COMMUNICATION RESEARCH TRENDS

A Quarterly Information Service from the
Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture

Autumn, 1980
Vol. 1, No.3

Broadcasting Policy and Media Reform

In some nations broadcasting evolves steadily and organically into a system that serves the information and leisure needs of an ever broader range of social groups. The media stimulate a widespread, critical and informed debate on national issues. In other countries broadcasting tends to become the preserve of powerful minority interests, and all information is slanted, often subtly, to serve the power strategies of these interests. Wave after wave of public "media reform" protest crashes against these privileged minorities, but the established controls remain virtually intact. What has communication research to say to this problem?

Anthony Smith, in the Introduction to his book, *The Politics of Information: Problems of Policy in Modern Media,*[1] suggests the need for a new perspective in research on national broadcasting policy. Formerly, the planning process implicitly assumed that new communications technology was a neutral object, simply an instrument for the achieving of society's goals. Increasingly, however, it is realised that new technology is not just the random discovery of some genius. Technology itself arises from the social demands placed on inventors. More importantly, institutions organised to administer technology "arise out of the fears of loss of control by powerful sections of society." Smith suggests that we cannot study the process of national broadcasting planning as if it were a detached rational process; it is the result of a tug-of-war between various social forces. "All decisions concerning information, from deciding where to place telephone circuits to deciding which jokes to excise from a comedy script, are part of the field of social forces which may be crudely termed 'communications'."

Anthony Smith dates this changing perspective from the time that television became the dominant broadcasting medium. More likely, as information increasingly becomes a key social resource, we are seeing the struggle over access to information and to the channels of communication becoming more accentuated.

Whatever the reasons, we are realising that the media are "public institutions dependent on decisions taken by or on behalf of society as a whole." The periodic public inquiries into broadcasting are national political events. Research into the process of forming broadcasting policy involves more and more the field of political economy.

This issue of COMMUNICATION RESEARCH TRENDS reviews a sample of "public investigations" of broadcasting and analyses the process in terms of the interplay of social forces.

Great Britain: The Annan Report

Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting: Chairman, Lord Annan. (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1977).

Britain has a relatively well-established system of public inquiries periodically reassessing the broadcasting services when there are demands for major changes or technological changes are on the horizon. The inquiry is not left in the hands of regulatory agencies (the Independent Broadcasting Authority or the BBC Board of Governors), direct parliamentary hearings, or contracts to specific research institutes. The responsible cabinet-level minister appoints a committee of "citizen-experts" to prepare a complete examination of the present broadcasting system and to propose recommendations for discussion and legislation in Parliament. The committee led by Lord Annan was the seventh inquiry in a series stretching back to 1923. The planning process centring on the Annan Report has continued for almost a decade: the initial discussions in the early 1970's, the appointment of the committee in 1974, the research leading to the 1977 report, several years of heated discussion of the report, both in professional broadcasting circles and among the general public, and the parliamentary debate now in progress.

A comprehensive inquiry

The inquiries insist on absolute autonomy from major pressure groups, especially broadcasting interests. The Annan

IN THIS ISSUE

Media Reform Movements: how effective are they? Page 4.

Reconciling Research and Policy. Page 6.

Current Research on Media Reform. Page 7.

Additional Bibliography on Media Reform. Page 8.

inquiry was comprehensive in that it examined both public and commercial broadcasting, national networks and local stations, special educational services as well as general radio-television programming. Most significant was the public consultation over a period of more than a year with more than 400 major organisations; extensive discussions with the management and staff (without the management) of virtually all of the broadcasting facilities; discussion with interest groups, from advertisers to trade unions; review of thousands of letters from listeners and viewers; and studies of broadcasting systems in EEC countries, and nearly all industrialised countries in the English-speaking world. Although no special research or audience surveys were commissioned, the voluminous audience surveys of the BBC and IBA were used and the extensive media research by scholars in Britain and elsewhere was analysed. Summaries of research findings, on television and politics (Dr. J. Blumler), the effects of television (Prof. J. Halloran), and television advertising (Dr. B. Hindley), were requested.[2]

Interestingly enough, the Annan Report did not consider the major factor requiring examination to be the new technology (teletext, video recorders, cable), but the changing socio-cultural context of Britain which is demanding new forms of broadcasting services. The emphasis is on people, not on technology or economics. Britain is becoming a socially more heterogeneous, pluralistic society with much less consensus on common cultural values. The desire to participate more actively in the decisions regarding broadcasting is also more widespread. There are demands for broadcasting to be more critical of existing social and political institutions. On the whole, the population is becoming better educated and is expecting a greater depth and variety in programming.

Lines of policy development

To serve this more heterogeneous, demanding audience, the Report recommends four basic lines for policy development: 1) greater *flexibility,* that is, moving from the duopoly of the BBC and the IBA to a wider range of channels with varying programming orientations; 2) *diversity,* a wider variety of high quality programming responding to the increasing plurality of lifestyles and sub-cultures in Britain. Such a diversity of channels and programmes will have little meaning unless the producers have real independence vis-á-vis the government and other powerful interests. In fact, the current Broadcasting Bill in Parliament proposes a fourth TV channel more open to "independent producers"; 3) The Annan Report stresses especially the need for mechanisms providing greater *direct accountability* of broadcasting services to the public. The Report also recommended the setting up of a Broadcasting Complaints Commission to consider complaints of "misrepresentation or unjust or unfair treatment in broadcast programmes". This latter proposal is now to be found in the Broadcasting Bill. — The Annan Report is not without its severe critics. In a paper discussing the 1977 report,[3] Prof. James Halloran points out that the Committee did not analyse broadcasting in the context of the structure, organisation and provision of all the media, how they are used and what functions they serve. The Committee also failed to study the international aspects of broadcasting such as "the operation of the international news agencies and Eurovision, arrangements with regard to co-production, the import and export of broadcasting material and the part played by the external service of the BBC ..." Furthermore, "many important social issues such as the broadcast coverage of race, industrial relations, women and other minority groups were treated sloppily and superficially". The basic problem, concludes Halloran, was the narrow focus of the Committee on the broadcasting agencies in themselves.

The United States: The Carnegie Commission Reports

A Public Trust: The Landmark Report of the Carnegie Commission on the Future of Public Broadcasting (New York: Bantam Books Inc., 1979).

Vincent Mosco observes in his recent book, *Broadcasting in the United States: Innovative Challenge and Organizational Control,*[4] that broadcasting in the U.S. is particularly rigid and unresponsive to public needs. "Over the past forty years the recommendations for change have essentially involved tinkering with basic legislation that solidified the structure of broadcast legislation in America — the 1934 Communications Act. The history of broadcasting teaches that no fundamental changes have come from such suggestions ..." There are no institutional mechanisms to "...analyse problems comprehensively and develop policies for long-term growth of communication systems". Mosco's valuable study reveals that broadcasting policy has still not advanced beyond the tinkering stage.

An approximation to more authoritative and comprehensive study of broadcasting policy are the 1967 and 1979 reports sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation. These (especially the 1967 report) have played a major role in establishing and designing the public broadcasting service in the United States. The 1979 report, which reviews much of the history and travails of public broadcasting, provides some insight into the problems of designing broadcasting policy in a country with the socio-political structure of the United States.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting

As TV was introduced in the U.S., many educational institutions and community organisations obtained licences for "educational TV". Each of these stations attempted to provide its own programming except for some national distribution of quality programmes from institutions such as the Ford Foundation. Following the recommendations of the 1967 Carnegie Commission, the U.S. Congress established in 1967 the Corporation for Public Broadcasting as a private, nonprofit organisation to encourage cooperation among educational stations and to disburse federal funds for national-level programme production. The CPB was not permitted to form a "fourth network" with centralised programme production. However, the local stations did form a Public Broadcasting Service controlled by the member stations to pool their programming efforts.

New kinds of programming

In the early 1970's, the CPB encouraged a new type of programming which, in the American context, carried considerable critical editorial interpretation of political

significance. The problems began, according to the Carnegie report, when the CPB went back to the U.S. Congress for more funds. The Nixon government "...believed that public television had become a vehicle for political criticism of the administration", and some local stations were concerned with the "eastern liberal bias" of controversial public affairs programmes. President Nixon vetoed the congressional appropriations for the CPB and proceeded to appoint CPB board members more to his liking. The new board discontinued most CPB public affairs programming. Eventually the CPB agreed to finance only the technical operations of local stations and programming was left at local level. The overall impact of this political intervention was to drive the CPB away from controversial programme content and a willingness to take risks.

The report points out that initially the CPB's central programming had a number of high quality successes and gained a growing audience.

Now, with central programme production curtailed, local stations have had to pool their limited resources to produce better programmes. There are frequently dozens of decision makers involved and each programme is the result of the lowest common denominator of agreement. Because of the subsequent weakening of more unified production, public broadcasting in the U.S. has not been able to provide a creative alternative to the commercial networks and has failed in its efforts to seek out the finest American talents.

The problems of public broadcasting

The major proposal of the 1977 Carnegie Report is the reorganisation of the CPB. The general governing board would continue to be appointed by the President, but there would be a screening process that would reduce the possibility of the politicisation of the board. It also recommended that the national programme service be separated from the governing board and given longer-term financing. This would mean that those responsible for programming decisions could support creativity without fear of reprisals either from political forces or from the timid within public broadcasting itself.

In a recent article, "An Institutional History of Public Broadcasting (in the U.S.)",[5] Robert Avery and Robert Pepper point to fundamental tensions which afflict public broadcasting systems in the U.S. and elsewhere. Firstly, there is the inherent conflict between the insulation of editorial independence from governmental interference and accountability to government funding. Secondly, there is the conflict between national programming and local or regional interests. Finally, one might add the problem of financing high quality alternative programming by licences or public subscriptions in competition with heavily financed commercial broadcasting geared to advertising interests. These are central questions for further research.

The Venezuelan Radio and Television Plan (RATELVE)

Proyecto RATELVE: diseno para una nueva politica de radiodifusion del estado Venezolano. Comision Preparatoria del Consejo Nacional de la Cultura, Caracas, 1977.

There have been strong movements in many Latin American countries towards reform of the broadcasting system. One of the most thoroughly researched plans was the RATELVE Project, a design for new broadcasting policy for the government of Venezuela.

Work on the plan was begun in 1974 on the initiative of the Committee on Radio and Television of the National Cultural Council, and the research was carried out largely by the team of ININCO, a communication research institute in Venezuela. The director of the Committee was Antonio Pasquali, now with UNESCO in Paris.

This comprehensive and detailed study of the state of broadcasting in Venezuela paints a picture typical of Latin America: wholesale use of the media as instruments to serve commercial advertising interests; depressingly poor quality of radio and television; duplication of services attractive for advertising and total neglect of other services, such as education and development; neglect of the country's best artistic talents; mass dependence on foreign imports; and concentration of the media services in the cities, leaving the rural areas unserved. Venezuela has a public broadcasting service, but it is so badly financed in comparison with private broadcasting that its services are the worst of all.

Functions of broadcasting

The general principles of the RATELVE Plan are familiar. The function of broadcasting is to develop a sense of community among the Venezuelan people, to contribute to the freedom and creativity of the person and to support a national development benefitting all social classes. In order that broadcasting be truly a public service and to protect freedom of expression, the policy directions must be a function of the state. But the functions of the government are carefully delimited and defined: to ensure that there is adequate broadcasting coverage, especially in the rural regions; and to encourage diversification of broadcasting services to meet diverse needs. The public broadcasting facilities are to provide the norm of quality and offer those services not attractive to the private sector. The government is to provide the guidelines for all broadcasting, public and private, so that there is balance and organic growth in the system.

The authors spell out in detail the organisation and functions of the proposed government agency, RATELVE, which is to group together the existing scattered ministries and departments.

Some questions

The RATELVE Plan is impressive, but overlooks several critical points. Firstly, what kind of organisation will ensure that editorial independence is protected from government and partisan political intervention? This is a fundamental issue in a country so highly politicised as Venezuela. Secondly, what mechanisms are there for accountability to and participation by the general public? In fact, there is no evidence that any one participated in drawing up the plan except for a small group of communication experts. Thirdly, what are the means for establishing an atmosphere for creative production that will attract Venezuelans with artistic abilities and prevent the public broadcasting service from becoming one more group of salary-drawing functionaries? Finally, the authors offer no plan for involving the public in the implementation of this policy. This may be one reason why, in a recent communications policy document of the present government

of Venezuela,[6] there is no explicit mention of the RATELVE plan.

West Germany: Public Participation in Broadcasting Policy

Arthur Williams, *Broadcasting and Democracy in West Germany* (Bradford, UK: Bradford University Press, 1976).

Broadcasting systems generally reflect larger socio-political structures, and, in turn, are important influences in the development of political systems. Arthur Williams describes the development of broadcasting in relation to the evolution of the West German political system since World War II. Ruth Thomas provides a similar analysis for France in a companion book, *Broadcasting and Democracy in France.*[7]

Stemming from the general policy of the Allies to decentralise power in the new Germany, there are nine regional radio and television stations in the Federal Republic, following roughly the socio-political division of the German Länder. In 1950 these new stations formed the Federation of the Public Broadcasting Corporations of Germany (ARD). In 1963 the Länder governments authorised the formation of a public corporation separate from the ARD which now provides the German central television service.

Principles of German broadcasting

The idea behind German broadcasting is that it is a service for the public controlled by the public. The regional stations were established with a controlling structure consisting of a broadcasting council, an administrative council and a station director or intendent. According to Williams, the broadcasting councils vary in their composition, but generally contain representatives of the major social groups of the region — the Land government, the universities, the three major religious confessions, business interests, etc. The broadcasting council is responsible for the general station policy, including programming and the supervision of the Station direction. The administrative council, composed mainly of specialists, is responsible for administrative and business aspects of the station.

Williams focuses on the mechanisms of public accountability in German broadcasting. In theory, the broadcasting council should ensure representative democratic control of the stations. However, in the practice of German politics, the councils became battlegrounds for the major political parties. This tended to politicise the personnel of the stations and threatened editorial independence as well as creativity in programming. Eventually this political pressure sparked off a national reaction among programme workers and other station personnel. Williams dedicates a chapter to describing how this movement achieved some legal guarantees for programmers. He also describes the public outburst that blocked the Christian Social Union's attempt to stack the broadcasting council of the Bavarian station and reasserted pluralistic control of broadcasting in that region.

Struggles over public broadcasting

In Williams' view political interference is still a serious problem. The political parties in their statements on the relation of politics and broadcasting all admit that some restraining mechanisms are necessary, but in practice the struggle for political influence in the media continues. The author proposes that the political theory can become legal practice only through another nation-wide confrontation which will involve the political parties, the broadcasting personnel and the general public. This will take the matter to the German constitutional court to make a definitive ruling to restore the mechanisms of balance and public control.

The present political struggles over the North German Broadcasting Corporation (NDR) may be just such a confrontation.[8] The NDR is controlled by the three Länder of Hamburg, Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony. The Christian Democrats in power in Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein would like to introduce private broadcasting. Hamburg's Social Democrats are deeply opposed to the idea. A recent decision (May 1980) on the dispute by the Federal Administrative Court probably means that the future shape of the NDR and north German broadcasting will not be settled until 1985 at the earliest. It is then that the treaty which set up the NDR expires.

Williams has sufficient confidence in the flexibility of the present legal and political structure to expect that the outcome of such a battle will help to resolve some of the problems of political interference. The struggle over the NDR will indicate how well founded that confidence is.

MEDIA REFORM MOVEMENTS: HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THEY?

Before 1960 broadcast planning was generally considered a matter for governments and the communications industry. The listeners or viewers took what was offered to them and protest was rare. This began to change in the 1960's as television came to exert a more pervasive influence on people's lives and organised citizen advocacy movements began to question the "media establishment."

The United States

One of the most comprehensive and brief evaluations of U.S. media reform efforts is that of Anne Branscomb and Maria Savage, *Broadcast Reform at the Crossroads.*[9]

There are numerous reform groups in the United States, of which some ten to fifteen are larger and more important. They are concerned with a variety of issues but especially with minority rights (the issues of the portrayal of blacks or women on TV, minority employment in broadcasting, etc.), children's TV, violence and sexual exploitation. Most of these groups centre on one or a few leading personalities and tend to be local or regional. Except for a few bigger groups, such as Action for Children's Television, or offices which are supported by a larger organisation such as the United Church of Christ, they are chronically underfunded and depend on volunteers. They can rarely form a national constituency and it has been difficult to form a national coalition of media reform groups because of specialised or even competitive interests. The general strategy has been to put pressure on

regulatory agencies (the Federal Communications Commission or the Federal Trade Commission) regarding the licence renewal of local broadcasting stations, taking cases to congressmen or, more recently, striking at the heart of the U.S. media system — boycotting or threatening to boycott sponsoring companies.

Branscomb and Savage list a number of the significant successes: better treatment of minorities in the media and increased minority employment, breaking up of media concentration, much more in-depth and critical news and public affairs broadcasting, elimination of some of the worst abuses in children's TV advertising and in TV violence, and general trends toward better quality programming. Perhaps the most important result has been the more critical, selective use of the media by the American public.

The authors indicate that the most effective pressure comes not from the scattered ad hoc reform groups, but from larger, well-financed organisations with constituencies cutting across the lines of social class, and regional and special interests. These are better able to form coalitions and to sustain long-term programmes of action.

Limitations of media reform movements

In spite of the successes, Willard Rowland at the University of Illinois, Urbana, feels that much current research on media reform is too optimistic because it fails to see its analysis in the context of U.S. reform history. In an article, "The Illusion of Fulfillment: Problems in the Broadcast Reform Movement and Notes on the Progressive Past",[10] he traces the rise of media reform in the 1960's and 1970's and the counter-vailing trends in the late 1970's. He shows how the old triangle of cooperation between the broadcasting industry, the FCC and the Congress — momentarily shaken by the reform movements — has now reasserted itself. The Federal regulatory agencies are themselves the result of reform movements in the late 19th century. However, with the 1934 Communications Act, the federal regulatory machinery was put fully at the service of the broadcasting-advertising industry and the FCC became the industry's protector against reform groups.

Rowland argues that reform groups react to the problems caused by entrenched concentrations of power when it is already too late. Many minority groups are more interested in entering the system than in questioning the structure. In the end, reform groups only legitimise the existing concentration of power.

Great Britain

Movements for reform of the broadcasting institutions and services in Britain revolve around the axes of *access* and *accountability*. Access for whom and accountability to whom? The members of the National Viewers and Listeners Association have very different answers from those people active in the field of community broadcasting, yet the central problems are common to both.

In their book *Whitehouse*,[11] Michael Tracey and David Morrison explore the governing principles which guide the activities of the National Viewers and Listeners Association, and, in particular, the Christian beliefs of its main founder, Mary Whitehouse. The book is an attempt to see how the development of the NVALA as an articulate and forceful pressure group can be related to changes in the social and cultural climate over the past two decades. The NVALA challenges the broadcasters on the grounds that they are a small élite imposing their own permissive standards of taste and morality on a public to whom they are supposed to be accountable.

Whitehouse shows clearly that the NVALA does speak for large numbers of viewers and listeners, but it also shows how difficult it is for any pressure group to establish its legitimate place in the formation of broadcasting policy. The NVALA's support for stricter censorship is not supported by the bulk of the broadcasting audience.

Community broadcasting

A good deal of pressure on the broadcasting authorities has come from groups and individuals anxious to find ways of allowing the public to play an active part not only in policy making but also in the making of programmes. This pressure has been primarily located in the field of local radio and community broadcasting. A study by Peter Lewis, *Bristol Channel and Community Television*,[12] explores some of the possibilities of turning the idea of broadcast access into a reality. 'Bristol Channel' was a cable TV station which operated from 1973 to 1975 transmitting locally originated programmes to about 23,000 homes in Bristol.

The report describes the operation of the station and tries to assess its significance for the concept of community television. One conclusion is negative. Cable TV is not seen to be the ideal means of community broadcasting. Lewis argues that the development of "local community radio" is the more practical goal.

One of the more interesting themes to emerge from the study is the realisation that for community broadcasting to be truly for the local community a marked shift in perspective has to take place. One has to abandon the idea that national network broadcasting is the 'norm', one has to "approach things from the opposite direction, from the grassroots. At the grassroots, there is communication — or the lack of it — between providers of services and their 'clients'...". This communication between a variety of people and groups (council departments, voluntary organisations, pressure groups, hobbyists etc.) is facilitated by various local media. In this context the local broadcasting station could "by providing an outlet, create an incentive to communicate, and allow the community to reflect itself". The needs of local communities, not the broadcasting technology, should be the controlling factors in providing services.

Common goals in media reform?

The criticism which can be levelled at both U.S. and British efforts in the area of media reform is that the groups are not really concerned with increasing participation for all members of the community, but only for themselves. The problem is made more acute if one takes a closer look at the concept of 'community'. Media reform groups of all opinions often seem to speak as if it was quite clear who the members of a particular community were. However, the conflicts which arise between groups and the difficulties in forming national organisations with widespread support across social, political and cultural lines, would suggest that there is considerable difficulty in agreeing on common values and goals. Unless proponents of media reform are prepared to examine critically their own presuppositions within the context of wider social

developments they cannot expect to effect lasting and fundamental structural changes.

Footnotes

1 Anthony Smith, *The Politics of Information: Problems of Policy in Modern Media.* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1978).

2 *Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting, Chairman: Lord Annan. Appendices E-1: Research Papers Commissioned by the Committee.* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1977).

3 James Halloran, *"Missing the Point: Annan and Mass Communication Research"*, Unpublished paper, Centre for Mass Communication Research, the University of Leicester.

4 Vincent Mosco, *Broadcasting in the United States; Innovative Challenge and Organizational Control.* (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Company, 1979), p. 127.

5 Robert K. Avery and Robert Pepper, "An Institutional History of Public Broadcasting", *Journal of Communication,* Vol. 30, No. 3 (Summer), 1980, pp. 126-138.

6 Ministerio de Información y Turismo, *Documentos fundamentales para uns mejor comprensión de la política de communicación social del estado Venezolano, No. 1, Principios Básicos* (Dirección General Sectorial de Planaificación y Presupuesto, 1980).

7 Ruth Thomas, *Broadcasting and Democracy in France.* (Bradford, UK: Bradford University Press, 1976.

8 Helmut Druck, "The end of an era for German broadcasting", *InterMedia,* Vol. 8, no. 3 (May) 1980, p. 13-17; also news item in *InterMedia,* Vol. 8, no 4 (July) 1980, p. 4.

9 Anne W. Branscombe and Maria Savage, *Broadcast Reform at the Crossroads.* (Cambridge, Mass.: Kalba Bowen Associates, Inc., 1978)

10 Willard Rowland, "The Illusion of Fulfillment: Problems in the Broadcast Reform Movement and Notes on the Progressive Past", paper to be published in *Journalism Monographs.*

11 Michael Tracey and David Morrison *Whitehouse.* London: Macmillan, 1979.

12 Peter Lewis, *Bristol Channel and Community Television,* London: IBA, 1976

Reconciling Research and Policy Making

Communication researchers comment that their conclusions and recommendations based on careful analysis are often ignored, misinterpreted or misused by policy makers. After researchers have invested a significant amount of talent, time and funds to provide data, policy makers seem to decide on the basis of little more than random personal opinions. On the other hand, those charged with policy formation tend to look upon communication research as too general and unrelated to the specific problems of broadcasting.

If communication research is supposed to be a tool for policy making, then there is a serious problem of efficiency. Ironically, it seems that in countries where there is the largest outpouring of communication research and publications, broadcasting policy shows the most chaos and the inadequacy of services is the most widely criticised. In this debate, the recurring question is how to bring together research and policy?

What kind of public inquiry?

The conclusions of public investigations on national or international broadcasting policy will depend very much on two factors: what groups should conduct the inquiry and with whom should they consult in order to see problems in the right perspective; and what are considered the relevant data necessary for arriving at policy recommendations? In short, should the responsible investigating institutions be the broadcasting organisations? Regulatory agencies? Representative political bodies? Research institutes? Are the most relevant data those provided by the broadcasters or those coming from the audiences or from some other source?

As Willard Rowland notes in a paper cited in the Review Article above, the broadcasters, regulatory agencies and legislators are in constant interaction with each other and over the years develop a kind of symbiotic relationship. In the recent book of Cole and Oettinger on the FCC in the U.S., *Reluctant Regulators,* there is a detailed analysis of how regulatory agencies tend to build up an alliance with the broadcasting industry against the public. In public consultations or hearings these regulatory bodies are often more concerned to defend their own interests and records than to listen. If policy inquiry is left to one or a combination of these groups, the investigation gets bogged down in the legal or administrative details of the present system.

There seems to be a growing consensus that the most effective investigative body is a more neutral "citizens committee" made up of people informed about broadcasting but with an authoritative mandate from the executive branch of government so that the recommendations can carry some weight with legislative bodies. Such an outside group is more likely to take a fresh, comprehensive view of the problems and be more responsive to the needs of the public. Widespread public consultation is also an important condition for such an inquiry.

Questions for research

Deciding what terms of reference are likely to produce more relevant data for policy analysis is a more difficult problem.

There is a general tendency to take the broadcasting agencies themselves as the starting point for evaluating broadcasting services. It has, however, long been argued that it is a mistake to study broadcasting in isolation, apart from other media and non-media institutions. How and from what sources do people at present get news, entertainment and cultural fare? What access do they have to these sources? Broader exploratory studies, raising these kinds of questions, and going beyond the audience survey research done by most broadcasting services, are ways in which communication research can be of special help in the public policy making process. Research can also provide more detailed, systematic evaluations of experimental and alternative uses of the media in order that these uses can be incorporated into the present organisation of broadcasting. Access to such information could lead to a greater diversity of services to different social groups and suggest alternatives in the use of media technology.

If the point of reference of public inquiries is the socio-political development of society — not just the broadcasting establishment — then communication research is more likely to be important for policy making. And by having a broader frame of reference, it is more likely that broadcasting will avoid stagnation and continually develop both the diversity and the quality of services.

Current Research in Britain and the United States Related to Media Reform

BRITAIN

COMCOM, the Community Communications Group, (8 Old Rd., Holm-on-Spalding-Moor, North Humberside), continues to promote the idea of a "third force" in British broadcasting, that of community radio. It produced an alternative response to the Annan Report and has recently sought to open up the debate on the future shape of local radio services by publishing two open letters to the Home Office Local Radio Working Party. It also commissioned a study of "The Technical Feasibility of Community Radio in London", (available from the publications officer 92, Huddleston Rd, London N7).

Peter Lewis, Goldsmith's College, London, a member of COMCOM's Local Radio Working Party, has also published: *Whose Media?: the Annan Report and After,* (London: The Consumers' Association, 1978).

Simon Partridge, publications officer of COMCOM, is actively promoting the development of community radio. He was the organiser of the Broadcasting Rights & Information Project, which sought to develop existing public service broadcasting and new democratic, non-profit alternatives. Some of its work has been taken over by the **Media Advisory Unit** of the Community Service Volunteers, (2nd Floor, Ralli Building, Stanley St., Salford, M3 5EF). They hope to publish a local radio training kit by the end of 1980.

Allan Pond, Dept. of Communication Studies, Sheffield City Polytechnic, is engaged in a two year research project on new media resources and community development. The aim is to contribute to the development of theory in the area of community studies through an empirical investigation of local media use in Sheffield. He has now produced a *Directory of Community Media in Sheffield.*

Michael Tracey has been appointed Research Officer to the British Film Institute's **Broadcasting Research Unit,** (BFI, 127 Charing Cross Rd., London WC2 0EA). The Unit is funded by the BBC and the Markle Foundation and has £170,000 for work over three years. He is also working on a biography of Sir Hugh Greene, former BBC Director General and with **David Morrison** will publish a book on the National Viewers and Listeners Association (London: Macmillan, (forthcoming)).

UNITED STATES

The **Aspen Institute,** (717 Fifth Avenue, N.Y. 10022 and 1010 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036), is currently focusing on three major activities. 1) the governance of public broadcasting in the U.S. and other countries and how public TV should respond to special interest audiences; 2) developing new measures of the effectiveness of TV programmes, particularly a qualitative rating style; and 3) the issues of policy, service and technology raised by the new electronic information delivery systems: teletext and viewdata.

Joseph Grundfest, formerly with the Aspen Institute Communications Program, now with the law firm of Wilmer & Pickering (1666 K. St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006), is studying the interaction of technological and economic forces with the legal environment in shaping the structure of new media industries.

Dr. Timothy Haight, Dept. of Communication Arts, University of Wisconsin-Madison, has recently contributed to two new books, *The Community Media Manual,* ed. R. Gallie. (Chicago: Citizens Committee on the Media, (in press).), and *Structure and Communication: National and International Issues,* ed. N. Janus. E. McAnany and J. Schnitman, (New York: Praeger, (in press).). He proposes to write on the potential of new communications technology for grass-roots organising and community development.

The **Harvard University Program on Information Resources Policy,** (200 Aiken, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. 02138), (**Anthony G. Oettinger,** Chairman; **John C. LeGates,** Director) is researching the regulation of state cable TV and pricing and cost allocation in telecommunications regulation. **Dr. Benjamin M. Compaine** has recently published a study outlining a new framework for analysing the media in terms of content, process and format, instead of in the usual categories of press, radio and TV.

Dr Ralph Jennings, Office of Communication, United Church of Christ, (105 Madison Avenue, N.Y. 10016), is executive director of the **Telecommunications Consumer Coalition,** a clearinghouse of 132 consumer, religious and public interest groups on telecommunications policy issues. Activities include fact finding and analysis of major issues affecting media users.

Vincent Mosco, Georgetown University, (Washington, D.C. 20057), is studying how deregulation of broadcasting would affect public media access; conflicts within U.S. media reform movement and the obstacles to changing U.S. telecommunications policy structure.

Michael Nyhan, formerly with the Aspen Institute, is now with the Videotex Research Group at the Institute of the Future, (2740 Sand Hill Rd., Menlon Park, CA 94025). Current research includes work on public TV.

Willard Rowland, Institute of Communications Research, University of Illinois, Urbana, researches on telecommunications and broadcasting history with a special focus on policy problems facing public broadcasting. He proposes to do comparative, international research on public broadcasting.

Bernard Rubin, Director, Institute for Democratic Communication, School of Public Communication, Boston University, (640 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Mass. 02218), is studying minority access to the media. He edits and contributes to a new book, *Small Voices and Great Trumpes: Minorities and the Media,* (New York: Praeger, 1980). He is also editor of *Responsible Mass Media and Ethnic Minority Groups,* (available from Dr. Rubin).

Additional Bibliography on National Broadcasting Policy and Media Reform

Broadcasting Policy: General

GERBNER, George, GROSS, Larry P. and MELODY, William H.
Communications technology and social policy: understanding the new "cultural revolution". New York: London: Wiley, 1973

GOULD, Peter and JOHNSON, Jeffrey
"National television policy: monitoring structural complexity", *Futures* (June) 1980, p.178-190.

ROBINSON, Glen O.
Communciations for tomorrow: policy perspectives for the 1980s. New York: Praeger: Eastbourne, East Sussex: Praeger-Holt Saunders, 1978.

National Broadcasting Policy

CATER, Douglas and NYHAN, Michael J. (eds)
The future of public broadcasting. New York: London: Praeger, 1976.

CASE STUDIES ON BROADCASTING SYSTEMS: London: Routledge & Kegan Paul in association with the International Institute of Communication, 1977-. Countries covered so far: Canada, Guyana, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands and Sweden.

COMMUNICATION POLICIES IN .... Paris: UNESCO, 1974-. Countries in Europe, Asia, Latin America and now Africa are being covered. The most recent studies have been of Kenya, Nigeria and Zaire.

HELLER, Caroline
Broadcasting and accountability. London: British Film Institute, 1978.

HOMET, Roland
Politics, cultures, and communications. New York: Praeger; Eastbourne, East Sussex: Praeger-Holt Saunders, 1979.

JOINT ACTION COMMITTEE ON PAY-TV AND SATELLITE POLICY (Canada)
Programming for performance: restructuring Canadian television for the 80's. March, 1980. Mimeographed report.

KATZ, Elihu and WEDELL, George
Broadcasting in the Third World: promise and performance. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977.

POLICY CONFERENCE ON MASS MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS
Public policy toward the U.S. mass media. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, 1978.

Media Reform in the United States

BRANSCOMB, Anne W. and SAVAGE, Maria
"The broadcast reform movement: at the crossroads", *Journal of Communication,* Vol.24. no.4 (Autumn) 1978, p.25-34.

COLE, Barry and OETTINGER, Mal
Reluctant regulators: the FCC and the broadcast audience. Rev. ed. Reading, Mass.: London: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1978.

GRUNDFEST, Joseph A.
Citizen participation in broadcast licensing before the FCC. Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1976. R-1896-MF.

GUIMARY, Donald L.
Citizens' groups and broadcasting. New York: London: Praeger, 1975.

HAIGHT, Timothy R. (ed.)
Telecommunications policy and the citizen: public interest perspectives on the Communications Act rewrite. New York: Praeger: Eastbourne, East Sussex: Praeger-Holt Saunders, 1979.

INDEPENDENT TELEVISION-MAKERS AND PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY: A seminar conference to promote telecommunications diversity for the 1980s, June 6-8, 1979. New York: Rockefeller Foundation, 1979.

KRASNOW, Erwin C. and LONGLEY, Lawrence D.
The politics of broadcast regulation. 2nd. ed. New York: St Martin's Press, 1978.

SCHNEYER, Theodore J. and Lloyd, Frank
The public-interest media reform movement: a look at the mandate and a new agenda. Washington, D.C.: Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, 1977.

COMMUNICATION RESEARCH TRENDS — Published four times a year by the Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture ISSN 0144-4646

Editor: Robert A. White

Administrator: Seraphine H. Leung

Subscription, individuals: US$6.00, payable on a US bank, UK£3.00 a year. libraries and institutions: US$10.00 payable on a US bank, UK£5.00 a year.

Address all correspondence to:
COMMUNICATION RESEARCH TRENDS
221 Goldhurst Terrace
London NW6 3EP
England Tel:(01) 328-2868

Typesetting and origination by
Type Out, London SW16: (01) 677 1788
Printing by
Roebuck Press, Lavender Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey; (01) 640-9211

The CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE is an international service for communication research.
General Director, Stefan G. Bamberger: Research Director, Robert A. White; **Director of Documentation,** James McDonnell.
International Advisory Board: Agnellus Andrew, Rome; Eckard Bieger, Frankfurt; Jean Desautels, Brussels; Franz Josef Eilers, Aachen; Hans Florin, London; James Halloran, Leicester; John Kelly, Dublin; John E. O'Brien, Montreal.