendetta against Bob Rae, then NDP premier of Ontario, the great man said "My inveighings against Rae's official kleptocracy achieved wide approbation."

Hollinger writers might also have noted Black once called universal Canadian social programs "plundering and bribery."

Though, if his own words were a reference, it's fortunate for Black the authors overlooked the passage where his Lordship complained of "Rae's sodomization of the private sector."

Whenever this sort of thing happens among the high and mighty, as it has with shocking frequency in recent years when the wealthy have taken more than even their piggish due, it's difficult not to think of people like Kimberly Rogers, a Sudbury woman who was prosecuted, convicted and placed under house arrest for the crime of accepting student loans while on social assistance.

Three years ago, she was found dead in her stifling apartment—the victim of a drug overdose, but the victim as well of her attempts to escape poverty, and of a society encouraged by the likes of Black to hyperventilate in rage at every nickel or dime society's poorest might need or, on occasion, misappropriate.

Oh, how Black lorded it over his inferiors over the years as he catalogued immorality among the lower orders.

In the 1980s, he said that while no one felt good about layoffs at the supermarket chain over which he presided, “we were discussing a workforce a minority of whose members had, since time immemorial, stolen more each year than the profit attributable to the shareholders.”

Let no man write his epitaph, indeed.

The fact is that any number of Black's former pronouncements— an outpouring beyond calculation—now resonate more meaningfully than ever.

The myth of Canada as a compassionate society was, he said, a “euphemism for what has become a ruinously exaggerated process of taking money from those who have earned it and giving it to those who haven't.”

In truth, it's almost impossible to read reports of the so-called Hollinger Chronicles without moments of hilarity.

The internal review makes particular criticism of Hollinger's high-profile directors for failing to keep tabs on Black— an especially poignant obser-

vation to Canadian journalists famously dismissed by his Lordship as “inadequately supervised” hacks toiling through “a miasma of mounting decrepitude and often alcoholism.”

Presumably, Hollinger would be far less annoyed with Black now had he been but a decrepit drunk.

It is, of course, yet to be determined what price Black will ultimately pay for his alleged transgressions. (A spell in the state lodgings recently occupied by his House of Lords colleague Jeffrey Archer would likely appeal to many.) But it should be noted that Black himself has expressed enthusiasm over the years for not sparing the rod.

Reacting to something written by Canadian journalist Linda McQuaig, Black once told Peter Gzowski on CBC's Morningside that he thought “she should have been horsewhipped,” if only the statutes allowed it.

Not even the delightful lunatics of Monty Python could have concocted a figure so pompous and overwrought as Lord Black of Crossharbour.

Though, on reflection, perhaps they came close with the Black Knight who was furiously protesting that he had suffered mere flesh wounds even as his severed limbs piled up on the ground around him.

Black continues to insist that the report is nought but exaggerations and defamatory lies, the work, presumably, of “the sniggering forces of envy.” Time will tell. But as a summing up it might be hard to top the epigram used by Peter C. Newman in *The Establishment Man*, his 1982 Black biography.

“The measure of a man is what he does with power,” said Pittacus of Mytilene (650-570 B.C.)

Quite so. And all said in one sentence, 11 words.

None of them more than two syllables.