

WHAT ARE THEY SELLING ME WITH MY OWN MONEY NOW ?

*A Framework For The Organization Of
Government Communication and Information Services*

By

Terry Wm. Lewycky

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfillment of the
degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Political Studies
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
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WHAT ARE THEY SELLING ME WITH MY OWN MONEY NOW?
A FRAMEWORK FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF GOVERNMENT
COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SERVICES

BY

TERRY WM. LEWYCKY

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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THESIS ABSTRACT

The importance of a two-way flow of information to the effective functioning of democracy has become sacrosanct in western political thought. While we profess and protect the sacredness of the theory, we do very little to assure that our institutions and mechanisms for establishing effective communications and disseminating information are efficient and beyond manipulation. We live in an era when the technology, trends and techniques of mass communication are stretching the bounds of advocacy and manipulation. When vast sums of public money can buy exposure and influence opinions or be spent on patronage and mismanagement. As our society enters an unprecedented age of information and image politics we must reflect on the role, the nature and the cost of government communications as it has evolved and presently serves the functioning of democracy. It is essential to the health of western democracy that governments assess that line between legitimate political communications and objective government information and develop effective policies, procedures and structures to retrieve and disseminate public information in an efficient and objective manner.

This thesis will provide a descriptive and comparative assessment of the nature and structure of government information and communication services as they have developed and evolved in western democracies. By undertaking an inductive analysis of existing literature and conducting interviews with specialists in the area of government information services, this thesis will identify those assumptions and traditions that form the foundation for various bureaucratic policies and apparatuses established to disseminate government information to the public. To date, nothing exists to provide a comparative perspective

of this very specific public information function in various democratic experiences. By assessing the needs, functions, structures and processes that have evolved in the United States, Britain and Canada, this document will suggest those premises and operative elements relevant to the establishment of an effective framework for the organization of government communication and information services.

It is hoped this paper will provide a functional perspective and guide to the organization of government information services for use by communication personnel within government, as well as, students of public administration and political studies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals have contributed to this study. I would be remiss to not thank all with whom I came in contact during my years as a media specialist and government communications director. From politicians and political assistants to bureaucrats, the media, research gurus, advertising agency personnel and communication production and technical specialists I owe a debt of gratitude. To the loyal and dedicated communication professionals that have served with me while in government I thank-you for always reminding me, by your actions and accomplishments, "that anyone could do this job, the difference was we did it efficiently". It is surprising how relevant that comment became as I got further into understanding the nature of government information services.

Thanks to the un-named gentleman in a focus group discussion in 1986, when asked about individual reaction toward government advertising gave the response, "What are they selling me with my own money now?" This rather insightful perspective has guided many government communication strategies and has remained a constant reminder of the 'other edge of the blade.' Also thank-you to the numerous individuals within various government departments, political parties and the communications community who provided information, perspectives and assessments of government procedures and activities. Through many phone calls, numerous letters and correspondence and formal and informal interviews they provided their time and insights.

A very special thank-you to my advisor Professor Ken McVicar, who as Head of the Political Studies Department at the University of Manitoba, was always able to find the

time to provide input, direction and encouragement. Similarly, I would like to thank Professor Robert F. Aidie and Professor Charles Bigelow for serving on my examining committee and providing much appreciated input and feedback.

A particular thank-you to Mr. Ken Goldstein, Mr. Don Rennie, Mr. Murray Wepler and Mrs. Gaile Whelan-Enns who all laboured through preliminary drafts of this paper to provide comment and critique. Their long time friendships, words of encouragement and the sharing of numerous "scars" from working in the field will always be appreciated. Thanks also to Mr. Ed Melnychuk for the hours spent providing computer tutoring and technical advise.

Finally I wish to thank my parents, my wife Julie Haluszynski, and my daughters Samantha and Jenna. While this thesis was never a cause of major sacrifice or inconvenience in their lives, their acceptance of the project provided an environment of stability.

Thanks to all.

Terry Lewycky

Winnipeg, 1993

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii.
Acknowledgements	iv.
Table of Contents	vi.
INTRODUCTION	1-9
CHAPTER ONE: DEFINITIONS	
1.1 Political Communications	10-15
1.2 Government Information	15-17
1.3 Nature and Function	18-27
1.4 Communication Channels	27-39
1.4.1 Politician	
1.4.2 Media	
1.4.3 Information Services	
CHAPTER TWO: COMPARATIVE STRUCTURES	40-43
2.1 The American Approach	43-61
2.2 The British Approach	61-73
2.3 The Canadian Approach	73-100
2.4 The Alberta Approach	100-103
2.5 Summary	104-110
CHAPTER THREE: A FRAMEWORK: ELEMENTS AND ASSUMPTIONS	111-112
3.1 Holistic Vision	112-114
3.2 Expectations and Evaluations	114-118
3.3 Legitimacy and Integrity	118-121
3.4 Management Structures	121-128
3.5 Public/Civil Service	128-131
3.6 Services and Patronage	131-134
3.7 Standards and Practices	134-136
3.8 Funding of Other Channels	136-139
3.9 Monitoring	140-143
3.10 New Technologies	143-144
CONCLUSION	144-147
BIBLIOGRAPHY	148

INTRODUCTION

A people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives. A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it, is¹ but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both.

These comments offered by James Madison in 1820 reflect a fundamental assumption of democratic political thought. The role and function of information and the freedom to access, maintain and distribute that information are considered sacrosanct in western political tradition. We accept and encourage freedom of information, expression and persuasion as essential to the democratic process. We discourage secrecy, propaganda and coercion as harmful and destructive. Our political structures and institutions are designed and constituted to define, protect and enhance the positive uses of information while exposing and punishing restriction, manipulation or abuse. The very basis of power within liberal democracy is founded on the concept of an informed and self-controlled citizen acting as the ultimate arbiter in a free marketplace of ideas. The means and mechanisms we develop in a democratic society to maintain this belief, to enhance

¹Saul Padover, ed., The Complete Madison, (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), p.331

choice and to expose manipulation are critical to our survival as a democracy. As some maintain that both propaganda and secrecy are endemic to all political orders,² we realize that Madison's advice and warning is as relevant today, in an age of advanced information technology, as it was during a time of penny presses and town-hall meetings.

This thesis will provide a descriptive and comparative assessment of one component of the broad and diverse study of political communications. It will specifically examine and compare the nature and structure of government information and communication services as they have developed and evolved in western democracies. By undertaking an inductive analysis of existing literature (including published and unpublished articles and reports) and reporting on interviews with specialists in the area of government information services, this thesis will identify those assumptions and traditions that form the foundation for various bureaucratic policies and apparatuses established to disseminate government information to the public.

While increasing amounts of comparative literature exist on the topics of political marketing, communication, and symbolism, limited material exists on the actual growth and

²Carl J. Friedrich, in Government Secrecy in Democracies, Itzhak Galnoor ed. (New York:Harper & Row, 1977) Introduction

administration of government information and publicity as it has developed within individual political jurisdictions. Nothing to date provides a comparative perspective of this very specific public information function as it exists in various democratic experiences. By assessing the needs, functions, structures and processes that have evolved in the United States, Britain and Canada, this document will suggest those premises and operative elements relevant to the DEVELOPMENT OF AN EFFECTIVE FRAMEWORK FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SERVICES.

While the public information system is vast and interconnected this thesis will only attempt to address how democratic governments, through their formally established bureaucracies and with public funding, identify, package, promote and distribute information to the public. The paper will provide a theoretical foundation and a context in which to understand the nature and function of the various types of information, as well as the channels of distribution within the public information system. It will not specifically address the wide range of inter-connected government information activities such as access to information, government secrecy, public opinion polling, and election financing. While many assumptions and theories are well defined and understood for other information related activities in a democracy, the function of government public

relations and information distribution remains a confused and chaotic activity which "operates in the shadow of dubious legitimacy".³ Much has been written and discussed about the political considerations and public policy implications of gathering, withholding, or releasing information within a democracy. Little has been said about the actual design, use and growth of the formal bureaucracy of "administrative publicity."⁴

Of consequent and critical importance to the thesis will be the issue of defining or adjudicating, within the context of government expression, that line between government information and political communication; that boundary separating a democratic government's need to objectively inform its citizens from the act of legitimate political persuasion inherent in, and required by, the democratic process. While communications may vary for each function within a political system, communications still remain a consistent aspect of all political functions. Identifying accountability and assigning tasks and functions between the politician and the civil servant may assist in establishing certain traditions, structural norms and procedures, and

³Scott M. Cutlip, "Government and the Public Information System", in Informing the People, Lewis M. Helm, et al., ed. (New York: Longman Inc., 1981) p. 37

⁴James McCamy, Government Publicity (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939) p. 253

jurisdictional responsibilities. However, are these operational functions sufficiently defined and protected to allow us to identify abuse and discourage manipulation? Can laws, legislative guidelines, regulatory agencies or the traditional 'watchdogs' of our political system adequately monitor governments in their ability to define that line? What degree of authority or restriction should be assigned to central or coordinating agencies in distributing information? What price, in efficiency and effectiveness, do we pay to assure a clear separation and protection between the needs and rights of the public and the inherent and persuasive nature of our political system? What price do we pay in not assuring clear definitions and guidelines? And finally, what role do crisis, national emergencies and new and changing technologies play in re-defining the roles and responsibilities for government in the handling and distribution of information into the twenty-first century?

In addressing these broad issues and concerns the paper will provide a functional definition and historical perspective on the role of government information services. It is also intended to provide an administrative appreciation of the nature of governments' responsibility, as well as an original understanding and definition of underlying operational and political assumptions and requirements. "Formal studies of information dissemination and policy are

a recent phenomenon. The subject itself defies easy categorization."⁵ It is hoped that a model, based on consistent premises and functionally operative elements, can be designed in the future to enhance the citizen's ability to choose within our free marketplace of ideas, at a minimal cost and with minimal abuse.

The thesis is divided into three parts. Chapter One identifies the specific activity of government under consideration and provides a conceptual definition of both political communications and government information. While the theoretical literature provides differing views on the general meaning and function of political communications within a democracy, there appears to be agreement on a definition of government information. Specifically, as either input information referring to that information government collects and maintains for use in decision making (and does not always make available to the public), and output information. Output information can either specify and identify allocations of government or it can fulfil a symbolic function, depending on its nature and intent. The dissemination of output information by democratic governments will be of specific interest to this paper.

⁵Bruce Morton and Steven Zink, "Contemporary Canadian Federal Information Policy," Canadian Public Administration Vol.34 No.2 (Summer 1991) p.313

Historically and philosophically we have accepted the need and obligation for democratic governments to provide information to the public. Information distributed to the public for the purpose of accounting and reporting, as an administrative aid to programming, or as a punitive device, and most recently (in some jurisdictions) as a policy tool of suasion and exhortation. There does not exist an agreement on a definition of the line that separates a democratic government's need to inform its public from that function of legitimate political persuasion required by the democratic process. The structures and devices available to democratic governments to ensure integrity and to monitor abuse of this blurred line (between information and propaganda) provide insight into the maturity and the integrity of the political system. While channels of government communication involve everything from the statements of politicians to the "sales pitch" of crown corporations and government agencies, this paper specifically addresses the government information services apparatus established to assist departments and agencies in their on-going program and legislative information and publicity requirements. The chapter ends with a review of the historic evolution of the relationship between politicians and the media and the inevitable birth of the 'illegitimate step-children of bureaucracy'the government information services apparatus.

Chapter Two provides a historical and comparative assessment of the structural and legislative approaches to information services currently in use in three western democracies. Common assumptions, issues and problems inherent to these approaches are also identified and compared. Of critical importance to the assessment of each system is the relationship between bureaucratic coordination and efficiency and political centralization and control. The American system of legislatively restricting and decentralizing all communication activities to the individual program level maintains checks and balances over possible control and centralization of government information. The British approach relies on parliamentary and ministerial accountability while assuring efficiency through structural traditions and centralization of the technical and mechanical functions of communications. Canada has evolved an omnibus approach that supports political management and coordination of government information, while neither guaranteeing technical efficiency nor assuring political accountability. The limited published information and the numerous structural adjustments initiated in Canada over the past thirty years require a more detailed and lengthy description and assessment. The Public Affairs Bureau, as established in the province of Alberta, completes the chapter with a perspective on a completely centralized approach with all services, staff and coordination controlled

by a central bureau of information.

Chapter Three examines the traditional assumptions, questions the predominant paradigms, and defines the nature and operative elements of an "ideal" conceptual framework for government information services. This will be a hypothetical and prescriptive approach based on existing historical and documented experience, consultative interviews, as well as speculation on future communication trends. This chapter addresses issues such as political integrity in a democracy, information management structures, public information funding and new communication channels and technologies. As well, it provides an assessment of structural devices to monitor, adjudicate and efficiently disseminate government information to the public. The chapter concludes with a re-stated concern about the need for popular and public information within a democracy and recommendations for a 'holistic perspective' to define and address the issue and public policy implications of political communications.

CHAPTER ONE

DEFINITIONS

1.1 POLITICAL COMMUNICATIONS

The discussion of a theoretical model and subsequent conceptual definition of political communications starts with Karl Deutsch's cybernetic view of political communication and control. As Deutsch so graphically states in the preface to his 1963 book, The Nerves of Government, "the concern is less with the bones and muscles of the body politic than with its nerves--its channels of communication and decision".¹ In Deutsch's view it is communication and the ability to transmit messages and to react to them that makes organizations function. All organizations, including political systems and governments, are considered dependent on processes of communications. These processes carry quantities of information that are required to maintain a 'machinery of enforcement', to establish 'habits of compliance' and to 'coordinate expectations'. It is this cybernetic view of organizations, utilizing communication processes to transmit output information and to receive input information and feedback messages, that Deutsch applies to his theory of political communications and control.

¹Karl Deutsch, The Nerves of Government, (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963) p.ix

While a sequence of these communication processes form a channel of communications, it is the specific nature and types of information they transfer that helps to define their role and boundaries.² Deutsch suggests that this transferred information is not a transfer of events, but rather the transfer of a patterned relationship of information between and about events. This information or transmitted pattern is received and evaluated against a memory or as Deutsch states "a background of a statistical ensemble of related patterns."³ Because of the patterned nature of the information it can be measured and quantified, subsequently allowing a quantitative evaluation of the amount of transmission and the degree of distortion within individual communication channels. The smaller the losses or distortions of transmitted information the more efficient is a given channel of communication. By evaluating the performance of particular communication systems Deutsch suggests we can identify the critical connections or configurations of the channels of information and subsequent decisions that keep organizations and groups behaving as they do. His well-constructed theory linking political power and decision-making with the accumulation, storage and use of information provides a critical context in understanding the nature, function and motivation of the communication channels

²Ibid., p. 147

³Ibid., p. 84

we create. "Control of the social institutions of mass communication, and generally of the storage and transmission of information, is an obvious major component of power."⁴

Deutsch's view of political communication includes the identification of three specific types of information which are essential to a society or a community to steer or govern itself:

first, information about the world outside; second, information from the past, with a wide range of recall and recombination; and thirdly, information about itself and its own parts.⁵

Comparing Deutsch's cybernetic view of communications with Gabriel Almond's systems approach to the understanding of political communications identifies similar analogies and conclusions for assessing the performance and effectiveness of the communications process. Almond states in the introduction to The Politics of the Developing Areas:

All of the functions performed in the political system--political socialization and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation, rule-making, rule application, and rule adjudication---are performed by means of communication.⁶

Although the means and media of communication may vary for each function within the political system, communication still

⁴Ibid., p. 203

⁵Ibid., p. 129

⁶Gabriel Almond, The Politics of Developing Areas (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p.45

remains a consistent aspect of all political functions. Given this cross-functional nature, it may be argued that political communications cannot be separated out or isolated as a distinct feature of a political system for subsequent study or examination. Unlike Deutsch, however, Almond suggests the separating out of the communication function has existed for centuries and is not unique to modern political systems. As the runners and drummers of primitive political organizations evolved into the criers and heralds of medieval kings and noblemen, in every case it is possible to differentiate "the articulative event from the event of communicating the act of articulation."⁷

The analytical task of separating out and assessing the performance of the communication function within a political system is considered, by Almond, an essential tool for distinguishing political systems and characterizing their effectiveness. Almond maintains that the degree of autonomy of a channel of communication, as allowed by the political system, can provide a crucial boundary-determining function in defining a free-flow or a restricted movement of information between the society and the political system. "An autonomous communication system 'regulates the regulators' and thereby preserves the autonomies and freedoms of the

⁷Ibid., p.46

democratic polity."⁸ Almond concludes his comments with a graphic analogy describing a cybernetic-like view of inputs and outputs driving the political process:

One may liken the communication function to the circulation of blood. It is not the blood but what it contains that nourishes the system. The blood is the neutral medium carrying claims, protests and demands through the veins to the heart; and from the heart through the arteries flow the outputs of rules, regulations,⁹ and adjudications in response to the claims and demands.

Both views, though not consistent, provide a definition of political communications and articulate an appreciation of the comprehensive communications process within a political system. They also recognize and define various types of specific information that flow as sub-sets within those processes and channels of communications. This thesis will not attempt to define or argue the merits of various models of political decision-making or their subsequent use of communications.¹⁰ It will, however, utilize the definition of boundaries and terminology, as well as a theoretical context for understanding one specific channel of communication within the total study of political communications. With a

⁸ Ibid., p.47

⁹ Ibid., p. 47

¹⁰ For a comparison of administrative models of information flow and decision-making and their impact on public information policy see Robert Everett thesis Information Canada and the Politics of Participation, (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, York University, 1990)

cybernetic concept of 'political communications' as the foundation, this paper will offer a more defined interpretation of the specific role and nature of government information as it exists and flows within the political system.

1.2 GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

David Easton, in 1965, provided a further refinement of a systems analysis of political life through an elaboration of the cybernetic flow of information as input, output and eventual feedback to the political system. While claims, protests, demands and indications of support are generally identified as input information, the output information from the political system can be defined as either allocative or symbolic.¹¹ Allocative output provides the actual rules, laws and allocations of society to the individual. This corresponds to the rule-making and rule-application activities traditionally identified as government functions. Symbolic Output is aimed at educating, informing or persuading by providing symbolic information about the system and its parts. Government not only allocates the goods and services to run the public household but also seeks continuing support and voluntary compliance with its rules and allocations.

¹¹Richard J. Van Loon and Michael S. Whittington, The Canadian Political System: Environment, Structure & Process (Toronto: McGraw Hill Co., 1971) p. 3

Government must persuade people of the merit of certain policies and initiatives and identify the risks of alternative action. Government informs, persuades, educates and rehabilitates:

The usual function of symbolic outputs is to communicate information about the outputs of the system to those who might be affected by them.....However, another important function of symbolic outputs is to increase support for the system without having to make any new allocative decisions. In this sense the government attempts to convince us of the "goodness" and legitimacy of the system simply by extolling its virtues to us.¹²

The notion of symbolic output information helps to further define and isolate specific types of information. It also suggests that the channels and functions of symbolic output information are inevitable elements of a broader, inherent and natural process of political communications. While symbolic output information may provide facts and figures, inform us of new laws, regulations, restrictions and opportunities, it also performs both a direct and indirect propagandizing service by increasing our support for the system. The inherent and required persuasiveness of the democratic system and the words and symbols that provide understanding and legitimacy are powerful forces. As both Deutsch and Almond suggest, the degree of control over and manipulation of the selection, presentation and omission of symbols, facts, opinions and events by the government will

¹²Ibid., p. 12

always define the level of interest, debate and involvement within the system.

Government has become a focus of interest and a primary dispenser of data in modern society, and one prerogative of the position is the ability to shape the implications of data for policy..... The control afforded by this ability is more powerful and less susceptible to checks than the techniques of secrecy and propaganda.¹³

While this is one type of information primarily disseminated within the political system by the public bureaucracy it is also conveyed by politicians, political parties, interest groups, the education system and even the public library and access to information apparatus. Our political system maintains this type of information as fundamental to informed discussion, debate and democratic decision-making. While it has often been expressed that informed public opinion is the basis of democracy, there is no reason to assume that symbolic output information or the channels of communication through which it flows are neutral or non-manipulated.

Democratic government routinely, and without conscious tampering with communications, uses widely accepted symbols to justify its allocation of value and to win support for the political order.¹⁴

¹³Rozann Rothman, "The Symbolic Uses of Public Information" in Government Secrecy in Democracies, Itzhak Galnoor, ed. (New York:Harper & Row, 1977) p. 62 & 76

¹⁴Ibid., p. 71

1.3 NATURE AND FUNCTION

The nature and role of output information can be further defined by summarizing the historically recognized and legitimate functions of information distribution by government. While the public education system, library and archival services and access to information functions are also involved in the distribution of output information, our examination is confined to those activities of government departments and agencies that directly and consciously promote, publicize and distribute information. In most cases these functions are also performed through media of mass communications and without the benefit of legislated mandates, guidelines or accountability. While the actual models adopted in each democratic jurisdiction to perform this function vary considerably, in most part the need, function and concerns of government expression remain the same. Three main functions can be advanced for the purpose and existence of government controlled information, public relations and publicity in a democracy.

The first function of government information can be identified as the repertorial need for a democratic government to report and notify the public. This need is predicated on the assumption that an informed public opinion is the basis of democracy. In the ideal fulfilment of democracy everyone would hear all sides of every question and issue to be

settled, however, this is simply not physically possible. As governments have grown so has the diversity, complexity and number of issues they must confront and communicate. Similarly, as the size and understanding of the interested public expanded so have the means and media of communication evolved to meet and feed that expanded interest base. As political involvement and agendas have become more complex, information specialists and distribution techniques have been required to counter information overload and break through the confusion. Whether it is information about body counts in war, consumer product warnings, specific data and statistics, budget expenditures, annual performance reports, proposed or recommended legislation or daily activities of Congress or Parliament... there is a need to report.

Whereas once the democratic political system relied upon and actually protected the right of the press to be the 'gate-keeper' of information to the public, the press can no longer be the sole source of communication and information. "There is much indispensable information which the mass media cannot handle."¹⁵ While the press, the legislative branches and members of the official Opposition may have criticized the executive offices and the bureaucracy for usurping their historic role as the agents of communication to the public on

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 100

matters of government, even these critics have accepted the necessity of government publicity and public information services to handle an increased information demand and flow. "For the truth is that government agencies are often forced into the business of establishing information programs to meet the needs of reporters and commentators on public affairs."¹⁶

The second function advanced for government involvement in the area of publicity and communication has generally been referred to as an administrative aid. The very nature of this function raises concerns of propaganda, manipulation and the intent to engineer consent. It is maintained that certain administrative measures will not succeed unless the public or certain segments of the public are adequately informed and aware of their rights, duties and possible eligibility and benefits. Recruitment and tendering advertising, promotion of government programs, information relevant to public health and safety, and information on new government initiatives best reflect this form of publicity. It is this form of government communications that is usually attacked as propaganda because of the need to step beyond the strict dissemination of information into the realm of packaging and "popularizing information---to select facts which are most likely to interest the audience; to state them in the language of the

¹⁶Francis E. Rourke, Secrecy and Publicity: Dilemmas of Democracy (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1961) p. 187

mass circulation magazine; to repeat them; to use other media than the printed word."¹⁷ It is in this area that information becomes a medium of persuasion while at the same time an element of public policy. The non-elected bureaucracy responsible for program awareness and delivery is compromised between governments' obligation to inform of actual allocative outputs and the deliberate, though subtle, symbolic output of persuasion and support for a system, value or program agenda. The words, symbols and tools of persuasion are similar for the politician and the civil servant. There is little to separate the function of government information from the shadow of political communications. "This is the point at which administration merges into politics, and the obligation to desist from partisanship ceases."¹⁸

A government's right and ability to inform, persuade, educate and rehabilitate helps to effectively implement government policy and to further advance the success and image of that government. Information intended to motivate action must be portrayed in a positive and beneficial context. It is inevitable that the government of the day, as the legitimate source of that message and benefit, will receive the inevitable and subliminal credit and acknowledgement. "The

¹⁷J.A.R. Pimlott, Public Relations and American Democracy (Princeton:University Press, 1951) p. 80

¹⁸Ibid., p. 94

persuasiveness of ambivalence and the government's ability to use the symbols of democracy allow an incumbent government the latitude to present its policy as optimum."¹⁹

It is also argued that democratic citizens are socialized to believe and expect a free marketplace of ideas, subsequently accepting and supporting the legitimacy, authority and truth of the government. As democratic government is assumed to serve the people there exists a strong tendency to react and respond to the messages and reports of government without question.

Because of what has been labelled the 'halo effect', having a generally favourable attitude to the particular occupants of the authority role, a member may be inclined to see the authorities as acting in his interests or on behalf of his demands more frequently than an objective appraisal would reveal.²⁰

The mechanisms and structures that both the British government and the U.S. government have established "to distinguish sufficiently between publicity as a political instrument and publicity as an administrative aid,"²¹ will be of major interest in assessing the respective models developed to disseminate government information.

¹⁹Op Cit., Rothman, p. 64

²⁰David Easton, A Systems Analysis of Political Life (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1965), p.389

²¹Op Cit., Pimlott, p. 95

Although there may be a reluctance by many to consider it a legitimate function of government communications, the growth and use of 'exhortation or suasion' has become increasingly prevalent as a public policy instrument. The concept of exhortation is presented at this point because of its use as an administrative aid, not because of its perceived legitimacy as a historic and recognized function of government communication. Doern and Phidd in Canadian Public Policy: Ideas, Structure, Process define exhortation, "to engage in a whole series of potential acts of persuasion and voluntary appeals to the electorate as a whole or to particular parts of it."²² It is argued that exhortation is only used as an immediate policy tool in lieu of other available resources and instruments. While widely used in trying to change patterns of private behaviour, exhortation has also been used to control and marginalize the public and their attention during times of war and periods of civil discontent. Doern and Phidd suggest that exhortation involves the lowest degree of legitimate political coercion by a democratic government. They view exhortation as democratic government functioning in its highest and most ideal form.²³ While this may justify the use of tools such as advocacy

²²Bruce Doern and Richard Phidd, Canadian Public Policy: Ideas, Structure, Process (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1992) p. 208

²³Ibid., p. 208

advertising in the short-term, even the authors agree that it raises serious concerns about government's credibility and integrity in the use and abuse of information and publicity in a democracy.

The final function and purpose for government publicity and information concerns its punitive effect. Though not as overt as either the repertorial or administrative functions, it exists and is utilized by government. Though used less in the British parliamentary system and under increasing scrutiny in the U.S., where the constitutionally protected rights of the individual have raised serious questions regarding the government's right to disclose information, this subtle and inconspicuous power of publicity has become a technique of governmental coercion.²⁴ Whether it is being called publicly before a Congressional committee such as the McCarthy hearings in the 1950's or, as in the recent U.S. Congressional vote to disclose the names of Congressmen (both past and present) who have knowingly or unknowingly taken advantage of the privileged services offered by the House Bank, the punitive effect of the government's ability to publicize is real. Many individuals, companies and industries have suffered incalculable damage from the impact of government disclosures, threat of publicity, advertisements of claims and notices or

²⁴Op.Cit., Rourke, p. 13

simple omissions in government information and material. While official use of publicity often results in injury to private citizens it can also act as a regulator within the marketplace by forcing product recalls and industry admissions of error and neglect. The fact remains that government information activities can serve both the health and welfare of the state or act to its detriment. "The truth of the matter is that publicity, like science, is the Promethean gift with which modern government has been both blessed and cursed."²⁵

It becomes obvious, owing to the inherent and required persuasiveness of the democratic system, that government expression and communication remains a paradox in both democratic theory and practice.²⁶ The line between the use of information to implement decisions that 'represent' the majority will and the use of information to attempt to 'fashion' a majority will is blurred. While government has an obligation to promote individual choice by expanding the individual's information and knowledge, it should be constrained from programming the citizen to make preconceived choices. It is difficult if not impossible to separate information from persuasion or to identify when we are being informed and when we are being persuaded.

²⁵Ibid., p. 10

²⁶Mark G. Yudof, When Government Speaks: Politics, Law and Government Expression in America, (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1983) p. 15

This suggests that while a formal line cannot be drawn between government speech that denies citizens' autonomy and government speech that enhances it, the aspiration should be to fashion a communications structure consistent with the principle that government should treat its citizens with equal respect. This assumes, of course, that the citizen is worthy of government's respect ---that he is, indeed, self-controlled and capable of conscious analysis of whether he has been manipulated or persuaded.²⁷

At this point the thesis will move from the theoretical discussion of the nature of government information to a descriptive approach of identifying and characterising specific channels of communication. The elected representative or politician and the media, while historically the initial distributors of information from democratic governments, have encouraged the growth of a third new channel of public information: a permanent government information service. While each of these channels of communication maintain its own assumption of a role, tradition and responsibility within the democratic political system, none is solely and totally responsible for informing the public. Reviewing the historic role and relationship between these active channels, within the context of the social, political and technological environment of the past sixty years, will furnish an understanding of the mechanisms and structures that have evolved. Of interest will be those factors and characteristics that have specifically driven the growth of

²⁷Ibid., p. 34

government information services and influenced their design and structure.

1.4 COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

The channels of communications carrying output information within the political system are many and varied. Extensive literature exists on the type, function and nature of information from politicians, the media, interest groups, political parties, unions and associations and of course the public bureaucracies of government and the citizen. While traditional channels of communication such as the elected representative, political parties and the media may be thought of as carrying on the systems' on-going political business, other specialized channels are activated in response to special issues, interests and needs. The educational system, the library and archival services, access to information apparatus and various government agencies, commissions and corporations from the Post Office to Marketing Boards all perform communication activities relevant to the political process in varying degrees. Whether communication activities are lateral or vertical they remain complex, over-lapping and interlocking:

A democratic nation's public information system may be defined as consisting of all elements and channels of communication through which a citizen learns of the activities of his government and conveys to government his views and his needs....One element works in relation to other elements, thus all may be lumped together under

the rubric of public information system.²⁸

While many channels of communication exist within a liberal democratic political system, of major interest to this discussion are those channels of communication directly involved and responsible for the vertical distribution of symbolic output information from the government to the public. The elected representative, the media and government information services play the primary and direct role in disseminating repertorial, administrative and punitive information from government. While other channels of communication within the political system may provide information, obtained from the government, it is not recognized as their primary function. Though political parties (including the governing party), interest groups and citizen associations may support and utilize certain government information to their benefit, they are not recognized as responsible or accountable for this information. Similarly, while the product specific 'sales pitch' of a Crown Corporation or Agency, and the life-style advertisements of a Tourism Promotion Bureau or Lottery Foundation may subliminally reflect a positive quality-of-life image, this is usually not their prime message or function. Only the politician, the media and the government bureaucracy maintain

²⁸Scott M. Cutlip, "Government and the Public Information System", in Informing the People, Lewis M. Helm, et al., ed. (New York: Longman Inc., 1981) p. 24

some legislative or legitimate authority to fulfil an information output function.

1.4.1 THE POLITICIAN

The following quote from a speech by Jean Jacques Blais, a Liberal Minister of Supply and Services in the Government of Canada in 1981 reflects the perspective elected political representative's place on their need and priority to communicate directly with the public. "Government is too complex nowadays to rely on 'policy by press release.' Programs must be explained---and not by reporters, but rather by the people who created them." Part of the fortunes and failures of every politician in a democratic political system depends to some degree on their skill and ability to communicate with the electorate. It is inevitable that politicians should regard communications as essential to their political survival and basic to their political nature. It is also understandable why it may be easier 'to shoot the messenger' than to admit or accept political failure or miscalculation. "How often have we heard a member of the party in power complain, 'We're really doing a good job; we just haven't communicated it well enough.'"²⁹

²⁹Communication Management Inc., A Review of the Organization of Communications and Public Information Services (Winnipeg: Province of Manitoba, 1989) p. 1

While the parliament or legislature is generally the primary forum for debate, announcement of government policy and articulation of government action it is only one of the mechanisms available to the elected representative. Speeches, meetings, debates, campaigns, media interviews and one-on-one discussions and correspondence all play essential parts in the flow of information to the public.

The member of Congress not only in Washington but in his constituency has traditionally been the chief spokesman of the central government and the chief medium of communications with the capital.³⁰

As the Executive Branch in the U.S. political system lacks the forum of a legislature or congress, it is expected and encouraged to develop its own mechanisms to communicate independently to the public.

In the United States the need of the Executive for its own channels of information to the public is the greater because, unlike the Cabinet under a parliamentary system, it cannot use the legislature as a forum.³¹

As suggested earlier, the politician in a democratic society is obligated to propagandize in support of his/her ideals, positions and respective government actions. While the symbolic output information provided by the politician may be factual, it is anticipated to be, and generally accepted by the public, as political in its style, nature and intent.

³⁰Op Cit., Pimlott, p. 72

³¹Ibid., p. 77

While politicians may criticize or condemn other channels of communication within the political system, they are dependant on the 'messenger' and their relationship with the other channels for their own credibility and success.

1.4.2 THE MEDIA

The particular relationship established in western democracies between the elected representative and the media finds its basis in both constitutional law, parliamentary tradition and 'mutual advantage'. Freedom of the press, as entrenched in the U.S. constitution, positions the media as the 'gatekeeper' of public information. As Douglas Cater wrote in 1959, "The American Fourth estate operates as a de facto quasi-official fourth branch of government, its institutions no less important because they have been developed informally and, indeed, haphazardly."³² While the parliamentary system has the benefit of a legislature and an official Opposition, the media still play a major and recognized role in communicating the information from the legislature to the public. The power and influence of the media are essential elements in the democratic process.

Those who govern and those who aspire to govern depend primarily on the news media to convey their ideas and criticisms...The press is the only institution in a large society equipped to disseminate political information

³²Douglas Cater, The Fourth Branch of Government (New York: Random House, 1959) p. 13

quickly and universally.³³

The role of both the media and the elected representative have evolved considerably throughout the years. As the major and recognized channel of communication to the public the media see themselves as the guardian of the public interest and the seeker of news. "The press becomes the eyes and ears of the people; it gathers the facts and presents them to the public in order that an informed public may rationally discuss alternatives."³⁴ This filtering process of the news machinery that conveys, and at times establishes, the political messages and agenda are subject to inevitable oversimplification and distortion.³⁵ Subsequently, the relationship between the media and the elected representative in managing or 'spinning' an interpretation of information and events has become, in many ways, a dynamic, competitive and adversarial relationship. The management of the news for the purpose of setting the agenda and controlling the image has become a critical component of political success. As Cater noted in 1959, "News is a fundamental force in the struggle to govern. He who shapes and manages the news in the public forum is most

³³Op Cit., Cutlip, p. 28

³⁴Op Cit., Rothman, p. 72

³⁵Op Cit., Cutlip, p. 28

likely to carry the day."³⁶

The numerous factors and idiosyncrasies involved in the historic relationship between the media and the elected representative in democratic society are beyond the parameters of this paper. Much has been written about the intricacies of the process as it was constituted, legislated or has evolved between these two players. The press gallery, media lobby or press bureau may see themselves as playing a key and historic role as agents of the people in interpreting the events of government, providing information and exposing secrecy. However, their capability, financial resources and increasingly conflicting ownership interests suggest that their ability to perform this function has become restrictive and limited.

No newspaper or T.V. news organization has the money, time, or resources to independently investigate every important story.....The position of the press places constraints on behaviour and limits their ability³⁷ to perform as guardians of the people's right to know.

The changing demands, capabilities and relationship between the media and the government provided the major impetus for creation of a permanent government information service. During a period of growth in government activities and involvement, through the influence and effect of two world

³⁶Op Cit., Cater, p. 56

³⁷Op Cit., Rothman, p.73/75

wars and in an environment of unprecedented new mass communication technology this function of government expression has evolved by need and circumstance, not by constitution or design. In this adversarial, yet mutually dependent environment, the permanent government information service and publicity office became the illegitimate offspring of the 'marriage' between media with diminishing capability and the growing needs of the democratic political system. "The relationship between the federal government and the mass media is central to the question of the proper role of the official information services." ³⁸

1.4.3 INFORMATION SERVICES

While the involvement of government in distributing information and publicity dates back to the 1800's in the United States, Britain and Canada, it was mainly an ad hoc and limited activity. The coincidence of various social, political, administrative and technological factors, combined with the precedent of war-time bureaus and the functional limitations of the media, led to the information services function becoming a permanent reality of government.

One of the primary factors of influence has been the growth of government itself in the past fifty years. The

³⁸Op Cit., Pimlott, p. 97

interventionist or welfare state addressed new issues and concerns and became more involved in the life of its citizens. Economic recovery from the depression of the 1930s and Keynesian economic thought brought a new perspective of the government's role and function in society and the marketplace. Legislative growth in the creation of rules and procedures, new regulatory activity and increased government involvement in the economy created enlarged bureaucracies with specialized staff providing more targeted programming, increased services and more product of government to be communicated. There existed a definite and demonstrated connection between a new emphasis in government enterprises during the recovery period and the extensive practice of publicity.³⁹ Government took on more complicated questions that required greater explanation to assure support, compliance and intended action. While many of the programs initiated by government became more focused and targeted to identified groups, the need for a broader awareness and recognition of these activities became crucial. "The greater government's ability to reach mass audiences and to communicate successfully with those audiences, the greater the potential for effective implementation of government policy."⁴⁰

³⁹James McCamy, Government Publicity (Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 1939) p. 229

⁴⁰Op Cit., Yudof, p. 14

What information may have previously been available and distributed in an ad hoc manner now required new divisions of labour and technical responsibility. Consistent with the increase in government services was an attitude, reflected earlier by Jean Jacques Blais, of government's obligation to communicate directly with the public. The need to educate the public in what James McCamy suggested in 1939 was the "novelty of public enterprise"⁴¹ or as Ogilvy-Webb later referred to as a "new awareness of government's responsibility to the governed"⁴² created a demand for communication specialization and coordination. There existed a growing conviction that in order for the public to fully understand matters of public policy it "cannot be left to the ephemeral pages of the press."⁴³

What was originally intended to specifically service the inquiries and information needs of the media evolved into massive government public relations and publicity functions. "The primary function of the information machinery is to help the media; its second is to supplement them."⁴⁴ Bureaus of

⁴¹Op Cit., McCamy, p. 7

⁴²Marjorie Ogilvy-Webb, The Government Explains (London:Geo.Allen & Unwin,1965) p.53

⁴³Ibid., p. 19

⁴⁴Op Cit., Pimlott, p. 11

government originally established for the purpose of servicing and disseminating government information to the Opposition or Congress grew initially because of the demands of the media and ultimately because of the direct needs of the public.

The tendency seems to be for public departments to start publicity from motives of self-protection and then, realizing its possibilities, to pass from the defensive to the initiative.⁴⁵

Of major significance to this growth and evolution of information services has been the impact of wars. The first world war saw the creation of a Department of Information in Britain, a Committee on Public Information in the United States and a Wartime Information Bureau in Canada. Programs were designed and implemented to stimulate public sympathy, coordinate resources, encourage investment in war bonds and to recruit combatants and workers for the war effort. Though each of these institutions was disbanded after the first war, they had, under circumstances of necessity, initiated the public to the need for domestic information and national communication security. The need for a domestic information service had obtained a degree of acceptance in a world experiencing a new form of warfare with weapons such as ideology and propaganda.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Op Cit., Olgilvy-Webb, p.55

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 55

By the start of the second world war the debate had been conducted and the machinery of domestic information services was in place and active. The assumptions and effectiveness of government information services were starting to be understood and accepted by governments and the public. "Total war in a democratic country can only be waged if people understand what the government is doing and can be persuaded to co-operate with it."⁴⁷ It is believed that the effect of Wartime Bureaus, Departments and Committees "taught government the value of public relations."⁴⁸

A final major factor in the growth of information services over the past fifty years has been the growth in mass communication technology. The advent of radio, motion pictures and eventually television, computer, and telecommunications have all affected the process of political communications. As political marketing of candidates at election time acquired the technology of mass communications so too have government information services. The need for specialization and knowledge of technical functions required professional publicists who were aware and trained in new and changing technologies. "The development of public relations in this way was accelerated by the growth in popular journalism; by

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 57

⁴⁸David Herold, "Historical Perspectives on Government Information", in Informing the People, Lewis M. Helm, et al., ed. (New York: Longman Inc., 1981) p. 17

the new media of the cinema and radio."⁴⁹

Whether in the United States, Britain or Canada, the emergence of a permanent information services function within government was encouraged by the needs of the public, the limitations of the media and the changing role and circumstances of governments. As mentioned, they were not structures of constitutional or legislative design, but rather an evolution of practices and traditions. Those individuals responsible for establishing these structures and delivering government information and publicity have been referred to as everything from the "step-children of bureaucracy"⁵⁰ because of their awkward and contrived role in the natural process of government to the "sultans of sleaze"⁵¹ or more commonly 'spin doctors' because of their inherent need to propagandize and promote a prescribed image of events. They are a recent phenomenon with technological tools of mass communication, positions of influence and few direct controls or limitations. "They are a modern invention between the government and the governed."⁵²

⁴⁹Op Cit., Olgilvy-Webb, p. 55

⁵⁰Ray E. Hiebert and Carlton E. Spitzer, eds., The Voice of Government (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1968), p. 47

⁵¹Joyce Nelson, Sultans of Sleaze (Toronto: Between the Lines Publishing, 1989) p. 19

⁵²Op Cit., Olgilvy-Webb, p. 183

CHAPTER TWO

COMPARATIVE STRUCTURES

This paper will now examine the history, assumptions and comparative models of government information services as they have developed in the United States, Britain, Canada and, because of its unique contribution to this comparative evaluation, the Canadian province of Alberta. Each jurisdiction has followed a legislative and democratic tradition with a similar perspective of the role and importance of information in the functioning of their respective democracies. Though guarantees of freedom of speech and of the press were enshrined to assure that the power of government would never be used to impede free expression and exchange of ideas domestically, nothing formal existed in any of these western democracies to encourage or facilitate the process of communication within society by government.¹ All three national experiences saw domestic information activities originate from a similar need, generally associated with agricultural information, and evolve into permanent services and functions through a common set of circumstances and a similar historical context. The creation of formal government information and publicity functions in all jurisdictions was the result of evolution rather than constitutional or

¹Ray Eldon Hiebert and Carlton Spitzer, The Voice of Government (New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1968) p. 14

parliamentary design.

A final common characteristic that will assist in guiding this review of these four political jurisdictions is the fact that in each example there remains an on-going concern and dialogue regarding the establishment of balance between administrative efficiency and political abuse in the conduct of government expression. Though this point will be addressed throughout this paper, it is important to realize the central concern and predominance of this concept in the assumptions and models established to disseminate government information. "Politics aside, the problem is to discover methods of control which will prevent abuse and waste without hampering administration."² While political abuse, in the form of direct propaganda, assumes a centralized control and deliberate planning and coordination of the apparatus and information of government, decentralization of activities and services and a lack of coordinated planning creates duplication and inefficiency. The nature and degree of authority exerted by lead or central agencies in the realm of informational policy has become "situated along a continuum running from a highly centralized model, where final and overall authority is exerted by a single agency with close ties to the political executive to one in which control

²J.A.R.Pimlott, Public Relations and American Democracy (Princeton:University Press,1951) p. 87

primarily resides with individual departments."³ It is within the context of this continuum that this review inspects the origins and development of government information services in four mixed jurisdictions.

This rough continuum will start with the thoroughly decentralized American approach and continue through to an example of a completely centralized and coordinated public information bureau. The American system of legislatively restricting and decentralizing all communication activities to the program level provides the most comprehensive, well-documented and fascinating glimpse of the growth and quasi-legitimacy of information activity in government. Because of the vigilant nature of the American 'checks and balance' political system, their experience with government expression provides a solid foundation for understanding and comparison. While the British approach relies on ministerial and parliamentary accountability, it assures efficiency through structural traditions and centralization of the technical and mechanical resources and tools of communications. Canada has evolved a complex hybrid approach that supports political control and coordination of government information, while neither guaranteeing technical efficiency nor assuring

³Robert Everett, Information Canada and The Politics of Participation, (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, York University, 1990) p.28

political accountability. The comparison ends with the Public Affairs Bureau in the province of Alberta. Though not a national example, it does complete the continuum and provides a perspective of a completely centralized approach with all services, staff and coordination controlled by a central bureau of public information.

2.1 THE AMERICAN APPROACH

When the U.S. Post Office and the system of post roads was first established one of the primary purposes was to improve the ability of communities to inform themselves of issues and public affairs. The dissemination of accurate information on the affairs of government was felt to be essential if the government wished to prevent sedition or insurrection in rural areas because of false or misleading information.⁴ It also became obvious, at that time, that such an instrument of information and education could be used as a vehicle for influencing political beliefs. In 1790, a Federalist proposal to give the President the right to determine where post offices and post roads should be located was bitterly opposed and eventually defeated on the grounds that it would give the chief executive extraordinary power over the shape of public opinion.

If the Post Office were to be regulated by the will of a single person, the dissemination of intelligence might

⁴Francis E. Rourke, Secrecy and Publicity (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1966) p. 7

be impeded, and the people kept entirely in the dark with respect to the transactions of Government.⁵

During the 1800's the use and dissemination of government information in the U.S. continued to grow in quantity and importance. Executive information reports, generated by government departments, provided much of the data on which legislative decisions were based. At the time, all major legislation was initiated by administrative documents giving facts and opinions for the guidance of Congress. Executive departments were responsible for assimilating and providing this information, almost in the capacity of staff aids, to committees of Congress. In many cases the presentation of information played a key role in influencing decisions of Congress and in providing the public with background information on areas of public concern.⁶

In 1862 the Department of Agriculture was established with the sole purpose "to acquire and diffuse among the people of the United States information on subjects connected with agriculture in the most general and comprehensive sense of the word."⁷ By 1867 the U.S. Office of Education was established with the mandate to provide information on the organization

⁵Ibid., p. 8

⁶Ibid., p. 8

⁷Op Cit., Pimlott, p. 79

and management of schools and methods of teaching. Similarly, the obligation of the Public Health Service and the Department of Commerce to provide information on matters of health, hygiene and economic data, respectively, find their origins in the late 1890's.

By the turn of the century the dissemination of information played a key role in the functioning of the U.S. government. It was also at this time that concerns about publicity and propaganda first became an issue in government circles. An effort by the Department of Agriculture in 1908 to establish a press relations bureau led to passing of the Mondell Amendment. This act provided that no part of the annual appropriation granted to the Department of Agriculture "shall be paid or used for the purpose of paying for in whole or in part the preparation of any newspaper or magazine articles."⁸ Though the amendment had limited impact, it led to further legislation and a definite attitude of suspicion and distrust that has characterized the role of government information and publicity in the United States.

As information and society became more complex it was not only necessary to gain the attention of the public but to

⁸David Herold, "Historical Perspectives on Government Communication", in Informing the People, Lewis Helm, et.al., eds. (New York: Longman Inc., 1981) p. 14

provide information in an easily understood manner and format. For the government to publish information the general public could not access or understand was unacceptable and could be interpreted as misleading. It was this logic that prompted the Office of Public Roads of the Department of Agriculture in 1913 to advertise in open competition for a 'publicity expert'. Though government information had been prepared and published in the past by personnel within departments, as part of their broader duties, this was the first time a specialist similar to a press agent in business was being hired.⁹ Representative Frederick H. Gillett took issue with this action not because he disputed "the need to publish information about roads or that farmers' bulletins should be readable and attractive," but because it "proposed to appoint a person simply as a press agent to advertise the work and doings of a government department."¹⁰ This was also the first time the conflict between the Congress and the Executive over the control of government information came to a debate. As reflected by Representative Gillett, the attitude of the time was, "anything which requires the knowledge of the public certainly finds its way into the press at this time."¹¹ Gillett initiated and succeeded in having legislation passed

⁹Op Cit., Pimlott, p. 70

¹⁰Ibid., p. 69

¹¹Ibid., p. 69

which forbade executive agencies from employing publicity agents without the express approval of Congress. Although this legislation is still in effect today it has not stopped the employment of communication people under the guise of Supervisors of Information and Research or Chief Education Officers.

Two further laws were passed in the United States, in 1919 and 1936 respectively, which dealt specifically with restrictions on communication and information services. In July, 1919 a 'gag law' was approved "which prohibited the use of any part of any appropriation for services, messages, or publications designed to influence any member of Congress in his attitude toward legislation or appropriation."¹² Although laws requiring all duplication of printed material to be done by the Government Printing Officer were enacted in 1919, it was not until 1936 that the most drastic interpretation of this law assured that no agency could publish or reproduce material in isolation from the Government Printing Office.

America's entry into World War I brought about the creation of The Committee on Public Information. This Committee, created by Woodrow Wilson in 1917 and headed by George Creel, marked a turning point in the development of

¹²James L. McCamy, Government Publicity (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939) p. 7

government information practices. Mandated to "create widespread sympathy for the war effort...to avoid undue censorship and instead flood the nation with positive publicity on behalf of the war effort,"¹³ the committee utilized every medium and vehicle possible to influence public opinion. When the controversial committee was finally disbanded by a Republican controlled Congress, after the armistice, it was widely perceived as "the publicity agency of a Democratic president".¹⁴ Historians have long suggested that the Creel Committee established a new awareness of propaganda and a new realization, by the American public, of the effects of mass solicitation. It has also been credited with having taught both government and business the value of public relations.

In government as in the business world, the 1920s and 1930s saw an expansion in information activities and the growth of public relations as a management function. Roosevelt's New Deal program brought about a rapid expansion of government programs and publicity activities. Not only did the various New Deal agencies bring about new jobs and growth in the business of advertising, but it was also during this period that both the Democratic and Republican parties

¹³Op Cit., Herold, p. 16

¹⁴Ibid., p. 16

established party publicity bureaus.¹⁵

With the outbreak of World War II President Roosevelt created the Office of War Information. However, because of Roosevelt's strong suspicion of government propaganda, due to the precedent of the Creel Committee in 1917, the office never received strong support or endorsement. "In fact, criticism of the Office of War Information was that it received too little authority and was too removed from policy-making to function as a genuinely reliable news source."¹⁶ Although its main function was to emphasize how the war could be won, rather than persuading the public that the war should be fought, the office was a haphazard operation which was disbanded immediately after the end of the war. A newly created, private sector sponsored, War Advertising Council assumed a much greater role in the war publicity effort. The existence of the Office of War Information, even during a time of national emergency, was neither welcomed nor supported by Congress or the President.

The very idea of the bureaucracy's need to communicate directly with its citizens has been approached with deep suspicion and trepidation in the U.S. tradition. The impact

¹⁵Ibid., p. 17

¹⁶Ibid., p. 18

of a political system with its 'checks and balances' and power sharing among Executive, Legislative and Judicial Branches, plus a cultural mythology about public relations has produced a system charged with a constitutional obligation to inform that is limited by the nature of its political system and traditions. It is this history of suspicion, in conjunction with the need for government to publicize and communicate, that has created the basis for the American model of government communications.

The Model:

The model of government communications and publicity established in the United States can be best described as completely decentralized. Each executive branch or agency within the government has developed its own informal and clandestine communication and publicity contingents, though funding is only appropriated to programs. The majority of information offices "are attached to particular programs or groups of programs and handle all public inquiries relating to those programs."¹⁷ There is no government-wide machinery, mechanism or support for the coordination of information policy, expenditures, technical support services or government messages. Authority for, and the mechanics of, government

¹⁷Wayne Phillips, "Organizing an Information Office" in The Voice of Government, Ray Hiebert and Carlton Spitzer, eds. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1968) p. 248

communication have been decentralized to the program level to assure no coordination or manipulation from a strong and central Executive Branch. The only central service to exist in the federal system is the Government Printing Office which ironically happens to be the largest volume publisher in the world.

Given the distrust of government advertising and publicity activities, as first manifested in the 1913 legislation restricting the hiring of publicity experts, and the decentralized nature of the government structure, any attempt to establish an estimate of the total expenditure on government communications activities is impossible.

As a consequence of both inconsistent budgeting of advertising and publicity activities, and the lack of government wide definition of key terms, there is literally no way to ascertain the costs of such activities in government.¹⁸

Each individual department is responsible for its own program communication activities and expenditures, whether open to public scrutiny or hidden within a maze of varying and duplicate terminology, descriptions and explanations.

Though structurally decentralized and to a high degree inefficient, the nature and content of government publicity

¹⁸Dean Yarwood and Ben Enis, "Advertising and Publicity Programs in the Executive Branch of the National Government", Public Administration Review (January 1982), p. 40

is quite sensitive, open to scrutiny and well defined. Numerous legislative safeguards exist, as will be discussed, to insure integrity of function and message. The structure appears to satisfy the need and obligation "as serving the public with the information that is useful in the deciding of public policy"¹⁹ while at the same time assuring a diffusion of power and control through checks and balances. "The controversy over government public relations is one facet of the perennial controversy over a strong central Executive."²⁰

The inherent struggle to assure a 'check and balance' on the shared powers of government has been the major criterion in establishing a decentralized approach to government communications. As Pimlott warned in 1951,

Modern techniques of mass information and persuasion are powerful tools, and all who seek to acquire or maintain power in a democracy must make use of them. Congress cannot view with equanimity their unfettered use by the Executive.²¹

Rather than establishing political responsibility for the nature and content of government information the American model attempts to legislatively define the role and parameters of government publicity while assuring a decentralized administrative structure to deliver what is considered program

¹⁹Op Cit., McCamy, p. 16

²⁰Op Cit., Pimlott, p. 72

²¹Ibid., p. 71

information only.

One further noteworthy feature of the U.S. system is the involvement and reliance on the private sector in government communication activities. In 1942, while America was at war, the American advertising industry established a War Advertising Council to assist with promotion of War Bond sales, army recruitment and rationing. Although, as mentioned earlier, an Office of War Information was created by the government, the Advertising Council (as it came to be known) appeared to have more freedom, credibility and results in motivating public support. This Council has now evolved to the point where it is responsible for funding the majority of government initiated publicity campaigns.²²

The Advertising Council is an organization made up of representatives from industry, from advertising agencies and from the media. They are joined in the common purpose of using the resources of advertising and the advertising industry in the public interest.²³

A government department forwards a request for a campaign to the Advertising Council through the White House Liaison Officer. If approved, the Council is then responsible for

²²With the amendment of the military conscription laws in the late 1970's and the need for the military to actively recruit, the U.S. Military is allowed to purchase advertising time and services. In the recent past similar arrangements have been made for the U.S. Postal Service.

²³O.J.Firestone, The Public Persuader (Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1970) p. 245

advertising agency selection and campaign implementation.²⁴ The Council either solicits public service announcement (PSA) advertising time from the media or directly solicits funds from the business community or private foundations to finance Council approved government campaigns. The Advertising Council, in its role of public watchdog and benefactor, assesses each campaign based on four criteria:

- 1) That the campaign is in the public interest.
- 2) That advertising is the best way to implement the campaign.
- 3) That the campaign is timely.
- 4) That it is non-commercial, non-partisan, non-sectarian and not designed to influence legislation.²⁵

Tensions and Attitudes:

All models of government information and publicity are conscious of the need for administrative effectiveness and efficiency while maintaining a controlled integrity in the funding and content of government's message. The U.S. approach, historically, has been to view the apparatus of government communication with suspicion. A political ethos oriented by a system of checks and balances and a cultural suspicion of

²⁴ If not approved the Executive department is left to its own devices to produce program material and solicit public service announcement time.

²⁵ Op Cit., Firestone p. 247

publicity "as a formalized way of persuading people to do something when they do not know they are being persuaded"²⁶ has created a systemic tension and attitude of distrust which pervade the entire apparatus. While Congress may feel it has been successful in limiting the centralized control of the Executive Branch and President in the use and mis-use of government publicity it has created a system of limited accountability, rampant mis-management and questionable control over individual agencies.

The emphasise on maintaining a check on the Executive Branch has allowed the growth of uncontrolled and undefined use of publicity by individual agencies and their funded programs. Departments such as Defense and Agriculture or agencies such as the Post Office or F.B.I. maintain massive communication resources capable of managing the news and public information channels and creating their own image and mythology. No adequate process exists to separate issues of publicity from the content of the programs they promote. The line between government information used as an administrative aid or a publicity tool for the department or agency becomes very blurred. While the argument over the need for government to be involved in publicity and communication has grudgingly been accepted by all sides, the tensions and distrust over the use and financing of government publicity remain undefined

²⁶Op Cit., McCamy, p. 5

and volatile. In this respect, "Congress has succeeded neither in devising adequate machinery of control nor in evolving a definite policy for settling information appropriations."²⁷

Legislation and Control:

It is understandable that the attitude and perspective from which different political systems interpret the need for and functioning of government communications will inevitably influence the means by which they monitor, control and adjudicate political abuse. The U.S. model relies mainly on strong legislative controls and political checks and balances. As has been stated, the U.S. Congress has initiated various legislation over the years to restrict employment of publicity experts, 'gag' attempts to influence Congress with publicity and to assure all government publishing is controlled and monitored. The net effect has been to isolate and diffuse administrative accountability with deceptive record-keeping, improper staffing and a failure to recognize the function of information distribution as a proper administrative responsibility.

The fact is that no accurate count of money spent or numbers employed by the U.S. government on public relations has ever been made, or is likely to be made as long as the function operates in the shadows of dubious

²⁷Op Cit., Pimlott, p. 91

legitimacy.²⁸

The American emphasis on legislatively defining the line between legitimate government program information and political propaganda is the result of limitations of the political system in defining political accountability. While sharing power with the Legislative Branch, the Executive Branch has been restricted in its control of the apparatus; the result is that no one has complete control over the apparatus. By not defining publicity as a legitimate administrative aid to government programming, and funding it as such, the U.S. model fosters an attitude of suspicion and distrust yet does not necessarily control manipulation and misuse.

The controversy over the limitations which should be set upon federal government public relations springs from the fear lest programs undertaken in the name of administrative efficiency should result in an excessive concentration of power in the Executive.²⁹

Funding and Efficiency:

It is extremely difficult to compare funding and efficiency between various models of government communications. Although the means and mechanisms for funding the process of government publicity can be identified, the

²⁸Scot Cutlip, "Government and the Public Information System", in Informing the People, Lewis Helm, et.al., eds. (New York: Longman Inc., 1981) p. 37

²⁹Op Cit., Pimlott, p. 72

efficiency and definition of expenditures is much harder to assess. The U.S. system has relied heavily on the private sector for much of its required government promotions. The U.S. system of review, approval and eventual majority funding through the Advertising Council, does remove the possibility of government publicity, whether considered propaganda or not, from being totally funded from the public purse. It does not assure any greater degree of accountability or efficiency for the increasing amount of public money expended in the duplication of communication support services required in a decentralized system.

One further component of administrative efficiency involves the actual co-ordination of government communication activities. The U.S. model has rejected the coordination of any interdepartmental planning or common technical support services. Though it appears the U.S. system could better coordinate certain technical activities for the purpose of efficiency, departments have maintained a general tradition of independence, a tradition of independence honoured by all executive departments and agencies in the federal government. There have been recommendations made to coordinate department communication directors through informal meetings and associations. However, the inevitable cry of outrage at the

thought of a "central ministry of propaganda"³⁰ quickly forced rejection of the idea. While Presidential press secretaries and department communications directors may have similar mandates, origins and acquaintances they do not meet or communicate as a group.

So fragmented is the world in which (they) live that the public information officers of the 12 federal departments, for example, know each other only casually and have only infrequent contacts in the course of their work.³¹

Management and Patronage:

The issues of management and patronage play a key role in the effectiveness and integrity of communication systems. As publicity and communications are abstract functions which require human interpretation, the nature, intent and allegiance of those involved in this process become key to the integrity and success of the process. The issue of an impartial and independent civil service may be the single most important variable in the evolution of individual models.

Anything which sharpens the distinction between the politician and the civil servant and fortifies the tradition of civil service impartiality will reduce the risk that government public relations will be abused for partisan ends.³²

³⁰Op Cit., McCamy, p. 199

³¹Canada Task Force on Government Information, To Know and Be Known, (Ottawa:Queen's Printer, 1969) Vol.2 p. 36

³²Op Cit., Pimlott, p. 96

A clear line of demarcation between the politician and the civil servant does not exist in the U.S. system of government.³³ As the American political system does not hold a cabinet member fully responsible for all policy articulated in the executive department under his jurisdiction, the role, influence and responsibility of senior civil servants is expanded and subject to political scrutiny and attack. Because civil servants are subject to political whim they have a vested interest in the articulation of specific policy and are subsequently more susceptible to possible manipulation and distortion of information.

If bureaucracy is responsible to citizens, its publicity will be used in the sort of administrative leadership that can be approved by advocates of personal freedom. If bureaucracy is promoting the interest of one particular group within the community, its publicity will inevitably be used for the ends of the one group.³⁴

In the United States, while every communications position in government from the President's Press Secretary through to department and program communication directors is generally a political choice with strong political allegiance, yet an independent advisory committee is used for the recommendation and selection of advertising agencies for major government accounts. As advertising agencies in western democracies have had a long and historic attachment to political parties,

³³Ibid., p. 96

³⁴Op Cit., McCamy, p. 262

because of the role they fill during elections, the need for objectivity in assigning agencies to lucrative government accounts becomes essential. Much of the mandate of both the U.S. Advertising Council and the British Advisory Committee on the Appointment of Advertising Agents is to protect the government of the day from involvement in or the perception of political patronage in the selection of these agencies.

2.1 THE BRITISH APPROACH

In Britain, the first government department to publicize its services to the general public was the Post Office. In its first annual report, published in 1854, the Postmaster-General commented on the public's inadequate knowledge of Post Office activities and stated, "it could not be otherwise than satisfactory to Parliament if by means of a periodical Report the general scope and extent of the progress made by the Department were brought under its notice."³⁵ By 1876 the Post Office embarked on the first government advertising campaign by having its staff distribute over one million handbills promoting the services offered by the Post Office Savings Bank. By 1912 when Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Lloyd George employed a corps of lecturers to travel the country and explain the provisions of the new National Insurance Act, the idea that provision of information to the public was an

³⁵ Sir Fife Clark, The Central Office of Information (London: Geo. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1970) p. 22

integral part of modern and effective government administration was widely accepted.

During the first world war Britain established the first government Department of Information. With reports on the war being telegraphed everyday to London papers, news, information and propaganda had a strong impact on public morale. Though guided by two committees of non-government experts---the Home Office Information Bureau and the War Propaganda Bureau---the formation of a broadly mandated Ministry of Information under Lord Beaverbrook was considered essential to the war effort. Publicity campaigns were initiated to recruit volunteers to the army, encourage food rationing and to provide "explanatory information about the Allied cause in neutral and enemy countries."³⁶ As the idea of an official information service was still considered quite distasteful in the context of parliamentary democracy, the end of the war brought a quick dismantling of the Ministry Office. While many of the functions of the wartime organization were transferred to other departments, as press offices to service on-going media inquiries, the idea of a permanent public relations staff in government during peacetime was still not generally accepted.

During the inter-war period the few departmental press

³⁶Marjorie Olgilvy-Webb, The Government Explains (London: Geo.Allen & Unwin, 1965) p. 51

offices within the British government slowly evolved into public relations divisions. These offices were initiated by the government to answer media inquiries and generally save the time of the Ministers.³⁷ This accepted and open attitude toward public information, which originated with the Post Office, was reinforced in 1925 with the creation of another commercial enterprise--- the Empire Marketing Board. It was established "to publicize the Board's aims and the Empire's resources through films, posters and exhibits."³⁸

When the 1926 general strike forced the British presses to stop publishing, the government established and ran its own emergency newspaper, The British Gazette. Similar to the U.S. experience, the growing information distribution needs of such departments as Education and Health assisted in the piecemeal development of publicity divisions in all branches of Government by 1939. With the outbreak of the Second World War the communications network was in place within government, and a growing cadre of information professionals were already in place within the bureaucracy.

As the need for government publicity was already widely accepted and well established as an essential component of

³⁷Ibid., p. 55

³⁸Op Cit., Clark, p. 25

government policy, the government in 1946 created a central resource agency known as the Central Office of Information (COI). By separating the paid technical activities of government publicity from the on-going media relations functions, the government hoped to assure administrative efficiency within government information services. As Prime Minister Attlee stated,

there are various technical functions, notably on the production side, which it would be uneconomical to organize departmentally, and which can best be performed centrally as a common service. For this purpose we propose that departmental information services shall be supplemented by a central office performing certain common technical and production functions.³⁹

Though the centralized common service approach has been attacked on occasion for perceived partisan activity it was respected and maintained for over forty years. While it was recognized that "a centralized information agency of this character might, in the hands of an unscrupulous extremist government, prove both a powerful and dangerous weapon of propaganda"⁴¹ the integrity and function of the COI was maintained without change. In 1987, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and her Press Secretary, Bernard Ingham, (a civil servant) initiated informal changes in the COI that allowed departments to hire their own publicity and marketing

³⁹ Ibid., p. 34

⁴¹ Robert Harris, Good and Faithful Servant: Unauthorized Biography of Bernard Ingham (New York: Faber & Faber, 1990) p. 114

consultants without COI involvement or approval. This 'loosening of ties', justified as part of a government-wide effort to privatize government services, in combination with the transfer of responsibilities for recruitment and training of information officers to the Prime Minister's Press Secretary, marked a major turning point in the nature of authority, control and neutrality within the British system of government information. The changes represented a significant and previously unheard of centralization of power in the hands of the Prime Minister.⁴² In 1989 the National Audit Office provided an independent report on the COI, endorsing its role and suggesting no further changes be initiated. While Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Ingham were both removed from power shortly thereafter, the COI has maintained its original function as a technical resource agency with more responsibility for cost recovery. While departments have assumed greater accountability for their budgets and campaigns, and still contract services directly, they are required to consult with the COI.

The Model:

In Britain, each Minister is directly responsible to Parliament, not only for the issues and administration of his/her department, but also for the communication activities

⁴²Ibid., p. 170

of that portfolio. Public policy and public relations are not separate functions of the government. Each department maintains and budgets directly for its own information and public relations staff. All departments may use the common technical resource services of the COI. The Central Office of Information provides a centralized non-ministerial, non-political technical service and media buying function. It has its own budget as voted by Parliament, and is administratively and financially responsible to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Minister of a given department, utilizing the services of the COI, takes full responsibility for the work carried out on behalf of that department.

The Ministerial department is responsible for the policy and contents of a publicity campaign while the Central Office of Information provides the expert and technical knowledge to translate the department's wishes into publicity material.⁴³

The technical and administrative functions of producing government information material, paid for with public funds, are centralized and separate from ministerial responsibility for the content and actual message. While the Minister must answer to the media and opposition, the COI only provides the production and distribution services for information "which does not purposely advocate a political party's point of

⁴³Op Cit., Olgilvy-Webb, p. 44

view."⁴⁴

The main argument for a central agency is that specialization and concentration can achieve greater economy and higher quality, as well as improve coordination at the technical working level. As a non-political, non-policy making department, working under the same constitutional conventions as other parts of the civil service, integrity and objectivity of staff may be assured. "The central position of Parliament is safeguarded to the extent that matters which are subject to Parliamentary privilege are not proper questions for information officers to deal with."⁴⁵

The Central Office of Information, since its inception, has had the assistance of an independent advisory committee to select advertising agencies to service government campaigns. The Advisory Committee on the Appointment of Advertising Agents (ACAAA) is appointed by the finance secretary to the Treasury. It is made up of representatives of the media and business community and is mandated to recommend agencies to work directly with departments. This maintains the general philosophy of the COI of not attempting

⁴⁴Beverley Edwards, The Rise and Demise of Information Canada (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Carlton University, 1979) p. 11

⁴⁵Op Cit., Olgilvy-Webb, p. 43

to coordinate, but simply to arrange for the supply of services.

The information services appear to have been accepted by both sides as part of a normal government administration. This is partly because the information services were established as part of the civil service structure; and partly because since 1953 the impartiality of the information services has never seriously been called in question in Parliament.⁴⁶

Tensions and Attitudes:

The British have identified and readily accepted the need for a government information function. Unlike the American experience, the role of government information during the wars was useful and positive. Similarly, faith in the political accountability of the government and the integrity of the British parliamentary system and civil service has created a positive acceptance of government expression and its role. "It is essential to good administration under a democratic system that the public shall be adequately informed about the many matters in which Government action directly impinges on their daily lives."⁴⁷ Utilizing structural safeguards such as the creation of the non-political Central Office of Information to provide efficient technical support services, and leaving the responsibility of answering to the Opposition or the public with the individual department Minister, assures an

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 80

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 67

integrity of process and intent. The civil service is there to implement, efficiently and objectively, the politically accountable policies and decisions of the Minister.

The fact that the government of the day will inevitably benefit from the use of government publicity does not suggest that the system cannot assure accountability, financial efficiency, continued integrity and professionalism within the civil service. The parliamentary system allows for and accepts the definite advantages and accountability for being the party in power and responsible for the outputs of the political system. The tradition of a defined and impartial civil-service administering the distribution of both the allocative and symbolic outputs to the public is well established.

It means the party in office has a means of putting out information which is not available to the Opposition... ..That is one of the advantages of being in office, and one of the advantages of being a Minister with the Civil Service working for you.⁴⁸

Legislation and Control:

The British experience has accepted a centralized resource services approach with entrenched structural constraints and definitions. The British model of government communications has not required enforcement of legislative policy or control. Though the apparatus has undergone numerous

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 194

reviews and had been criticized in Parliament for partisanship when first established, it appears to have gained broad acceptance. By accepting the need for government publicity and communications, the British model has created an administrative, technical and structural system that defines responsibility, assures Parliamentary and ministerial accountability and maintains the functional integrity and professionalism of a non-partisan civil service. The development of operating traditions and conventions that assure integrity and independence of the civil service can only occur in a system where political accountability is well defined. Public service objectivity, ministerial accountability and parliamentary scrutiny and debate assure prudence and integrity."In the final analysis, the standards of performance depend on a watchful Opposition and the clash of political parties. If freedom of debate is missing, the information services of any country can be open to abuse."⁴⁹

Funding and Efficiency:

The British system maintains well identified budgets and appropriations, as approved and voted by Parliament. While the British government may take political responsibility for the nature and content of its publicity, the public pays for the delivery of that message.

The provision for government information purposes on all

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 203

ministerial departments' Votes, as well as the COI Vote is reported in the Memorandum by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury which is presented annually to Parliament, and Parliament is thus made aware of total government expenditure on this sphere, and can question it if it so wishes.⁵⁰

One further component of efficiency involves the concept of executive coordination of government communication activities. The COI was established to effect a high degree of coordination of technical support services and to realize efficiencies of cost and scale. Though the heads and directors of Information for each department had personally reported to a weekly Meeting of Information Officers (MIO) it was of limited importance (mainly as a social venue) and to coordinate timing for media events and announcements. This forum, traditionally headed by the Press Secretary to the Prime Minister, took on new, unprecedented relevance during the era of Bernard Ingham. Mr. Ingham, as a civil-servant and faithful press secretary to the Prime Minister in the late 1980s, utilized the Meeting of Information Officers as a forum to co-ordinate the 'corporate image,' tone and message from government departments. This was an unprecedented act of centralizing and coordinating the actual message of government. It was an act of 'crossing the line' that had maintained the integrity and trust of the British system.

For at the MIO, information officers were required not only to list every forthcoming announcement-but to

⁵⁰Op Cit., Clark, p. 136

indicate whether these were expected to be good or bad....In all these decisions, through the MIO, Ingham was consulted and became, effectively, the final arbiter. He made no secrets of this process.⁵¹

Management and Patronage:

The British Parliamentary system assures accountability at the political level, thus drawing a distinct line between the professional duties and responsibilities of the civil servant and those of the politician or their political staff. The civil servants "are accepted as servants of the department, like any other officer, who can be expected to serve his Minister without political bias, offering impartial advice as a professional in his own field."⁵² The constitutional assumption that Parliament is the main point of contact between the government and the people emphasizes the fact that elected representatives are responsible and answerable to Parliament for their decisions and actions. This theory requires an objective and impartial servant to administer the process. The example of the relationship and style of Margaret Thatcher and Bernard Ingham reflect how fragile the traditions of the British model can be in the hands of certain unscrupulous politicians or blindly loyal civil servants.

If it was once admitted that Ingham's job was to procure for the government the most favorable coverage possible,

⁵¹Op Cit., Harris, p. 113

⁵²Op Cit., Olgilvy-Webb, p. 186

and hence to increase popularity, he could no longer be regarded as objective. If he was not objective, he was not acting in accordance with his duties as a professional civil servant.... Ingham's alleged neutrality, in other words, ⁵³ was the rock upon which the entire edifice rested.

Though Ingham's position of Press Secretary remained a civil service function, the assignment of responsibility for recruitment and training of information officers, the coordination of departmental information activities through the MIO, and the combination of the roles of press secretary and spokesperson for the government was disastrous to the tradition of integrity developed by the British information services.

What had happened was without precedent. Ingham now had four separate functions. He was the Prime Minister's personal media advisor. He was the non-attributable spokesman for the entire government. He had responsibility for the 'recruitment, training and career development' of 1,200 information officers. He coordinated an advertising and publicity budget of some 168 million pounds. In any other country he would have been given the proper title: Minister of Information.⁵⁴

2.3 THE CANADIAN APPROACH

Britain's repeal of the emigration laws in the mid-nineteenth century prompted the colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and the province of Canada to actively and individually promote themselves at the London International Exhibition of 1851. They appointed a

⁵³ Op Cit., Harris, p. 116

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 170.

commissioner to co-ordinate their presence and to assemble commercial trade displays featuring such items as furs, feathers, minerals, wild animal heads and timber. This practise of Trade Show promotion of the new colonies continued through Confederation with participation at International Shows in Bryant Park, New York in 1876 and Paris in 1878. By the turn of the century this type of activity had grown to the point where Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier, in 1901, created the Canadian Exhibition Commission to rationalize and co-ordinate the Federal presence at these shows.⁵⁵

The Commission reported to the Department of Agriculture, which, as in the United States, played a lead role in the dissemination of government information to farmers. By the late 1800s the Department of Agriculture had become the pillar of government information services with organized trade show activities, government publications and the distribution of bilingual brochures to field offices by 1887. The Department even employed an itinerant publicity agent who toured rural Scotland and England in the 1880s enticing potential settlers.⁵⁶

⁵⁵Government of Canada, Task Force on Government Communications, To Know and Be Known, (Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1969) p. 123

⁵⁶Robert Everett, Information Canada and the Politics of Participation (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, York University, 1990) p. 34

By 1869 the federal government had passed legislation creating a Queen's Printer. "His job was to award all printing and binding contracts and to supervise all government printing, including the Statutes of Canada, the Canada Gazette and parliamentary and departmental documents."⁵⁷ In 1886, the Queen's Printer operation was expanded to include a Department of Printing and Stationery reporting to the Secretary of State.

The relationship between economic expansion and government information services was further expanded in 1892 with the creation of the Trade and Commerce Department. This department published weekly trade bulletins, in both official languages, informing businessmen about business statistics and overseas trade activities. The LABOUR GAZETTE, founded in 1900 by the Department of Labour, and THE CIVILIAN published in 1908 as a 'journal devoted to the interests of the Civil Service of Canada', reflect the growth in government publishing and information services prior to the first world war. While many departments hired and maintained information personnel, there existed no information policy, sense of professionalism or discussion regarding the nature and

⁵⁷Government of Canada, Task Force on Government Communication, To Know and Be Known (Ottawa:Queens Printer, 1969) p. 124

function of government information. It was not until the outbreak of war that a special war edition of THE CIVILIAN raised the issue of information activities of government. During the war THE CANADA GAZETTE, published by the Department of Secretary of State, with expanded circulation, was used to advise of government proclamations dealing with the war effort. A Press Censorship Branch was also established during that period.⁵⁸ By the end of the war a Parliamentary Committee on Government Printing was starting to express concerns over the growing cost of government publishing and the media were starting to question the impact of government's influence through information control. While government information services continued to grow, information activities received little mention in annual reports and other official documents.

During the 1920s and 1930s government expanded its social legislation with a consequent expansion of individual department information service functions. The creation of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics in 1918 and the Motion Picture Bureau in 1921 both added to the growing maze of federal information activities. Still there existed no overall policy statement or co-ordinated approach to publicity activities by government.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 127

Meanwhile, the issue of public communication and information distribution in a country as large and diverse as Canada was of growing concern and debate. The Aird Commission on Broadcasting in 1929 "recommended the establishment of publicly-owned radio for Canada with the Federal government in control."⁵⁹ This led to the formation of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission which operated until the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (C.B.C.) was born in 1936. The objective of providing all people in Canada with "equal enjoyment of the benefits and pleasures of broadcasting" was part of an on-going national obsession with "the problem of how to develop a national identity when you live cheek-by-jowl with the wealthiest country in the world."⁶⁰

By 1936 the Post Office had formally established an internal information section, having functioned for many years with an unofficial and non-political public relations officer. Similarly, the first tourism promotion activities, both domestically and abroad, were initiated by Canada's national parks service through the Department of the Interior. It was during the same period that the Motion Picture Bureau evolved into the National Film Board.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 130

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 130

In 1939, with the start of the second World War and the creation of the Department of National War Services, the first government effort was initiated to coordinate public information services. As a branch of this department, the Wartime Information Board was charged with responsibility "to ensure an informed and intelligent understanding of the purposes and progress of the Canadian war effort."⁶¹ With a mandate to co-ordinate interdepartmental information efforts, the Board was directly responsible to the Prime Minister. "It involved the departments' first organized and comprehensive attempt to co-ordinate their several information efforts."⁶² With the end of the war, the Board was dissolved and total autonomy in the area of information was returned to the departments.

The Information Divisions in the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Departments of Public Works, National Revenue, National Defence and Housing were all mandated to develop a dialogue with the public. In the 1940s and 50s expansion in population, programming and the growing vision of the federal government's role in establishing a national presence and communicating with the public fuelled the autonomy of individual department

⁶¹Ibid., p. 15

⁶²Ibid., p. 133

services. While formal classification of information officers was initiated in 1946 by the Civil Service Commission, the system of information dissemination continued to expand in a haphazard manner.

the combination of no co-ordination, no common legislative justification even for the existence of information services.... had a number of stultifying effects on federal information programmes, and on the competence and morale of federal information staff. It had also led to a remarkably large and aimless variety of methods and administrative practices.⁶³

The 1962 Royal Commission on Government Organization (Glassco Commission), in its five-volume study on all aspects of government operation, made the following observations about the Federal Government's information services: "The picture that emerges of public information services in the government is one of a general blur of diffuse activity, with growing clusters of organization. Central planning, direction and co-ordination are lacking."⁶⁴ It is interesting to note that while the Glassco Commission maintained the traditional view that "the idea of government departments publicizing their activities, of pursuing public awareness campaigns, or of building policy relevant networks was deemed to be

⁶³Ibid., p.16

⁶⁴Government of Canada, Glassco Royal Commission on Government Organization, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1962) p. 110

illegitimate,"⁶⁵ it also was the first body to advocate better central planning and co-ordination of government communication activities. In 1968 with the election of Pierre Trudeau a new vision and expectation of the role of government information and communications began to emerge.

By the late 1960s the lack of interdepartmental co-ordination, poor recruitment, training and salaries for information officers and a general decrease in the quality of public information was becoming a major concern. The historical trend was to hire ex-newspapermen or political appointments with limited knowledge of government departments and even less knowledge of information management. This led to a situation where Ministers and Deputy Ministers did not bother to consult with their information personnel in the development of public policies or positions.⁶⁶ In 1968 Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau created a Task Force on Government Information with a mandate to:

study the structure, operation and activities of Federal departmental information services.....and to make recommendations to the government on improvements it deems appropriate in order to effect the better co-ordination of Federal activities in this sphere and to

⁶⁵Andrew Gollner, The Changing Role of Communications in the Federal Bureaucracy (Quebec City: Laval University Presentation to Canadian Political Science Association, 1989) p. 26

⁶⁶Beverley Edwards, "A Proposal for a New Federal Information Agency" in The Right To Know: Essays on Governmental Publicity and Public Access to Information, Donald c. Rowat, ed. (Ottawa: Carlton University, 1980) p. 32

promote greater efficiency in the diffusion of official information.⁶⁷

The 17 major and 147 minor recommendations of this Task Force, published in a two volume set titled TO KNOW AND BE KNOWN, confirmed the fact that the Canadian Government's information services were fragmented, uncoordinated and lacked a 'clarity of purpose'.

They have operated without defined government objectives and, except perhaps during World War II, without even the feeblest guidelines on organization, operation, function or interdepartmental co-operation.⁶⁸

The major recommendation of the Task Force was to establish a central resource and services organization, to be known as Information Canada. This organization would facilitate and co-ordinate the technical and operational aspects of government informational activities both in Canada and abroad. An Order in Council in April 1970 created Information Canada with its formal direction and mandate unceremoniously identified in a Treasury Board Minute:

- a) to ensure that federal government programs and policies are explained
- b) to provide information feedback from Canadians to the government

⁶⁷O.J.Firestone, The Public Persuader (Toronto: Methuen Publishing, 1969) p. 2

⁶⁸Op Cit., Task Force on Government Communications, p. 13

c) to co-ordinate federal information campaigns and assist departments.⁶⁹

Information Canada consisted of four main branches: Planning, Information In, Information Out and Administration. The Canadian Exhibition Commission, the National Film Board's Still Photo Division and the Queen's Printer were also combined within the new structure. While information personnel and responsibility for planning communication activities were left with the departments, the centralized technical resources and inquiry system within this new agency encouraged an open, two-way communication between government and the public. This latter function fulfilled an election promise of the Trudeau government, to improve and enhance participatory democracy in Canada. "It was heralded with metaphorical fanfare as an example of the new cybernetic view of government. Government needed good information about citizen preferences coming "in" and good information about public policy going "out"."⁷⁰

By 1974 Information Canada was already experiencing serious administrative and financial difficulties and was

⁶⁹Beverley Edwards, The Rise and Demise of Information Canada, (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Carlton University, 1979) p. 35

⁷⁰Bruce Doern and Richard Phidd, Canadian Public Policy: Ideas, Structure, Process (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1992) p. 210

attacked by a Report Of The Standing Committee On National Finance On Information Canada, and the Wall Report written by D.F. Wall. By early 1976, after six years of no clear direction or mandate, constant attack from the Opposition, limited resources and political support, and definite sabotage by both the departments and the media, "Information Canada departed unsung and largely unmourned".⁷¹ It was unceremoniously cut from the federal budget as a austerity measure during an annual budget exercise. Information Canada staff were redistributed to departments and the Canadian government information services reverted back to the previous approach of complete decentralization. While many argue that Information Canada was nothing more than an experiment of the Trudeau government's abrasive aspirations to strong, centralized and rational government, others see the demise of Information Canada as a critical and unfortunate point in the history of Canadian information services.⁷²

The period from 1977-1988 has been referred to as "the era of piecemeal reform"⁷³ because of the plethora of ad hoc

⁷¹Eric Miller, A Report on Federal Government Communications, (Ottawa: Treasury Board Secretariat, 1976) p. 39

⁷²The most complete history and assessment to date on Information Canada is Robert Everett's Ph.D. Thesis, Information Canada and the Politics of Participation. 1990

⁷³Op Cit., Gollner, p. 32

committees, reforms, policies and guidelines. As the Regional Communications Study of 1984 concluded, "although clear communications guidelines have been developed, with some exceptions there has been a failure to implement the guidelines."⁷⁴ This paper will not attempt a documentation or assessment of the various individual actions, reforms and guidelines undertaken over the past sixteen years in creating the omnibus agency type model that now exists.⁷⁵ Since 1976, the structure has been fundamentally decentralized, with the responsibility for program communication planning and implementation remaining with individual Ministers and their departments. However, the complex involvement of central agencies providing technical services, advisory expertise, coordination and political approval raises serious questions about any attempt to classify this "patchwork of overlapping, narrowly conceived statutes and regulations rather than coherent, over-arching, national information policies. Federal government information dissemination in Canada has followed a checkered, even schizophrenic, course."⁷⁶ The combination of roles, responsibilities and guidelines

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 45

⁷⁵The Gollner paper of 1989 is the only known and available historical documentation of this period in the history of Canadian government information services.

⁷⁶Bruce Morton and Steven Zink, "Contemporary Canadian Federal Information Policy", Canadian Public Administration (Summer 1991), p. 313

developed over the past 16 years is summed up by Gollner's reference to, "a new set of bureaucratic brain synapses, in pursuit of a way out from the communications deadlock."⁷⁷

Numerous committees, boards and secretariats from the Canadian Unity Information Office (CUIO), created in 1979 to provide a national public information service and to offer co-ordination and strategic communications services to individual departments.... to a Cabinet Committee on Communications, the Treasury Board, the Public Service Commission of Canada, the Privy Council Office's Communications and Consultation Secretariat and the Department of Supply and Services.... have played essential and at times conflicting roles in the co-ordination of various aspects of government communications since the demise of Information Canada. For the purpose of clarity the political and policy coordination and management functions will be separated from the technical, production and resource co-ordination and management activities.

The closure of the CUIO in 1984, by the Mulroney government, signalled the end of any formal 'one-stop shop' or single agency providing central guidance to government communications in Canada. By 1980 a new Cabinet Committee on Communications was created with a definite political mandate.

⁷⁷Op Cit., Gollner, p. 45

This committee originally required all "public information considerations and plans to be annexed to all Memoranda to Cabinet"⁷⁸ While this was essentially a 'paper exercise' of addressing communication issues in isolation from program or policy issues, it eventually led to the practise of all major departmental advertising plans and activities requiring a "statement of project concurrence"⁷⁹ from the Chairman of the Committee.

The Cabinet Committee on Communications also maintains an Advertising Policy Sub-committee (APSC) which provides an overview of all government advertising and makes recommendations to the Chairperson of the Cabinet Committee on: "allocation of expenditures; priority themes; overall consistency and coordination; effectiveness of the management system for advertising and policy direction."⁸⁰ The Advertising Management Group (AMG), created in 1979, acts as the operational arm of the APSC by providing the overview, advice and coordination of advertising. It is also responsible to the Department of Supply and Services Canada for the actual 'rations and quarters' in the tendering, contracting and

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 34

⁷⁹ W.T. Stanbury et al, "Federal Advertising Expenditures," in How Ottawa Spends 1983, Bruce Doern, ed. (Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 1983) p. 137

⁸⁰ Government of Canada, Treasury Board Administrative Policy Manual Chapter 480 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1988) p. 10

prompt payment for communication and advertising services. The Advertising Policy Sub-committee allows the chairperson of the Cabinet Committee to control and initiate all advertising strategies, messages, themes, and timing including the assignment of advertising agencies. "AMG also secures for the department the required 'statements of project concurrence' from the chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Communications. This concurrence must be obtained for each department's annual plans and for individual campaigns."⁸¹

The Cabinet Committee on Communications is further supported in its role of approving or vetoing all communications activities of government by the Privy Council Office (PCO) Communications Secretariat. This secretariat acts as an advisory body to the Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Communications with respect to the policy substance of all department proposals. Similarly the PCO Communications Secretariat was mandated to work directly with individual departments to improve their communications with the public. "The Privy Council Office's Information Secretariat (sic) provided a co-ordination function by examining the major policy decisions of the various government departments."⁸² The authority of the PCO Communications Secretariat extends:

-to advise institutions of the government's priorities

⁸¹Op Cit., Stanbury, p. 137

⁸²Op Cit., Edwards, p. 122

and themes that are to be reflected in their strategic communication planning,
-to provide federal institutions with advice and support in their planning and management of communications,
-to co-ordinate, in exceptional circumstances, the organization⁸³ and execution of major communications strategies,

Since 1976 Treasury Board has been responsible for the approval of policy on communications, ensuring effective expenditure management and human resource requirements, and for coordinating the implementation of the Federal Identity Program.⁸⁴

Similarly, the Public Service Commission of Canada is, in theory, responsible for the standards and selection of communications personnel, appointment of communication personnel to the Management Category and for the training of departmental spokesperson and communications staff.⁸⁵

Consistent with the many communication directives and management guidelines issued over the past 15 years has been the development and centralization of various technical and production resources related to communications. The Department of Supply and Services has assumed responsibility as a common service and Special Operating Agency, via Treasury Board

⁸³Op Cit., Treasury Board, p. 8

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 9

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 8

directives under the Financial Administration Act, for procurement functions such as advertising management, agency selection, media purchasing, the Queen's Printer and technical production services. "Supply and Services Canada contracts for government advertising. In addition to issuing the long-term agreement with the AOR,⁸⁶ it negotiates and issues long-term contracts with advertising agencies."⁸⁷ As stated, the Advertising Management Group (AMG) serves both the APSC and the Minister of Supply and Services with regard to their respective responsibilities for the management of government advertising.

The AMG makes recommendations to the chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Communications on: the assignment of advertising agencies; the form of agency compensation in accordance with established government criteria; the evaluation of selected campaigns and the⁸⁸ annual independent evaluation of the Agency of Record.

A second resource group within Supply and Services Canada, the Canada Communications Group acts as a full service agency to assist departments, when requested, with the specific technical and production services they may require in implementing a campaign. This includes providing services, either in-house or by contract, for typesetting, photo reproduction, film footage requirements, and display and

⁸⁶Agency of Advertising Record (AOR)... an accredited media buying service or facility.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 10

⁸⁸Op Cit., Doern, p. 137

signage procurement. The Canada Communication Group-Publishing (CCG-P) is responsible for the Queen's Printer, contracted printers and establishment of priced publications. All requested services are charged back to initiating departments.

Though individual Ministers and their departments are directly responsible to Parliament for planning and implementing their own communications requirements, the numerous central agencies control and dictate much of what is said and done. The specific relationship between individual departments and the Department of Supply and Services (which supplies technical and production services as requested by departments), the Privy Council Communications Secretariat (which provides consistent objectives and authority), and the Cabinet Committee on Communications (which provides the approvals) remains subjective and arbitrary.

As long as their operational plans are viewed to be consistent with government-wide strategic plans, departments are left to operate at their own recognizance. There is an awareness by policy administrators that various departments are at different stages of information maturity and information capacity.⁸⁹

THE MODEL:

The Canadian system of information services has evolved from a totally decentralised approach prior to Information

⁸⁹Op Cit., Morton and Zink, p. 333

Canada, to a omnibus agency model of consolidated services and co-ordination. It has been suggested that the Canadian approach is similar to the British model because Ministers and information officers are directly accountable and responsible for implementing information programs and supporting central technical resource agencies. However, no similar centralized political or policy coordinating function, such as the Cabinet Committee on Communications or the PCO Communications Secretariat currently exists in Britain. (Although the efforts of Bernard Ingham were similar in intent.)

The lack of debate, both in Parliament and the media, on the function, role and implications of government information in a democratic society is lacking in the Canadian experience. Much of the Canadian approach to information services has been spent attempting to integrate an ill-defined, yet essentially centralized and politically coordinated information function with a program management function. As the role and priority of information was first identified in the 1968 Task Force Report on Government Information and re-confirmed in the Wall Report of 1973, it is surprising how little progress has been made.

Communication is inseparable from the function of government itself...(it should be) regarded as an integral part of the whole function of government and of service to the public and not as a desperate resource to

be drawn upon for convenience or periodic persuasion.⁹⁰

The history of the Canadian experience has been one of confusing structural inconsistencies and inadequacies plus policy doublespeak. Attempting to integrate the government information function into a management function within departmental policy and program decisions, while maintaining quasi-centralized political control and coordination of the communication process has produced some unprecedented results. "There have been numerous examples in recent Canadian history of attempts by the federal government to influence public opinion on issues of tax reform, the Quebec question, and national energy policy, to name only a few."⁹¹

Neither the U.S. nor British experience would have tolerated such a subjective, manipulative, or politicized role for a communications function in government. Fundamental concerns about efficiency, political control, and manipulation of information have been regularly dismissed in the Canadian experience. The on-going discussion about the role of communication in policy and program formulation, the continual re-issuing of guidelines and the constant changes in management authority and responsibility are directly due to

⁹⁰D.F. Wall, The Provision of Government Information (Ottawa, Privy Council Office, 1974) p. 18

⁹¹Op Cit., Morton and Zink, p. 337

an ill-conceived, haphazard and undefined structural policy. Neither the Glassco Commission, the 1968 Task Force on Government Information, nor the Wall Report addressed the historic or philosophic concerns and issues regarding the relationship between centralized control, political manipulation and administrative efficiency. "Unless the issue of disjointed, overlapping, lethargic central coordination and enforcement is faced fair and square, no amount of studies, resolutions and advice, will divert the government's communication ship from its peculiarly circular route."⁹²

Tensions and Attitudes:

Lacking a legitimate legislative authority, other than that indirectly defined by the Financial Administration Act, or a strong historical tradition in identifying the role of the various players in the communication process, definite and inevitable tensions exist between departmental information officers and central service personnel. Similar to the deceptive practises and activities utilized in the U.S. to obfuscate information expenditures, individual departments, assisted by their administrative units, circumvent certain central service requirements whenever possible. It is not uncommon in bureaucracies to find tension created by the duplicate and over-lapping functions of departments and

⁹²Op Cit., Gollner, p. 54

central service agencies.⁹³

Similarly, the on-going tension and continued effort to involve and include information personnel in departmental management committees reflects the lack of credibility within the system for the communication function. The history of all jurisdictions reflects a similar problem of credibility and acceptance associated with continued political interference and manipulation of the information function and epitomised by the label of "step-children of bureaucracy".⁹⁴ The continuing effort to implement various guidelines and policies to further integrate communications with policy and program functions reflects an on-going policy failure.

While a number of deputy ministers made some initially encouraging signs of falling in line with the July 1981 guidelines, their program managers looked on the whole process as a giant pain in the neck. The last thing they wanted was to have policy relevant, two-way communications advice breathed down their backs by their communications branches.⁹⁵

Legislation and Control:

Neither formal legislation nor a tradition of structural definition or consistency has existed in the Canadian model.

⁹³ Timothy W. Plumptre, Beyond the Bottom Line (Halifax: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1988) p. 224

⁹⁴ Ray E. Hiebert and Carlton Spitzer, The Voice of Government (New York: John Wiley & Son, 1968) p. 47

⁹⁵ Op Cit., Gollner, p. 44

Even the formation of Information Canada in 1970, under a majority government, did not warrant a formal act of Parliament. Established through an Order in Council with a limited definition of function, it was disbanded by a simple budget deletion in 1976.

Though Ministers are accountable to Parliament and the public for the actions of their departments, responsibility for the content and co-ordination of government information remains "within the Privy Council Office which is supposed to monitor and co-ordinate all government communications and act as the secretariat to the cabinet committee."⁹⁶

The creation of a Special Operating Agency within the jurisdiction of Supply and Services Canada was approved and authorized with a Treasury Board directive within the parameters of the Financial Administration Act. Chapter 480 of the Administrative Policy Manual defines policy objectives and operational guidelines for government information activity. While 'Access to Information' legislation does exist, limited guidelines or legislation exist to define the responsibility and repertorial obligation for consumer research or government polling in support of communications initiatives.

⁹⁶Hugh Windsor, "The High Cost of Feeling Better," Globe and Mail, 26 May 1992, A4

Funding and Efficiency:

The Canadian approach to information services has been defined by participants in the process as cascading dysfunctionism. Due to the lack of a defined authority for the use of central services and inconsistent application of government expenditure coding information, "the government lacks accurate or detailed information on communication expenditures."⁹⁷ Individual departments define and identify communication expenditures differently within their departmental budgets. Departments, in cooperation with their own administration branches regularly circumvent central agencies for the sake of expedience in reaching communication goals. Inevitable duplication and variances in cost definitions occur. While there appears to be an improved coordination of government information and publicity efforts, due to the vigilance and actions of the Privy Council Office, no evidence exists to indicate improved efficiency or effectiveness in government communication. "The analysis of federal expenditures on advertising is made difficult by a relative paucity of data from the Estimates and the Public Accounts and by major methodological difficulties."⁹⁸

⁹⁷Government of Canada Privy Council Office, Background Papers: Meeting of Communications Managers (Meech Lake, 1987) p. 3

⁹⁸Op Cit., Stanbury, p. 139

Direct formal co-ordination between the individual Directors-General of Communications for departments does not normally exist within an on-going organization. The recent War in Kuwait was one example where formal meetings were initiated for a limited time. While a Council of Federal Information Directors (CFID) existed in the early 1980s, it has since evolved into a Federal Council of Communicators (FCC) with occasional and informal meetings between Directors-General. Co-ordination of technical, production and media buying activities has been accomplished to some degree by the Canada Communications Group and the Advertising Management Group and of course the PCO Communications Secretariat. The federal government in Canada utilizes a combination of in-house and contracted production services similar to the COI in Britain. Media space and time buys are co-ordinated and purchased through an agency-of-record (AOR) arrangement with a selected advertising agency.⁹⁹

Management and Patronage:

For close to a decade final responsibility for actual communication implementation within the Canadian system has been vested in deputies and their line managers. These

⁹⁹As an accredited media buying agency, the AOR is able to negotiate volume discounts with the media, make prompt payments for contracted space and also to purchase media at the net rate, subsequently saving the government a 15% media rebate (less AOR fees).

deputies and line managers have received numerous directives, policies and guidelines indicating a consistent attitude, utilization and involvement of communication services, but there has been no enforcement.¹⁰⁰ The attitude within department management has been to maintain haphazard organizational and functional roles and loosely defined communication management skills and selection standards.

The neutrality and objectivity of the civil service has been increasingly compromised by the confused structure and obscure lines of authority within the Canadian model. The role of the public service in developing and maintaining an objective tradition and approach to government communication and messages is non-existent in the Canadian context.

There is a collective girding of the loins within government for a communications battle that most insiders believe is inevitable. But getting into the propaganda business is a sensitive topic among the bureaucrats who are being forced to march to the cabinet drummer.¹⁰¹

Although Supply and Services Canada acts as a common service department for the procurement of many government goods and services, it does report to a Minister. Unlike the British Central Office of Information which has a non-ministerial and non-political common service function, the Minister of Supply and Services Canada can influence policy

¹⁰⁰ Op Cit., Gollner, p. 52

¹⁰¹ Op Cit., Windsor, A4

and is accountable to Parliament for the activities and guidelines of his/her department. This includes joint responsibility with the Chairperson of the Cabinet Committee on Communications for the procurement and assignment of advertising agencies.

A quick review of advertising agency appointments by governments, both provincially and federally in 1993, can still be summarized by Professor Firestone's comments in 1968 as part of the Task Force on Government Information.

Traditionally, patronage has been the main basis of selecting advertising agencies to work for government departments and agencies. It is based on returning a favor for a favor. Advertising agencies help a political party and some of its leading figures during election time. If the party is returned to office, the agencies concerned are given a share of the advertising business of the government.¹⁰²

Much of the process involving the appointment of advertising agencies takes place internally with the public usually learning about the decision much later. Though agencies are generally tendered under the mandate and guidelines of Supply and Services Canada, no independent Council or committee assists in the selection process. Unlike Britain and the United States, which maintain independent councils as 'watchdog' agencies, no assurances exist in Canada to guarantee selection of an agency on the basis of merit.

Government advertising is one of the last bastions of patronage in Canada, a relic of an earlier age, which has

¹⁰²Op Cit., Firestone, p. 202

outlived its usefulness. Britain has done away with patronage in advertising; so has the United States; and so have many other industrialized countries.¹⁰³

The relationship of the Press Secretary to the Prime Minister and the information services apparatus of government is inevitably connected and assumed reasonable within the context of the Canadian system. Through liaison with the Cabinet Committee on Communications, the Prime Minister's Press Secretary and Communications Director are indirectly involved in the direction, coordination and approval of all communication activities of government. Unlike the British system where the Press Secretary to the Prime Minister is always chosen from and remains a member of the public service, in Canada the position is part of the Prime Minister's Office and is usually subject to appointment by the Prime Minister.

2.4 THE ALBERTA APPROACH

This section on comparative communication structures concludes with a brief summary of the Alberta experience with a fully centralized information services system. While it provides a unique example, the Alberta approach is only presented here to complete the continuum. The size and demands of a provincial information system vary considerably from the requirements of a federal model, though many of the

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 203

assumptions and dilemmas remain the same.¹⁰⁴

The Province of Alberta has for many years operated a fully centralized information service. Created by two provincial Orders in Council in 1972 and 1973, and a Treasury Board Minute in 1976, the model is predicated on the principle of 'pooling' all the information staff and loaning it out to departments, "rather like reporters assigned to certain beats by a newspaper editor."¹⁰⁵ Communications personnel are part of a central agency or Bureau and are placed on a secondment or assigned basis to provide a direct communications service assisted by a central technical support facility. The seconded Information Officer coordinates the needs of his assigned department with the services of the bureau. The Bureau provides all required communications and contracted production services to departments in support of their communication programming needs. Clerical support staff are provided and paid for by departments.¹⁰⁶ The Public Affairs Officers, all members of the civil service, report directly to the Director of the Bureau. In most cases creative, design

¹⁰⁴France maintained a similar fully centralized communications system until 1969 when it was disbanded.

¹⁰⁵David P. Brown, Information Services of the Province of British Columbia (Victoria: Queen's Printer Province of B.C., 1976) p. 64

¹⁰⁶Murray Wepler, Monologue vs. Dialogue: Review of Manitoba Government Communications (Winnipeg: Province of Manitoba, 1982) p. 85

and production services are contracted out to local suppliers and agencies. The Bureau is basically staffed by "experts" in a central consultative capacity with advisors, planners and writers who work at the department level.

The Bureau offers a communications research and planning service, places and designs advertising, offers technical services such as art and film work, handles promotions and special events, and tries to promote good news media relations.¹⁰⁷

A Council of Communication Directors, on assignment to departments, has been created to assure a high degree of strategy coordination and central direction. Though communication budgets are controlled by the departments and respective Ministers, the Bureau reports to and is appropriated staff through the Department of Government Services (originally through Executive Council). This model assures a strong centralized control of the communication process.

A strong "apprenticeship" system of internally trained Bureau Officers plus opportunities for the improvement of personal skills and upward mobility makes the Bureau "one of the strongest government communication organizations in North America."¹⁰⁸ While the centralized control, skill and

¹⁰⁷ Socio-Systems Consulting, The Media and the Bureau of Public Affairs (Edmonton: Department of Government Services, 1973) p. 2

¹⁰⁸ Op Cit., Wepler, p. 89

motivation of the Bureau may differentiate this approach, it is also extremely subject to entrenched loyalties and the possibility of subtle political influence and manipulation.

Though the Press Secretary in the Premier's Office is not directly connected with the Bureau of Public Affairs, he/she has direct daily contact with the media. The Press Secretary attempts to answer inquiries of a political nature and arranges media interviews with members of Cabinet. Information Officers have limited direct contact with the media,

in fact, many newsmen are unaware of the Information Officers role, and even when aware do not use them...A few newsmen do use Information Officers as resource personnel for background information and to brief themselves on a subject prior to questioning a minister or other politician.¹⁰⁹

The experience of this model has received mixed reviews.¹¹⁰ The Public Affairs Bureau in Alberta has received both strong support and strong criticism. As quoted in the Calgary Herald of May 22, 1973,

It is generally agreed that a government should keep the

¹⁰⁹Op Cit., Socio-Systems, p. 13

¹¹⁰In France, where all Ministers maintained their own press and information services and have been free to issue their own press releases when they wished, the model was somewhat decentralized. While the Ministry of Information performed more of a co-ordination role between the departments, as opposed to an all-encompassing role of collecting, organizing and transmitting government information, it was considered a 'bureaucratic nightmare' and disbanded in 1969. After 25 years of operation, the continued rejection of the new department by an old system severely limited and confused communications to the public.

public informed, but that it shouldn't use public funds to deliver partisan political messages. There is a fine line between the two, and the Province's Bureau of Public Affairs has been lurching along the boundary.¹¹¹

2.5 SUMMARY

The various bureaucratic structures established in western democracies to disseminate information to the public have not only evolved in their purpose but have become essential components of our system of democracy and our process of governing. These various government information services reflect a certain consistency of thought regarding the awkward and quasi-accepted need and consequence of government expression.

They have, without benefit of constitutional design or guidance, each evolved an approach to communication and information services distinct to their political system and the public ethos of the time. In both the United States and Britain what originated as a need to service the demands and inquiries of a press with limited resources, has evolved into massively funded public relations and publicity bureaus. Canada's need to co-ordinate the presence of individual provinces at overseas trade expositions has prompted a 100 year history of Commissions, Task Forces and Committee reports that have seen communications used as a governing instrument

¹¹¹Op Cit., Socio-Systems, p. 2

and an obvious tool of suasion. While government continues to support the need for communications it has never resolved the inconsistency between co-ordination and control. While it is increasingly argued that government communications budgets, as with business advertising and publicity budgets, should be defined and established as a percentage of the total government operating budget,¹¹² the function still remains a subjective activity suspended in a 'grey area' of legitimacy. Each model reflects inherent concerns and weaknesses, at a time when our society is experiencing new parameters of manipulation and technological penetration. While no model assumes perfection, the assumption remains that the nature of checks and balances within the respective democratic systems will assure some degree of integrity and disclosure of manipulation and abuse in a system of recognized 'dubious legitimacy.'

The structures established to fulfil the information needs of democratic societies have generally reflected the traditions and functional influence of the political systems they serve. In the U.S., in order to ensure a 'check and balance' over the authority, centralization and control by the Executive Branch, the Congress passed legislation and established a decentralized operational structure. With

¹¹²Joyce Nelson, The Sultans of Sleaze (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1989) p. 17

communication activities relegated to the level of individual program promotions the assumption is that no one branch or component of government can control or direct the communications apparatus. The involvement of the Advertising Council in major initiatives further devolves and decentralizes any ability to co-ordinate or focus a manipulation of information. This fragmentation is intended to allow for a freer flow of information between the government and the people. The long-standing tradition of governments, at all levels, of not engaging too overtly or directly in communicating with the people, encourages thought and choice in a freer marketplace of ideas.

As a diverse and pluralistic society, the United States has a government which does not speak with one voice...the United States does not have a ministry of information to coordinate its communication efforts. There are literally thousands of governments within governments, at the local, state and national level, competing with each other to be heard.¹¹³

The actions, biases or indiscretions of individual civil servants in the conduct of their communication duties will be exposed in this system of competing voices. Because accountability is blurred and diffused in the creation of this chorus of competing voices, the high cost to government in duplication of technical services, clandestine job classifications and inconsistent expenditure coding and

¹¹³Ray Eldon Hiebert, "A Model of the Government Communication Process", in Informing the People, Lewis M. Helm, et al., ed. (New York: Longman Inc., 1981) p. 3

identification is the inevitable result.

In Britain, the recognition that public policy and public relations are not separate functions holds individual ministers answerable for the actions and messages of their departments. Government information is considered an essential function of the bureaucracy and is structured accordingly. The Central Office of Information efficiently and objectively provides the mechanical resources to produce the message, while the politician accepts responsibility for the message. The civil service, in this environment of clear differentiation of function, has evolved further traditions, guidelines and conventions to assure a separation of responsibilities, liabilities and loyalties when promoting an engineered government message. With Parliament and the Opposition, as constituted 'watchdogs' to expose abuse and improper use of information, a certain checks and balances are assumed to exist. The government of the day is politically accountable for their own decisions on what they feel the public will tolerate.

However, the recent actions of Margaret Thatcher and Bernard Ingham in centralizing control of the information apparatus and changing the traditional role of the British COI reflect how susceptible even the British model can be to conscious political manipulation and abuse.

The Canadian federal system, though predicated on the British parliamentary model and a centralized resource delivery mechanism, has not established defined assurances of objectivity, administrative efficiency or political accountability. Though Ministers are still held accountable for the messages of their departments, the tradition of politically coordinating and centralizing control over the government's overall message and distribution of information has become officially entrenched. While other western democracies have attempted to establish systems which assure some degree of structural or legislative control over the possible centralization of information, the Canadian model (since the demise of Information Canada) has assumed a systematic control and co-ordination of the message without assuring technical and administrative legitimacy or efficiency. Seemingly unaware of the arguments and ramifications of a politically controlled and centralized mechanism for providing information to the public, the Canadian model provides no legislative guidelines, no defined structural tradition or philosophy and no assurances of objectivity within its civil service. The nature of government's message and the parameters of what constitutes propaganda or advocacy in Canada are substantially less defined and more questionable than in any other western democracy. "The relative ease with which we were able to find

examples of the use of suasion in Canada suggests that this governing instrument is used quite extensively."¹¹⁴ Canada has also become a leader in the advancement of advocacy advertising by government.¹¹⁵ It must also be noted that the Canadian system has not provided any greater degree of efficiency or financial accountability in the technical creation of government's message.

The Alberta approach of a fully centralized advisory and technical support apparatus relies completely on the independence and objectivity of a professional civil service staff within the Public Affairs Bureau. The Bureau is within the jurisdiction of and accountable to the financial and procedural guidelines imposed on the Department of Government Services. As a common service department, under close parliamentary scrutiny, it is anticipated that objectivity will prevail. Similarly, the apprenticeship program, established for the professional development of information officers, is assumed to instill an attitude of professional accountability, objectivity and integrity. While formal guidelines do exist to identify the division of responsibility

¹¹⁴Wm. T Stanbury and Jane Fulton, "Suasion as a Governing Instrument", in How Ottawa Spends, A.M. Maslove, ed. (Toronto: Methuen, 1984) p. 307

¹¹⁵Hon. Gerald Regan, "What is Governments Rationale for Using Advocacy Advertising", in Advocacy Advertising: Propaganda or Democratic right?, Duncan McDowall, ed. (Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada, 1982) p. 38

between the information officers assigned to individual departments and the Press Secretary to the Premier, no guidelines exist to determine the nature and content appropriateness of government publicity. The Minister of Government Services is still responsible for departmental policy and actions as they relate to the nature of government's message and the political impartiality of the selection and appointment of the Director of the Public Affairs Bureau.

While this fully centralized approach has been referred to as the most effective communications organizations because of its professionalism, efficiency and ability to assure financial accuracy and accountability, the model provides few safeguards against either formal or informal manipulation and political abuse.

CHAPTER THREE**A FRAMEWORK: ELEMENTS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

The intent of this thesis, as outlined in the introduction, was to identify those premises and operational elements relevant to the development of an effective model for the organization of government communications and information services. The paper originated with a theoretical context within which a definition and conceptual understanding of the relationship between political communications and government information was established. It then proceeded to assess the function and roles of those key channels of communication which contribute to that relationship within a democracy. The descriptive summary of the evolution and nature of government information activities in these separate jurisdictions has, it is hoped, added to a conceptual understanding of the function and its ramifications. The use of a continuum from a decentralized to centralized model, as a context for our investigation, has provided consistency in questioning the fundamental assumptions, weaknesses and effectiveness of each approach to government information services. It is now time, having summarized these models, to conclude with suggestions of what premises and operative elements are relevant to an effective framework for the organization of government communication and information services.

3.1 HOLISTIC VISION

As stated previously by Olgilvy-Webb, the existence of government information services "are modern inventions between the government and the governed".¹ While the role of professional public relations and publicity consultants has increased dramatically in all aspects of the democratic process, including third party and special interest group lobbying, little has been studied or written about the effects of the relationship that exists between these operatives in the democratic process. "This impact of the growth of public relations on our political life has been too little noted and too little studied."²

Advances in social marketing, consumer identification and polling, targeted media communications and image campaign techniques provide new insight into opportunities for social control and manipulation. There is a growing awareness in all democratic societies of the need for new approaches to campaign financing, election communication and public issue advertising. In an era of electronic communication, advancing technology and an increasingly cluttered communications environment the ability to control the communications

¹Marjorie Olgilvy-Webb, The Government Explains: A Study of Information Services (London:Geo.Allen&Unwin,1965) p. 183

²Scott Cutlip, "Government and Public Information Systems", in Informing the People Lewis Helm, et.al., eds. (New York:Longman Inc.,1981) p. 26

spectrum, monopolise exposure, and influence public opinion is an increasing and legitimate concern to the way we 'do' democracy. With a cynical electorate reflecting a growing crisis of confidence in the democratic process we are also challenged to find new answers and ideas on how we, as President Clinton recently stated, "do politics in the 90's". New ideas in the use of electronic town-hall meetings, political 'infomercials' and satellite 'talk (to the voter) T.V.', will have growing acceptance to a electorate that has become increasingly alienated from the democratic process.

It is imperative in this new information age that we reflect on all our political institutions and procedures and that we take a holistic view of how western democracy constructs and conducts its political communications into the next century. To review, assess, regulate or restrict any one element or vehicle in isolation of the total context of a 'political marketing mix' will be limited and ineffective. Government communication and information services must be identified and included in any and all discussions related to the nature, control and dissemination of public and political information. To assume political marketing and communications required in a contemporary democracy occurs only within government and during election periods, is myopic and dangerous. Issues such as access to information, interest group communications, programming regulation, election

financing and broadcast and telecommunication restriction provide a 'holistic' environment in which we can define the role and responsibility of government expression for the future.

3.2 EXPECTATION AND EVALUATION

History shows that no model has been able to adequately define or adjudicate that line between government information and political communication. While some suggest that it is the "failure to distinguish sufficiently between publicity as a political instrument and publicity as an administrative aid"³ that has suspended the function of government expression in a 'grey area' of legitimacy, no line has ever been formally established. The persuasive nature of political communication is an all-encompassing, accepted and integral part of the democratic process. To attempt to establish criteria or mechanisms for unequivocally defining or measuring a line between information and persuasion is impossible. "The line between information and persuasion is shadowy, and to distinguish satisfactorily between the different kinds of persuasive activity is seemingly impossible."⁴ The U.S. House Propaganda and Publicity Subcommittee in 1947 defined "information as the act or process of communicating knowledge;

³J.A.R. Pimlott, Public Relations and American Democracy (Princeton:University Press, 1951) p. 95

⁴Ibid., p. 241

to enlighten": and "propaganda as a plan for the propagation of a doctrine or a system of principles."⁵ The experience of the American military's reporting of casualties in Vietnam or limiting media access in Kuwait and Grenada provide examples of how transparent the line can be between information and propaganda. To assess the nature and content of government advocacy advertising in Canada in relation to what is allowed and exists in the United States is to confirm that no consistent qualitative definition exists in democratic societies.

Similarly, quantitative measures of efficiency and effectiveness are just as vague and inconclusive. As has been indicated, it is not only difficult to get concise quantitative information on communication expenditures for different models, but more difficult to establish some sense of communication effectiveness. The nature of the business of communications is creative, abstract and at times non-quantifiable. As Lord Leverhulme once stated, "Probably half of every advertising appropriation is wasted, but nobody knows which half." As we have noted, while the objectives, the nature and the mechanisms available to implement communications in government can be diverse and confusing, one should not expect to find a common reference or 'industry

⁵Ibid., p. 72

norm' for success or effectiveness. To establish a consistent formula for measuring communication effectiveness in differing government environments is difficult if not impossible. "When the cost of publicity cannot be isolated, and when precise measurement of effectiveness is lacking, little can be done toward ascertaining the economy of federal practices in costs of money and energy."⁶

While concerns about fiscal responsibility and the cost of communicating have made politicians and the public more aware of the problem, little has been accomplished by management consultants attempting to quantify the issue or establish isolated measurements. Establishing a cost and value for government communications may be more a responsibility for politicians and political scientists, in protecting the requirements and integrity of democracy, than it is an issue of management and fiscal accountability.

Most of the criticism lay either against 'propaganda' and lobbying or against extravagance and inefficiency. There was no criticism of the principle of government information or the use of persuasive publicity in support of an administrative program.⁷

While confirming the impact of government information by identifying specific expenditures, measuring program in-take

⁶James L. McCamy, Government Publicity (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939) p. 165

⁷Op Cit., Pimlott, p. 87

or response and providing post-campaign research provides good 'political analysis', it offers no insight into the larger picture of government objectives, public costs and the citizen's ability to know and choose. Maximum efficiency in the distribution of government information may not be definable nor possible. However, creating a structure that encourages and insures a free and accessible marketplace of ideas can provide a balance between efficiency and control.

This suggests that while a formal line cannot be drawn between government speech that denies citizens autonomy and government speech that enhances it, the aspiration should be to fashion a communication structure consistent with the principle that government should treat its citizens with equal respect.

The objective of encouraging and enhancing the self-controlled citizen in a free marketplace of ideas bears a definite, and at times, obscure cost. Publicity, like democracy itself, must possess both the ability to persuade and the need for integrity. To create and define a level of integrity or a minimum expectation of the government, in providing information to the public, can only be accomplished through free and open access to more information. In an 'age of information', to restrict disclosure, discourage access or to impede the government information function because of questions of legitimacy or integrity, is dysfunctional and dangerous. We must not only ensure full disclosure and

⁸Mark G. Yudof, When Government Speaks (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983) p. 34

accounting in this free marketplace of ideas but also allow the citizen, within a completely transparent government, the ability to identify and differentiate structural or administrative inadequacy from political manipulation. As Walter Lippman noted in 1920, "There can be no liberty for a community that lacks the means by which to detect lies".

3.3 LEGITIMACY AND INTEGRITY

"Public relations exist only in democratic societies. It is a legitimate function only in those societies where every person has a right freely and openly to express his or her point of view."⁹ As stated previously, public relations and publicity, like democracy, must contain both the ability to persuade and an assumption of integrity. Government not only has the right to public expression, it has the democratic obligation and the required tools. To compete effectively in a free marketplace of ideas for public attention and acceptance, government information services must be legitimate, credible and effective.

As the British realized in 1946 "public policy and public relations cannot be separated".¹⁰ Therefore, it was

⁹Ray Eldon Hiebert, "A Model of the Government Communications Process", in Informing the People, Lewis M Helm, et.al., eds. (New York: Longman Inc., 1981) p. 7

¹⁰Sir Fife Clark, Central Office of Information (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970) p. 11

imperative to legitimize the function, assign the bureaucracy tasks and functions and then centralize and co-ordinate those technical functions of producing communications from the non-quantifiable function of media liaison and relations. In the United States, "experience has shown how frequently discussion of government public relations is coloured by differences over policies which they are being used to further."¹¹ Yet, there still remains a reluctance in the American system to perceive of government information services as a legitimate function accessible to criticism and reform. This is most evident in the massive and hidden cost of the American approach.

The controversy over the limitations which should be set upon federal government public relations springs from the fear lest programs undertaken in the name of administrative efficiency should result in an excessive concentration of power in the Executive.¹²

The Canadian example of the obvious and accepted use of suasion as a governing instrument should be a final testament of the need to provide a sense of legitimacy to the function of government expression. For government to actively engage in a process of public persuasion without legislated control or effective accountability is contrary to assumptions of a free and democratic society. The use of information is slowly and methodically replaced by the use of persuasion. "To govern by exhortation is to engage in a whole series of potential

¹¹Op Cit., Pimlott, p. 73

¹²Ibid., p. 72

acts of persuasion and voluntary appeals to the electorate as a whole or to particular parts of it."¹³

To view the function of government information and communication services as a legitimate instrument to be used in the process of governing, similar to the functions of expenditure, taxation, regulation and public enterprise, will assure and allow for increased disclosure, debate and accountability. To allow government information and communication activities to be scrutinized and examined less as an ancillary of policy, but rather as a direct policy tool, will help define where the boundary exists between administrative efficiency and political abuse. It will also help to establish new and legislated structures, guidelines and reporting principles upon which to secure these boundaries both in times of stability and in times of national emergency. The citizen's ability to recognize persuasion and to realize his\her ultimate and real cost for that government function is essential to the credibility of our democratic process. Transparent government should be required to clearly disclose and identify sponsorship of all publicly funded information. A requirement to advertise the actual and detailed cost of each government communications campaign could be established as a component, in ratio to the size and expenditure, of each

¹³Bruce Doern and R.Phidd, Canadian Public Policy (Scarborough:Nelson Canada, 1992) p. 208

campaign. For every twenty purchased advertisements one would have to be details of the costs of the campaign. "A legitimate government is one whose authority citizens can still recognize while still regarding themselves as equal, autonomous, rational agents."¹⁴

3.4 MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

The integrity and efficiency of government information services is directly related to the political will and ability to define the management of informational policy and the communications process. In many cases the debate about communication and information services in government is obfuscated because of the ill-defined process and the misunderstood responsibilities within the communication structure. As stated previously the inability of 'management to manage' is usually predicated on a political inability or reluctance to define the structure and the lines of responsibility. Whether it is the relationships between the elected politician, the senior civil servant, the political party 'spin-doctor' or an advertising agency; the focus of a legitimate and effective system must be to articulate the roles and functions of those players in the process of political communications.

¹⁴Op Cit., Yudof, p. 2

An environment that will encourage the open and legitimate use of information as an instrument of government must clearly define structural roles and procedures in the management of communications. As with other functions of government, the relationship between administrative efficiency and political abuse is contingent upon the relationship and level of involvement and authority of central and lead agencies in the realm of informational policy. The concept of a continuum, "running from a highly centralized model where final and overall authority is exerted by a single agency with close ties to the political executive to one in which control primarily resides with individual departments"¹⁵ can be a limited and misleading representation of the available spectrum of options. As Robert Everett suggests, this view, "is coloured by a lingering but false image of administrative architecture." He is accurate and unequivocal in his claim that "the ultimate purview over informational policy resides with political masters."¹⁶

Governments can and do unify and consolidate numerous functions under umbrella agencies. This is an essential and accepted practise in government management of policy input, program co-ordination and technical resources. One option for

¹⁵Robert Everett, Information Canada and the Politics of Participation (unpublished PH.D. Dissertation, 1990) p. 28

¹⁶Ibid., p. 29

consolidation of communications, as reflected by a ministerial model, mandates a single department to speak on behalf of the government and act as a clearing house and distributor of official information. Generally, under the direct supervision of a cabinet level appointee, this model is considered rare and is mainly initiated during wartime and national emergencies in the form of an Office or Board of Information. A second more common model involves the creation of a resource agency such as the Central Office of Information in Britain. While not directly attached to any single minister or ministry, this quasi-independent status provides some insulation from political interference and abuse. Its main purpose is to provide the technical expertise required by individual departments. As Mr. Attlee stated in 1946 during the creation of the C.O.I., "there are various technical functions, notably on the production side, which it would be uneconomical to organize departmentally, and which can best be performed centrally as a common service."¹⁷

While the decentralized approach to government information established in the U.S. is predicated on maintaining a political balance rather than technical efficiency, suggestions for co-ordination were first identified and recommended by James McCamy in 1939. "Program-

¹⁷Op Cit. Sir Fife Clark, p. 34

making, as one affected factor, could be much more economical and more effective for the government as a whole if publicity offices were bound together in some organization in which information could be readily shared."¹⁸ While the U.S. federal government is distinct in the need for structural independence as enjoyed by its individual departments and bureaus, there is a recognized and accepted inefficiency. There is an acknowledgement by all jurisdictions that the operational processes and mechanisms required to technically produce the government's message can be separated from the functions of policy development and program management. Whether communication services are provided in-house or contracted through the private sector; efficiency and rationalization of co-ordination and production can and should occur.

The argument that a decentralized department based communication function can provide a better understanding of specific issues and perspectives, or a freer flow of information input, is weak in consideration of new electronic techniques of gathering, assessing and preparing information for further packaging. Mr. Attlee's comments are as true today as they were in 1946. Commercial advertising agencies and publicity bureaus have been providing efficiency through

¹⁸Op Cit. McCamy, p. 242

full and common services for years. Whether it is providing individual planning, production and creative services directly or tendering and assigning the expertise of an advertising or publicity agency; efficient techniques, mechanisms and know-how exist. It is possible and imperative for government to achieve some degree of efficiency and administrative accountability in the technical process of creating communications.

A final model of consolidation can be referred to as an omnibus agency model. This model is unique because of the emphasise placed on the functions of consultation, co-ordination and policy input. While omnibus agencies do not usually fall under the purview of information ministers, as was the case with Information Canada, they have in some Canadian provincial jurisdictions been assigned to the office of the premier in the form of Government Information Services. Numerous omnibus agencies can and do co-exist to co-ordinate and provide consultation and policy input in production and printing (Queen's Printer), advertising purchasing (Advertising Audit Offices) and media relations (Information Services). The present Canadian experience of vesting overall control and authority for government information within individual departments and Treasury Board, while divesting the actual work of co-ordination, consultation and policy input to the Cabinet Communications Committee, the Privy Council

Information Secretariat, the Advertising Management Group and the Department of Supply and Services-Canada Communications Group brings new meaning to the concepts of centralization and decentralization in a 'fused political executive.'

While the consolidation and co-ordination of technical resources, production and consultative services, in the form of resource or omnibus agencies, can provide administrative efficiency and cost-savings through inter-departmental planning and volume purchasing, they also provide an effective apparatus to orchestrate and control the overall themes, messages and images of the government. Individual Ministers in a Parliamentary system may be accountable for the specific messages and campaigns of their department, but it is much more difficult to establish accountability for the politically orchestrated and engineered campaign of 'selling' the government through the co-ordination of these individual program and departmental messages. As Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Ingham demonstrated, creating ministerial accountability does not necessarily assure responsibility or lack of political abuse. Similarly, the Canadian approach of obfuscating the roles and responsibilities of individual Ministers with the myriad of omnibus agencies has created a system where fundamental assumptions of integrity and separation of responsibility are lost in an avalanche of 'cascading dysfunctionism.'

It is imperative in any model of government information services to clearly define the authority and responsibility for the government's message. As technical, production and media-buying activities can be legitimately quantified and consolidated, so can the inevitable political function and management process of devising and coordinating the government's over-all communication themes and messages. Central co-ordination of the political message and information policy of government can and must exist at the cabinet table or with the Executive. The existence of an executive management function with a strategic role in coordinating and evaluating the government's over-all political communication activities can be an acceptable, legitimate and open component of the operation of a democratic government. While this function at present exists and is the political responsibility of the Prime Minister's Press Secretary, the Presidential Communications Director or the Secretary to the Cabinet Communications Committee, it is the distinct relationship and line of authority between this activity and the on-going program information activities of government that has become blurred and undefinable. It is this fine line between the political desires and intent of cabinet and the senior communications bureaucrats responsible for the on-going delivery of government information that defines the integrity of the system. It is at this point, and only at this point,

that the discussion of political control and manipulation should be identified and legislatively defined. It is at this point that effective management of the process can be formally separated from the politics of the message.¹⁹

3.5 PUBLIC/CIVIL SERVICE

Concurrent with the issue of separating the efficiency of the process from the politics of the message is the function and independence of the civil service. All models appear to agree that "anything which sharpens the distinction between the politician and the civil servant and fortifies the tradition of civil service impartiality will reduce the risk that government public relations will be abused for partisan ends."²⁰ While the civil service, in all jurisdictions discussed here, has established certain structural traditions and safe-guards, the confused and at times clandestine nature of the function of government communications has seen political appointments, incompetence and frustrated management as the norm rather than the exception. Inadequate knowledge

¹⁹An example of this relationship was recently exposed in Manitoba where the Director of The Provincial Communication Services Branch, in response to an Opposition request for costs of a specific advertising program, providing two different sets of figures for the Communications Director for Cabinet to select and approve prior to providing a response. "Filmon Secretary Accused of Political Censoring", The Winnipeg Sun, December 16, 1992.

²⁰Op Cit. Pimlott, p. 96

of the function, the agency or department and the process of communication, in conjunction with a poor tradition of training, recognition and professionalism, have added to the perceived illegitimacy of both the participants and the process. While the mainstream bureaucracy is required to assume responsibility for these obscure and politically manipulated positions within government, they are also forced, by the nature of the structure, to accept the liability when the line is transversed. The old metaphor of 'shooting the messenger' has made the mainstream bureaucracy very 'gun shy' in fully integrating the role of communications into departmental management, planning, programming and administration. Unless a clear line of demarcation is established with strong and impenetrable rules and guidelines, the role of government communicators will always remain the 'step-children of bureaucracy'.

Too many government agencies do not involve their public information officers sufficiently at the policy-making levels where their services are most essential to the entire communications process. Again it has probably been the competition between the politician and the bureaucrat, and the mis-representation of our tradition, that have kept the information officer out of the policy formation process; and that failure is a serious one.²¹

It must also be noted that in many ways the objectives and motives of the mainstream civil service are perceived to

²¹Ray Eldon Hiebert, "A Model of the Government Communication Process", in Informing the People, Lewis Helm, et. al., eds. (New York: Longman Inc., 1981) p. 6

be 'diametrically opposed' to the objectives and motives of the communication function. The sense of immediacy and persuasive intent of communications are not always consistent with the culture, perspective and operational style of bureaucracy. While the need to persuade and convince the public are shared attributes between the politician and the government information officer, they are not necessarily strong functions or objectives of bureaucracy. For this reason the relationship between the politician, the bureaucracy and the information specialist can, at times, appear as a three-way triangle. The loyalty of Bernard Ingham, as a civil servant, to Margaret Thatcher became much greater than his loyalty to the function and tradition of the civil service.

Ingham's alleged neutrality, in other words, was the rock upon which the entire edifice rested. Remove it, and the theory of a Government Information Service whose sole function was to dispense objective facts would have come crashing down.²²

This relationship is not uncommon and is generally maintained and protected by politicians in the selection of communication personnel because of the mutual interest and shared objectives of the politician and the communications practitioner in government. "You don't hire your enemy," is a well known political adage in western democracies. This relationship, which constitutes an integral issue in any

²²Robert Harris, Good and Faithful Servant (New York: Faber&Faber, 1990) p. 116

attempt to establish an objective and effective communications apparatus, has many further implications.

3.6 SERVICES AND PATRONAGE

While administrative efficiency, through centralized technical resource services, and a tradition of management expertise and objectivity in the civil service are critical tools in separating the efficiency of the process from the politics of the message, they are not the only tools. While everyone who has read a newspaper or watched a T.V. commercial has the right to profess to be a communication expert, few people may actually understand the mechanical needs and technical procedures involved in producing a news release, brochure or television commercial. It is this unique technical specialty and functional characteristic of the process of communications that frustrates the politician's ability to operate in isolation and the bureaucrat's ability to administratively control. Neither possesses nor can provide the necessary technical expertise. The need for actual and trusted technical skills and communication management expertise are critical to the process.

Whether that need is fulfilled through in-house technical capabilities of the government and its paid public servants or contracted direct to an advertising or publicity agency is more an issue of politics than of administrative

effectiveness. The extent to which a government effectively needs or uses its own machinery and personnel to create and produce communication material should not confuse how or for what policy purposes it manages and controls that resource. The administrative and technical ability to provide effective communications exist both in government and commercially 'on the street'; the issue remains one of establishing a workable and efficient structure, defining certain standards and guidelines and maintaining political and fiscal integrity.

The nature of the relationship between advertising agencies, political parties, the suppliers of technical and research services and the media is entrenched, complex and well documented in democratic countries. In many jurisdictions the establishment of government information services with paid public servants may be seen as nothing more than a convenient operational substitute for the politically unacceptable practise of hiring or contracting one's political allies in the form of advertising agencies or publicity bureaus. While the objectives, mechanics and techniques remain the same, all that changes is the label of the practitioner and the assumption of objectivity. "The top men (in government service) are the nearest counterparts to the business public relations executive and the public relations counsel."²³

²³Op Cit. Pimlott, p. 106

Patronage to advertising agencies, use of partisan publicity and public relations experts by politicians, public opinion and research polling and the direct conflict of interest inherent in the process of government buying advertising space in the media have all affected the development and conduct of government communication activities. The administrative and technical process of selecting agencies for government accounts, identifying the greatest efficiency in procuring government communication services, assuring objectivity in media purchasing, and selecting management and co-ordination of publicity activities have in many cases obfuscated the real issues relevant to the problems of government communications. In many jurisdictions, due to the often misunderstood and technical nature of the communication process, these issues of administration and implementation have become on-going 'political footballs'. Debate about the confused technical management of government information often over-shadows the debate about the lack of legitimacy, structure or objective content within government information. The ability of a government to objectively tender and contract production and agency services, buy media time, or assign and hire publicity expertise should be a recognized management prerogative based on cost effectiveness and merit. In many instances it is still a function of favouritism, patronage and system maintenance. Many of the management and

administrative issues of government communications that arise in the political arena and consume the bureaucracy are a result of a poorly defined or purposely confused structural apparatus. While in the U.S. and Britain quasi-independent bodies and councils have been established to provide some objectivity and legitimacy to the advertising agency tendering and selection process, the Canadian system has never established or legitimized such a body or council.

3.7 STANDARDS AND PRACTICES

In August 1979 the Chairman of the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) sent letters to 12 federal agencies "raising questions about representations they were making to the public in advertising and promotions."²⁴ This agency, responsible for truth in advertising, did not have or claim to have jurisdiction over its sister agencies. This was the first time the F.T.C. concerned itself with advertising by the government. In Canada, as in the U.S., a combination of government legislation, media and advertising association standards and codes of ethics exists to police commercial advertising. As government is not considered to be in a 'competitive environment' it is not subject to the rules of The Competition Act. The Canadian Advertising Foundation's

²⁴Edwin Cowan, "Problems With Government Advocacy", in Informing the People, Lewis Helm, et.al., eds. (New York:Longman Inc., 1981) p. 38

Advertising Standards Council is only now requesting that "party and private sector advertising be governed by the same rules in regards to what the advertising can say (during election campaigns)."²⁵ Though governments have never been known to police themselves, it is unimaginable why common standards of quality and content cannot be developed between relevant government departments, media outlets and the advertising industry. Though enforcement may be difficult to assess and define, the simple act of having a common set of standards could assure some degree of integrity and public credibility. While the line between information and persuasion or propaganda may be blurred, there is no reason to believe it cannot be brought into better focus. As the Advertising Council in the U.S. has developed criteria (see page 54) to assess the appropriateness of government campaigns it accepts, similarly government can define criteria to assess the appropriateness of its own campaigns and messages. While this concept may be questionable during periods of national emergency, the discussion is imperative to the health of democracy.

While written guidelines and manuals of operational practises exist for many administrative functions within government, nothing generally exists for the benefit of

²⁵ Stan Sutter, "Changes Proposed For Election Advertising," Marketing Magazine, 2 March, 1992, p. 3

understanding government procedures in communication activities. Because the British COI has been in existence since 1946 operational procedures are well written and defined. However, in most situations no distinct operational guidelines or procedures exist. As was recommended by the Canadian Task Force on Government Information in 1969, "These guidelines would deal with agency and media selection, the planning and formulation of advertising campaigns, relations with outside organizations, research, surveys, pre and post-testing and analysis, standards of performance and so on."²⁶

3.7 FUNDING OF OTHER CHANNELS

The title of this thesis, a quote from a research respondent, "What are they selling me with my own money now?" provides a truly public insight into attitudes toward government advertising. Source credibility is an important part of communication and its impact on the recipient. People tend to forget or reinterpret a message as it suits them, to avoid disagreeable messages, and to totally ignore information perceived as self-promoting and less than direct. In a free marketplace of ideas this is accepted and understood. While most of this paper has been concerned with government communication and the negative impact on the citizen in a democracy, we must also accept the lack of impact and possible

²⁶O.J.Firestone, The Public Persuader(Toronto:Methuen Publications,1970) p. 210

ineffectiveness. "People are attentive to the source of the message; for better or worse, I fear that governments face a sceptical audience.....If anything there appears to be a mounting distrust of government leaders and their motives."²⁷ Whether government, at times unable to separate information from persuasion, is the most credible source of information in a democracy is becoming increasingly questionable.

While government may have historically been forced by the realities of war and the limitations of the press to assume the role of chief distributor of information, it should not be assumed that government must necessarily continue to perform this function. Similarly, while governments should attempt to enhance the self-controlled citizen's ability to choose within a free marketplace of ideas, it is not and should not be the only participant contributing to the public information system. "If government dominates the flow of ideas and information, the ideal of the self-controlled citizen, making informed choices about his government, is destroyed."²⁸

As has been noted the public information system in a democracy comprises many elements: the media, interest groups, political parties, unions and associations to public

²⁷Op Cit., Yudof, p. 114

²⁸Ibid., p. 1

bureaucracies, corporations and the citizen. While the cost of assuring that public information finds its way to the citizen may theoretically be considered a responsibility of government, it does not necessarily have to be a direct function of the government. Democratic jurisdictions have a history of providing either direct or indirect funding to public broadcast networks, advocacy organizations and equity interest groups for the dissemination of information on public-policy issues.²⁹ While Pimlott may have suggested in 1951, "the central issue...is the extent to which the government needs its own machinery to supplement the privately owned mass media,"³⁰ the question may now be to what extent does the public need other machinery to supplement or balance the government communication apparatus? The structures and mechanisms are available to encourage and enhance the self-controlled citizen in their ability to understand and chose political options. Governments must be judged on their commitment to creating, legitimizing and protecting those structures which enhance access and choice within the marketplace of ideas.

As stated previously, the U.S. approach of relying on the media, the Advertising Council and the private sector has

²⁹James T. Bennett and Thomas J. Dilorenzo, Official Lies, How Washington Misleads Us (Virginia: Groom Books, 1992), p. 5

³⁰Op Cit., Pimlott, p. 79

generated more public support and credibility than the direct messages of government. With an increasing trend in Canada and Britain to co-operative advertising and promotions between government and the private sector there appears ample opportunity and increasing fiscal sense to reconsider the impact of source credibility and the notion of other unique funding arrangements. It is not uncommon in all three western democracies for the public to finance political communications, via political parties, at election times. In 1987 the Canadian Progressive Conservative party established their own national parliamentary news service to provide electronic news clips of their M.P.s and Ministers, via satellite, to accepting media outlets. The service provides interviews with Conservative politicians and free coverage of news conferences announcing government programs. It should be equally acceptable, and possibly mutually beneficial, for governments to consider funding certain defined political communications and information on an on-going basis from political parties and other recognized institutions. "In a democracy the propagation of political programs and policies should not be the prerogative of the majority party acting as government but instead should be left to individuals and political parties."³¹

³¹S.Prakash Sethi, "A Critical View of Government Advocacy Advertising" in Advocacy Advertising: Propaganda or Democratic Right?, Duncan McDowall, ed. (Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada, 1982) p. 43

3.8 MONITORING

Traditionally the responsibility for monitoring the abuse of government information and publicity practices has been with Opposition politicians via Parliament or a legislative forum, or with the media. In the U.S. it has historically and constitutionally been the role of the media to act as 'watchdog' of the political process. While groups and associations representing everything from good government and truthful reporting to civil service unions have monitored and commented on government communication activities, none has maintained an on-going vigilance and lasting public assessment. The U.S. Advertising Council and the British ACAA have not had a jurisdictional motivation or mandate to monitor or comment on the intent or content of the government's message. Government information services have been routinely questioned and reviewed by commissions, committees, task forces and consultants, yet the subject, academic interest and public understanding of the function and process is extremely limited.

History reflects that it was the inability of the media due to limited resources and the escalating growth of government programs and services that originated the need for government information services. "There is much indispensable

information which the mass media cannot handle."³² Similarly, recent financial mergers and take-overs within the media industry have concentrated ownership of this essential forum in the hands of a few individuals. With increasing dependence on advertising revenue, including that of government, it is questionable how effective the media can be as a 'watchdog' with such conflicting interests.

The same Opposition politicians who are charged with the responsibility of exposing opportunities for political abuse or deficiencies within the government communications apparatus, will at some point, become government and have access and use of that same process and structure. In many cases the record of their own party in power will reflect the same weakness and abuses within the government information services. The power that was and the power that will be provide little motivation to initiate change.

It is essential in an era of unprecedented growth in the technology and techniques of mass communication and subliminal messages that democratic society create, mandate and support institutions that can monitor, adjudicate and report to the public on questionable government information activities and privacy practices. The need and ability to expose political

³²Op Cit., Pimlott, p. 100

manipulation and abuse of the massive information machinery of government is essential. The citizen's ability to recognize the official lies of a democratic government and the government's ability to respect that right is critical to the continued survival of democracy. The obvious and ultimate cost and danger remains,

government persuaders will come to disrespect citizens and their role of ultimate decider, and manipulate them by communicating only what makes them accede to government plans, policies and goals.³³

While the concept of a Ministry of Information has historically been associated with the idea of planned and orchestrated propaganda, consideration must be given to establishing such a device or agency mandated to assure compliance and protection of a democratic government's obligation to promote individual choice and expansion of the citizens' knowledge through information. In an 'information age' when information is becoming more of a commodity to be bought and sold in the marketplace with new and advanced technologies of communication and larger governments, there is a real and essential obligation to expand and develop new channels of communication to the public. With a legislated or constituted mandate to protect and enhance the information rights of citizens this agency would have the democratic authority to monitor, report and expose the government's

³³Op Cit., Yudof, p. 6

use and abuse of information. A similar concept of a 'peoples advocate' whose job it would be to defend the public's right to know, was first proposed by Senator William Benton and popularized by Douglas Cater in 1959. "He would strive to create a constant presumption in favor of disclosure. He would fight as hard to release information as some officials have been known to suppress it."³⁴

3.9 NEW TECHNOLOGIES

The introduction of new media and new technologies in the area of computerization, telecommunication, satellite transmission and electronic information management provides new opportunities to re-think old habits. Much of the function of government information services involves the concept of popularizing information for better public consumption. The 'publicity agent', that the U.S. Department of Agriculture wished to hire in 1913, was to package information to assure better public understanding and subsequent use. With the ability of twenty-first century technology to assure comprehensive government information management, the concept of popularizing and disseminating information has already been superseded by the need to provide better and quicker access to existing information. It is not beyond comprehension in an environment of home computers, 400 plus T.V. channels,

³⁴Douglas Cater, The Fourth Branch of Government (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1959) p. 168

communication satellites and 'electronic highways' to consider providing all government information via designated channels, telecommunication networks or specific store front information kiosks. The onus on government to sell or advocate what it is doing would shift to providing legitimate assurance of access to information and management and regulation of the channels of communication.

The need for democratic societies to establish a context in which to comprehend and assess the impact of new media and changing uses of informatics and information is essential. Whether we are altering or fundamentally changing our channels of communications, increasing the amount of information available, changing our social and political symbols or simply devising new ways to manage information, it will impact on both publicity and integrity within our democracies. David Easton provided a astute realization in his comments of 1965

With modern technological skills in the area of mass communication and persuasion becoming increasingly sophisticated, it is regularly suggested that it is only a matter of time when any regime will be able to perpetuate itself indefinitely.³⁵

CONCLUSION

It was the intention of this paper to provide a functional perspective and an effective framework for the

³⁵David Easton, A Systems Analysis of Political Life (Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 1965), P.395

organization of government information services. I submit this thesis on behalf of the many communication professionals who as 'illegitimate step-children of bureaucracy' have taken abuse from politicians and their political assistants, criticism from the public as 'apple-polishers', and been ostracized, abused or mismanaged by others within the civil service. Though government information services may have evolved haphazardly as need and circumstance demanded, the function is critical to our democratic process. This intermediary activity of government, providing information to the very citizens from whom it assures its democratic authority and survival, offers new and unique challenges in our political evolution. While 'they are modern inventions between the government and the governed' one must also believe the role of government information services will expand in an environment of increasing media fragmentation and clutter and decreasing national vision and consensus. As such we must be able to better define their role, their strength and their weakness in serving democratic society in the future.

As previously suggested, essential to the process of defining that role will be the ability of democratic societies to assume a holistic perspective in understanding the present and future relationships of their changing channels of communication to their changing public information requirements. The very nature of our attitude toward and

assumptions about information in democratic society require fundamental change and adjustment. The assumption of a free and open marketplace of ideas is inconsistent with a principle of crown privilege that supports all government information as secret unless the government wishes to package and release it. In Canada, as many proponents of freedom of information legislation contend, the reversal of this simple principle to suggest that all government information should be released unless government can make a good case for keeping it secret³⁶ would fundamentally change the paradigm and parameters of definition and assessment. Not only would this impact on the ability to access and manage information, but equally on the whole nature and function of promoting and publicizing government actions.

In the U.S., where there has been a long and documented realization of control and marginalization manufactured by the media, big business, government PACs and special interests; there is a growing distrust of the government and bureaucracy as well. All of this occurring in a political environment that neither recognizes government publicity as a legitimate function nor accounts for its hidden and massive spending. "The consent that government manufactures is not always consonant with the truth--and that is why every American

³⁶Ken Kernaghan and David Siegal, eds., Public Administration in Canada (Scarborough:Nelson Canada, 1991) p. 469

should worry about the propaganda machine that churns beneath the corridors of power."³⁷ The concept of the free and open marketplace of ideas has become limited and expensive. As communities of interest find themselves in increasing conflict with communities of wealth and power, a new and honest view of information and its function and control is imperative in avoiding what Madison perceived as either the farce or the tragedy.

³⁷Op Cit., Bennett and Dilorenzo, p. 14

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