# C O M M U N I T Y  T E L E V I S I O N

# AS AN AID FOR CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

# IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

*by*

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ABSTRACT

Community Television
as an aid for citizen involvement
in the planning process

An increasing desire on the part of the public to have more control over the environment in which they live is raising demands for a more decentralized decision-making structure. These demands mean a change in the power structure. Information has become the source of power and control. If citizens are to be involved equally in decisions, it means they must have freer access to the reception and distribution of information - especially in the mass media.

Television as a medium has the capacity to deeply involve people and to transmit a large volume of information. In Canada, the content of broadcast television is controlled by the government agency, the CBC, and private broadcasters. Financial interests (advertisers and stockholders) can exert strong influence on programme content. A scarcity of broadcast channels and very expensive and complicated equipment restrict access to broadcast television.

Cable television offers a solution. It has a potential capacity of eighty-two channels; it does not require as sophisticated equipment; and the Canadian Radio-Television Commission requires the cable system operator to provide a community channel. Free access by citizens to

a cable channel for expression and information is the basis of community television. Several cases, in which media access and citizen influence over decisions were improved, were examined.

The Fogo Island project exhibited the power of film to help a community to formulate its goals and define solutions to its problems. The Drumheller project used video-tape, instead of film, to the same ends. In both these projects the citizens controlled the content of the "programmes". The Barrie experiment used two electronic media (television and telephone) for dialogue. The content of the programme was determined by a community committee. The Richmond project used electronic dialogue but the content was greatly influenced by a technical panel.

The experiment in the West End was designed to spur discussion of the future of that area, to interest some residents in the use of video and cable television for expression of their attitudes about West End life and some directions for development. On a small scale the experiment was successful; the extension over a longer period of time will determine its final outcome.

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

This research began with an investigation of the information gap between planners and citizens and the search for a possible technique for closing that gap, partially or completely. Television, the very popular medium of today, and its "newer model", cable television, were recognized as having an exciting potential for closing that information gap and including the public in decisions.

To establish a framework within which to view the rôle of television, basic assumptions regarding the rôles of the planner and citizen were outlined. The definition of these rôles evolved from an awareness that more people are gaining concern for their environment. They are realizing that decisions are having increasingly wide and complicated consequences which are affecting them and their living environment. This leads to increasing demands to know about plans before they are completed. Further, demands are being made for involvement in the total process - from goal formulation, investigation of alternative solutions, to implementation - in a democratic fashion. Such participation would mean that the power to make decisions would not remain in the hands of a small elite. Instead, more control by the citizens at the neighbourhood level is being proposed by many politicians and community groups as an effective redistribution of decision-making power.

One of the major barriers to citizen participation in planning is simply learning what is being devised. Proposed developments are seldom discussed publicly before they are "announced" and reports are often extraordinarily expensive or limited in distribution. When people do have complaints or suggestions, they often find methods of expression difficult, ineffective, or non-existent. The communication process with its two-way flow of "information" does not operate. If only a few people know what plans or programmes are being drawn up, only they have the ability to make decisions. The regulation of information has become a key source of control and power in today's society. If the public is to participate in decision-making, it should have free access to information sources, especially the mass media - newspapers, radio and television.

With citizens taking a more active rôle, the planner would take the rôle of a resource person. He would provide information about alternative plans and programmes and consequences to the public. The flow of information should be a two-way flow - from the politicians and bureaucrats to the public and from the people to the decision-makers. This would mean planners would encourage expression of opinions and ideas by the public and those expressions would be considered in the plans and programmes. A two-way information flow would also mean the public would have easy access to the transmitting (or publishing) end of the mass media.

If the media not only carried local "news" but also permitted various local views and ideas to be voiced, the people would

gain more information, would have more input into the decision process and assume more understanding of and responsibility for decisions. The presentation of issues by themselves if in terms they can comprehend will raise people's awareness of themselves and their community.

> "Techniques of communications such as community newsletters in various languages and especially a form of community television and radio can be particularly useful in creating an involved group of citizens. It is often forgotten by those critical of efforts to develop citizen involvement, that we have in the society a number of constraints that inhibit involvement. One of these is a communications system that does not specialize or translate issues and ideas into local neighbourhood terms. People know more about the black revolt in American inner cities than they do about conditions in their own immediate area. It is not surprising, therefore, that there appears to be limited interest in neighbourhood affairs."[1]

The present structure of the media - newspapers, radio, television - does not allow the views of the public to be heard unless they are "newsworthy". Students, the poor, and native peoples resort to rallies, marches, or more violent protests to attract the attention of the media and obtain their right to be heard. Material (news or entertainment) broadcast on commercial television must appeal

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[1] Lloyd Axworthy and Ralph Kuropatwa, *An Experiment in Community Renewal: Observations and proposals arising from a demonstration project in Winnipeg*; for presentation to the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, St. John's, Newfoundland, June 19, 1971, p. 31.

to a mass audience; the advertisers are paying high rates to reach as many people as possible. Public access to broadcast television is not only restricted by the financial interests of sponsors and broadcasters but also by the expense and sophistication of the equipment and a small number of available channels due to electrical interference from adjacent channels.

Cable television can remove those barriers to television. Existing technology makes it possible for eighty-two channels to be carried. Simplified, inexpensive video-tape equipment of a quality suitable for transmission is available for use by "amateurs". The Canadian Radio-Television Commission requires each cable system licensee to provide a community channel, if he intends to transmit non-Canadian stations, and encourages programming that is planned and produced by the community. Improved access to television is thus technically possible and stimulated by regulations.

To discover how a neighbourhood or community television facility could affect or effect involvement by more people in decision-making, several experimental communications projects were reviewed. These projects has used media to aid discussion of community goals, alternatives, and implementation of a solution. The approaches used in those cases guided the formulation of an approach to a neighbourhood television experiment in the West End apartment district of Vancouver.

The relation between cable television and citizen

involvement in the planning (decision) process is outlined:

(i) The power to make decisions and draw plans is concentrated in the hands of an elite.

(ii) Citizen demands for dispersal of that power are growing.

(iii) Citizens have little access to information reception or transmission.

(iv) Information control is the source of power today.

(v) Information dissemination is concentrated in the hands of an elite (often the same as (i)).

(vi) The abundance of cable television channels can reduce the concentration of information transmission.

(vii) Citizens can express their biases and exchange information.

(viii) Open expression can create understanding and a sense of community.

(ix) Citizens have more power to influence decisions, through information access and strength of community.

(x) Planner takes a resource-advisory rôle.

# 2

# CHAPTER 2

## Involvement - Why & How

The intention of this chapter is to define two of the key terms used in this thesis - "citizen involvement" and "planning process". The expression "community television" will be discussed later in relation to these terms.

A description of the rôles of the public and planners in the decision-making process presents ample opportunity for argument or complete disagreement and rejection. Such conflict suggests differing ideas of the political and power processes, the nature of society, and the relationship between people and their environment. One's version of the rôle of the citizen is deeply intertwined with one's ideological approach to who should have the power to make decisions in a vastly complex urban nation, and the effects of these decision-makers on the direction (or lack of direction) of Canadian society, and with one's understanding of the influence on individuals of rapid, uncontrollable changes in their environment. The planning process cannot, or should not, be separated from political and social processes; "... it would be more correct to say that participation is an issue of political science and not planning at all ... It is in effect part of 'one of the oldest and hardiest arguments in traditional political theory; how should the subject be guaranteed

against the state'"[1].

It is not the purpose of this chapter, nor of this thesis, to enter a lengthy political argument or a defence of the position taken herein. Instead, a discussion of the rôles that have been offered to the public, in relation to the rôle it demands, will be undertaken.

## 2.1 Citizen Involvement - Why?

> "Citizens' participation is not an end in itself. In the final analysis, it must be evaluated on two levels. First, citizens' participation is concerned with social change and must be evaluated in terms of its accomplishments in this area. Second, citizens' participation must be evaluated in terms of its ability to recapture the spirit of participatory democracy of community involvement. It must enable the citizen to involve himself meaningfully in his society, making his voice and aspirations heard and understood in community decision-making. Much has been achieved in both areas; the future of human society may require that the entire community become involved in this process."[2]

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[1] Brian J. Styles, "Public Participation - a reconsideration", *Journal of the Town Planning Institute*, Vol. 57, no. 4, April 1971, p. 163.

[2] Wilson A. Head, "The Ideology and Practice of Citizen Participation", *Citizen Participation: Canada*, James A. Draper, editor, 1971, pp. 28-29.

The theme of participatory democracy surfaced in the early 1960's. In United States cities in particular, it led community, ethnic, racial and students groups through discussions, confrontations, and generally frustrating experiences with bureaucracies. The urban renewal and freeway construction techniques of "slum clearance" provided the main foci for demands for a voice in decision-making.

Appleby attributes the growth of citizen participation to several factors (described for American society although Canadian society is considered similar in many respects):[3] the size of the cities and the land being consumed by them; bureaucracies, with volumes of rules and regulations, that were resistent to change; the intolerable lag between the perception of needs by a minority and a political decision to act at the expense of the majority; disagreement over priorities in allocating funds to support the military and scientific ventures instead of to social programmes; the civil rights movement; the feelings of disruption and uncertainty especially regarding large-scale urban renewal; and the increasing receptiveness of the federal government to citizen participation.

It is postulated that citizens' groups desire to have more direct say in the changes occurring in their city and especially in their immediate neighbourhood. The problem people faced was that decisions, which affected their lives, were being made by

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[3] Thomas Appleby, "Citizen Participation in the 70's: The Need to Turn to Politics", *City*, Vol. 5, no. 3, May/June, 1971, p. 52.

the small elected elite and also by unelected personnel in planning departments and executives of large corporations or real estate firms, with little or no attention paid to their ideas and feelings. An assumption basic to the ideology of participatory democracy is "that the ordinary citizen possesses the right to 'participate' in the decisions which affect his life"[4] or "people should be able to say what sort of community they want and how it should develop"[5]. Participation is said to allow the development of individual talents and personalities[6] which, in an organized group, represents a largely untapped source of energy and ability. Opposing this classical concept of democracy is the elitist concept that holds that decisions must be made by the few elected representatives[7]. It is a compromise between these two concepts - more citizen voice but retention of efficiency - that most groups seek.

The demand for participation began amongst the poor or minority groups but is no longer a class movement. The upper-middle class residents of the South-West Marine Drive area of Vancouver recently complained about a housing development proposed for their own area with little notice of its inception, let alone neighbourhood involvement in the planning[8].

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[4] Wilson A. Head, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

[5] Brian J. Styles, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 163.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 164.

[8] Hall Leiren, " The Experts Out-Gun Joe Citizen", *The Sun*, November 9, 1971, p. 6.

"The dilemma of participation increasingly faces all classes in society ... there are four causes contributing to this situation:

"(1) The economy is expanding and changing rapidly in ways that benefit some and not others.

"(2) There are great mobility opportunities for some in the social structure.

"(3) There are emerging values that reject traditional means of social control.

"(4) The expansion of government intervention in the economic and social life of the nation increases the stakes of participation."[9]

More segments of society are becoming involved. Some citizens' groups seek more services, better programmes, and improved policies while others have realized that those improvements cannot be gained without a change in the basic structure of how decisions are made, an alteration in the framework of representative government, and a change in power relationships in society.

"If there is an element common to all, it is to regain a degree of self-rule and self-control over the decisions that affect their life-styles and life chances."[10]

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[9] Michael Clague, "Citizen Participation in the Legislative Process", *Citizen Participation: Canada*, James A. Draper, editor, 1971, p. 31.

[10] Lloyd Axworthy and Ralph Kuropatwa, *An Experiment in Community Renewal: Observations and Proposals arising from a demonstration project in Winnipeg*; for presentation to the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, St. John's, Newfoundland, June 9, 1971, p. 14.

These latter people visualize a democracy closer to the classical concept than to the elitist concept.

### 2.1.1 Changes in Society

We return to the first method of evaluation of citizen involvement - the accomplishments in achieving social change. The demand for a participatory democracy implies changes in the way decisions are made. The degree of influence over decisions that an individual or group has is determined by the power it has obtained through wealth, education, and information. Implicit in democracy, too, is equality:

> "... citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. It is the strategy by which the have-nots join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources allocated, programmes are operated, and benefits like contracts and patronages are parcelled out. In short, it is the means by which they can induce significant social reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society ... participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows the powerholders to claim that all sides were considered, but it makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit. It maintains the status

quo."[11]

> "Government activities have been growing rapidly in scale and scope. All Canadians are becoming increasingly aware of the impact of government decisions - federal, provincial, and municipal - on their daily lives. Along with the awareness has come a spreading recognition that government decisions now have greater consequences for good or ill than was true in earlier days when governments played much more limited rôles."[12]

From the pervasiveness of this expanded rôle of government has sprung the call to have more representation of citizens' interests in the decisions of the ruling elite[13], by diffusing their power through continual scrutiny[14], and, in the case of local government, by decentralizing the structure[15]. The smaller government unit, for example, a system of neighbourhood wards, would require politicians to be more aware of community problems, and neighbourhood residents would have specific representatives to observe and consult. A citizen would no longer feel the politicians and the decision process are inaccessible and would be encouraged to participate in

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[11] Sherry R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation in the U.S.A.", *Journal of the Town Planning Institute*, April, 1971, Vol. 57, no. 4, p. 176.

[12] Economic Council of Canada, *Eighth Annual Review: Design for Decision Making, An Application to Human Resource Policies*, September 1971, p. 1.

[13] Brian J. Styles, *op.cit.*, p. 164.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 164.

[15] William Hampton, "Little Men in Big Societies", *Journal of the Town Planning Institute*, Vol. 57, no. 4, April 1971, pp. 168-170.

the administration of neighbourhood affairs, destroying the myth of public apathy.

> "The success of an elitist democracy rests upon striking a balance between the responsiveness and accountability of the few to the many, and the ability of the few to get on and make decisions. The current concern about participation arises from a feeling that the balance has swung too far in the direction of decision-making and away from responsiveness."[16]

The main objective of citizen involvement in a democracy is to achieve equality, or rather "equal power to make decisions"[17] concerning one's social and physical environment. To be effective, participation will require adjustments in attitudes and in the political and administrative systems.

> "... participation is not just a planning exercise, but an issue that is integral to the nature of society. Participation in planning is therefore a microcosm of the wider involvement of people in the decisions that effect them is all walks of life. It would appear, therefore, that the degree of success that planners achieve in involving people in the planning decision process, will be conditioned by events in society as a whole, as much as by the techniques and resources that they have at their disposal."[18]

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[16] Brian J. Styles, *op.cit.*, p. 164.

[17] William Hampton, *op.cit.*, p. 166.

[18] Brian J. Styles, *op.cit.*, p. 167.

For the public to become involved in decisions, a change in the power structure is necessary, requiring many far-reaching changes in society. Many deeply entrenched attitudes must be reassessed and the processes of legislation and administration must be more susceptible to innovation and change. The more open the legislative process is to the expression of citizens' opinions in new and varying ways, the more it is likely to meet the current needs of the people.

## 2.2 Citizen Involvement - How?

### 2.2.1 The Importance of Information

The information available to people and the methods by which it is made available, is an important factor in determining what people learn and the depth and orientation of their understanding. Thus, the control of access to information and the media for its distribution is a significant source of power in today's society. Johnson recognized this in his discussion of the broadcast industry:

> "Within any paper-shuffling bureaucracy (corporate or government) power lies with he who controls the key to the filing cabinet. To make information that is now someone's personal domain easily accessible threatens his status and prestige - perhaps the justification for his job."[19]

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[19] Nicholas Johnson, *How To Talk Back to Your Television Set*, Little, Brown, and Company, Boston, Toronto, 1970, p. 141.

> "As former (U.S.) Secretary of Defence McNamara demonstrated at the Defence Department, the 'management information system' lies at the heart of management's power over any large organization today. If access to that information is diffused, so is power."[20]

It is this importance of information and the amount of public access to information that influences participation.

It is postulated that the rôles of the politician, the planner, and the citizen must change if effective participation is to take place. Until recently plans have been drawn up for people instead of with them. The planner, politician, or developer devised schemes by themselves until announcement of impending construction or of a zoning change. Confrontations or negotiations with citizens then took place at this stage. One of the main problems was (and is) the lack of communication with, or transmission of information to, the public until the final phases. This lack was sometimes deliberate due to a departmental system of classifying documents, but more often it was simply a reluctance to make it public, or a reluctance to admit that the public would want or could use such information. Often documents were very expensive, making them inaccessible to many people[21]. The public has been accused of apathy, but, in addition to feeling that the decision-makers were inaccessible, the ordinary citizen has been

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20 Nicholas Johnson, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

21 The report on the Third Crossing of Burrard Inlet was not for sale to the public.

given only limited access to information.

The Institute of Urban Studies at the University of Winnipeg co-ordinated an experimental community renewal project in a district of Winnipeg. The research was designed to define some basic principles for effective urban renewal that involved the local residents.

> "As work on the demonstration project showed the provision of information, delivered in ways that can be received and assimilated by residents is necessary for citizen participants. Apathy is not a problem if people are informed."[22]

> "At present, public involvememt in policy-making suffers under a large handicap. By and large, the general public does not know, even after the fact, the arguments and evaluations on which public decisions are based. Public comment, which cannot be based on information and analysis, may be ill-informed and irrelevant. At worst, it may be a dangerous advocacy of simplistic solutions to complex human problems."[23]

The practice of planners, and other agencies, should be to communicate to those directly effected by proposed and existing

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[22] Lloyd Axworthy and Ralph Kuropatwa, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

[23] Economic Council of Canada, *op.cit.*, p. 85.

plans and programmes, and to the general public, the rationale for the decision made and the policies, rules and regulations involved.

> "One of the central requirements for developing a well-informed electorate is that there must be an increasing willingness and competence on the part of officials and politicians to discuss basic policy issues in the public arena."[24]

The information gap was also noted by Hellyer's Task Force:

> "In order to ensure that Canadians and their governments have access to as much information as possible on housing and urban development, the Task Force recommends that: A new department of Housing and Urban Affairs should give early priority to the creation of a central information bank to collect, organize, and disseminate available data on these subjects to other government agencies, and Canadians generally."[25]

In analysing the flow of information about federal government programmes, and the reverse flow of the public's needs and desires to all levels of government, the Science Council of Canada found that "... all those people who have deepest need for the services of the federal government are exactly those people who are least likely to know anything at all about these same services."[26] The Council also

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[24] Economic Council of Canada, *op.cit.*, p. 85.

[25] Government of Canada, *Report on the Federal Task Force of Housing and Urban Development*, Paul T. Hellyer, Minister of Transport, January, 1969, p. 75.

[26] Government of Canada, Science Council of Canada, *Report No. 14: Cities for Tomorrow, Some Applications of Science and Technology to Urban Development*, Information Canada, Ottawa, September 1971, p. 58.

stated: "The fact remains, however, that the need for an integrated system for social communication is as essential and urgent as the need for a joint attack on many more obvious problems. The public as the consumer of necessary information cannot be expected to wander about a congeries of offices to seek out available information vital to its every day needs."[27]

In the planning context, then, the planner should be aware of the types of information the public wants, should be aware of the people's needs and desires, and should encourage communication in both directions.

The flow of information should not be one-way. Ideas, feelings, and reactions from community residents should be encouraged to enable refinement of plans and programmes. Ways of gathering citizens' contributions and of understanding and using the information must be devised by decision-makers. The citizens then have a direct input into the drawing up of plans and policies; the decision-makers have a better understanding of their "clients" and more criteria on which to make a "rational" decision.

"The communication process pertaining to specific information should be a two-way process. Not only should governments inform the public, but equally important the citizen should be offered ample opportunity and indeed, should be actively encouraged, to express their reactions to the services offered them. Therefore,

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[27] Government of Canada, Science Council of Canada, *op.cit.*, p. 59.

a feed-back mechanism should be built into the process."[28]

> "The minimum responsibility of the public authorities in the area of participation by citizens is to furnish them not only with good information and services that meet their needs but also with an input structure that encourages participation in all its forms."[29]

It will be necessary to maintain the two-way communication throughout the planning process, if citizens are to be included in all phases, not just the final phase.

> "A wider dissemination of information and knowledge about public policy issues should provide for: a discussion of policy objectives, and alternate strategies at the time policies are announced; and subsequent periodic reports on the progress of operating programmes."[30]

It is postulated that information has a definite function in maintaining effective citizen involvement. The closing of the information gap through new policies for dissemination and new techniques and technologies of communication is another major change required of society.

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[28] Government of Canada, Science Council of Canada, *op.cit.*, p. 59.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[30] Economic Council of Canada, *op.cit.*, p. 85.

## 2.2.2 Rôles

What rôles will be played, in the changed society, by the citizens, the planners and the politicians?

Citizens have moved through various rôles depending on the local attitudes and their own levels of awareness and willingness and capability to express their demands. Not all groups experienced every rôle and not all groups have advanced to positions of greater power.

The rôle of the citizen groups can be viewed in five basic ways:[31]

1) "The total elitist view ... assumes that citizens should accept the decisions of professional experts and elected representatives". This is the form of "nonparticipation" used for so long and which received the brunt of the initial confrontations. Its forms are the public meeting and press release for "announcement" of plans ("informing"[32]), advisory boards to "educate" ("manipulation"[33]) and local groups to "adjust their values" ("therapy"[34]). This view of citizen involvement does not ressemble participatory democracy.

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31 Lloyd Axworthy and Ralph Kuropatwa, *op.cit.*, pp. 14-15. From Robert Aleshire, "Planning and Citizen Involvement", *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, Vol. 5, no. 4, June 1970, p. 370.

32 Sherry R. Arnstein, *op.cit.*, p. 178.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 177.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 178.

2) "The citizen group has the right to veto decisions, made by the elite." The citizen group cannot enter discussion to reach a solution but can at least say "no".

3) "The citizen should have his needs analyzed, surveyed, and maybe even listened to." This view reduces the citizen to "statistical abstractions"[35] and gives no assurance that citizen ideas will be fixed into the analysis.

4) "The citizen should be consulted ... where options are presented and groups asked for advisory opinions." The citizen groups, in this view, have some influence, at least a voice, in the decisions - "placation"[36].

5) "The citizen group has the right to make decisions, even if they are wrong." Power is given to the people in neighbourhoods through negotiated partnership, delegation to a neighbourhood planning corporation which has final veto or complete control[37].

By having such a neighbourhood system, the physical and social environments would be planned on the basis of the knowledge and understanding of the residents.

> "If people are involved in deciding on the process, they have the chance to fit programmes to need and the result can be better urban programmes. It is really a variation of the old Aristotelian formula that only those who wear the shoes know when they

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[35] Sherry R. Arnstein, *op.cit.*, p. 178.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 179.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 180.

don't fit."[38]

The citizens of an area should be involved in all stages of a "planning process which is suited to the political framework of a democratic society: problem identification, goal formulation, survey and analysis, design of a plan, plan implementation, evaluation and reorientation."[39] Wheeler agrees with this notion, "Required is not merely the acquiescence of local residents, but also their active involvement in the planning process from the beginning"[40]. Long term success of a plan or programme will be more likely if the change is generated from within the community.

The planner's rôle becomes that of a technical advisor to neighbourhood groups and councils and that of an information source and distributor. He will bridge the information gap.

The politician's rôle remains that of the decision-maker who is responsible to the people of the neighbourhood. The decentralized government gives citizens more direct say and interest in the shape of the place they live in. The feeling of "you can't fight City Hall" would be decreased or eliminated.

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38 Lloyd Axworthy and Ralph Kuropatwa, *op.cit.*, pp. 20-22.

39 D.W.P. Barcham, *Community Development: An Integral Technique in the Process of Community Planning*; Thesis for M.A. in Community and Regional Planning, University of British Columbia, 1968.

40 Michael Wheeler (editor), *The Right to Housing*, from the Background Papers and Proceedings of the First "Canadian Conference on Housing", Toronto, October, 1966, p. 328.

## 2.3 Definitions

Citizen Involvement = influence in and control over all plans and programmes

Planning Process = decision process in society

Planner = resource person

# 3

# CHAPTER 3

## Television in Today's Society

### 3.1 Communications and Electronics

The communication system, the cybernetic process - information dispersal, feedback and regeneration - described in Chapter 2 was postulated as being essential for effective citizen involvement. By increasing communications - intra-neighbourhood, inter-neighbourhood, community-government, and between all levels of government - the criteria upon which decisions are made will change.

> "Every communicator is an agent of change. Some of us are more successful at this than others. If you can grasp the significance of everyone and everything reaching out to change and be changed by everyone and everything else, you will have some understanding of what is meant by a dynamic school, culture or society."[1]

> "Communication is never an end in itself; it is a means. The end product of communication is the control over some aspect or aspects of the environment ... Every message, every statement of fact, regardless of its mode of expression is a statement of

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[1] James J. Thompson, *Instructional Communication*, American Book Company, 1969, pp. 15-16.

> your biases and an attempt on your part to influence and thus control in some way the behaviour of other people, things, and events. There is nothing sinister or insidious about this; it is the reason for communication."[2]

The burgeoning electronic communications (television, colour television, cable television, computers, Telex, TWX, satellites and laser) technology will have a tremendous effect on the patterns of growth and relationships among people and between people and their environment. In referring to the services that would be provided by broad-band communications networks in the late 1970's and early 1980's the Industrial Electronics Division of the Electronics Industry Association stated:

> "We look upon such systems as being of 'national resource' dimensions and the development of these resources as a national goal. ... The mushrooming growth in available information is bringing about a revolution in communications which will produce a profound change in the way society is structured and in the way we live."[3]

Television presents information, that is both auditory and visual, in a unique manner. That presentation gives television as yet inestimable power. "... television has accelerated the rate of communication at many very different levels of discourse. There can be not the least doubt that television can become the most important of

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[2] James J. Thompson, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

[3] Ralph Lee Smith, "The Wired Nation", *The Nation*, May 18, 1970, Vol. 210, no. 19, special issue, p. 602.

all agencies of social change"[4].

Herein will be considered the influences of television in society. The promise of its characteristics as a medium for the communication of information - feelings, sights, and sounds - is television's *forte*. The success of the broadcasting industry in fulfilling television's potential has been limited by factors external to the medium itself - limited channels, high cost of equipment, the financial structure, and the treatment of the audience as a mass.

## 3.2 Television - An Involving Medium

Each medium (print, radio, film, television, etc.) has some effect on the senses that are unique to itself. The message interpreted by the receiver is determined by his past experiences and the responses of his senses to the communication. The medium used thus influences the message received. As television is understood more, its characteristic strength for transmission of messages in an understandable way is realized more.

> "Using the word education in its original non-formal sense, *educare*, to nourish and to cause to grow, television potentially constitutes the greatest educational medium of all time. By its

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[4] Ashley Montagu, "Television and the New Image of Man", *The Eighth Art*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, 1962, pp. 127-128.

> very nature television enjoys, as no other medium ever has, an unprecedented opportunity to be a power for good in this world, for the enrichment of the lives of men and the enlargement of the concept of mankind."[5]

Marshall McLuhan is famous, and infamous to many people, for his insights into man's sensorial responses to his environment and the effects of communications media and technological advances of man. He expounds a theory that the personal and group relationships in society are affected to a large degree by the dominant methods of communication. Pre-literate man used audible tools, eg. voice, drum - to communicate and his relationships were close. Literate man was visual, converting messages to symbols - words, diagrams - to be traced by the eye; his relationships were more introverted and detached.

> "Before the alphabet, ordinary society was profoundly involved in its experiences. Auditory man is always involved, he is never detached. He has no objectivity. The only sense of our many senses that gives us detachment, noninvolvement, and objectivity is the visual sense. Touch is profoundly involving; so are movement, taste and hearing. All of these senses have been given back to use by electronic technology. Man is becoming once more deeply involved with everybody."[6]

Visual man has to translate "sight" verbally because there was no means

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[5] Ashley Montagu, *op.cit.*, p. 130.

[6] Marshall McLuhan, "Television in a New Light", *The Meaning of Commercial Television*, The Texas-Stanford Seminar, 1966, edited by Stanley T. Donner, University of Texas Press, Austin, pp. 94-95.

for one person to see exactly what another was seeing. Television carries the same image to millions of people[7].

The type of medium used to transmit information determines the interpretation and the degree of understanding of the receiver. Media "shape the message in their own image. ... The information conveyed by the printed word is not the same kind of information transmitted by a movie. The two media differ, and their difference lies in what happens to information when it is committed to one or the other. Every medium exerts its influence - its own peculiarities - on the message and, in this sense, becomes a part of the message."[8]

McLuhan and his researchers in Toronto conducted an experiment to test the effects of different media. Four randomized groups of university students were given the same information, at the same time, about the structure of preliterate languages, by radio, television, a lecture, and reading. The production on each medium was kept simple and basic. A short quiz was administered afterward to discover how much was retained. The television and radio groups did much better than the lecture and print groups; the television group did considerably better than the radio group. The test was done again with the full capabilities for emphasis and dramatization applied to each of the four media. The television and radio groups again were higher than the

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[7] Caleb Gattegno, *Towards a Visual Culture: Educating Through Television*, Outerbridge & Dienstbrey, New York, 1969, pp. 2-3.

[8] James J. Thompson, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

lecture and print groups but this time the radio group did better than the television group. The reason was that

> "TV is a cool, participant medium. When hotted up by dramatization and stingers, it performs less well because there is less opportunity for participation."[9]

The nature of the television image is important, especially in comparison to the motion picture image. Film, by its chemistry, produces a very clear definition of information on the screen at the end of the room. The television picture is formed by electrons shooting out to scan the face of the tube, creating points of varying relative brightness, in a series of horizontal lines. In North America, there are 525 lines that comprise one frame (two interlaced fields of 262.5 lines per 1/30 second) while in Europe the image is more intense, with 625 lines.

> "The TV image requires each instant that we 'close' the spaces in the mesh by a convulsive sensuous participation that is profoundly kinetic and tactile, because tactility is the interplay of the senses, rather than the isolated contact of skin and object."[10]

The TV image, of lower definition than film, does not provide <u>detailed</u> information about objects but still has substantial audio-visual material. While film is powerful as a storehouse for information in an

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9 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media, The Extensions of Man*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, Toronto, London, 1964, p. 311.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 314.

accessible form, it is surpassed only by audio-tape and videotape[11].

The rôle of television and the effects it is having on people, especially children, is an important determinant of the structure under which politicians and planners will be operating in the future. The involving nature of the television image has changed the response to other media and has encouraged more involvement in all aspects of life - significantly among the children who have been exposed to television from an early age.

> "Every new medium changes our whole sense of spatial orientation. Since television, our kids have moved into the book. They now read five inches away from the book; they try to get inside it. Television has changed their whole spatial orientation to one another and to their world."[12]

Because broadcast television strives to reach a mass audience, everyone experiences and participates with everyone and everything else. Electronic technology permits access by everybody, anywhere, to the same information. Canadians thus experience the riots in the ghettos in American cities, and the bombings in Northern Ireland, and lives of American doctors and private detectives.

> "Television is a public communication, in which the pictures are living events brought to the viewers either as they are

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[11] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Man, The Extensions of Man*, p. 291.

[12] Marshall McLuhan, "Television in a New Light", p. 93.

occurring, or as they have occurred, with words and sounds that are the living realities, and not merely the counterparts, of those who have uttered or created them. ... Persons and places, events and ideas that he would otherwise have never experienced are brought to him to see and hear and contemplate."[13]

While all media are still used as sources of information, television has become the main source and the most trusted source in many countries, including the Soviet Union[14]. Different media are valuable for different kinds of news, data, and expression. The newspaper medium provides conflicting views on issues, especially political ones, while television is more concerned with involvement in depth. The American people's

"information on public affairs may still be gained primarily from newspapers and magazines, but visual images and spoken messages have an immediacy which the printed word lacks, and whatever strong opinions or feelings of urgency people may feel about public questions are likely to be shaped more by (TV) news broadcasts and documentaries than by news dispatches and editorials. Also, it is well to remember that television reaches millions of viewers who have no access to the printed page, and these viewers are at an especially formative stage in their lives, for they are the children who are too young to read."[15]

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13 Ashley Montagu, *op.cit.*, pp. 125-126.

14 James J. Thompson, *op.cit.*, p. 111.

15 David Potter, "Television: the Broad View - The Historical Perspective", *The Meaning of Commercial Television*, The Texas-Stanford Seminar, 1966, edited by Stanley T. Donner, University of Texas Press, Austin, p. 53.

Television is not only informative but also, because of its requirement of active participation by the viewer, it is formative. Viewers tend to indentify with the characters or the values they represent[16] and with events and processes that are occurring elsewhere.

Confusion is often related between television and reality. This is partly due to skepticism in the media, derived from abuse, misuse, and frequent misinformation by those who have vested interests and from simulating, truthfully, real situations (such as space flights) with mock-ups[17]. Confusion is created in another way.

> "If an event is not on television it hasn't happened. And if you - or those with whom you can identify - are not on television you don't exist. A Harris poll reported in December 1968 that a sense of alienation was growing among many Americans - principly, it seems to me, those who are excluded from participation in television. The right to petition one's government ... has become the need to petition one's media - usually television. That is how a citizen helps to change things. That is how he communicates with his fellow citizens."[18]

Television is also creating demands for social

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16 Ashley Montagu, *op.cit.*, p. 129.

17 Kyo Izumi, "Some Thoughts About the Environment and Telecommunications", *Plan Canada*, Vol. 11, no. 1, 1970, p. 33.

18 Nicholas Johnson, *How to Talk Back to Your Television Set*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, Toronto, 1970, p. 187.

change[19]. It emphasizes the contrasts between the living conditions of the viewer and the standard of living that is considered "real" and common in the TV world, resulting in frustration. By being involved in events while not actually present, awareness and concern are increased but are given no release. More demands are made for a voice in the decisions that affect the viewer.

It is possible that electronic innovations can also be an outlet for the expression of opinions and desires.

> "Traditional channels of response were not structured for the immediate and personal reactions that electronic media provoke. ... (Hot line radio shows) represent an early stage in the possibilities of participation via electronic media. ... Participation in local decision-making by concerned groups may become a political necessity, thereby altering both the process and the product of planning for the city."[20]

More innovations, particularly in transmission cable technology will allow more electronic input. Television as a means of expression by sight and sound images for other people to share, as an artist uses paint to express himself and to provoke response, is far more important than television for data transmission. There is the danger than electronics would be used instead of traditional personal relationships. As Izumi warns about telecommunications[21]:

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19 Arnold Wise, "The Impact of Electronic Communications on Metropolitan Form", *Ekistics*, Vol. 32, no. 188, July, 1971, p. 24.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

21 Kyo Izumi, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

"... this resource is not to be substituted for the face-to-face dialogue as the industry tends to suggest. It is to enhance that essential human experience by extending, expanding and focussing our perception in contrasting diversity so that this perception is as 'holistic' as possible."

As a medium, television is involving. It requires the senses to participate in the building of an image, resulting in the viewer's becoming involved in the people and events on its tube. Involvement in its images induces in the viewer a desire for deeper involvement in all aspects of his life.

"Television is instant civilization. Its rapid transmission of sight and sound images - probably the two most important modes of human communication - interlaces the world, spurring change that is already swift, profound, and disorienting."[22]

## 3.3 The Television Broadcast Industry

Television has not been utilized to its full potential for artistic and cultural expression. It has special capacity for creative works; a capacity also for the expression of ideas and feelings by and among the many cultures of Canada. Conditions controlling the development of broadcasting (radio, then television) as an industry, limited the development of the capabilities of the media. Technical details of

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[22] James J. Thompson, *op.cit.*, p. 107.

transmission, the financial bases of the industry, and treatment of the audience as a mass all influenced the direction of growth and content of television. The pioneers in broadcasting (radio) in the 1930's all recognized its powerful social rôle and considered sponsorship to be of minor importance. However, after World War II, economic considerations became the dominant reason for the choice of programming.[23]

Goodman addressed himself to the structure of commercial television:

> "In the arts in general, whether high art or low art, unless there is some real motive operating, the result is going to be inauthentic or phony. The trouble with most of the programming is that it is not authentic. The programming does not have as its real aim - and I defy the people in 'the industry' to deny this - affecting the audience, either to teach them something or to really move them. The programming attempts to hold the audience in order that the commercials can occur. Now that is not an authentic, intellectual, or artistic motive. And given that motive, the result must be that the packaging is more important than the content. And so it is."[24]

All broadcasters are not unaware of the potential

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23 Fred W. Friendly, *Due to Circumstances Beyond Our Control*, Random House, New York, 1967, pp. 266-267.

24 Paul Goodman, "Television: the Broad View - The Social Perspective", *The Meaning of Commercial Television*, The Texas-Stanford Seminar, 1966, edited by Stanley T. Donner, University of Texas, Austin, p. 72.

of television and the way the industry is presently run. Its early promoters had "dreams of a theatre without walls for instant communication, culture for millions and news in depth"[25]. Some contemporary broadcasters occasionally attempt to contribute to the general welfare but the programme becomes a highly-sponsored "spectacular" and its value is lost[26].

Many "consumers" of commercial television feel that the quality of programming is so poor that television is degenerating and books (the traditional medium) are the only source of culture.

> "We have become part of a hard-core minority who want no part of television. But by abandoning television we have not only relinquished our chance to improve it, but we have deprived ourselves of the opportunity of learning what television is all about."[27]

Therefore, not all of the blame for the failure of television's development lies with the people who control the broadcasting industry; all citizens must share it for not demanding improvement.

> "Broadcasting is something in between a public utility and purely private enterprise, and because it is so vital a social force, it cannot be permitted to drift on its decaying course."[28]

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25 Fred W. Friendly, *op.cit.*, p. 273.

26 Ashley Montagu, *op.cit.*, p. 131.

27 James J, Thompson, *op.cit.*, p. 110.

28 Fred W. Friendly, *op.cit.*, p. 238.

### 3.3.1 Technical Limitations

There are several technical factors that have led to the domination of the industry by the networks and wealthy entrepreneurs. First, the electromagnetic spectrum limits the channels suitable for broadcast television. The very-high frequency channels (VHF) (Channels 2-6, FM radio band, and Channels 7-13) are the most frequently used because they offer good definition of picture. However, a VHF channel must have a vacant channel on either side of it to avoid electrical interference with another VHF station in the area. The FM radio band provides this gap between Channels 6 and 7. The number of channels that are suitable and usuable in one area is therefore quite limited. The ultra-high frequency channels (UHF) (Channels 14 - 83) offer additional space but are of lower power and definition than VHF channels. There is presently only one UHF channel in Canada, the educational television Channel 19 in Toronto. For reception of UHF channels, the purchase of a converter for home television sets is required. Secondly, the capital investment for equipment, such as cameras, studio lighting and design, control room equipment, and transmission tower and equipment, is enormous - limiting television broadcasting to those with strong financial support. Thirdly, when the Canadian Radio-Television Commission grants a licence, it prescribes the limits of the area of broadcast of a station. It thus controls the number of stations that have access to an area.

### 3.3.2 Economic Constraints

Possibly the greatest force determining what the public sees and hears is the programme sponsors. Radio broadcasting was initially financed by the sale of radio receiver sets. Some sponsors with short advertisements were accepted as radio dwindled.

> "At the outset the prospect that advertising might become the financial mainstay of the broadcasting industry was but dimly perceived, and was often rejected insofar as it was perceived."[29]

The post World War II economic boom and growth of television provided expanding companies that were eager to advertise new products and entrepreneurs seeking financial sources for the investment in television equipment.

> "This conjunction of advertising and programming is one of the decisive historical factors which have shaped the character of ... television."[30]

The rate an advertiser would be willing to pay was determined by the size of the market he could reach - affected by the time of day a programme was shown, the number of people estimated to be watching it, and the number of stations carrying it. The popularity poll ratings became very influential in deciding whether a programme would be seen.

> "... the makers of depilatories have no special competence for the

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[29] David Potter, *op.cit.*, p. 58.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

> rôle which history has whimsically assigned to them as arbiters of American entertainment and shapers of policy in the field of public communications. An old saying affirms that he who pays the piper calls the tune, or as an historian would state it, no power exceeds the power of the purse. The purse for the programmes which divert the American people is held by parties who care nothing about the diversion for its own sake, but care a great deal about whether the diversion can sell tobacco, or aspirin, or cake-mix."[31]

The finances of individual stations and networks and thus the programming was affected by the ratings through the support and pressure of shareholders.

> "... a strange formula became the determining factor of what went on the air. The stock market watched the ratings and, in turn, their effect on advertising sales, expected earnings, the amount of news and serious programming (considered poor advertising times) and eventually the price of the stock."[32]

Television developed at a time when the public and businessman considered that "the more centralized and bigger the organization, the more efficient the operation and the better the product"[33]. The multi-national corporate advertisers and investors and

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[31] David Potter, *op.cit.*, p. 55.

[32] Fred W. Friendly, *op.cit.*, pp. 269-270.

[33] Paul Goodman, *op.cit.*, p. 69.

the national networks thus controlled the types of entertainment and information reaching the public.

> "With this increase of centralization and control there has occurred, of course, a counter-Jeffersonian, or anti-Jeffersonian reduction of the multitude to passivity; they have no initiative or power to make decisions in most matters of life, except the choice of commodities on the market. Therefore, they degenerate into something called 'masses', with the taste of masses."[34]

Broadcasters state that the ratings show what the people want, the mass wants, but it was the advertisers and shareholders who originally influenced what reached the viewer. Some people reject programmes as being bad; others do not receive shows that are even worse because the networks are afraid of offending other segments of the population. Diversity of programming to meet the diverse cultures, diverse interests, and diverse tastes of society is severely restricted. Minow told the National Association of Broadcasters:

> "We all know that people would more often prefer to be entertained than stimulated or informed. But your obligations are not satisfied if you look only to popularity as a test of what to broadcast. You are not only in show-business; you are free to communicate ideas as well as relaxation. You must provide a wider range of choices, more diversity, more alternatives. It is not enough to cater to the nation's whims - you must also serve the nation's needs."[35]

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[34] Paul Goodman, *op.cit.*, p. 69.

[35] Newton N. Minow, *Equal Time: The Private Broadcaster and The Public Interest*, edited by Lawrence Laurent Atheneum, New York, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1964, p. 55.

He proceeded to remind the broadcasters of the power of the television medium to involve and influence the viewer and the control over the reactions of thousands of people that the advertisers and stations have.

> "What you gentlemen broadcast through the people's air affects the people's taste, their knowledge, their opinions, their understanding of themselves and their world. And their future."[36]

The same economic forces act on the independent broadcasters who make up the private Canadian network, CTV, and on the public network, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, which as a Crown corporation has a mandate to operate with no financial loss. The *Broadcasting Act, 1967-68* tempered the economic influence somewhat by giving the CBC a further mandate:

> *Section 3.* "(f) ... a national broadcasting service that is predominantly Canadian in content and character;
>
> "(g) the national broadcasting service should
>
> "(i) be a balanced service of information, enlightenment and entertainment for people of different ages, interests and tastes covering the whole range of programming in fair proportion,
>
> "(ii) be extended to all parts of Canada, as public funds become available,
>
> "(iii) be in English and French, serving the special needs of geographic regions, and actively contributing to the flow and exchange of cultural and regional information and en-

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[36] Newton N. Minow, *op.cit.*, p. 63.

tertainment, and

"(iv) contribute to the development of national unity and provide for a continuing expression of Canadian identity."[37]

This portion of the Act ensures some diversity in programming but it does not necessarily preclude economic influence.

The Act provides another partial restriction of external control by empowering the Canadian Radio-Television Commission (CRTC), in Section 16(b), to make regulations applicable to all licences regarding the standards and diversity of programmes, the character of advertising and amount of advertising time, and standards for partisan political broadcasts[38]. However, the actual programme content is determined by the station or network.

The decisions as to whose views are to be aired, the nature of the editorial bias on news and information, and the type of entertainment the viewer receives are made by independent entrepreneurs and corporation directors under the influence of advertisers and shareholders.

"For this kind of control over the amount of resources there are just too few minds, even if they were wise and benevolent. It's the nature of our institutions that the wise and benevolent do not rise to the top; the safe rise to the top for obvious reasons."[39]

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37 An act to implement a broadcasting policy for Canada (*Broadcasting Act, 1967-68*), p. 685.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 690.

39 Paul Goodman, *op.cit.*, p. 71.

### 3.3.3 The Mass Audience

By using the popularity ratings to determine programming, the broadcaster imposes a form of censorship - designed to attract a mass audience in order to attract the mass advertising dollar. Such controls may serve the majority interests but they leave large minorities, such as native peoples, the poor, the aged, children, Chinese, Italians, Greeks, without an expression of their interests. By trying to appeal to a mass public, television must accept the standards set by the mass, whether it is high or low, and must ignore variations in taste on either side of the standard. By showing only things that are accepted already by the mass public and those things that are bland, controversy is avoided and some of the worst features of society are confirmed[40].

> "The industry is afraid to use the medium out in the world where we can see what's going on, for those programmes might be dull, and untoward things might occur; instead, the programmes must be under control, and live shows are hardly ever made any more."[41]

The viewing audience, however, is increasingly finding its desires unsatisfied by the mass-appeal productions. Tastes seem to be more varied as people become broader in outlook and more

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[40] Paul Goodman, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

aware, "... a questing awareness, sensitive to values and responsive to excellence"[42].

Not only variations in taste should be considered but variations in ideas. To receive television coverage of their views, minority groups (students, poor, labour, French-Canadians, Indians, etc.) resort to demonstrations or more drastic tactics.

> "... we probably ought to be giving more thought to principles of public right of access to television. ... The only public access comes during news programmes and interview shows when, of course, the outsiders are carefully screened."[43]

The *Broadcasting Act* provides the basis for this type of structure:

> *Section 3.* "(d) the programming provided by the Canadian broadcasting system should be varied and comprehensive and should provide reasonable, balanced opportunity for the expression of differing views of public concern ..."[44]

How frequently do the entertainment and information schedules reflect the interests, tastes, and needs of the immigrants in Toronto, the Chinese in Vancouver, or the Ukranians in Winnipeg? Programmes that are done usually have an external bias, either the producer using his interpretation or the sponsor seeking to hold a large audience. Regarding the minorities (and sometimes majorities) in American cities, Johnson says:

> "We cannot simply tell the story of black and other non-white

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[42] David Potter, *op.cit.*, p. 67.

[43] Nicholas Johnson, *op.cit.*, p. 188.

[44] An act to implement a broadcasting policy for Canada (*Broadcasting Act, 1967-68*), pp. 684-685.

Americans better than we have. They have to tell it for themselves.

> "The media must look to the Negro community to originate its own programming, reporting, and editorializing about its affairs and the affairs of the nation, and the world."[45]

Access by a large number of people to broadcast television is limited by the expense and complexity of the equipment and the scarcity of space in the air waves. The current financial structure, that treats the audience as a uniform mass, inhibits diversity and blocks expression by people that may be controversial. However, the desires of the public are changing and what is needed is a channel of expression.

> "... television *is* responsible for violence to the extent that it insists upon action from those with legitimate grievances to share with their fellow citizens. People will do whatever is necessary to be heard. What is necessary is what the gatekeepers of our television channels define is necessary."[46]

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[45] Nicholas Johnson, *op.cit.*, p. 110.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 188.

# 4

# Chapter 4

# Cable Television and Community Access

## 4.1 Technical Basics

Several technical innovations have created a communications system with a capacity to provide vast amounts of information and the ability to allow relatively unskilled people access to the transmitting end of television.

Cable television, or community antenna television (CATV), began in Langford, Pennsylvania in 1949[1] and appeared in Canada in London and Montreal in 1952[2]. The original purpose of CATV was to provide people in remote towns, or in areas of a city with high interference, with higher quality signals and a large variety of local and distant television stations than they would receive from the air. This purpose is still the main reason viewers are willing to pay a monthly subscription (of $5.00 in Vancouver) in addition to an installation charge. A cable television system comprises a master antenna (hence the name) located on a tower or other elevated site to gather the broadcast signals. Amplifying equipment, at the base of the an-

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1 Ralph Lee Smith, "The Wired Nation", *The Nation*, May 18, 1970, Vol. 210, no. 19, special issue, p. 582.

2 Government of Canada, Canadian Radio-Television Commission. *Cable Television in Canada*, Information Canada, Ottawa, January 1971.

tenna (known as the "head-end") sends the signals along a trunk coaxial cable, through neighbourhood "feeder" cables, and down "drop wires" to individual homes and television sets. The cables are strung on the telephone company's poles or conduits. Amplifiers are spaced along the distribution cables to maintain good quality signals. Therefore, a poor broadcast signal can be improved and transmitted to those willing and able to pay.

The component of the system that creates the exciting potential is the coaxial cable. It is made up of a centre copper wire; surrounded by a thick layer of polyethylene foam or other insulating material; that is surrounded by a tubular shield of braided copper wire or a seamless aluminium sheath; then covered by a protective coating[3]. This design allows the coaxial cable to eliminate the inherent problem of broadcast television, electrical interference from adjacent channels.

> "When an electric current is introduced into the cable, an electromagnetic interaction takes place between the centre wire and the surrounding sheath. The interaction prevents currents from radiating off the cable. This is the secret of the cable's key characteristic - its immense capacity for carrying electronic signals, data and information."[4]

Although most cable systems in Canada have been built with only twelve channel capacity[5] (because almost all television receiver sets are built

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[3] Ralph Lee Smith, *op.cit.*, p. 584.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 584.

[5] Government of Canada, Canadian Radio-Television Commission, *op.cit.*, p.1.

with only that capacity), it is possible with present technology to design systems that could carry all VHF channels (2 to 13) and all UHF channels (14 to 83). Cable television thus has the potential to end the scarcity of available channels that presently limits access to broadcast television.

A cable television operator has a monopoly in his licence area because the Canadian Radio-Television Commission (CRTC) will not issue licences that will result in overwiring of an area[6]. The broadcasting policy emphasizes public service which means uninterrupted service, requiring financial stability of operators (especially in the case of over-air broadcasters). Before the CRTC became the regulatory body, it was found that a substantial investment was lost if a second operator could not compete successfully and the construction and maintenance of two cables over the same television routes was inconvenient. The CRTC requires that an operator completely "wire" his licence area within the first licensing period (each period is two years). The CRTC thus implements the portion of the *Broadcasting Act* that acknowledges "the right of persons to receive programmes"[7] by encouraging stability and providing opportunity of access. To prevent unfair pricing, the Commission must approve the level of fees charged by a licensee[8].

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[6] Government of Canada, Canadian Radio-Television Commission, *op.cit.*, p. 37.

[7] An Act to implement a broadcasting policy for Canada (*Broadcasting Act, 1967-68*), p. 684.

[8] Government of Canada, Canadian Radio-Television Commission, *op.cit.*, p. 37.

Cable television has proved very popular in Canada, especially in areas close to American television stations.

> "In 1970, 27.5 per cent of Canada's 4,000,000 urban households were linked to cable television systems."[9]

Not all cable systems are in urban areas. Many are remote and some transport programme material in (such as the system in Whitehorse). Some systems have only a few dozen subscribers while

> "there is a very large one in Vancouver which is often said to be the largest in the world, with more than 100,000 subscribers"[10].

> "Proportionately, cable television has developed more rapidly in Canada than in the United States. There are in the United States some 2,300 systems in operation with approximately four million subscribers. By comparison, Canada is 1970 had 340 systems with 1,100,000 subscribers. The introduction of cable television in the large American cities is just beginning. At present, the largest system is in San Diego and has 20 per cent penetration. In the urban centres of British Columbia, Vancouver and Victoria, the penetration is 65 per cent."[11]

The cable television systems in the Lower Mainland and their licence areas are given in Appendix A.

Another technological step that makes the use of tele-

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[9] Government of Canada, Candian Radio-Television Commission, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

vision possible by more people is the miniaturization of cameras, video-tape recorders, and editing equipment. Several manufacturers have cameras approximately the size of an eight millimetre camera and portable recorders that use half-inch video-tapes instead of the broadcast standard one-inch or two-inch tapes. The half-inch equipment is of a high enough standard for cable television. The cost of a camera and recorder is about $1,500.00, compared to the tens of thousands of dollars for broadcast equipment. Compatible editing equipment can be quite expensive; that made by the Sony Corporation is the least costly - about $700.00. Including some accessories it is possible to set up a community facility for approximately $3,000.00.

Cable television, with its ability to carry numerous channels, is reaching most areas of Canadian cities. For a relatively low cost it is possible to create programmes of good quality for transmission over cable.

> "Together, then, the elimination of channel scarcity and the sharp reduction of broadcasting cost can break the hold on the nation's television fare now exercised by a small commercial oligarchy. Television can become far more flexible, far more democratic, far more diversified in content, and far more responsive to the full range of pressing needs in today's cities, neighbourhoods, towns, and communities."[12]

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[12] Ralph Lee Smith, *op.cit.*, p. 584.

## 4.2 Potential of Cable Television

The promise of cable television is to open a new channel of communication and expression to people who have been excluded in the past because they did not have enough money to make a programme or pay for "advertising", because they did not create a sensation to become "news", or because the things they had to say would not appeal to a mass audience.

> "Programming which would recognize the range within the audience, rather than treating all viewers as if their tastes and interests were indistinguishable, would be a great advance."[13]

Besides reaching a variety of audiences, a cable system would be designed to reach specific geographical areas (representing social, economic, or other groups) of a city or the country. A group of welfare recipients could "air" their problems and solutions in their own neighbourhood, with the rest of the city, or, with the aid of an eventual microwave, or satellite, link share them with another part of the country.

The CRTC recognizes that the provision of locally-produced programmes can help develop a community identity, contribute to the cultural life by complementing broadcast television, schools and theatres[14], and foster communication among individuals and community

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[13] David Potter, "Television: the Broad View - The Historical Perspective", *The Meaning of Commercial Television*, the Texas-Stanford Seminar, 1966, edited by Stanley T. Donner, University of Texas Press, Austin and London, p. 67.

[14] Government of Canada, Canadian Radio-Television Commission, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

groups[15]. Although cable operators and most subscribers consider the major selling point of cable television to be the provision of American programmes, the CRTC places more emphasis on the supplying of Canadian stations, in accordance with the *Broadcasting Act, 1967-68*, and on a community channel. In its announcement of April 10, 1970, the Commission defined the priorities to be fulfilled to obtain a licence to operate a cable system[16]:

"a) CBC network service

b) Canadian private network service (CTV)

c) Canadian B contour TV stations

d) a channel for community programmes

e) the Commission may require reception from additional Canadian stations which have significantly different programme schedules than categories (a) to (c)

f) service from one non-Canadian commercial station

g) service from one non-Canadian, non-commercial station".

Therefore, if the operator intends to bring in one American channel he must provide all the other services (a) to (e) also.

Some operators of smaller systems, for economy, define community programming as the exhibition of weather data or stock market information but most provide studio facilities or tape plug-in facilities for programmes.

"It has been estimated that providing a community channel will cost

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15 Government of Canada, Canadian Radio-Television Commission, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

at least $20,000.00 a year, although many systems spend much more.

"Most systems that have begun community programming are producing, on the average, about 10 hours a week. They report interest and excitement from their subscribers, although it is difficult to estimate just how large the audiences are for community programmes. One system, which went to unusual lengths to ascertain its audience for such programmes, concluded that about 24 per cent of its subscribers watched them."[17]

## 4.3 Community Programming

There are two schools of thought evolving concerning how the public can become involved in television and the decision-making. The first seeks to use the two-way flow that is possible with the coaxial cable (as in the telephone) and a combination of electronic media. The second seeks more local citizen control of and input to the programme content and bias.

The former is very dominant in the thinking of many Americans who are trying to find an effective way to use the Public Broadcasting Service, the cable systems in smaller urban areas, and public affairs programmes on commercial stations. The programming to a large degree is done by a professional staff. The format being used

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[17] Government of Canada, Canadian Radio-Television Commission, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

is the "open line". The programme, whether concerning local government[18], public issues, or education[19], is presented and the viewer permitted to respond by telephone. The use of electronics for reply is envisioned as extending to a two-way cable (the home TV set acting as a camera too) and to an input console in every home.

A public television station in Jacksoncille, Florida, has a nightly programme called "Feedback", that reports on news issues by film, videotape and live interviews then allows viewers to phone in comments or questions. It draws large audiences[20].

Such a format gives people opportunity to air their views and provide feedback to decision-makers. However, the respondent is anonymous, at the end of the telephone line or at the console. Also he is given the opportunity to comment on issues chosen by someone else, the professional producer, and not problems that he or his group may define.

The second type of community programming - citizen control of content and bias - is more dominant in the thinking of Canadians in the development of cable television. Public participation in television, therefore, means that the community describes itself. The content would not necessarily have mass appeal but may interest only

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18 John W. Macy, Jr., "Community Uses of Public Television", *City*, Vol. 5, no. 2, March/April, 1971, p. 24.

19 Stanley A. Garlick, "Improving Urban Communications 1: Electronic Technology's Great Potential", *Nation's Cities*, March, 1971, Vol. 9, no. 3, p. 22.

20 John W. Macy, Jr., *op.cit.*, p. 25.

those concerned with the topic. (For example, the programme, "Show of Hands" with news for the deaf, on the community channel in Vancouver.)

> "Television programming that is done by the community does not have - and cannot have - the professional production techniques of conventional television. For those who are interested, this is not a problem: involvement with something that is close to them is compensation enough for lack of polish."[21]

The issues or solutions to be discussed would be presented by people who are closest to them and the bias presented is internal, not external. The manner of presentation would reflect the originator's viewpoint.

Instead of promoting mass values which tend to diminish regional differences (and neighbourhood differences) and create national or international perspectives[22], local programming would create neighbourhood and city-wide perspectives.

The two schools of thought are not mutually exclusive by any means. A programme produced by one group or neighbourhood could solicit telephoned comments by its own members or those of another group or neighbourhood.

The CRTC outlined three basic examples of local pro-

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[21] Government of Canada, Canadian Radio-Television Commission, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

[22] James J. Thompson, *Instructional Communication*, American Book Company, 1969, p. 111.

gramming, favouring a mix of the three forms, with priority given to the first:[23]

"a) Community Programming

"This is a process which involves direct citizen participation in programme planning and production. Access to the community channel is the responsibility of the cable television licensee, but the means which are employed to best further the use of a channel for the local citizenry, to establish fair access, and to facilitate production, can be as varied as necessary to study local need.

"b) Local Origination

"This type of programming usually consists of coverage of local activities of all kinds. ... under the direct supervision of the cable television system staff.

"c) Informational Programming

"This form of programming can provide a counterpoint to the concept of community programming. It can inform the community about matters which are of concern and interest to its citizens. Programmes may be of a highly specialized mature, appealing to minority audiences, or they may be of a general interest. Effective informational programming should make for improved and more responsible participation in community programming (i.e. type (a))."

The Commission exhibits a strong preference for programming that is done

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23 Government of Canada, Canadian Radio-Television Commission, *Canadian Broadcasting, "A Single System": Policy Statement on Cable Television*, July 16, 1971, pp. 17-18.

by the public, but leaves the responsibility for content with the owner of the system.

## 4.4 Control of Cable Television Content

As cable television, and other electronic communications inventions, expand there is a danger that the uses to which the new tools are put may not coincide with human desires and human ends. Many of the services were contrived for space exploration and entered general society as marketable gadgets. Fears of uncontrolled use have been expressed.

> "The overwhelming feeling of participants - the majority of whom were sociologists, educators, architects, urban planners, and social workers - was that it is essential to develop technology to meet society's social, political, cultural, and economic goals, and above all to make criteria that the machine liberate man, instead of dominating him."[24]

The attitudes and motives, of the people who control the cable content and the type of information and ideas they permit to be disseminated will greatly influence the benefits that CATV can produce.

> "We have moved from an age when political and economic power were measured in land, or capital, or labour, to an age in which

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[24] Government of Canada, Department of Communications, *Telecommission, Study 6(d) Report on the Seminar on the Wired City*, held at the University of Ottawa, June 26-28, 1970, Information Canada, Ottawa, 1971, p. 5.

> power is measured largely by access to information and people. The man or institution which has the greatest political, military, or economic power today is the one with access to the greatest amount of relevant information in the most usable form in the quickest time; and, in institutions or societies where popular understanding and support are relevant, the greatest access to the mass media. ... The problem in establishing cable television ... is not that of deciding where we will put all those wires; it is deciding who gets to hold the switch. ... guarantees of free speech must, today, extend to making the mass media available to those who want to use them."[25]

By having more access to the medium of cable television, people will have more opportunity to obtain information and tell others how they feel about neighbourhood issues. By gaining access to that medium, they increase their power to influence and be a part of decisions that affect them. Television would become part of the community.

Community Television: This term is assumed to mean that the citizens of an area participate in the planning and production of programmes. Control and responsibility for access to and the content of a cable television community channel lie with the citizens. Thus, the implicit potential censorship by the owner is removed and the freedom of expression and the diversity of programmes that cable television enhances is not threatened.

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25 Nicholas Johnson, *How to Talk Back to Your Television Set*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, Toronto, 1970, p. 140.

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# CHAPTER 5

## Postulates, Objective , Methodology

The preceeding chapters laid out the assumptions basic to the premise of this thesis, and the reasons for the arrival at those assumptions.

The planning process was described as a more democratic one than exists at present, one which gives people more power to make decisions, or influence decisions, about programmes and plans that will affect them. The citizen becomes more involved in all stages of the process, from determination of goals, formulation and selection of alternative sources of action, to implementation of the project. The rôle of the planner in this process is that of a resource person. He would assist the articulation of goals by providing diverse channels of expression; he would encourage discussion of solutions and outline additional ones and describe the possible consequences of each alternative; and he would provide information about techniques of implementation.

Television is a medium that requires participation and involvement by the viewer due to the nature of the "pictures" formed. The audio-visual image presents a large amount of information in the form of hard data, and in the form of movement and emotions. The technology of cable television opens more channels for use and does not necessitate highly sophisticated equipment. Inexpensive and easy-to-handle equipment

is available for the recording of people and events for programmes. The Canadian Radio-Television Commission requires every cable system operator to set aside one channel for community use and encourages the planning and production of programmes by citizens. However, one restriction to access does exist. Section 3, paragraph (c) of the *Broadcasting Act, 1967-68*[1] does not question the right to freedom of expression but it places the responsibility for programmes broadcast on the licensed person, not the producer. Community television assumes that the programming is done by community members and that the control of content is not external but also lies with the citizen.

5.1 Objective:- to explore the uses of community television as an aid for citizen involvement in the planning process.

That is, the research was designed to explore ways in which easy access by the public, to a television channel will improve the flow of information and expression of ideas about goals and alternatives, both to and from the public.

5.2 Methodology

It was decided that the most effective method of testing the use of community television was to conduct an experiment. Such a test

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[1] An act to implement a broadcasting policy for Canada (*Broadcasting Act, 1967-68*).

would permit evaluation of the response of planners and citizens of an area to the new vehicle of expression. The researcher became a participant in the process; playing a portion of the rôle of the planner by encouraging the use of a basically new medium and encouraging discussion of the qualities, problems, and goals of the neighbourhood. The study was more of an active, subjective exercise than a passive, objective one of the survey-questionnaire type. It was intended to actively involve residents of the community in both television and planning.

The location chosen for the execution of the experiment was the West End of Vancouver. This very dense, high-rise apartment district was chosen for several reasons: the researcher had established contacts with the West End Community Council in the course of other work during the fall of 1971; from that work awareness of a communication gap among residents and between residents and officials (including planners) became evident; the new apartments have had television cable installed during construction and most of the older buildings have been wired (an engineer from Vancouver Cablevision estimated that 97% of the dwelling units have "Cablevision"); and planners for the City of Vancouver were in the process of drawing up policy guidelines for the area without seeking input from West End residents.

As a basis for the process the experiment should follow and the results that might be expected from the use of media, several cases in the use of film, video-tape, and television were examined. The cases concerned important community issues and the use of media was generally in the community development process - the formulation of goals

and achievement of changes or improvements in community life.

The case studies and the West End experiment were evaluated under several headings, for the sake of consistency:

1. the community - what were the basic characteristics of the community and its people, and what were the problems facing the community regarding development (or lack of it);
2. the medium - the type of medium used, who initiated the use of the medium, and the way in which it was used;
3. the results - the degree of citizen involvement in expression of desires and the influence they have on the decision-making process.

Some of the cases illustrate the approach to the use of the media - community involvement in the choice of content and making of programmes; some of the others are examples of the use of electronic media, television and telephone, for two-way communication and discussion of the issue. The latter type allows people to ask questions or make comments on a chosen topic in the "view" of the watching public, in the style of a large "community hall" meeting. Both techniques can be effective for involving people, but the former gives them control over content and editorial bias.

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# CHAPTER 6

## Case Studies and the West End Experiment

### 6.1 Challenge For Change[1]

Several of the projects to be discussed were originated wholly, or partially, by the Challenge for Change/Société Nouvelle programme of the National Film Board of Canada. The programme began in mid-1966 when the Privy Council of Canada asked the Film Board to do a film that would help to close the gap between the public's understanding of poverty and the reality of that way of life, a gap that was very evident at that time. This problem pointed to the gap in information output and input permeating North American society. The mass media: television, newspapers, magazines, and films, pour out tremendous volumes of information but the voices of many people are never heard. Most people remain on the receiving end.

> "The need for a real exchange of information and ideas among the various groups that make up the fabric of our society grows more pressing every day. Silent poor or silent majority - we are all

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[1] National Film Board of Canada, *Newsletter - Challenge for Change*, Vol. 1, no. 1, Spring 1968, p. 2.

National Film Board of Canada, *Newsletter - Challenge for Change/Société Nouvelle*, No. 7, Winter 1971-72, p. 3.

suffering from the need to influence the decisions that effect our lives.

"Instead of being an instrument to facilitate these exchanges, the media, as presently constituted, usually exacerbate these frustrations by filtering citizens' opinions, when solicited through the well-dressed eyes of professionals, journalists and communicators. ...

"In this disparity between people's lives and the popular media lie the origins of Challenge for Change, a programme that the National Film Board of Canada designed to 'improve communications, create greater understanding, promote new ideas and provoke social change'."[2]

With this objective Challenge for Change initially set about making films, the context of which were decided by those photographed and the community as a whole, then switched to video-tape because of its instant replay ability. Because of the ease of operation of the video-tape equipment (compared to film equipment), Challenge for Change switched to supplying technicians to train community members to use the camera. Thus, even the recording was done through the eyes of the citizens.

The Challenge for Change/Société Nouvelle has brought together the National Film Board and "certain federal government departments which now comprise: Agriculture, C.M.H.C., National Health and Welfare, Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Labour, Regional Economic Expansion and Secretary of State/Citizenship. The programme is responsible directly to the Secretary of State, via the Privy Council office."[3]

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[2] National Film Board of Canada, *Newsletter - Challenge for Change/Société Nouvelle*, No. 7, Winter 1971-72, p. 3.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

This combination of departments emphasizes the significance that the federal government attaches to the programme and its objectives.

## 6.2 Case I: Fogo Island, Newfoundland[4]

### 6.2.1 The Community

Fogo Island is a small rocky island off the north-east coast of Newfoundland, about forty miles north of Gander. It is only fifteen miles long and nine miles wide. In 1967, the island had fewer than 15,000 residents scattered among the ten villages. A new, but inadequate, road system, religious factionalism, rivalries, and an established custom of minimum interaction separated the people of those villages. Fogo's economy was based on its function as a supply centre and on the inshore fishing industry. Fishing was declining because fleets of boats, that were larger and more efficient than those of Fogo Island fishermen, were intercepting the fish in international waters, before they could reach the Newfoundland shores. At least sixty percent of the island's residents were on government welfare. Under its centralization scheme (moving communities, whose economies

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[4] National Film Board of Canada, *Newsletter - Challenge for Change - Société Nouvelle*, No. 7, Winter 1971-72.

Elayne Harris, "Fogo Island: birthplace of a communication process", *University Affairs*, March 1972, p. 607.

The Extension Service, Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, *Fogo Process in Communication* - A reflection on the use of film as a inter-community communication, Spring, 1972.

were no longer viable, to stronger regional centres), the provincial government was seriously considering relocating the entire Fogo Island population. The history and tradition of 300 years and the Island's pride, resisted the scheme and the despair of the welfare problem.

### 6.2.2 The Medium

The credit for the Fogo experiment is shared by the National Film Board of Canada and the Extension Service of Memorial University of Newfoundland. In the summer of 1967, under the still young Challenge for Change programme, the Film Board sent a crew to record the "troubled" life of Fogo. Seeking a long-term commitment from some institution, the film-maker contacted the Extension Service (whose field representative, a community development worker native to Fogo Island, was interested in helping the residents stay on the Island). What evolved was not the "documentary" that was originally planned, but a new communication technique and a social catalyst for community development - a process that has received emphasis by the Film Board and Extension Service since then. The method has proved to be an effective tool for opening up new, or formerly restricted, communication channels.

About twenty hours of film were shot, sent to Montreal for processing and editing down to about six hours, then screened back to the people a month later. Permission of the people was sought before shooting, before public screening, and before it was shown outside the village or outside the island. Control over the issues, atti-

tudes, problems, and ideas reflected in the final films and over the persons who viewed them lay with the people.

> "... the film crew attempted to generate in the people confidence to formulate and express their problems, as seen by themselves, for it was felt that the expression of problems was a step to understanding and solving them. The technique moved away from the traditional method of focussing on issues and instead became centred around personalities, personalities whose views reflected a community feeling. To achieve a balanced perspective of Fogo Island, it was necessary also to encompass more than negative or problematic issues and to include films documenting social events, community achievements and the rich culture and tradition so much evident in the Islanders' lives."[5]

The films themselves were worthless. The ways in which they were used were more important. Screening sessions were held around the island, resulting in constructive discussion and increased awareness of themselves and their problems. The distribution of the films was a key element in achieving changes desired by the community.

> "... the Fogo Island community with its problems, strengths, weaknesses, dignity, concerns and hopes, was shown to agencies, departments, government officials and other individuals in a position to give the Islanders the encouragement, advice and help they required in order to help themselves or receive aid they had a right

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[5] Elayne Harris, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

to expect."[6]

Some of the films were shown to provincial Cabinet ministers and the response, in film, of the Minister of Fisheries led to the establishment of a fisherman's co-operative fish plant.

A film crew was trained by the National Film Board in Montreal for permanent attachment to the Extension Service. However, the Fogo pilot project had shown film's drawbacks, technical specialists and their salaries and expenses, high laboratory costs, a time lapse between filming and screening on a large and heavy projector, and another time lapse before the finished film. The Extension Service now uses mostly video-tape for the "Fogo process in communication" because it does not require skilled technicians, expensive equipment, or processing, and it has instant playback ability.

### 6.2.3 The Results

Fogo Island is "an example of how co-operation, understanding and self-help can create an atmosphere conducive to progress and development"[7]. Film gave the Islanders a different type of input to the decisions being made by the politicians and officials - the "film dialogue" led to further discussions and in 1971 to a fish plant (co-operative) to replace the private plant, that is larger and can process

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[6] The Extension Service, Memorial University, St. John's,Newfoundland, *op.cit.*

[7] Elayne Harris, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

more varieties of fish than the traditional cod. The Island's economy is also buoyed up by a new ship-building co-operative. With the twenty-seven new "longliners", the fishermen can reach the distant fishing grounds. There has also been a significant reduction in those on welfare, an improvement in transportation facilities, and provision of a new, consolidated high school. Film acted as a mirror for the community and it allowed those outside (politicians and planners) to look "into" the community and see it as its residents did.

## 6.3 Case II: Drumheller, Alberta[8]

### 6.3.1 The Community

The Drumheller Valley is situated about fifty miles northeast of Calgary. Most of the coal mines upon which it was dependent had been mined out and closed down. The villages of the area were on the verge of becoming ghost towns. The surrounding farm lands and a new federal penitentiary provided some support for commerce. Many of the valley dwellers were squatters living on slim resources of their

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[8] David Gordon Baxter, *The Utilization of Video-Tape in the Community Development Process: An Exploratory Study*, Thesis for Master of Social Work, Department of Social Welfare, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Spring 1971.

National Film Board of Canada, *Newsletter - Challenge for Change/Société Nouvelle*, No. 7, Winter 1971-72.

pensions. The town of East Coulee, about fifteen miles east of Drumheller, had the last operating coal mine and had seen a population decline from 3,000 in 1951 to 500 in 1969. Rosedale, a little village four miles east of Drumheller, had neither local government, water, sewage or gas. It was the scene of strongest action.

### 6.3.2 The Medium

In August 1969, the Challenge for Change programme had been invited to use video-tape in the valley. The National Film Board was using the "Fogo process", capitalizing on the simplicity and instantaneous playback qualities of the half-inch video-tape recorder and camera. To maintain continuity in the project, the Film Board enlisted the aid of the School of Social Welfare and the Division of Continuing Education at the University of Calgary. These departments were interested in the impact of this new technology on the community development process. They hired a community development worker to work in the valley for two years.

After the worker had been in the valley for two-and-a-half months, a Challenge for Change team worked with him for a month doing interviews about the future of the valley. A tape was put together about the decline of East Coulee and shown at a town meeting. At that meeting the Rosedale Citizens' Committee invited the worker to help them improve the conditions in their village. He trained committee members to use the equipment and they began an interviewing blitz - seeking residents' opinions on the situation in their village. The tapes were

edited down to a one-hour programme, "Rosedale: A White Man's Reservation?", which was shown at the local community hall in early April, 1970. Half the population attended and a heated and relevant discussion ensued. The outcome of the meeting was the formation of subcommittees to tackle specific problems: water, industrial incentive, promotion and publicity, gas, land improvement.

Video-tape was used to get interviewees thinking and raise awareness of common feelings. It was used to improve communications between the leadership group and the rest of the community. After the general meetings, the video-tape was relegated to a documentary function. The news-information function was taken over by two valley newspapers.

### 6.3.3 The Results

The strong leadership of the expanded and renamed Rosedale Citizens' Action Committee was responsible for the changes in the community. The water and gas subcommittees achieved the installation of water and gas lines. The industrial incentive subcommittee, not only stopped the demolition of the local school (which had been phased out by the consolidated school system) and compensatory repairs, but it negotiated the school's use as a factory, with a subsidy under the Alberta government's incentive plan. The townsite improvement subcommittee held a weekend cleaning bee to clean up homes and vacant lots. Later, it organized community construction of a park from an overgrown, bushy area. A fire engine was donated and a fire hall built for it. In addition to

raising community identity and pride, the activities encouraged more commercial investments in the village.

## 6.4 Case III: Barrie, Ontario[9]

### 6.4.1 The Community

Barrie is a city of about 26,000 situated on the shores of Lake Simcoe. It is a satellite of Toronto, being only about fifty miles, by expressway, from the downtown area. It is a high growth centre, partly because economic and marketing studies have determined it is the optimum location for warehousing. Of the many problems facing the community, the ones of highest priority (as determined by a series of discussions on the use of the cable system's community channel) were:

1) the plight of high school and college students, thousands of whom were expected to be travelling through Barrie during the summer (1971);
2) the choice of a site of a new arena-auditorium; and
3) the growing pollution of Kempenfeldt Bay, on which Barrie lies.

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[9] Interviews with: John Pearson, Director of Research, Ontario Department of Municipal Affairs
Ed Waitzer, Interchurch Broadcasting Project - Cable Study, Toronto, Ontario

*Municipal World*, "Will Cable Television Help Community Development?", December, 1971, pp. 322-324.

6.4.2 The Medium

Energy was focussed on the origination of a programme on the community channel of the cable television system. Credit for the initiation of the project is given to Stanley Burke, a former CBC news reporter who is now a free lance broadcaster interested in the social potential of cable television. In February, 1971, stranded in Barrie by a snowstorm, he became involved in a discussion with local leaders about the use of cable television for community affairs. The "Committee 26,000" was formed and over the next four months expanded to include many community agencies and special interest groups. The problem of "Youth in the Summer '71" was considered most important to the community and became the topic of the first programme.

In June, 1971, a group of about 100 people, from such established institutions and organizations as the YM-YWCA, Parks and Recreation Commission, the Children's Aid Society, Board of Education, and youth groups, joined the mayor and city council in their chambers. The two-hour discussion was taped and replayed, unedited, the following evening over the cable station. Afterwards viewers held open discussion and debate using the telephone. The programme had been advertised strongly in the other local media resulting in a large audience. The response during the phone-in session and the following day was so strong that the programme was rerun, with equal response, the following day.

### 6.4.3 The Result

A high school teacher had been the prime mover to open a hostel for the young people on the move. The television programme created additional support for the idea and resulted in community approval and construction of the hostel. The solution of a problem of general concern was achieved by opening discussion to public view and input.

## 6.5 Case IV: Richmond, British Columbia[10]

### 6.5.1 The Community

The municipality of Richmond is situated immediately to the south of Vancouver. It consists of several islands in the delta of the Fraser River. Within easy commuting distance of downtown Vancouver, Richmond has become a bedroom suburb. The demands for housing have eliminated much of the agricultural land and are threatening the remainder. The conflict of land use and the other factors such as the price of land and mortgages have suggested a more economical, higher-density use of the land, especially among planners and real estate developers. Projects that include town-houses or apartment blocks have disturbed some Richmond residents, who want only the traditional single-

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[10] Interview with Ian Chang of the Richmond Planning Department

family home to be built in the area. The municipal planning department organized a group of citizens into the Goals Planning Committee, designed to discover what the residents want their area to be.

### 6.5.1 The Medium

In addition to doing a sample survey of households, a media information blitz was done. A member of the Committee made a contact with Metro Media (see West End Case Study) which worked with the Committee and a group of high school students. Interviews in people's homes were video-taped and the viewpoints of some major developers were recorded. A slide and poster display was set up in the mall of Richmond Shopping Centre and people's solutions and comments were recorded.

These tapes were part of a two-hour programme shown on the Vancouver cablevision, community channel, Channel 10. A panel discussion was interspersed with the three segments of tape during the first hour of the programme. During the second hour, and after the programme, viewers phoned in to ask questions of the panel or to make comments. Due to advertising in the local paper, in the Vancouver daily, *The Sun*, and by notices taken home by school children, the response was enthusiastic. A second programme, shown a couple of weeks later, was poorly advertised and the panel was more technical in character; the telephone response was considerably lower. The results were taken to a public meeting.

### 6.5 .3 The Results

The interest and awareness raised by the contact with the community-at-large through the questionnaires, the activity in the shopping mall, the television programmes, and the public meetings was noted well by the politicians. A by-law was passed, on a temporary, trial basis, requiring that a developer submit his plans to a meeting of citizens for their approval before the municipal council will approve them.

## 6.6 Evaluation of Cases

### 6.6..1 Fogo Island, and the Planning Process

Plans had been formulated by the Newfoundland government to phase out some of the less viable, remote communities (one of which may have been Fogo Island). The Fogo Islanders showed them that history, tradition, and pride were important factors to be included with economics in reaching a decision. Film was only a tool - for the community to take an objective look at itself and to show decision-makers the problems and solutions as defined by the residents. Film encouraged the inhabitants to formulate goals and consider alternative solutions. The changes were not made by the films but by strong leaders and hard work by many islanders. The films broke through the communication barrier between villages, aided dialogue with politicians, and improved the understanding among the

Islanders and by the "outsiders".

### 6.6.2 Drumheller and the Planning Process

The community development worker realized that the tapes that he and the Challenge for Change crew did for the East Coulee meeting, exhibited his biases in the questions asked and the editing of material. The response to his tapes was not nearly as great as the reaction to the tapes done by the Rosedale Committee. Not only did the Committee members ask different questions but the operation of the equipment by them reassured the interviewees and encouraged more open comments.

When asked to rate the functions that video-tape served[11], the leadership group gave the greatest value to its being an involving tool and as a medium of information flow. Other Rosedale residents gave highest rating to video-tape as a medium of expression and an instrument of visual impact and awareness.

The communication barriers between residents were dissolved and identity of the community reinforced. Strong leadership resulted in improvements in Rosedale. The provincial government's centralization plan of phasing out communities with no viable economy was shown to be against the feelings of the citizens.

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[11] David Gordon Baxter, *op.cit.*, pp. 66-67.

### 6.6.3 Barrie and the Planning Process

The Barrie project took a major step towards citizen involvement in the decision process. The "Committee 26,000" became involved in a discussion of community problems and goals and set priorities. The public at large participated in an open debate and may thus have influenced the decision-making process. The nature of the topic seemed to necessitate the attraction of a larger audience - which seemed to be taking advantage of the lack of scheduling on the community channel to perform in a "broadcast television" manner. The people involved in the planning of the programme and in the taped discussion appeared to be those who were articulate and already involved in decision-making. Such a situation at the beginning of "community programming" in Barrie could lead to the exclusion of less vocal and less knowledgable people.

### 6.6.4 Richmond and the Planning Process

The Richmond project had the most significant effect on the decision-making process, regarding housing and development. The community television channel was used to raise people's awareness of their area. It required them to consider their own ideas and goals for their community and gave them one outlet for expression. A variety of viewpoints and technical information were presented openly. Residents learned what some of their neighbours were like and what they thought about a common problem.

## 6.7 The West End Experiment

One of the important rôles in the West End project was that of the Metro Media Association of Vancouver. Its formation and goals are described, because it not only supplied video-tape equipment and advice but it played a key rôle in determining the direction of the researcher's approach to the problem. Thoughts about the planning process, citizen participation, and access to television were tied together by the philosophy of Metro Media and its methods of working with community groups.

### 6.7.1 Metro Media[12]

Aware of increasing demands by groups and individuals for help in working with media, Intermedia, an experimental artists' workshop supported by Canada Council, submitted a proposal to the Donner Canadian Foundation to create a workshop for experimentation with videotape in a community context. A grant of $21,500 in January, 1971 got the project underway - salaries and the purchase of three half-inch Sony Porto-Pacs and one half-inch deck and one one-inch deck for editing. Overwhelming community demands led to the establishment of a formal community media service agency, the Metro Media Association of Greater Vancouver, in April 1971. It is broadly based, open in membership and committed to playing an active rôle in redistributing and democratizing the communications power in society.

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[12] National Film Board of Canada, *Newsletter - Challenge for Change/Societe Nouvelle*, No. 7, Winter, 1971-72, pp. 12-13.

The Challenge for Change programme gave a grant in July, 1971 to hire resource people and purchase materials; it also loaned some equipment. Under the Local Initiatives Programme, Metro Media has decentralized its activities by setting up neighbourhood media facilities in Kitsilano, the West End, Fraserview-Killarney, and Grandview-Woodlands.

It has worked with over forty organizations on such topics as housing and tenants' rights, native rights, ethnic groups and immigrants, ecology, transportation, recreation, and labour issues. Each group must identify its communications goals - what it wants to say, to whom, and how - before taping can begin. About thirty hours of cable television programming has been produced by groups trained by Metro Media resource people. Other groups have used video in their own activities, internal communications, training, public relations, developing issues, and organizing.

Metro Media has good rapport with the management of Cable 10, the community channel, which is keenly interested in citizen produced programmes. A regular one-hour programme slot if available on Friday evenings to groups working with Metro Media.

### 6.7 .2 The Community

The West End has a population of about 35,000 people within an area less than a square mile. Since about 1958, construction of high-rise apartments in the West End has earned it the term, "concrete

jungle". People live there because they want to be close to work, shopping, and entertainment in the downtown core, close to beaches and Stanley Park, and because there is a variety of accommodation and rents are reasonable. There is a wide variety of ages, ethnic origins, and income. The area is a reception area for immigrants and the transiency rate is high. Information about services and facilities available is lacking. The information centre, the West End Bulletin Board, does not have the funds to move from its location in the basement of Gordon Neighbourhood House (isolated in the southeast corner of the area). It also does not have a policy of reaching out to people; instead it waits for people to drop in.

The diversity and transiency and a noticeable lack of communication among and about the people have left a feeling of no community spirit[13].

The "West End Resident Survey" conducted by the Vancouver Department of Social Planning and Community Development at the beginning of December, 1971 revealed the major dislikes - traffic, noise, parking, the types of people, and the numbers and density of buildings - and the major "likes" - convenience to park, beach and downtown, the view and the people. The strong dislike for the people is probably a good indication of lack of community spirit. Overall, about seventy-five percent of the people were satisfied with life in the West End.

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[13] Robert W. Collier, *Towards a Social Program for the West End*, for the Department of Social Planning and Community Development, City of Vancouver, June, 1971, p. 2.

The West End Community Council is striving to achieve a voice for the West End Citizens in the decisions which affect them. It was recognized as the local area council for the West End when United Community Services adopted (in 1964) the concept of the Local Area approach to social planning. The Community Council is not a strong body. It is well aware of community problems and general attitudes towards them but it is not knowledgeable in techniques of achieving their ends and often is very reluctant to use measures that might cause someone at City Hall to get angry. The community development worker from Neighbourhood Services Association (funded by United Community Services) who is assigned to the Community Council is not active in giving it direction or ideas.

The Community Council has difficulty communicating with and including a substantial number of residents. The membership is low and attendance at public meetings is seldom above fifty (in other neighbourhoods, an attendance of 100 is considered significant). A major part of the difficulty, the Council found, is simply devising ways to reach the multitude of residents.

> "Organizational representatives identified the passivity of the West End residents as a major social concern and attributed it in part to the City's past insensitivity to citizens' opinions and suggestions."[14]

The departments and agencies of the City work with West End citizens in ways that are manipulative and exhibit considerable condescension. After Dr. Collier's report had stressed the pedestrian orientation of activities

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[14] Robert W. Collier, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

in the West End, the Community Council mustered considerable energy and enthusiasm for a one-day street festival on one of the commercial streets, Denman. It was blocked by the Engineering Department. That energy was then channeled by the Social Planning Department into conducting its "West End Resident Survey". The survey covered many of the topics that had been done in several earlier surveys on which recommendations were drawn in Dr. Collier's work as a consultant. The day the questionnaire was distributed ("Q-Day"), some members of the Community Council realized that they had had no input into the formation of the questions and had been "recruited" for its distribution.

The Community Council was assured of quick feedback of survey results - by the first week in January, 1972. Internal and technical delays held the information inside the department. On March 2, 1972 some tentative results were revealed to the Council on the condition they would not be made public. More details were to be given at a meeting scheduled for April 19, 1972. The ironic twist was the responses to some "new" questions included in the survey. One of the most significant areas of dissatisfaction comprised: "The opportunity to have a say in the decisions made about the West End" (44% were dissatisfied) and "The availability, for me, of information concerning the West End" (36% were dissatisfied).

At the same time and as a result of the survey, City departments were formulating policy guidelines for City Council regarding development in the West End. There has been no open indication that residents will be given an "opportunity to have a say in the decisions made about the West End".

There was thus three basic communications problems that the researcher identified as existing in the area (communications being defined as information and as the expression of ideas, feelings, and personalities) that might be solved, somewhat by the use of video and community television. The removal of communications barriers was seen as a key to enabling West End citizens to be involved in decision-making.

(1) Area residents apparently experience a sense of alienation from each other and from the neighbourhood (whether because of the poor design of the apartment unit, the "beehive" stacking of apartments, the "walls" of high-rises, and/or the scarcity of neighbourhood centres for interaction) revealed in the high mobility of residents and the feelings of insecurity on the street.

(2) The citizens' groups in the West End do not communicate actively with each other or with non-members, if at all, and do not know how to approach the decision-makers.

(3) The City departments severely restrict the information that they disseminate and do not encourage West Enders to express their opinions about which direction development should go nor are they given channels of input to the bureaucracies (i.e. the information flow is not two-way and only weakly one-way).

6.7.3 The Medium

The process the researcher went through in attempting to establish interest in and use of community television will be described.

Fall, 1971: During the preparations to close Denman Street, the researcher suggested the use of video-tape to record events, people and opinions about West End development, on the street. The idea was readily accepted. When the "festival" was stopped and attention directed to "Q-Day" (Saturday, December 4, 1971) the researcher felt there was no rôle for video in the City's "process". Several days before "Q-Day", the researcher learned that the Social Planning Department was planning a programme to "publicize" the survey and elicit more response (questionnaires were accepted until December 8). It seemed an excellent opportunity to introduce some Community Council members to the video equipment, to involve them in the production, and permit some dialogue and information flow, instead of simply publicity. The researcher offered to organize equipment and production.

Within five days, programme time was arranged, Metro Media's help solicited, interviews recorded in Denman Place mall (by Bob Douglas, president of the West End Community Council), and scenes of the West End shot, relating to the main topics of the survey - apartment buildings, transportation, shopping facilities, and parks and playgrounds.

The programme was shown on Tuesday, December 7, on the

regular Tuesday night slot, 10:00, of "Plan Van", the programme of the Community Planning Association of Canada. The format included twenty minutes of the recorded scenes, a panel discussion with Dr. Robert Collier, Bob Burgess (Social Planning Department) and Bob Douglas, and one of the taped interviews (others were technically bad), then the rest of the hour was opened to phone calls.

Even though the only notice of the programme had been at Denman Place the three telephone lines were full for the forty minutes. "Plan Van" in considered to have a regular viewing audience. However, due to the length of the panelists' answers only seven calls got through. The callers dealt with noise, traffic and the effect of the Third Crossing on the West End, police protection, and the City's follow-up to the survey.

On the whole, the hastily prepared programme seemed to have spurred some creative dialogue.

January, 1972: The researcher held a discussion (January 8) with Bill Nemtin, executive director of Metro Media, regarding neighbourhood video facilities. Coincidently, Metro Media was considering decentralization and had received a Local Initiatives Programme grant from the federal government, enabling expansion.

Several meetings with Bob Douglas (of the Community Council) found him interested in the community television concept but (quite justly) too busy to devote time to such a project. Similar reac-

tion came from other Community Council members and the community development worker. That response left the researcher with no definite direction.

Consideration was given to taking an approach similar to the December programme - the researcher as producer and a number of "experts" as informants and centred on a specific topic (eg. streets). It was felt such a structure would serve the functions of shifting the rôle of the planner to that of a resource person and giving information about alternatives and their consequences to the public. Those functions would have been valuable but would not have advanced the concept of community television. The bias to the programme content would have been given by the researcher and the "experts", not by West End residents.

A meeting was arranged (on January 24) with members of the West End Resources Council, social workers, public health nurses, and other professionals working in the area, to discuss the potential of video, how it could aid their work, and problems that could be tackled. Interest was high but eventual response was low. Roberta Kalargirou, the Metro Media resource person assigned to the West End and formerly with Challenge for Change, attended, as did Abe Herring, a masters student in the School of Social Work at the University of British Columbia.

A "where-to-go-from-here" meeting with Roberta and Bill Nemtin the following day led to the decision to concentrate on a specific issue, of general concern, to stir up interest in video. Because the Community Council was organizing an informational meeting on February 9, regarding the effects on the West End of the Third Crossing of Burrard

Inlet, the topic of the "trial tape" had been defined for us.

February, 1972: Abe Herring and the researcher spent time learning about the equipment and camera and interviewing techniques while talking to West Enders on the street about the Third Crossing. Unfortunately, the Community Council meeting was structured in a way that the video-tape was relegated to an unimportant position between the lecturers and group discussions. Reactions to the tape and community television showed little more than "it's a good idea". The lecturers, Norman Pearson, a planning consultant, and Paul Roer, professor at the School of Community and Regional Planning, were recorded and a portion played on the Metro Media programme on that Friday night. Our presence and the information was not completely lost.

Roberta, Abe and the researcher decided the tape needed more life if it were to succeed when it was learned that another group on a Local Initiatives Programme grant was doing to same thing. It was also realized that our bias would still be injected. "Where-do-we-go-from-here" time again.

Abe suggested the use of a van to travel the West End streets talking to people about life in the West End, and making our presence known by being seen around the area. The Mondays of the next three weeks were spent interviewing people at various locations - Denman Place, edge of Stanley Park, an intersection away from the main streets, commercial areas of Davie and Denman Streets, beaches of English Bay - and scenes and impromptu interviews were done from the windows of the van.

This work reassured us of the power of video. Although many people refused to talk to us, those who did speak spoke openly. Most were keenly interested in seeing themselves on television. We discovered the involving power of the medium. Simply spending hours driving around the streets gave us greater understanding and knowledge about the West End. We learned about the people, even those who ignored us. The editing sessions multiplied the involvement because it was necessary to review the tapes and constantly rerun them to add portions to the programme tape.

Our goal was to produce a tape that would show West Enders what could be done with video-tape, to show them some of the personalities of their neighbours, and what those neighbours thought about West End living. We were sorry that it was ourselves who were so involved and not some of the residents. Our hope was that some people would respond to it and would want to do further work.

March, 1972: The tapes were edited onto a one-hour, one-inch tape, given an introduction and shown on Friday, March 17. An article written for the March 16 edition of the *West Ender*, the neighbourhood newspaper, explained our presence in the West End and advertised the programme. Both the article and the programme invited residents to a video workshop on Saturday afternoon. Seventeen people showed up. All except three of them had responded to the article and had not seen the programme. Most were interested in the video-tape equipment itself and did not have a specific use in mind. The viewing of the programme at a subsequent workshop raised enthusiasm and many ideas for its use about West End people and problems.

April, 1972: The group had dimished to seven enthusiastic young people. They talked about doing programmes on the relationship of high-rise tenants to their building manager, the various types of people and their use of space in identical suites in the same high-rise building, and the life of children in the West End. On April 8 and 15, the group recorded the activities and talked to West End children all over the area. The tapes will be condensed to one-half hour and shown in Cable 10 in the near future.

### 6.7.4 The Results

As the whole process is at an embryo stage, no major, tangible results can be recorded. A few West Enders have begun to say something about aspects they see as important. The degree of commitment by these people and by a resource person will determine the strength and direction of the neighbourhood television activities.

### 6.7.5 The West End, and the Planning Process

The West End experiment took one step in each of two directions. The December programme required the planners on the panel to adopt more of the rôle of resources persons: they answered questions and explained some of the consequences of the suggestions of telephone callers. The "cablecast" of the West End Third Crossing meeting had the planner explaining the consequences of the proposed tunnel and the factors that should have been considered. On the other hand, the March

programme was oriented towards the people and their ideas and opinions. But it still had the editing bias of the resource people.

The response of a small group of residents to the concept of producing their own programmes gave a shred of hope that community programming will become a significant vehicle of expression. In the few shooting excursions of that group, they realized that they were learning more about their neighbourhood. That awareness, combined with an intent to speak out by using video and with the dispersal of access to television to the neighbourhood level, increases the possibility of West End citizens achieving that "opportunity to have a say in the decisions made about the West End".

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# CHAPTER 7

## Conclusions and Directions

### 7.1 Community Television

The medium of television is raising people's awareness of the world around them. National and international events are fed instantly into their livingrooms. The television picture induces involvement by the viewer in its messages, and a desire to be more involved in the events and processes of society. Most people cannot afford access to broadcast television. To gain that access, they must hold rallies or demonstrations (non-violent or violent) that are "newsworthy". Increasing demands to become involved in the decisions about the living environment are exposing communications problems. Information about plans and programmes is not readily revealed by officials and many citizens seldom know where to get information. Public participation is frustrated by the lack of information and the lack of equal channels of expression.

By creating a community television facility through which residents could produce programmes, the community's indentity could be strengthened. The Challenge for Change projects found that when people used media for expression they learned more about themselves and their common goals. Metro Media has found that as soon as a group picks up a camera that the learning, awareness, and strength of purpose begins.

What to point the camera at, what to say into the microphone, and what to edit all require the identification of the message and potential receivers of the message.

Different viewpoints about plan alternatives can be expressed on a community channel and an electronic dialogue can be held. Not only is the access to television a new concept to West End citizens and other Vancouver groups, but the concept is at an early stage of development across Canada. However, the growth of the idea in both urban and rural areas is extremely rapid, basically due to the regulatory urgings of the Canadian Radio-Television Commission. If citizens are to take full advantage of cable television, and other electronic advances, they must be instructed how to use it.

> "If we design our cities on the assumption that wiring will bring about community and productivity then we better work hard at helping people to understand how to plug in."[1]

This is one of the functions that Metro Media serves - training community groups and bringing them into contact with cable television.

The uses that can be made of cable television are wide and hold many implications. One channel could be assigned to each neighbourhood for the residents to operate as they wished. Channels could be devoted to educational purposes - holding university courses, or tu-

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[1] Government of Canada, Department of Communications, *Telecommission, Study 6 (d) Report on the Seminar on the Wired City*, held at the University of Ottawa, June 26-28, 1970. Information Canada, Ottawa, 1971, p. 15.

torial classes, amateur arts, small business advertising, health, legal assistance, and an "ombudsman" channel to receive and answer citizen complaints[2]. One channel could be for Parliamentary proceedings and there could be two-way links between schools and ethnic groups[3].

Concentrated use of a channel, or cable network, by a neighbourhood or other special interest group, could create an inward looking attitude. A sense of neighbourhood could be fostered in this way. The ability to feed into or to pick up from national transmission links might foster a sense of nationalism[4].

There are some inherent dangers. One is that "... the cable will make it less and less necessary for the more affluent population of the suburbs to enter the city, either for work or recreation. Lack of concern and alienation could easily deepen, with effects that could cancel the benefits of community expression that the cable will bring to inner-city neighbourhoods."[5] By looking in upon themselves groups - whether economic, ethnic, or religious - may begin to exclude other people. A second danger refers to who controls the use of the cable system. With closed-circuit television systems keeping surveillance over main traffic arteries and high-crime areas and the possibility

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[2] James Bailey, "Cable Television: Whose Revolution?", *City*, Vol. 5, no. 2, March/April, 1971, p. 21.

[3] Government of Canada, Department of Communications, *op.cit.*

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[5] Ralph Lee Smith, "The Wired Nation", *The Nation*, May 18, 1970, Vol. 210, no. 19, special issue, p. 606.

that two-way cable can turn the TV set into a camera, questions are raised about invasion of privacy[6].

Who will control the use and content of cable television, and not what types of programmes it could carry, is the factor that will determine whether the public will receive the full benefits of that medium. Presently, with the responsibility for content lying with the system owner, freedom of expression can be abridged. J. Alphonse Ouimet, then Chairman of the Board of Directors of Telesat Canada Corporation stated:

> "... steps would have to be taken to ensure that ownership of the cable hardware would not mean monopoly control over programming or usage. Would it not be better ... if CATV companies were owners of a hardware system which others used to distribute programmes and various services?"[7]

The concept of separation of hardware and software could have some, as yet undetermined, social effects.

> "Certainly programmers would have much greater editorial freedom and private individuals would have the opportunity to originate their own programming instead of only receiving those of others. The difference, in a nutshell, is between active participatory democracy and passive participatory democracy."[8]

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[6] Nicholas Johnson, *How To Talk Back to Your Television Set*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, Toronto, 1970, p. 140.

[7] Government of Canada, Department of Communications, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Designation of cable television as a common carrier, like the telephone system, would make it accessible to all on a nondiscriminatory basis at standard, reasonable rates and would not allow the owner to interfere with the content[9].

The CRTC has regulatory power over the rates charged by the cable companies. To ensure that CATV is available to all, especially the poor (who presently have the least access), the possibility of subsidies may have to be considered. Professor M. Barcelo of the University of Montreal posed several questions:

> "Are we ready to accept that a 'socially' desirable objective for the Canadian society as a whole cannot really be desirable unless the economical and cultural minorities consider it as useful as the economical and cultural majorities? Are we ready to modify our national objectives so that Canadian society has a strict minimum of non-participants?"[10]

## 7.2 The Planning Process

The planning process was defined, in Chapter 2, as the total decision process in society. It was not considered as an entity separate from the political and social processes. "Citizen involvement" was equated to public influence in and control over all

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[9] Ralph Lee Smith, *op.cit.*, p. 599.

[10] Government of Canada, Department of Communications, *op.cit.*, p. 30.

plans and programmes that affect them. People are demanding to be included in all phases of the process - formulation of goals, discussion of alternatives and consequences, and implementation of plans. It was noted that involvement would be aided by closing the information gap between politicians-bureaucrats and the public with two-way communication.

Community television would give more people the chance to become agents of change, to influence people or events. The television image will relay the scenes, persons, and activities to many other people as the cameraman sees them, and the editor connects them. The viewers would participate in the images. The experiences, ideas, and feelings of the production group would be shared by the audience. Since television is a trusted source of information, it can be a very effective tool for community groups to use.

The West End experiment showed that the process of deciding what to record and how to present it requires clarification of the group's objectives and its view of the issue. The Fogo Island and Drumheller cases showed that revelation of the attitudes and ideas of residents can spur discussion among neighbours, in reaction to a familiar face on the screen. Tapes and films sent to "outsiders" can improve understanding and influence the outcome of a decision. Thus, the whole process of community programming for community television can be effective for involving people and affecting decision-making. Using television as one of many possible aids, community groups gain more power. Changes in the community will not be made by television but by people and strong leadership, as the Fogo Island and Drumheller cases vividly revealed.

The preceeding paragraph considered only the more involved rôle of the public. How will community television affect the rôle of the planner as a resource person?

The value of video-tape for information storage, and of television for information transmission, is enormous. The "electronic dialogue" (using television and telephone) is one method of establishing an exchange of views and information. The resource person can thus use television to explain the ramifications of plans and possible solutions (as in the West End programme on the Third Crossing tunnel), or to respond to citizen ideas through "electronic dialogue" (as in the Richmond case and in the first West End programme). The planner and his knowledge thus become more available to the community.

Video-tapes do not necessarily have to be broadcast; they can be shipped elsewhere for playback. The medium of expression is still television. Thus, decision-makers in more distant places (provincial or federal capitals) could view tapes showing the biases and reality of the community group. For example, members of an Indian band, who may not be skilled writers, could show the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the bureaucrats in the Department in Ottawa their version of local problems or how they would like to see their lands developed, or not developed. This form of "submitting a report" would necessitate a re-evaluation of procedures of "analysis". In this way, the criteria upon which decisions would be based would be presented in a different form on a different medium.

The participation and the decentralization of the power structure that people are demanding can be achieved only if politicians recognize expediency in the change, if planners are willing to adapt their rôle, and if people have the strength to assume the responsibility for decisions. Video-tape and community television can be a catalyst to the change in the power structure (by dispersing media power). They can also be useful tools for people and planners in their new rôles.

Planners are in positions to govern the degree of public participation in society. They can maintain their own power and the status quo by taking an "objective" stance and make all decisions on a "rational" basis. Or, they can acknowledge the inalienable right of every person to state his case, to have a say in the decisions that affect his life and direct his society. There are two strong trends evident today. The computer-simulation, behavioural-study, questionnaire-analysis, economical-criteria approach is in vogue among academics and "up-to-date" planners. Then, there is the ordinary citizen who is getting smothered in the jargon and only knows what it is like in his immediate environment. The first definitely has a place, for without study the wide ramifications of decisions could not be forecast. But it is the input into the decisions of "human-scale" criteria that is going to make life in the massive urban areas tolerable. Only by having an input into decisions will people be willing to accept those decisions and their consequences.

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## INTERVIEWS

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Pearson, John, Director of Research, Ontario Department of Municipal Affairs

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# APPENDIX A

CATV Companies in the Lower Mainland
(Source: Licensing Section, Department of Communications, Vancouver)

| Name of Licensee | Licence Area |
|---|---|
| 1. Canadian Wirevision (Owned by Vancouver Cablevision) | City of Vancouver, northwest Burnaby, and Richmond |
| 2. Express Cable Television Ltd. (Vancouver Cablevision) | part of North Vancouver |
| 3. National Cablevision Ltd. (Vancouver Cablevision) | (2 licences)<br>a) Port Coquitlam and Port Moody<br>b) Maple Ridge and Mission |
| 4. Western Cablevision Ltd. | New Westminster |
| 5. North West Community Video Ltd. | West Vancouver and part of North Vancouver |
| 6. West Coast Cablevision | North Burnaby |
| 7. Delta Cable Television Ltd. | Delta and Tsawwassen |
| 8. Fraser Valley Cablevision Ltd. | Surrey |
| 9. White Rock Cablevision Ltd. | South Surrey and White Rock |
| 10. Valley Televue Ltd. | Chilliwack, Sardis, and Vedder Crossing |
| 11. M.S.A. Cablevision | Matsqui, Sumas |