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MANY VOICES, ONE CARIBBEAN

by

LOUIS DANIEL

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Journalism

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

May 15, 1991

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ISBN 0-315-68865-3

The undersigned recommend to the faculty of Graduate Studies
and Research acceptance of the thesis

"MANY VOICES, ONE CARIBBEAN"

submitted by Louis Daniel
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Journalism

Thesis Supervisor

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May 1991

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the role of the Caribbean Broadcasting Union (CBU), in a region with extensive foreign television programs. It intends to demonstrate, in journalistic style, the vulnerability of the Caribbean to the influences of a powerful nation through its domestic and international broadcast systems. Discussed are foreign media penetration in the Caribbean, and the extent to which the CBU has been able to counter foreign influences in Caribbean broadcasting. The region's partial responsibility for the wholesale importation of foreign standards and values is dealt with. This thesis discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the CBU in promoting the interests of Caribbean broadcasting.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am especially grateful to Reudon Eversley and the staff of the Caribbean News Agency (CANA), to Trevor Simpson and to Michael Abend for their help throughout this inquiry.

My thanks and appreciation to Professors Vincent Mosco and George Frajkor, and to Archibald McKenzie for directing this study with a combination of ideas and arrangements.

I owe a special debt of appreciation to the interviewees, who gave their time and shared their ideas to make this thesis possible.

And to Avril McIntosh, for her enthusiastic support in many ways.

"Satellite communication is now the channel through which lifestyles and value systems are imposed on poor, technologically weak and vulnerable societies."

- Senator John Wickham, Barbados.

"Instead of being an instrument of cultural distortion, television can be a positive force for regional integration."

- John Osborne, Chief Minister, Montserrat.

Dedicated to my parents Thelbert and Phoebe-Ann, to my niece, Nickisha, and to 'my best friend' Cicely, for their moral support.

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TABLE 1. (RECIPIENTS OF CBU MATERIAL)

Country	Station	Media	Set Count	Ownership
Antigua	ABS	Radio	70,000	Govt.
		TV	27,000	Govt.
	CTV	TV		Private
	ZDK	Radio		Private
Bahamas	ZNS	Radio		Govt.
		TV		Govt.
Barbados	VOB	Radio	280,000	Private
	CBC	Radio		Govt.
		TV	60,000	Govt.
Belize	BBN	Radio		Govt.
Bermuda	BBC	Radio	100,000	
		TV	45,000	
Dominica	DBS	Radio	28,000	Govt.
	MTV	TV	3,700	Private
Grenada		Radio	80,000	Govt.
Guyana	GBC	Radio	200,000	Govt.
Jamaica	JBC	Radio	1,373,577	Govt.
		TV	210,000	Govt.
	RJR	Radio		Private
Montserrat	Radio			
	Antilles	Radio		Private
	AT	TV		Private

TABLE 1 CONT.

Country	Station	Media	Set Count	Ownership
	ZJE	Radio	8,500	Govt.
Netherlands				
Antilles	TeleAruba	TV	19,000	
	TeleCuracao		30,000	
St. Kitts	ZIZ	Radio	50,000	Govt.
		TV	9,500	Govt.
St. Lucia	RSL	Radio		Govt.
	Helen TV		20,000	Private
St. Vincent	NBC	Radio	65,000	Govt.
Suriname	STVS	TV	35-40,000	Govt.
Trinidad	610	Radio	600,000	Govt.
	Radio			
	Trinidad	Radio		Private
	TTT	TV	300,000	Govt.
Turks &				
Caicos	Radio Turks		40,000

PREFACE

The growth of cable and satellite television in the Caribbean reinforces an overwhelming presence of American programs in the region. Caribbean media experts fear foreign television is destroying the region's cultural identity and others argue that the widespread availability of information has positive influences.

The Caribbean situation is not unique. American networks are pervading the Third World.

This thesis examines a case of foreign television influences in the Caribbean and the work of the Caribbean Broadcasting Union in stimulating information exchange, technology, expertise and programs between Caribbean broadcast systems.

There are different ways to approach this subject. One way is to analyse the failure or success of the CBU in promoting Caribbean broadcasting. This analytical approach has produced different results. My purpose is to make this thesis, using interviews and research material, speak for itself. From the information provided, the reader will make

his or her judgment based on assessment, rather than an explicit conclusion.

This study is supported by interviews conducted with media experts in the Caribbean, particularly in Barbados - the CBU headquarters. Among those interviewed were Terry Holder, the CBU's secretary general; Michael Abend, television exchange consultant with the CBU; and Sam Taitt, president of the Caribbean Publishing and Broadcasting Association.

Resource material was obtained from the libraries of the CBU and the Caribbean News Agency. Helpful information was extracted from the library and resource centre at Carleton University.

Given the limited financial resources at my disposal, I was unable to meet some of the key players in mass communication in the Caribbean, such as those involved in the Caribbean Institute of Mass Communication in Jamaica.

Other drawbacks included the unavailability of some of the interviewees who were absent from office during my visit to the Caribbean.

INTRODUCTION

The Caribbean is a diverse group of small countries between Florida in North America and Venezuela in South America. The countries are separated by water, but they lie in close proximity.

The total population of the Caribbean archipelago is 32 million people. About 65 per cent of them speak Spanish. French or a French-based creole is the dominant language of another 20 per cent. The rest speak English or Dutch.

Beyond geography, several things unify the region. The people share a historical scar. They are descendants of slavery and the plantation system. European powers fought among themselves to maintain possession of the islands, which supplied them with raw materials and commodities, particularly sugar. Labor was supplied by slaves and indentured laborers mainly from Africa, India and China.

The Caribbean economies are characteristic of those of developing countries. They suffer from high unemployment (20-30 per cent on average), poverty, and sluggish if not falling economic growth rates. Fiscal deficits and chronic

balance of payment problems are common among many of the countries like Jamaica, Guyana and the Dominican Republic.

The people of the English-speaking Caribbean have similar racial origins, language and institutions. They share the same attitudes and values. But the countries face certain limitations. With the exception of Guyana and Belize, the economies are small. Populations range from fewer than 500,000 in most of the Eastern Caribbean to several million in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Puerto Rico.

Small size constrains productivity and growth, and although the countries may have the capability to produce, they lack the capacity to take advantage of big markets.

Dennis Pantin, an economics lecturer at the St. Augustine campus of the University of the West Indies, says "the Caribbean entered the 20th century with the historic mission of creating humane societies and dynamic economies after complete military and political domination by Europe."

(1)

"The challenge was, in the motto of Jamaica, to create 'out of many, one people,'" (2) says Pantin.

The Caribbean is at the crossroads of three continents. Its small, fragile economy makes it powerless to resist technical broadcast penetration from the rich, large nations that surround it.

The region's print and electronic media, developed out of the colonial era, have a high level of foreign content. Before independence, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), dominated the airwaves, while the Thomson Group controlled the press.

Four of the seven major West Indian dailies and three of the six big Sunday papers were owned by the Thomson Group, and half of the 15 radio stations were in foreign hands. Telecommunications was controlled by the British company, Cable and Wireless. Communication ties with Britain bound the colonies to the mother country.

Caribbean people rarely got firsthand information about positive developments in the region. BBC and Voice of America (VOA), broadcast news about disasters, crises and confrontations. There was little or no coverage of achievements in the educational, social and cultural development of the region.

Rediffusion - a British broadcasting company - competed with state-owned stations. Rediffusion owned four cable radio stations in the larger Caribbean territories - Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Later, it began broadcasting on assigned frequencies on the medium wave band.

Rediffusion stations had a common owner and they pooled resources for their mutual benefit. They exchanged news and programs and negotiated jointly for broadcast rights and advertising.

Television broadcasts began in the Commonwealth Caribbean in 1962 with the establishment of Trinidad and Tobago Company Limited. The next year, the state-owned Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation formed JBC Television. Barbados established its television system, CBC-TV, in 1964 as part of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation. ZAL-TV was introduced in Antigua in 1965 by a private company and in 1972 ZIZ-TV was set up in St. Kitts-Nevis by Scottish Television. It later was sold sequentially to the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), and the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS).

St. Lucia Television Company Limited, a private

company, operated a booster station that relayed outputs of CBC or ZIZ via a state-owned relay service.

Governments now own the television systems in Antigua, Barbados, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Trinidad and Tobago.

Local ownership of the media became critical to Caribbean development during the independence era of the 1960s. Caribbean leaders demanded control of the region's communication systems to stimulate economic, social and cultural development. Public and indigenous co-operative ownership of the Caribbean media grew out of this demand. But the leaders did not anticipate the heavy dependence on foreign content by television which evolved in the 1960s.

When television started in the Commonwealth Caribbean in 1962, most of the material was imported. There remains an excessive dependence on foreign programs 28 years later. Domestic television stations offering six or eight hours of viewing broadcast about 87 per cent foreign programs. Satellite communication, now available in most Caribbean countries, are circumventing existing national broadcast systems in the name of 'internationalism'.

Imported programming is not unique to the Caribbean. It

is a global concern. Extensive publicity was generated when the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems addressed issues like the cultural integrity of poor nations, the dominant one-way flow of information from developed nations to the Third World and the right of people to communicate through media technology.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), set up the Commission headed by Sean MacBride. It reported in 1980 with a publication called Many Voices, One World. (3)

The MacBride Commission authorized many studies on international communication problems. About 100 documents were prepared, producing a series of debates about a new information order.

Mustapha Masmoudi, Tunisia's Ambassador to UNESCO, was among the most articulate campaigners for the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). The NWICO "seeks a restructured system of media and telecommunication priorities in order for LDCs (Less Developed Countries) to obtain greater influence over their information, economic, cultural, and political systems." (4)

Developing countries believe the current world communication system is a product of colonialism and reflects commercial obligations of former years, he said. "Now the LDCs want to remove the last vestige of colonial control by promoting NWICO." (5)

Masmoudi says there are economic and information disparities built into the international power system between developed and developing countries. He argues for a free and balanced international communication system favoring equality in the relations between sovereign states.

But Western journalists led by the United States opposed the plan, citing the possibility of censorship and state control of information and journalists. Media analyses tried to show that governments would be encouraged to reject Western perspectives. (6)

NWICO was effectively smothered by Western opposition.

Four news agencies dominate the international news flow using information as a commodity. The agencies are Associated Press, United Press International, Reuters and Agence France Presse. These Western news agencies are accused of being indifferent to the problems and concerns of

developing countries. News from the southern hemisphere generally relates to negative issues like crime, violence or natural calamities.

Says Masmoudi:

"And because of their monopoly over news flows, these agencies can and do intentionally impose upon the developing world such information and the pro-Western establishment values, priorities, and biases it conveys....this information is not only of no interest to those in developing countries but also, because of the Western perspectives it presents, it is inappropriate and damaging."
(7)

The UNESCO Commission recommended that developing countries set up agencies to formulate communication policies and to distribute information between countries of a particular region. The Caribbean Broadcasting Union was established to limit the concentration and monopolization of Western news and program flows in the Caribbean.

Today, there is a continuing debate in the Caribbean about cultural penetration and cultural imperialism by the West. Politicians and media experts argue about the loss of West Indian identity due to the high volume of imported

television programs. They say satellite broadcasts are aiding the course of cultural imperialism. North American television programs received via satellite are retransmitted live by local television stations across the region.

Some stations carry U.S. programming on a 24-hour-per-day basis complete with commercial advertising for a North American public. The unedited programs bring in U.S. comedy, drama, news, weather and commercials. Watching Antilles television in Montserrat, viewers can see CNN News, The Jeffersons, Solid Gold, news from WGN in Chicago and Chicago's weather forecast.

Other countries retransmit a low volume of U.S. programs. Barbados carries CNN's Daybreak morning news program for four hours on weekdays, with a series of local scenes substituted for U.S. commercial breaks. Jamaican television takes nightly International News Highlights from a U.S. network. In Guyana, entrepreneurs set up their own satellite retransmission system with fees and a descrambler for patrons. Guyana does not have national television.

A few scholars have examined various areas of the Caribbean's media systems. Among them are Dr. Everold Hosein

(8), and Dr. Leslie Sargent (9). There is also Harold Hoyte (10).

Dr. Hosain says the financial constraints that regional television systems face should not result in extensive dependence on imported television content. He says there is scope to increase the quantity of local productions.

Sargent's UNESCO study focuses on radio and television. He says 27 radio stations broadcast an average 18 hours a day with 55 per cent recorded music. At least one third of their average news content originates from the BBC, VOA, or the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC).

But Sargent's study did not examine recent developments with the VOA. From Monday to Friday, Caribbean radio stations can call the VOA for news bulletins out of Washington that the VOA claims reflect Caribbean interests. It offers regional radio stations free daily 10-minute feeds of news reports by short wave, in addition to specially-packaged programs on agriculture, technology, education and culture.

Sargent says television averages about 76 per cent foreign content, with at least 52 per cent of the programs

originating in North America. The British contribute 24 per cent and the remaining 24 per cent is local programming.

Since then, the situation has worsened with the growth of pirate satellite dishes and the proliferation of cable television.

The Caribbean Broadcasting Union fears American corporations have built a foundation to penetrate the small societies of the region with cultural influences.

While the definition, production and distribution of news were the main concerns of the NWICO, television entertainment became a critical issue for developing countries. The ideological impact of television and its market dominance prompted Third World countries to demand, through UNESCO, a 'free and balanced flow of information' instead of the United States-supported concept of a 'free flow of information'.

U.S. private broadcast networks, film and television industries dominate world-wide program distribution because of their marketing capability and America's political power.

Western countries led by the U.S. effectively killed

NWICO. Ronald Reagan, former U.S. president, followed by Margaret Thatcher, former British prime minister, eventually withdrew support from UNESCO.

But the case of the Caribbean Broadcasting Union is an example of how NWICO could work effectively.

CHAPTER ONE:

FOREIGN CONTENT ON CARIBBEAN TV

FOREIGN CONTENT ON CARIBBEAN TV

The increasing concern about the extent of foreign television penetration of the Caribbean is underlined by a 1986 survey by the Caribbean Institute of Mass Communication (CARIMAC), a department of the Mona campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI). Television program content in the English-speaking Caribbean, it found, was an average 87 per cent from external sources. The survey said the figure represented a 10-per-cent increase over average levels recorded 10 years earlier.

The UNESCO-sponsored survey compared programming schedules of eight national television stations, analysing them against a similar survey conducted in 1976.

Foreign television content varied from a high of 95 per cent in Montserrat to 76 per cent at the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation in Kingston. Entertainment programs imported from the United States dominated most of the television schedules examined. And the programs reflected North American cultural, social and political values.

Dr. Aggrey Brown, director of CARIMAC, says the

findings are "potentially devastating and detrimental to regional culture." (11) He says the unacceptably high level of foreign media content is due to the region's proximity to the United States, and the reluctance of Caribbean television stations to produce alternative indigenous programs.

William Demas, former president of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), says the communications technology of developed countries is infiltrating the region "beyond our capacity to absorb, and presents the threat of making our worthwhile media systems redundant and worthless." (12) Demas says foreign programs question the validity of the rich cultural traditions of the Caribbean.

Many regional leaders and media experts agree. Harcourt Blackett, a Barbadian Catholic priest, says the importation of foreign standards affects the young population.

"The lifestyles that are portrayed on our television sets are not in keeping with rural agricultural society. And this can lead to under-development of our people," (13) says Blackett on a visit to Dominica in July, 1990.

"We have this taste for the lifestyle of the rich and

famous, when our economy does not permit that." (14)

He says Caribbean TV should act as agent for the people's development.

Some Caribbean analysts believe it is a conscious decision by governments and program directors to broadcast satellite television programs, or import foreign programs.

Ronald Sanders, former CBU president and former member of the Board of Directors of CANA, says regional governments consider local television stations disruptive influences on their own internal political operations. Sanders, also a former member of the Executive Board of UNESCO, says Caribbean governments encourage foreign radio and television broadcasts in their countries to divert attention from domestic issues and to maintain their power base.

Government-owned stations carrying live U.S. television programs without authorization from U.S. networks face possible exclusion from the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI). The CBI is an aid, trade and investment agreement between the U.S. and the Caribbean. The CBI was introduced by the Americans to help manufacturing industries in the Caribbean. Countries pirating satellite programs and

repeating them do not qualify for benefits under the CBI.

Several countries like Antigua and Jamaica were pressured into accepting restrictions on CBI benefits, and pay fees for the 'privilege' of retransmitting U.S. television programs that do not cater to the region's interests and priorities. Others had to abandon satellite TV broadcasts because of public outcry.

St. Lucia has very little local television production, so the government attempted to sustain a daily 24-hour schedule with satellite broadcasts from the Miami-based Cable News Network, and other mid-western United States companies. It abandoned the effort after St. Lucians complained about the negative effects of satellite TV on school children.

Hopeton Dunn, a Caribbean journalist, conducted a recent study on the impact of foreign media content on young people in Jamaica. The study compared the responses of secondary level students in three Kingston schools. Based on their exposure to new media technology in Jamaica, the children were asked to name the Prime Ministers of Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago. They were also asked to name, separately, the leaders of the United States and the Soviet

Union.

According to the study, 75 per cent of the students surveyed failed to name the regional leaders, 11 per cent could not name the president of the United States and 33 per cent were unable to name the leader of the Soviet Union.

Dunn says the findings emphasize the strong North-South one-way flow of information to the region and the low level of intra-regional information exchange.

During the 1989 U.S. invasion of Panama, the U.S. media fed Caribbean stations with news and comments. Jamaica's lone television station sometimes carried two reports nightly from the same U.S. network. The reports focused on the 'drugs' (later discovered to be food), money and Haitian-type voodoo crafts allegedly found at General Manuel Noriega's residence. The dead and injured on the American side were emphasized.

American coverage of Panama featured flag-wavers who welcomed the U.S. invasion and wanted Noriega hanged.

Fitzroy Nation, former Caribbean Regional Editor with Inter Press Service, says there was "token reference to the

impact of the military action...on Panamanians." (15)
Churchmen claimed 2,000 Panamanians were killed, but most
dispatches mentioned 500.

The situation was the same for Grenada when the United
States invaded the country in 1983. The Reagan
Administration corralled the Caribbean media to print and
broadcast the same news about Grenada on front pages and in
lead stories. In an October 28 address to Americans, Ronald
Reagan called Grenada "a Soviet-Cuban colony being readied
as a major military bastion to export terrorism and
undermine democracy." (16)

The Caribbean media supported the American 'discovery'
of large quantities of arms in Grenada for use in a
'communist conspiracy'.

Tim Hector, editor of the Outlet newspaper in Antigua,
says the Grenada invasion demonstrates "the capability of an
external power to organize, mobilize, control and direct the
entire operation and presentation of a particular point of
view to the people of the Caribbean." (17)

"If America says Iran is a bad nation, the
interpretation of the news is immediately continued by

Caribbean media houses and journalists," (18) says Hector.

The defunct Caribbean Contact newspaper denounced foreign broadcasts as a vehicle for a new kind of colonization of the Caribbean. The paper said "to accept, pay for and re-transmit to Caribbean audiences on a regular basis programming which at best treats the region as a silent and passive eavesdropper on a communication process in the developed world, and at worst instills in viewers a sense of the irrelevance of events and actions within their own cultural milieu, is a dehumanising process." (19)

The paper called for supervised re-transmission of satellite television on Caribbean stations before "it becomes established as a vehicle for a new colonisation of the minds and hopes of the people of the region." (20)

The Caribbean Contact said some governments know the powerful influence television can have on society, so they do not allow the establishment of indigenous privately-owned television stations. But they encourage unedited retransmission of foreign programming over which they have no control.

"One of the major problems created by this policy of

indiscriminate retransmission of long hours of satellite TV programs is that of wide-scale truancy among school children across the region who remain glued to television sets during school hours." (21)

Raymond Lawrence, Dominica's cultural officer, says government should control the level of foreign programming imported into the country. Lawrence says the cultural values and identity of developing countries are threatened because of the present status of the telecommunications industry.

"The government has an important role to play in monitoring the situation so that we are not saturated with foreign programming, and (to make sure) there is a balance between what is being done locally and what is being brought in from overseas," (22) says Lawrence.

In many cases, it is not possible to view more than 30 or 60 minutes of Caribbean-prepared material in one day. Television stations offer several options. There are news, sports, movies and entertainment channels. The Disney channel is also available.

St. Lucia's Helen Television Company offers daily 24-hour broadcasts on two channels. One of them relays

programs from the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation in Barbados. The other connects St. Lucians with leading U.S. television networks.

Every night, there is a half-hour news and feature program with 10 minutes of CNN news. There is also a 60-minute Sunday magazine program featuring local activities. The St. Lucia government gets 30 minutes television coverage a week.

St. Vincent broadcasts 24 hours of television programming with about 90 per cent foreign content. The other 10 per cent is restricted to news with external input and an occasional local feature or a religious telecast. The Government Information Services is given three half-hour broadcasts every week.

Dominica is capable of accessing eight channels on a single satellite from one of the privately-owned cable stations, Marpin Television Company and Video 1. Marpin has a monopoly on cable distribution and gives occasional coverage of national events like independence celebrations and the ceremonial openings of parliament. U.S. networks account for about 95 per cent of daily television viewing.

Montserrat has access to seven U.S. television stations at cheap rates under the CBI agreement. Satellite TV Montserrat Limited serves the capital, Plymouth. There have been plans to extend coverage to the southern part of the island. The cable system is operated by a Puerto Rican firm, which has been granted a 15-year duty and tax-free franchise.

Howell Bramble, son and brother of two former premiers and editor of Montserrat Times, says the government is willing to make these concessions because it feels cable television will aid Montserrat's tourism.

"We attract older tourists who need something to do, not the young ones looking for beaches," (23) says Bramble.

The small island of 13,000 people also operates an FM radio station headquartered in Milwaukee, USA. The programs are compiled in Milwaukee and broadcast by a transmitter in Montserrat.

In 1984, St. Kitts was using 12 channels, with a capacity for 36. Two of the 12 existing channels were allocated to the government-owned ZIZ-TV, one to Antigua's ABS-TV and the remaining nine to U.S. stations.

One of the ZIZ-TV cable channels featured information like flight announcements and parliamentary proceedings. The other carried the regular program schedule with about 65 per cent U.S.-originated shows.

Antigua's cable system, CTV, has 16 channels on a 24-hour cycle. It relays U.S. movies, sports and other channels via satellite. The system is handled by a U.S. representative company, but Vere Bird Jr., son of the prime minister, owns it.

Broadcasting in Antigua is virtually tied up by the Bird family. The Bird government controlled ABS radio and television and the Bird family founded and completely owned radio ZDK. Ivor Bird, son of the prime minister and general manager of ZDK, says ABS faces serious threats from CTV.

"Cable will wipe out the audience of ABS-TV. People turn to ABS now only for local news," (24) says Bird.

Sometimes CTV blocks out ABS-TV although it is allocated a channel on CTV. ABS-TV lacks technical and financial resources, and it is swayed by its competition - CTV - into a broadcasting schedule of almost 90 per cent American programs relayed live and unedited off satellites.

Barbados has one television station - CBC - which offers a variety of local and foreign programs. About 80 per cent of the programs come from overseas. There is also subscription TV operated by CBC. These channels offer separate entertainment, sports and news.

Like Jamaica, the Trinidad and Tobago viewer sees a variety of programs, but foreign content dominates. People with privately-owned dishes get multi-channel options of U.S. television.

The Caribbean has become a target for American broadcast companies. It was evident when the West German-owned Radio Antilles was initially established in Montserrat to create programs for Caribbean people. The station became the voice of several external broadcasting institutions like the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Voice of America, Deutsche Welle (it relayed English language programs of Radio Deutsche Welle), and the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Until its devastation by Hurricane Hugo in 1989, Radio Antilles was the most powerful English language AM station in the Eastern Caribbean (200,000 watts).

Caribbean media face strong competition from booster stations set up by the BBC and VOA in the region. VOA has plans to install 11 new transmitters in the Caribbean, including Antigua, Belize, Grand Cayman, Grand Turk and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The North American enterprise and cultural penetration has replaced the British, French, Spanish and Dutch of the colonial era. The American presence is all-pervasive. Today Eastern Caribbean countries with little or no indigenous television programming receive up to 24 U.S. channels by satellite.

The Caribbean Broadcasting Union representing the major radio and television networks has expressed concern about the effects of new satellite technology, and the invasion of the region's airwaves by the dominant shortwave and other external radio systems.

The CBU has already made an impact on regional radio stations with the exchange of radio programs. The union is now involved in a regional television exchange program between the English, Dutch, Spanish and French-speaking Caribbean.

- 1) Providing information on broadcast quality either immediately following the transmission or some time before the next. This will allow the Program Co-ordinating Centre to advise participants to improve the technical quality of their respective contributions.
- 2) Over-running (programs running beyond the cut-off time).
- 3) Manning of broadcast stations during transmission. Very often participants run individual reports without due care to constant monitoring. Some participants complain that reports are played with unstable picture resolution and/or audio hum. Sometimes no one responds to calls for correction on transmission. (46)

According to the Technical Co-ordinating Centre at Textel, Trinidad, from March 28 to October 21, 1988, there were 46 out of 149 occasions when programs overran for various reasons. Since then, there have been some improvements.

CRU's coverage of the 1989 Caribbean Summit in Grenada

CHAPTER TWO:

THE CARIBBEAN BROADCASTING UNION

THE CARIBBEAN BROADCASTING UNION

In 1969 a group of Commonwealth Caribbean broadcasters met in Jamaica to discuss the future of electronic media. Nine state-owned radio and television stations met to formalize a relationship established for exchanging programs.

The broadcasters discussed exchange of regional programs, the purchase and distribution of programs, the clearing of program material through customs, the loan of equipment in emergencies, staff exchanges, the granting of work permits, training and the mechanics of news exchange.
(25)

At the end of their four-day meeting, they unanimously agreed to establish a Caribbean Broadcasting Union and a committee to prepare a draft charter.

The Caribbean Broadcasting Union was officially formed in Guyana in 1970. It started with the state-owned radio and television stations in the Commonwealth Caribbean and now embraces privately-owned broadcasting stations in the English/Dutch-speaking Caribbean.

One of its basic objectives was to pool the resources of the national broadcasting stations and develop programs identifying Caribbean people as a homogeneous group. The CBU sought to develop two concepts from the beginning: co-operative production of regional material and inter-country sharing of productions.

Shared coverage of West Indian cricket was among the union's early successes. The CBU negotiates on the joint behalf of its members for broadcast rights to events like international cricket, World Cup Football and the Olympic Games. Several programs were produced by multi-national teams of Caribbean broadcasters moving from island to island and all systems shared the costs and used the programs.

Membership participation considerably reduced unit costs to stations. Costs which would have been prohibitive in individual negotiations became manageable under the CBU umbrella.

The union's supreme body is its annual general assembly which makes all major decisions regarding the CBU's goals and objectives. The assembly admits new members, fixes subscriptions and makes plans and programs for the fiscal year.

The general assembly also elects a management committee which looks after the affairs of the union between assemblies. The CBU activities are divided into three main areas: radio, television and engineering. Each is managed by a vice-president. The management committee and five additional members have overall responsibility for the Caribbean Broadcasting Union, but all projects are executed by the CBU secretariat.

The CBU says it has a "structure which, at the Committee of Management level, seeks to take advantage of the most experienced managers in giving guidance to the management of the Union, while utilizing, in the working groups, the special skills available within every member system of the Union." (26)

The CBU was established to strengthen the process of Caribbean integration. It began as a foundation for regional institutions promoting the economic, political and social activities of the Caribbean. Among those institutions were the Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA); a Commonwealth Caribbean Regional Secretariat responsible for co-ordinating CARIFTA and implement decisions of Heads of Government meetings, and a Caribbean Development Bank.

CARIFTA sought to stimulate industrial development by providing a large regional market to ensure the growth of profitable industries. The Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), emerged from CARIFTA.

CARICOM was responsible for forging stronger economic ties through a Caribbean Common Market; encourage functional co-operation in areas of health, education, shipping and air transport; and co-ordinate the foreign policies of the independent member states.

The CBU produced its first series of documentaries - Project One - in the early 1970s focusing on each of the 13 Commonwealth Caribbean countries. The one-hour programs were "conceived as the first introduction of the Caribbean, by Caribbean nationals, to the Caribbean." (27)

The documentaries were broadcast throughout the region and daily newspapers carried a series of supplements. The programs allowed media professionals to move around the region working with staff of the host stations and making surveys of existing human and technical resources.

The CBU got institutional support from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the CARIFTA

Secretariat in Guyana. The two agencies signed an agreement in 1972 to develop mass communication in the Caribbean. UNESCO administered the project. Hugh Cholmondeley, the union's director-general at the time, was appointed radio expert and program exchange specialist.

The UNDP/CARIFTA project agreement provided the CBU with vibrant production activity. "Productions ranged from the automatic coverage of events including national elections, disasters and important regional events to country profiles, discussions and features on significant regional political questions, cultural productions...and weekly joint programming linking stations in the sub-regions," (28) says a CBU magazine.

The CBU took steps to standardize equipment, stockpile spares and arrange for bulk purchases of television and research material. It campaigned for removal of customs duties on non-commercial broadcasting material and for the provision of copyright laws.

At the end of UNESCO's regional mass communication project in the late 1970s, the CBU's profile waned. The union no longer had the facilities of the regional secretariat and production was infrequent.

However, an expanded membership, including public/privately-owned broadcasting systems in the English/Dutch-speaking Caribbean, injected renewed vigor. The private broadcast sector received full CBU status, having been eligible only for associate membership.

The union says "private broadcasters represented professional broadcasting expertise, and it was necessary for some working arrangement to be made with them." (29) The CBU made other constitutional amendments by the end of the 1970s to accommodate the non-English-speaking countries, because it recognized their "cultural, historical and social background was the same." (30)

Associate membership was granted to media and communication institutions within and outside the region, which collaborate occasionally in joint projects with the CBU. Most of the CBU members are state-owned entities, but the union's policy guidelines protect it from government interference.

In its early years, the CBU concentrated on radio and staff exchanges to expose producers, announcers and journalists to broadcast conditions outside of their home environment. But there was a sudden increase in regional

television activity when the stations of the Dutch Caribbean joined the union.

It started when the stations organized the first annual Caribbean Film Market in 1975. The Film Market served as an exhibition for regional productions and helped to promote joint purchase of programs. Major international producers of television material were invited to bring samples of their productions and block orders for programs were placed at considerable savings to individual stations.

The CBU established a permanent secretariat in Barbados in 1981, in the interest of the Caribbean broadcasting systems and the growth of the CBU. Barbados was chosen for the union's headquarters because of its central location and efficient communication facilities.

Working from its new secretariat, the CBU organized training programs for management, programming and engineering personnel. It also provided coverage of significant regional events like national elections, conferences and national disasters.

In 1984, the CBU's television program planners staged their first song festival in Aruba. The festival was a model

of the Eurovision Song Contest. Eurovision operates the daily acquisition, exchange and distribution of TV news for networks in the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). The festival was organized to promote Caribbean musical talent and it became an integral part of the CBU's annual general assembly.

Cricket is a major unifying force in the Caribbean and it has revenue-earning potential. The CBU helps to promote cricket as a key element of regional integration by offering radio and television coverage of major regional and international matches.

When England played host to the first Cricket World Cup in 1975, the CBU sent a three-man Caribbean radio commentary team to give ball-by-ball coverage of matches involving the internationally-acclaimed West Indies cricket team. Whenever it is possible, there is Caribbean representation on commentary panels with a touring West Indies team.

The CBU arranges coverage from Pakistan, England, India, Australia and New Zealand to a central point in the Caribbean. It is then relayed to participating systems sharing the cost of the link. The union introduced television coverage with edited highlights of the West

Indies tour of England in 1988, and there was similar coverage of the West Indies tour of Australia and the India tour of the West Indies.

The CBU recorded its most significant broadcast achievement in 1990 when it provided television coverage of the England cricket tour of the Caribbean. Caribbean viewers saw live broadcasts of a five-part series of cricket matches between the West Indies and a visiting team.

The West Indies Cricket Board of Control gave Sky Television of the United Kingdom broadcast rights to relay commentary back to the U.K. But the CBU negotiated with Trans World International, an agency representing Sky Television, for regional coverage in return for 'certain services'.

The services included sending a team of six technicians with the TWI production team throughout the region, (at the union's expense), building television facilities at each venue and providing microwave links from the ground to external telecoms. Caribbean countries followed the games from an American domestic satellite rented by the CBU. The TWI signal relayed to the U.K. on Intelsat was pulled down and turned around for Caribbean viewing. Stations from

Bermuda in the north to Guyana in the south participated and shared the cost of the U.S.\$215,000 project.

The CBU has also organized live coverage of the finals of the Shell Caribbean soccer tournament, offered recorded coverage of the Texaco and CARIFTA (athletics) games and other significant regional sporting events. The CBU says it is committed to broadcast any sport event of Caribbean interest.

It may appear frivolous for the CBU to be concentrating much of its resources on sports coverage, but cricket is a symbol of Caribbean unity (perhaps even more than hockey is for Canada). The game was an avenue for the CBU to start the process of cultural integration.

Two decades after its establishment, the CBU remains a promoter of Caribbean broadcasting interests in a region dominated by foreign television programs. Lester Spaulding, president of the CBU, says "the management committee is dedicated to promoting the CBU as an organ which will heighten consciousness among our Caribbean peoples of the imperative of regional cultural integration...." (31)

He says the CBU is aware that its most urgent role is

to encourage member systems to produce programs "which will serve the process of regional development, and which will impact on the global flow of information." (32)

This view was strongly endorsed by Errol Barrow, former prime minister of Barbados. Addressing the annual general meeting of the Caribbean News Agency in 1985, Barrow called for the establishment of a regional production centre before the Caribbean finds itself "submerged under the avalanche of television networks coming out of North America." (33)

"I hate to think that here in the Caribbean we cannot produce programs which are relevant to conditions of our society," (34) said Barrow. He added: "We stand on the threshold of the 21st century where the Third World must, by its own action, bridge the gap of inequality that separates it. In this context, communications must be an important technique for survival. It's a challenge which will remain relevant to the Caribbean for the foreseeable future." (35)

The CBU's program/information exchange represents a response to that challenge, as it seeks to develop an equitable balance in the flow and content of information and a right to national self-determination of domestic communication policies.

Since the formation of the union, member systems have demonstrated the need for quantitative and qualitative increases in inter-region information flow. They have also committed themselves to more relevant, Caribbean-generated programs that would strengthen regional co-operation, integration, identity and a sense of well-being.

It was clear no single system could produce enough material for region-wide distribution. Each country is constrained by a small domestic market that relies heavily on advertising. A joint effort was necessary to exchange programs among the territories developing, at the international level, into a two-way communication flow reflecting, more accurately, the aspirations and activities of Caribbean people.

Periodically, the CBU has reviewed its role in a rapidly-changing Caribbean where satellite television technology is growing. In 1984, it conducted a study to examine the operation of member systems and to determine what action was necessary to stimulate co-operation in news exchanges and in the undertaking of special joint projects for regional distribution.

The CBU followed the study with a working assignment

undertaken by UNESCO and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung - a non-governmental organization in West Germany. The union sought the assistance of UNESCO and the FES to:

- a) create the machinery among news departments of CBU television systems for more effective contact and regional exchanges
- b) establish a regular program of exchange, involving newscasts or features, to facilitate the inclusion of regional items in news programs
- c) identify proposals for undertaking regular regional current affairs/news oriented programs on a joint basis for distribution among CBU member systems, and
- d) explore the feasibility of a realistic plan for the implementation of an experimental satellite news exchange. (36)

In 1987, the FES agreed to expand and improve regional news exchange among CBU member systems. It sent Michael Abend, a television exchange specialist, to the Caribbean to

organize and execute training programs for television news exchange personnel. Abend was also responsible for designing a master plan for further development of a Caribbean news exchange scheme and for examining ways of linking the regional system with similar activities outside the Caribbean.

"We know that the Caribbean, in terms of mass communication, has a problem. Up to 90 per cent of the TV programming is broadcast mainly from the United States, so this was the reason for the CBU to ask my foundation for assistance to establish the project," (37) says Abend.

The program exchange was also a basis for creating a commercial venture in program production and distribution generating foreign exchange from stations outside the Caribbean.

There was sporadic exchange of news and programs between two stations, before the formal start of the present news exchange project. Trinidad and Tobago Television and the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation began to trade programs with marginal effect. Terry Holder, CBU's secretary general, strongly believes Caribbean media should reflect the lives of Caribbean people as a first step towards

regional co-operation.

"We feel that Caribbean people should see more about themselves and we've sought through television - because we feel it is in that area that we are most vulnerable - to open a window on the Caribbean, so that people can look at themselves, know more about themselves and about each other," (39) says Holder.

The CBU produced Caribvision on March 28, 1988, during a six-month period of building the infrastructural network for participating countries. Caribvision is a daily news exchange program via satellite. The union subsequently produced Caribscope - a weekly magazine program compiled from items submitted by member stations of the CBU.

Caribvision and Caribscope are information-based features produced and co-ordinated by the Caribbean Broadcasting Union. Participation in Caribvision is limited to the four countries with access to satellite: Barbados, Curacao, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. But five other countries get the exchange product via courier service. In addition, Cable News Network, Atlanta; the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), New York; and Visnews, London sometimes use Caribvision material.

Nineteen stations in 18 English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean countries broadcast Caribscope at prime time. The countries include Bermuda, the Bahamas, Jamaica and Belize in the north to Aruba, Curacao, Guyana and Suriname in the south. Caribscope is also offered in French to French-speaking territories.

The CBU says Spanish-speaking countries have shown interests in Caribscope and an exchange has started with Venezuela and Cuba.

"Both countries are sending us features. The Cuban Institute for Radio and Television informed us that Caribscope will be broadcast on one of their national channels. We shall try to produce a Spanish version, as other countries, like Puerto Rico and Costa Rica, have shown interest," (39) says Abend.

Recently, the CBU began producing an additional monthly half-hour program called Caribbean Profiles. It features three personalities, or 'unsung heroes', focusing on their contribution to the development of Caribbean communities.

"We want to put the focus on those people and hold them up to the Caribbean and say these are models that young

people should be able to follow," (40) says Holder.

There are preparations now for a Caribbean television program distribution system to make regional productions available to all Caribbean stations. UNESCO is financing the project. The CBU presently offers services through collaborative ventures with extra-regional institutions and, as a result of intra-regional productions, to the countries and stations in Table 1.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE CBU AT WORK

THE CBU AT WORK

Caribbean television stations, linked and represented by the Caribbean Broadcasting Union, were perhaps the least likely to develop a regional news exchange program. The stations are small, financially weak and they have limited technical and economic resources. The countries sit in the shadow, or as Americans say, in the backyard of the United States. And 'backyardism' helps to shape the modern Caribbean. There is a pervasiveness of American perspectives, culture and lifestyles.

Satellite dishes are installed throughout the region for private reception of U.S. channels and the volume of imports of American programs is high. American ideas and customs dominate the region. Barrymore Stevens, former general manager of ABS Radio and Television, Antigua, says the proliferation of external tastes and values "comes at a time when more than ever before, the people - particularly the youth - need to be focused on the development and moulding of our countries, and perhaps more to be stimulated into playing a more meaningful and fuller role in that process." (41)

Says Stevens:

"The encouragement of patriotism and good citizenship; the stimulation of farming and cottage industries; the fostering of workers education in these endeavors and in other industries; the projection of local arts and crafts; the historical enlightenment and complete development of our people are all crucial subjects which must find their indispensable niche in any national communication and development strategy." (42)

Caribbean broadcasters were challenged to change the imbalance in communication flow. They identified television news and information about events in neighboring countries as resource-based material capable of preserving the region's identity.

In 1986, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago began a daily TV news exchange by satellite. Jamaica joined them later. Abend says it was a peculiar kind of co-operation, because the telecom companies supported the exchange with 'rock-bottom' rates for satellite usage.

"In all other parts of the world, prohibitive PTT (the Telecom companies) rates had delayed the establishment of such exchange systems." (43)

In 1987, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), responding to a request from the CBU, agreed to improve and expand the Caribbean television news exchange on the basis of the organization's experience in other countries. Caribvision was subsequently launched and regional Caribbean TV production and distribution was a reality.

Caribvision is organized and handled by a co-ordinating centre at CBU headquarters in Barbados. TEXTEL, Trinidad supervises the technical production.

By mid-morning, the program co-ordinating centre in Barbados collects all news for the day's transmission. A program menu is then compiled, listing a running order with relevant information for material accepted for broadcast by international telecommunication satellite systems.

Information to member stations passes through the wire service of the Caribbean News Agency (CANA), by an inter-computer link. This arrangement is an attempt to minimize administrative costs. There is facility for facsimile services to stations which are not CANA subscribers and to international news services like CNN and EBU, New York.

When broadcast organizations receive the approved daily menu, from the program co-ordinating centre, they have to prepare packaged reports for satellite exchange.

When transmission begins, the co-ordinating centre yields responsibility to the co-ordinating international television centre at TEXTEL in Trinidad. Because the CBU does not have the necessary facilities, the day's transmission is recorded for the co-ordinating centre by Barbados External Telecommunications Company. This puts the centre at a disadvantage, because production decisions are passed on to technical personnel.

Before Caribvision, participating countries booked about 10 minutes satellite time from Intelsat, for transmission. This arrangement cost Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago more than U.S. \$40,000 for three days a week. After Caribvision was launched, Intelsat offered a new charging system called 'Block-Booking'. Participating systems can book as a group, 15 minutes of satellite time at a reduced rate - U.S. \$9. The previous rate was U.S. \$13.

As well, the CBU stations could increase their bookings from three to five times a week. The block-booking rate structure requires that at least three stations stay in the

program for the initial one-month duration of the agreement. Later the CBU, Intelsat and the Telecoms agreed to a yearly contract for cost sharing of Intelsat charges. Gladstone Wilson says the CBU/Intelsat arrangement is the first attempt by a broadcast union to secure cheaper rates for member systems of a diverse region. (44)

CBU member systems without satellite facilities can participate in the daily exchange by air services. Recordings of the satellite exchange are copied by the co-ordination centre and dispatched the same afternoon by plane to the five networks lacking satellite ground stations. These systems include HTS, St. Lucia; SVG, St. Vincent; MTV, Dominica and ABS and CTV, Antigua.

The European Broadcasting Union acts as an international agent for the CBU. The organization's New York office sees the daily schedule of Caribvision and decides whether to take a feed of the program. The EBU usually takes news of international interest for its audiences in Europe, Asia, Africa and North and South America.

But there are factors that limit the success of exchanging material through the EBU network. The time difference between the Caribbean and Europe prevents EBU,

New York from offering its subscribers CBU material during daily conferencing with the different world capitals. Europe's conference call begins at 10 a.m. (EST). The CBU begins transmission of Caribvision at 7.15 p.m. in London, Paris and Bonn.

The CBU has two options. It can either transmit Caribvision closer to EBU's conference call, or ask EBU to record Caribvision at its regular transmission time and then retransmit the program through New York the following morning.

Another problem is cost. The CBU has an agreement with Intelsat, but it does not have a contract with the EBU. This arrangement opens the region to a one-way flow of messages and information from the EBU network. Michael Abend says "we have to get agreement on associate membership so that TV systems in Europe and around the world are associate members and payment to the union would be allowed to use our material. All we have to agree on is a very complicated system of billing for each item." (45)

There is also the possibility of problems arising with the method of packaging news material. Unlike Caribbean stations, other regions package as news raw material and

sound without commentary. Caribbean stations usually prepare and use finished stories because they have limited facilities. If the CBU were to make raw material available to other unions, analysts say none would use the material originating from an unfamiliar Caribbean territory.

CNN is an associate member of the CBU, taking news feed on a receive-only basis. But CNN often complains of poor picture quality, resulting in infrequent use of Caribvision material. Emphasis is thus being placed on improving the quality of programs.

The Caribbean Television Exchange Project launched what it calls a 'training offensive' and two German experts conducted on-the-job training in Trinidad, Curacao, Jamaica and Barbados. The CBU says about 100 television personnel from 12 countries received training in new procedures for improving, controlling and adjusting video and audio quality.

CBU engineers are satisfied that member stations understand the procedures for successful transmission of news material, but they have identified three areas that need attention:

- 1) Providing information on broadcast quality either immediately following the transmission or some time before the next. This will allow the Program Co-ordinating Centre to advise participants to improve the technical quality of their respective contributions.
- 2) Over-running (programs running beyond the cut-off time).
- 3) Manning of broadcast stations during transmission. Very often participants run individual reports without due care to constant monitoring. Some participants complain that reports are played with unstable picture resolution and/or audio hum. Sometimes no one responds to calls for correction on transmission. (46)

According to the Technical Co-ordinating Centre at Textel, Trinidad, from March 28 to October 21, 1988, there were 46 out of 149 occasions when programs overran for various reasons. Since then, there have been some improvements.

CRU's coverage of the 1989 Caribbean Summit in Grenada

is an example of the difficulties Caribvision faces. There is no electronic news-gathering and post-production equipment in Grenada. And there is no satellite ground station. Without this equipment, Grenada could not provide regional coverage of the Caribbean's main political forum.

The CBU joined a pool of five teams from five regional countries equipped to transmit the opening ceremony live throughout the Caribbean. During the six-day meeting, they distributed daily half-hour programs. Most countries got the tapes by air freight, but a satellite feed was available from a neighboring country.

Besides Caribvision, there is Caribscope, a Caribbean news and magazine program based on exchange contributions. It is compiled and edited by the CBU co-ordinating centre in Barbados, distributed by air-freighted cassettes and screened regularly by 19 networks in the English, French, and Dutch-speaking Caribbean.

Initially, Caribscope was produced every two weeks, but from January, 1989, the frequency changed to weekly productions. By the end of 1989, 15 more networks within and outside the region asked for pilot copies of Caribscope, including Venezuela, Mexico, the United States and Canada.

Abend says the CBU is slowly succeeding in changing the one-way flow of information.

"This constitutes a first step towards the objective: not only to provide the Caribbean people with Caribbean programs, but also to reverse or at least, turn a little, the one-sided flow of information." (47)

The CBU has reached agreement with CNN, Atlanta, for Caribvision at an annual fee and it has made arrangements with TV stations in the United States and Canada that want to show Caribbean programs to their large metropolitan communities of West Indians. Some of the stations are interested in Caribscope.

"Just yesterday (July 17, 1990), we got a fax from Toronto that channel 47, famous for its ethnic programs, will buy Caribscope and will conclude a contract for one year, then they will again subscribe to the program," (48) says Abend.

"Although the financial aspect is important for us, more important is to tell and show the world the true picture of the Caribbean. That it is not only a region of disasters, drugs and crime, but it is a region...with a

cultural heritage which is worthwhile." (49)

In 1989, the CBU covered damage caused to Jamaica by Hurricane Gilbert, and the Joint Assembly of the European Economic Community (EEC), and the group of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), countries. When Queen Elizabeth visited Barbados in March the same year, the CBU also carried highlights of the visit.

During the 1990 Grenada elections, CNN relied on the CBU for coverage and footage. Visnews also carried CBU highlights. Abend says it was the first time a political event in the region was reported worldwide from a Caribbean perspective.

The CBU has acquired a standards converter that will allow it to offer programs in NTSC, PAL and SECAM. The union says it will now try to market programs in European countries with large West Indian communities and promote linkage with the French-speaking Caribbean territories. The CBU already has a feature exchange with French Guiana and Helen TV in St. Lucia is broadcasting a French version of Caribvision and Caribscope to Martinique.

The production of Caribbean television programs is no

longer a problem. The CBU has pooled the resources of more than 20 of its member stations and it has co-ordinated individual national activities as a joint regional effort. But the union faces a problem of distribution.

"The CBU has really become a strong medium for regional integration across all language borders....What is necessary is a central Caribbean up-link to distribute Caribbean programs without crossing the U.S. border at high contract charges," (50) says Abend.

For Caribbean people to watch a live event like the Caribbean Song Festival, the CBU has to combine the use of two satellites crossing the United States border. Up-link is only possible to Intelsat, while down-link is provided by an American domestic satellite like Westar or Pan Am Sat.

Intelsat is used to exchange and distribute programs, but only four countries - Barbados, Curacao, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago - are linked to Intelsat. The Bahamas use a different satellite and Suriname and Guyana, despite their satellite links, do not have the foreign currency to pay for the service. Other member stations, including those in the Leeward and Windward islands, cannot be reached by satellite.

The CBU faces more problems when providing the French territories with live coverage of a Caribbean event. About 30 miles separate Martinique from St. Lucia and Guadeloupe and Dominica. But no television picture can be exchanged directly between these countries via satellite for technical reasons.

Commonwealth Caribbean countries use the NTSC (National Television Standards Committee), system, while the French territories use SECAM (Sequential Color with Memory).

Transmission of the Caribbean Football Cup Finals to Guadeloupe, for example, requires a third satellite. The CBU's Intelsat signal has to be down linked in France, converted to SECAM and up linked to Telecom 1. This incurs a cost of U.S. \$65 per minute, or U.S. \$3,900 per hour.

"These inadequate satellite links are the real obstacle to networked Caribbean television," (51) says Abend.

There are other frustrations involving networking with Cuba, which is broadcasting Caribscope on one of its national television channels. No courier service exists between Barbados and Cuba, so the CBU has to send tapes through the diplomatic mail in Guyana to Havana.

One of the major administrative problems that faces the CBU's program exchange efforts is the lack of a CARICOM mechanism to allow free passage through customs of broadcast material. CBU stations pay duty on their package, while material for the British Broadcasting Corporation enjoys duty-free status from many of the countries.

Custom officers argue that there is no distinction between Caribbean material and programs coming from the United States, so a tariff duty is charged for the movement of these Caribbean programs.

There have been discussions with custom officials from each Caricom territory to identify ways of speeding the process of delivery, particularly at custom points. The CBU hopes to develop a system similar to one in Europe where a CBU delivery bag, clearly identified, transports material quickly through regional airports.

The Caricom Secretariat promises to seek formal support from the region's trade ministers for duty-free access to bags carrying CBU emblems.

Since Caribvision, the CBU has established areas of co-operation with agencies and institutions to strengthen

news and program flows on television. The union's next step is to establish a program inventory and distribution unit. This unit will identify and collect material available in member systems and repackage them for use within and outside the Caribbean. UNESCO will finance the project.

The CBU is aiming for a central Caribbean uplink to a satellite that will enable it to develop a regional network among the English, Dutch, French and Spanish-speaking Caribbean. There is general agreement among Caribbean TV program managers for a regional television link-up, at least once a month, featuring documentaries, talk shows, a regional schools' quiz and a regional soap opera.

An application is now before the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), for a feasibility study on an optimal television satellite distribution system. After consideration, the ITU on behalf of the CBU will submit an application to the United Nations Development Program for hardware and training. The UNDP has allocated funds for a general study on a better Caribbean telecommunications system.

The Caribbean Television Exchange Project would also develop inter-region communication links outside the

Caribbean and the CBU has named Africa as a potential partner.

An application has been filed with the International Program for the Development of Communication (IPDC), a UNESCO body, to endorse the project with the African Broadcasting Union (URTNA).

"I believe through the Caribbean Broadcasting Union we could link, through broadcasting, not only broadcasters but the peoples who reside in the two regions," (52) says Holder.

But problems have arisen.

The Inter-Regional Project is currently on hold. The UNESCO agency says it cannot approve the application because both unions failed to meet the deadline requirements of governmental support from the territories of the respective regions.

The CBU says the prospect of an exchange is also frustrated by an incompatible system. Caribbean television uses the NTSC (National Television Standards Committee), broadcast system, while Africa uses PAL (Phased Alternating

Lines), and SECAM (Sequential Color with Memory). Program exchanges were not possible without a converter and the CBU could not afford to buy one.

UNESCO supported the CBU with initial arrangements for the Inter-Regional Project by funding the union's participation in URTNA screenings in Nairobi. Sam Taitt, general manager of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, represented the CBU.

A CBU report says Taitt met several delegates and noted that, while URTNA was not ready for an exchange, the systems of Angola, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Swaziland and Zimbabwe agreed in principle to make programs available to the Caribbean for exchange or sale. Taitt also recommended a project to train television directors by personnel from the National Film and Television Institute in Ghana.

The CBU and URTNA are now sharing experiences. Sharon Marshall, co-ordinator of Caribvision, participated in a 1990 discussion in Senegal to launch Africavision. The African nations were linking their systems by satellite using the Caribbean as a model. Holder says Marshall was invited to the meeting to share the Caribvision experience with delegates.

Some observers say the CBU could do more to establish closer ties with Africa. Tim Hector, editor of the Outlet newspaper in Antigua, says the CBU should have provided coverage to Caribbean viewers of Nelson Mandela's 1990 visit to the United States.

"It's the closest he (Mandela) has come to these parts and he was going mainly to black communities there. One wonders why the CBU didn't see the need to provide some coverage of an event like that and to put some focus on it."

(53)

"So we are now being treated to questions of whether Mandela should have mentioned that (Muammar El-) Ouaddafi helped him, and that he has links and support for the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization). For us to get that through American eyes is sad in the extreme, because the Palestinians are faced with a form of racial oppression as are the black South Africans," (54) says Hector.

Hector says the CBU, through its coverage, would have been able to put the issue into a Caribbean perspective shifting the focus from the "supreme American point of view." (55)

Caribbean territories.

The UNESCO team reported that although Reuters increased its news coverage of the region by relocating its Caribbean Desk from London to Barbados, its services were still inadequate. The Barbados office had a six-member staff, employed stringers in 13 Caribbean countries and transmitted about 25,000 words a day of which 3,000 were Caribbean news.

Fifteen subscribers from a total of five countries benefited from the service. Other countries could not subscribe because of technical and financial reasons. The major problem was the high cost of telecommunication facilities. Instead they received a daily cabled summary of world and regional events.

The UNESCO team said some countries did not subscribe to the Reuters Caribbean service because the agency was foreign, it did not produce features and there was no news photo coverage. UNESCO compared Reuters policy with the practice of Western news imperialism and recommended the establishment of a regional news agency. It advised that the agency operates as a public corporation to protect its autonomy.

devastation. Caribvision and Caribscope featured the extensive hurricane damage to countries and stations.

The union was also active in restoring partial service to some stations with UNESCO assistance. Two engineers travelled to Antigua, Montserrat and St. Kitts where they assessed the damage, repaired equipment where feasible and made recommendations for full restoration of services.

UNESCO funded a study on behalf of the CBU aimed at achieving proper installation of transmitting equipment and the development of hurricane preparedness plans for each station. The study guaranteed a Caribbean plan of assistance in the event of damage to any broadcasting station.

The Caribbean Broadcasting Union, then, has been of enormous value to the region's electronic media. There has been an increase in Caribbean programming and in increased co-operation between stations at the regional and international levels. Stations can carry programming which previously they could not afford. Staff exchanges are now possible among all the stations in each of the Caribbean countries, fostering awareness of the Caribbean Community of which they are all a part.

investments." (61)

With this new technology, the CBU hopes to offer advertisers the opportunity to reach all member stations at the same time.

"The union is seeking to attract a Caribbean-wide audience and develop a new regional market for advertisers."
(62)

At the international level, the CBU has already authorized the Starfire Communications Group to implement a block advertising system and act as the union's broker to sell television time to overseas advertisers. Holder says the Direct Advertising System will ensure that each station receives its fair share of the total revenues.

Presently the CBU regards itself as more than just a co-ordinating centre. It has become a production house winning awards for outstanding regional television productions.

When Hurricane Hugo damaged several radio and television stations in the Leeward Islands in September, 1989, the CBU produced programs on the extent of the

devastation. Caribvision and Caribscope featured the extensive hurricane damage to countries and stations.

The union was also active in restoring partial service to some stations with UNESCO assistance. Two engineers travelled to Antigua, Montserrat and St. Kitts where they assessed the damage, repaired equipment where feasible and made recommendations for full restoration of services.

UNESCO funded a study on behalf of the CBU aimed at achieving proper installation of transmitting equipment and the development of hurricane preparedness plans for each station. The study guaranteed a Caribbean plan of assistance in the event of damage to any broadcasting station.

The Caribbean Broadcasting Union, then, has been of enormous value to the region's electronic media. There has been an increase in Caribbean programming and in increased co-operation between stations at the regional and international levels. Stations can carry programming which previously they could not afford. Staff exchanges are now possible among all the stations in each of the Caribbean countries, fostering awareness of the Caribbean Community of which they are all a part.

Caribvision, Caribscope and Caribbean Profiles are examples of joint ventures in news and current affairs promoted by the CBU. Most of the programs have moved from pilot stage for a few Caribbean stations to daily usage by 18 countries and regular exposure in North America and Europe.

Through UNESCO and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, the CBU has begun to counter what Caribbean leaders have been complaining about since the early 1960s: poor intra-regional communication and the one-way information flow with the outside world.

CHAPTER FOUR:

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

communications project using the CBU as a vehicle to ensure full involvement of Caribbean people in a common activity.

The project resulted in vibrant production activity for the CBU operating from the UNESCO project office at the CARIFTA Secretariat in Guyana. UNESCO continues to give support to the union's efforts in upgrading broadcasting skills and programs in the Caribbean.

The CBU and UNESCO have executed a series of attachments for media technicians from the small systems of the seven-nation Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). These technicians periodically undergo training at the larger stations in Barbados and Trinidad.

Terry Holder says the three-week attachments are organized to facilitate a transfer of knowledge and to assist the technicians in developing routine maintenance procedures that they can implement at their home stations.

With UNESCO assistance, the CBU has organized meetings for OECS radio managers to expose them to critical areas of broadcasting operations. The meetings focused on the role and responsibility of broadcasting managers, the choice, use and maintenance of equipment and the sharing of technical

association with the Caribbean and its continuing battle with foreign media domination.

At their fourth Heads of Government Conference in 1967, Commonwealth Caribbean leaders resolved to obtain the technical assistance of UNESCO to conduct a feasibility study on the establishment of a Caribbean news agency. UNESCO sent two consultants to the region in 1968 to study the viability of the project.

Says Marlene Cuthbert, a Caribbean mass communication analyst:

"The UNESCO team reported that it was only through the press, radio and television that the people of the Caribbean could be made aware of the wider trading area of which they formed a part, and that the economic grouping of Carifta provided a framework parallel to which the institutions necessary for the development of regional mass communication could be built." (63)

The team studied allegations that the foreign-controlled media were only interested in profit-making. Cuthbert says this was true for the Thomson papers which depended on Reuters for regional coverage, rather than placing their own correspondents in the various

Caribbean territories.

The UNESCO team reported that although Reuters increased its news coverage of the region by relocating its Caribbean Desk from London to Barbados, its services were still inadequate. The Barbados office had a six-member staff, employed stringers in 13 Caribbean countries and transmitted about 25,000 words a day of which 3,000 were Caribbean news.

Fifteen subscribers from a total of five countries benefited from the service. Other countries could not subscribe because of technical and financial reasons. The major problem was the high cost of telecommunication facilities. Instead they received a daily cabled summary of world and regional events.

The UNESCO team said some countries did not subscribe to the Reuters Caribbean service because the agency was foreign, it did not produce features and there was no news photo coverage. UNESCO compared Reuters policy with the practice of Western news imperialism and recommended the establishment of a regional news agency. It advised that the agency operates as a public corporation to protect its autonomy.

"Whether it concerns highly developed or less developed countries, the national agency would be in the best position to meet the urge of the consumers of the region to recognize and define their national identity," (64) says the report.

In June, 1972, UNESCO helped Caribbean media executives negotiate an interim arrangement with Reuters to establish the Caribbean News Agency. Discussions continued up to two years later. A second survey emphasized CANA's purpose was to increase the regional flow of news, "not so much by limiting the number of foreign items but rather by cutting down the lineage of the single messages from abroad, and at the same time expanding domestic coverage." (65)

In July, 1975, Reuters Caribbean Service began as a joint venture with the Caribbean Publishers and Broadcasters Association. Reuter-CANA operated for six months with an interim board of directors, and headed by Barbadian Harry Mayers as Reuters Caribbean editor.

Reuters provided the new CANA service with staff, part-time correspondents, buildings and equipment in Barbados. CANA became an independent news agency on January 7, 1976, sending out 20,000 words of copy a day (15,000 words from Reuters International Service and 5-6,000 words

from CANA).

Today CANA remains one of the most successful Third World news agencies producing 20,000 words a day in Caribbean news. With technical assistance from UNESCO, the agency has expanded its operations to include a radio service financed by the government of West Germany. CANA Radio acts as an extension to the wire service presenting a daily 15-minute program of news and current affairs to subscribers throughout the Caribbean and parts of North America.

CANA Radio's "The Caribbean Today" is a direct response to the BBC's traditional and widely-listened-to "Caribbean Calling", which died shortly after the introduction of the CANA Radio service.

Like CANA, the CBU wanted to create a Caribbean awareness at a time when regional leaders were alarmed over the influence of imported television material in their countries. They regarded foreign material as a hindrance to national consciousness and progress.

One year after its inception, the CBU sought the assistance of UNESCO to develop a regional mass

communications project using the CBU as a vehicle to ensure full involvement of Caribbean people in a common activity.

The project resulted in vibrant production activity for the CBU operating from the UNESCO project office at the CARIFTA Secretariat in Guyana. UNESCO continues to give support to the union's efforts in upgrading broadcasting skills and programs in the Caribbean.

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resources and the establishment and development of commercial departments. They also looked at the application of proper financial control procedures and co-operation in sub-regional programming.

"The radio station managers who participated described the seminar as relevant and stimulating. UNESCO has indicated a willingness to fund a similar exercise for television station managers," (66) says Holder.

UNESCO has allocated funds for a 'train-the-trainers program' and a project to establish and develop commercial departments in radio stations in the Leeward and Windward islands. UNESCO has made other financial contributions to the CBU in areas of inter-regional co-operation, disaster preparedness and project implementation.

When stations in the Leeward Islands were devastated by Hurricane Hugo in September, 1989, UNESCO assisted the Union in sending two experienced engineers to Antigua, Montserrat and St. Kitts to assess and repair the damage.

The Caribbean Television Exchange Project continues to expand with assistance from the FES, bringing greater visibility to the work of the CBU. Caribvision, the daily

satellite news exchange, adds a regional component to the major news broadcasts of member stations. Caribscope, the weekly magazine program, commands peak time viewing on most regional television stations.

The FES has worked with the media in developing countries for more than 15 years. Abend says the FES is engaged in projects in 90 countries concentrating on areas of trade unionism, co-operatives and small scale industries.

"This foundation (the FES), very early, got involved in development of the media in developing countries. It was their idea to help the Third World to establish television exchange systems according to the example of Eurovision - the European exchange system. They (the FES), helped to establish exchange systems in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean." (67)

When the FES/CBU program of co-operation came to an end in 1990, it was extended for another two years. Abend's contract was also renewed.

The FES/CBU co-operative arrangement is a model of the European Broadcasting Union - the 'mother' of television exchange systems - formed in 1955. Abend says it was

essential that the CBU worked with the EBU in the early years of the television exchange project.

"From the very beginning we co-operated with them. Via EBU, New York, we got the first item out of the Caribbean for worldwide distribution." (68)

"They also help us now and then with staff or equipment during, for example, the CARICOM Summit in Grenada where we had a very difficult task to provide the region with topical coverage of the main political events out of an island without television equipment and without satellite up-link." (69)

Through a 'training offensive' organized by the FES, the CBU has been emphasizing high quality production. German technicians have conducted on-the-job training for Caribbean television personnel using the resources of the larger television stations in the region. The result was coverage of special regional events which have gained the CBU recognition from journalist associations in Barbados and Jamaica.

The United Nations Development Program has taken advantage of the regional programs using them "as vehicles

in drawing the attention of the Caribbean public to their projects." (70)

"The Caribbean Television Exchange Project helped to place the spotlight on projects of the United Nations Development Program, and co-operated with UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), in promoting the 'Rights of the Child'," (71) says Holder.

He says a special television magazine was also produced for the Caribbean Family Planning Affiliation on Family Planning Day, 1990.

The CBU has functional co-operation with CANA to prevent duplication of efforts and to ensure coverage of all significant events in the interest of Caribbean listeners and viewers. Chief executives from one organization would represent the other's interests at regional conferences or meetings.

"An agreement between CBU, CANA and UNICEF for Caribbean multi-media support for children's programs is reflective of the level of collaboration," (72) says Holder.

The CBU has discussed plans with Deutsche Welle, a

German company, to conduct training programs for Caribbean radio broadcasters using the facilities of Deutsche Welle's Radio Training Centre in Cologne. The programs range from sessions for trainers to workshops for training institutions. Holder says Deutsche is committed to co-production exercises up to 1992.

The CBU became a member of the Inter-Union Satellite Operations Group (ISOG), in 1989, when it participated in the sixth World Conference of Broadcasting Unions. Holder says the union has benefited from meetings organized by the ISOG and with the group's support, the CBU may get approval for a new Intelsat tariff system for the television news exchange.

"The discussions are particularly relevant to our radio and television exchanges, since, at these meetings, representatives of Unions discuss improvement in satellite technology, facilities and tariffs with Intelsat and other carriers, as well as with Telecom companies." (73)

Apart from assistance provided by UNESCO and the FES, the union is supported by two of its associate members. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has conducted 'on-site' news and program production courses in St. Lucia, St.

Vincent and Guyana. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting offers training to improve the skills of broadcasters involved in the regional magazine program Caribscope.

UNESCO and the FES continue to play a catalytic role in the development of the CBU. The two organizations have offered manpower development, planning assistance and platforms for the CBU to exchange views and experiences.

Given the institutional support of UNESCO, the FES and other media organizations, the Caribbean can pool its resources and make a decisive effort to increasingly speak with its own voice within and outside the region.

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NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
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CHAPTER FIVE:

THE CBU AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

THE CBU AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

The Caribbean Broadcasting Union entered the decade of the 90s playing a critical role in Caribbean integration. It progressed from a central administrative and co-ordination centre to a production agency increasing regional Caribbean programming.

But in the process, there is continuing debate.

Should the CBU have more authority over its member stations, most of them government-operated?

Is the presence of foreign TV material, especially the preponderant American media, as insidious as critics claim? Or is the Caribbean especially vulnerable to the flood of American programming world-wide exporting the ideology of the American way?

And how does Caribbean programming deal commercially with that abundant and cheap source of alien material?

The union's establishment in 1970 coincided with the founding of institutions like the Caribbean Free Trade Association and the Caribbean Development Bank, designed to

foster integration of Caribbean culture, economies and political aims.

Ronald Sanders, former CBU president, says the union represented the first phase.

"We had to integrate the Caribbean people. It was necessary for them to get to know one another better and we saw the radio and newspapers serving this purpose by an exchange of information - by intensifying the quantum and quality of information between and among countries of the Caribbean," (74) says Sanders.

"And that's what the primary purpose of the CBU was - to pool the resources of the national broadcasting stations, both radio and television, in a way that would help us to maximize the opportunities for exchanging program material, and also for doing co-productions that would identify the Caribbean as a homogeneous group of people." (75)

The union lists its immediate objectives as:

- the identifying of new and varied sources of programs for Caribbean stations, through the establishing of links for functional co-operation

- with other broadcasting unions and agencies;
- the redefining of the Caribbean, and the expansion of interests beyond the English and Dutch-speaking area;
 - the further stimulation of local production of programs, and the distribution of those programs within the region;
 - the acquisition of international markets for the sale and distribution of Caribbean program material;
 - the development of a repository of all Caribbean program material;
 - the designing of a communication system which is part of the international network, and which facilitates the participation of all radio and television members in the projects and activities of the Union. (76)

The CBU has sponsored a series of co-operative radio programming and has encouraged the intra-regional flow of television programs. The increasing exchange of television programs is one solution to the problem of inappropriate cultural media intrusions.

BROADCAST POLICY

But the CBU handicapped itself when it restricted membership to government broadcasting stations, says Tim Hector, editor of the Outlet newspaper in Antigua.

Hector, who is also the leader of the opposition Antigua Caribbean Liberation Movement, says the union's policy of restricting membership to government-owned stations conflicted with internal government policies which emphasized exclusive government control of domestic broadcast systems.

"For instance, whenever they have me on a program, the program is never broadcast in Antigua. I think in that sense it had a very, very serious problem imposed on it," (77) says Hector. "Once its programs must meet the requirements of governments for it to be aired, or be censored off the air and the Caribbean Broadcasting Union does nothing about it, it means that the CBU cannot protest to the governments, or even ask why such persons are unacceptable." (78)

This seems to have justified the United States position on NWICO. But 'development journalism' - a media theory at the heart of NWICO - requires some degree of state

involvement in the media. This might appear to open the door to censorship, but it is a necessary means to carry out the goals of development journalism.

Third World leaders believe a concerted effort by both government and media is required to rapidly improve the social and economic position of LDCs.

In the Commonwealth Caribbean, governments own most broadcast media. They may exercise responsibility to use the stations in the public interest or they may license foreign corporations to operate the media.

Hector says the CARICOM Secretariat should implement a policy giving the CBU a mandate to take appropriate measures against stations found violating a general CARICOM policy on broadcast programs.

Sanders agrees with Hector because he says the CBU lacks authority to exert influence over broadcasting policies. He refers to a recent complaint to the union by the Private Sector Organization of Antigua about the handling of information on Antigua's involvement in arms trans-shipment from Israel to narcotics-traffickers in Colombia.

The PSO comprises the Antigua Hotels and Tourist Association, the Manufacturers Association, the Employers Federation and the Chamber of Commerce.

In a letter to the CBU, the PSO says the Antigua Broadcasting Service (A.B.S. Radio & Television), refused to broadcast the views of opposition political parties, the Antigua Christian Council and other organizations on "this deplorable event." (79)

"The people of this country had to depend on news emanating from outside the country to learn details of this distasteful event," (80) says the PSO.

"It is clear that you deliberately censored information and thus attempted to deprive the Antigua and Barbuda community of vital information which they required to have a proper understanding of the situation. It is shameful that as the nationally-owned media, you should have sought to restrict information from the very community you are supposed to serve." (81)

According to Sanders, the CBU did not respond to the PSO complaint because "it has no sanction over its members." (82)

DECISION-MAKING

The CBU has other weaknesses in the decision-making of Caribbean broadcasting. When leaders of the seven-nation Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), were considering purchasing Radio Antilles from its German owners, they did not consult the CBU.

"That indicates to me that after the initial thrust that gave rise to the CBU, the (Caribbean) Heads of Government no longer saw it as a vital and important organization and it does not feature as an institution to which they would give body and substance," (83) says Hector.

Terry Holder, CBU's secretary general, says it was "extremely unfortunate" (84) when the CBU and the Caribbean News Agency were excluded from discussions regarding the future of Radio Antilles.

Radio Antilles was eventually purchased by OECS Governments who now operate the station.

Holder says the union was already considering plans to establish a short-wave radio station to service people within and outside the Caribbean and the Radio Antilles

facilities would have been appropriate. He says the CARICOM Secretariat should make the proposed short-wave radio station a priority.

FOREIGN TV DOMINATION

The CBU faces other challenges in the area of foreign television domination. The union believes national and regional communication policies must be established to curtail the growth of satellite television stations and the use of foreign programs. Holder says there needs to be a system of licensing.

"I think to have a cable station come into the Caribbean at this time just to pull down and relay signals from outside is unfortunate. We need to have an intelligent system of licensing that demands some form of responsibility from the licensee," (85) says Holder. "It means that we would want to insist that (a) certain amount of local programming is on (our stations)." (86)

Evan Browne (87) in a recent study recommended an integrated licensing policy. There would be a Regional Licensing Commission requiring specified levels of local or regional content. Suggested is an upper target of 40 per

cent combined local/regional content and a legal enforcement and monitoring regime.

On the basis of new demand for local and regional productions which this regulation would generate, the study proposes the establishment of a co-operatively-operated regional pooling and production centre. It would act as a clearing house for the commercial distribution of programs made by small independent regional producers, apart from making and distributing its own films.

This would supplement the existing CBU television production and pooling centre.

Caribbean information ministers support the licensing system in principle. But they have failed to examine the influence of North American programs on the Caribbean population, says Harold Hoyte, president of the Caribbean Publishing and Broadcasting Association. Instead, they "have examined peripheral issues which address changes in communication trends that affect the political security and independence of the Caribbean." (88)

Says Hoyte:

"Their 1983 meeting in Guyana resolved to seek funding

for the support of co-operative production of four to seven Caribbean dramatic productions during the ensuing year; facilitate regional inventory of available program materials and their inter-country exchange; recommend the examination of broadbased ownership structures for Caribbean broadcasting agencies combining mass-membership organizations, private business and government, among other things." (89)

Regional governments can no longer afford to ignore the more specific challenge of satellite communication and its influence on people's life-style and value systems, he says.

Hoyte recommends that Caribbean governments establish a regional commission to monitor the increase of foreign media systems and to ensure that there is a balanced flow of information.

Some writers and scholars disagree with the view that American programming threatens to convert Caribbean peoples into Americans. Among them are Dwight Whyllie, a senior broadcast journalist with CBC Radio, Canada, and Dr. Evrold Hosein, a Caribbean media analyst.

Whyllie, a former general manager of the Jamaica

Broadcasting Corporation, argues that Caribbean links with North America have always been strong.

"What Caribbean people are extremely good at doing is selecting from all these influences what they like, or think most relevant, adopting and adapting it, and incorporating it into their own cultural statement," (90) says Whyllie.

Whyllie says it is the responsibility of Caribbean producers and journalists to grasp the opportunity "and feed into this global media complex with their own material." (91)

He adds:

"The proliferation of cable and satellite television in the U.S. and Canada means that there is a hungry monster ready to be fed. Big as it is, the giant U.S. program machine can't satisfy the appetite of all these new outlets. So already there is programming flowing in from Britain, Australia and Europe, among other sources. Promotional films from corporations, travel organizations, educational institutions and government agencies fill space. Talking heads saying little of substance fill more space. And still there are empty screens with slides, test patterns and logos waiting for programming." (92)

Dr. Hosein argues that the claims of cultural dependency generated by foreign television programs are exaggerated. Foreign programs may in fact be reinforcing already-established "consumption-oriented lifestyles." (93)

"The (cultural) impact is perhaps no greater (and probably less) than the impact of the introduction of electricity, refrigeration, and indoor plumbing. Our culture and lifestyle are perhaps affected more by the aeroplane, tourism, the travels of our civil servants, the return of overseas-trained doctors, engineers, lawyers and technicians," (94) says Dr. Hosein.

But Hoyte believes it is mistakenly argued that trans-national television services operating in the Caribbean provide the region with information flow and better international understanding. He says the very imbalance of the information flow "automatically negates this argument." (95)

"The cultural implications of this penetration are multi-dimensional," (96) says Hoyte. "In Dominica and St. Lucia, both of which suffer from high illiteracy and unemployment, ordinary folks are happily discussing how President Reagan "looks", or the latest American politics,

crime and fashion, without knowing what is going on around the Caribbean Community." (97)

Hoyte says the people even boast about whose country has the most television channels and "all of this adds up to an unnecessarily-easy access to Caribbean people from foreign, particularly American, sources and the eventual subversion of our culture." (98)

Foreign program domination thus threatens the orderly development of Caribbean societies and destroys the natural pattern of growth in Caribbean economies.

"We reject the notion that the availability of several channels of television news, sports, movies and so on, provides "safe" entertainment for the idle minds of our unemployed during daylight hours.

"As persons engaged in the business of communication, we regard it as an area of economic and cultural life that should be protected against foreign penetration, not for narrow, self-serving reasons, but rather because it is essential to national and cultural identity and to the eventual improvement of the quality of life," (99) says Hoyte.

Hoyte says Caribbean people should not merely be passive recipients of information coming from extra-regional sources.

Caribbean governments are partially being blamed for the region's heavy dependence on foreign programs. Initially, television stations were set up at the request of Caribbean governments by multinational corporations like the Thomson Group. These corporations were primarily interested in profitable returns on their investments.

CHEAP TV PROGRAMS

The stations imported cheap programs to fill air-time because it was unprofitable to produce local programs. Very marginal advertising revenue was generated from advertising rates based on small audience size. Advertising revenue was enough to pay for cheaply available imported programs, says Dr. Hosein.

"The programs sold on the international market were programs which had already made profits for their production companies and could then be rented at very minimal rates."
(100)

"It was clear to those who were setting up television systems that profits would be made only if there was minimal equipment input, and massive dependence on cheap imported content to fill air-time." (101)

Thus this massive dependence on imported content resulted in the establishment of television systems with the barest of facilities and used equipment, while production facilities were kept to a minimum. Dr. Hosein says most stations were built with one television studio capable of limited productions and minimal training was provided for production staff.

Governments now own and operate most of the stations but the financial situation remains the same. The criterion for a successful television service is whether the system makes money. Dr. Hosein says an assistant general manager discusses the reliance on imported programs and the financial difficulty in producing local programs this way:

"The position is this. If you finance a station from commercial revenue, you've got to deliver an audience. The delivery of that audience is relatively easy if you put on exciting film programs. Exciting film programs cost more money than we can finance. So that the meat of the

revenue-bearing programs tends to be rented films which cost about a hundred dollars per hour to rent and use whereas your programs produced here, for example, tend to be most popular if they are dealing with current affairs and programs of that nature cost about four or five times the cost of a film program. If you go into variety and if you go into anything like a drama, you go through the roof, you go ten, twenty, thirty times the costs of a film program, without any trouble whatsoever. Particularly if you go out and do a well-produced film, you can spend a great deal of money.

"So the first problem is the relative cost and the second problem is the relative appeal. For example, you can produce a very good program on a national subject. It would cost you many thousands of dollars to produce, it would occupy an hour of screen time and it will not earn more than a couple hundred dollars of advertising revenue. So you both spend more and earn less.

"In a sense it is a problem of advertisers not liking local programs. An advertiser is reassured by the success of a program elsewhere. So that if you bring in **Marcus Welby** with all its Emmy awards, the advertiser feels confident that it will be popular in the island. If you make a program

in the islands, you have to prove yourself first, and then you will get advertising....Meanwhile you've borne costs above the costs of an imported program. So getting advertising support is very difficult. Many people talk of advertisers being prepared to support things that are in the national interest. Frankly, most advertising is placed by hard-nosed advertising agents who look at cost per thousand and if you can't show what your audience is, they ain't going to buy it.

"I would think that somewhere in the region of 50% local programming is probably obtainable with care if we want to maintain a profit-making situation. As our audience size increases our revenues from the resulting increased advertising rates can support more local programs than would otherwise be the case." (102)

With some modifications, this explanation for the extensive dependence on foreign programs is an acceptable justification for the present state of dependence. Dr. Hosein says one modification is that more advertisers are supporting local productions because of their increasing popularity.

Despite the financial constraints regional television systems face, some analysts believe the stations can escape the presumed inevitability of extensive dependence on imported television content. And these analysts compliment the CBU for piloting the regional television exchange and production program.

Leslie Sargent (103) says co-operative productions can be self-supporting and commercial enterprises can be persuaded to sponsor production of first-class Caribbean plays for Caribbean-wide distribution.

BARGAINING

Sargent also underscores the CBU's effort as a bargaining agent for Caribbean countries with the International Telecommunications Union.

The ITU is an agency of the United Nations that allocates radio frequencies and satellite parking spaces in the geo-stationary orbit.

"One area in which the Caribbean Broadcasting Union is of vital importance to the region is as a clearing house for regional dealings with the International Telecommunications

Union," (104) says Sargent. "Because of the enormous expansion of telecommunications of all kinds over the past 10 years, the earth's limited electronic spectrum is becoming increasingly congested." (105)

The ITU was originally established to manage the radio spectrum, but changes in the market-place of information and the electronic services industry raised questions about accessibility and allocation. Several United Nations agencies like UNESCO were formed to police matters related the New World Information and Communication Order.

Sargent says co-operative action like that taken by the CBU is essential, because of the highly technical issues involved in the global telecommunications debate.

"Demands by the developed countries for ever more spectrum space for transmission of data, television, radio and point-to-point business and personal communications, has meant that small countries must be increasingly vigilant to ensure that they have for themselves the frequencies that are needed for their development." (106)

There was concern by developing countries that nine-tenths of the frequency spectrum could be distributed

to one-tenth of the world's population leaving the majority without the means to make themselves heard. This concern resulted in the formation of the International Program for the Development of Communication.

Communication and its control received world attention about 25 years ago when Western news agencies and international media chains controlled the information disseminated to developed and developing countries.

The ensuing struggle to change that order resulted in the transfer of ownership of Caribbean radio stations from the Rediffusion group and the withdrawal of the Thomson newspaper group from all regional papers.

According to Hoyte, "in the majority of Caribbean territories the post-independence period saw the emergence of locally-owned media houses, directed from Bridgetown, (Barbados), Port of Spain, (Trinidad), Castries, (St. Lucia), and elsewhere (Jamaica being an exception since the ownership of its major daily has been in Jamaican hands for a very long time)." (107)

In some cases, there were privately-owned broadcast systems, while public ownership replaced the international

chains.

"This addressed the critical issue of control residing in the hands of powerful and well-off media empires from overseas with no special interest in the country nor any reason to have any interest in it," (108) says Hoyte.

CONTROL

Today, with more than 60 per cent of the world's communications coming from the United States, the Caribbean has become part of the information, news and entertainment market. There is strong pressure to accept satellite television offered by U.S. broadcasting corporations. Their dynamic export policies mask what amounts to direct government intervention to peddle the American way of life far beyond America's borders.

Raymond Williams (109) argues that in the non-communist world, broadcast development is determined by the expansion of American communications system. And he says, having developed a complex military, political and industrial communications system, the Americans are determined to penetrate the broadcasting systems of all other available states.

"In more than 90 foreign countries, the three leading corporations have subsidiaries, stations and networking contracts; they are particularly strong in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Middle East." (110)

Williams says old films and television programs are dumped in developing countries at prices which make local production look expensive by comparison. Entertainment, advertising and general political and cultural influence come in a 'cheap' package.

He concludes that the vast circulation of American programs in poor countries like the Caribbean is a planned operation by a distant and invisible authority - American corporations.

This planned operation was evident when the United States-funded TV Marti began test broadcasts aimed at Cuba on March 27, 1990. The U.S. says the news and entertainment station based in Florida promotes the free flow of information. But Cubans see TV Marti as an act of electronic aggression against the Cuban government.

The advent of TV Marti generated critical response from Caribbean media organizations and the regional ecumenical

movement. The Barbados-based Caribbean Conference of Churches says TV Marti "calls into question the existing information order as it relates to ideological differences, electronic aggression, cultural imperialism, information hostility and the possible violation of national sovereignty." (111)

The CCC says "until information ceases to be used as a weapon of foreign policy to promote and entrench practices of information hostility and cultural domination, there is in reality, no free flow of information...." (112)

The presence of cable television in the Caribbean introduces a confrontation between the political and economic aspects of commercial broadcasting and the educational and cultural development of the region. And the Caribbean Broadcasting Union is determined to counter the influence of foreign-dominated programs on Caribbean values.

Terry Holder, the CBU's secretary general, says the union is an indispensable network pooling the human, technical and financial resources of member systems for greater Caribbean awareness.

"If you consider the cost of communication, the cost of

programming, the cost of training, no one system can afford it. If the systems try to do without the CPU now, they would collapse." (113)

Says Holder:

"I think the CBU as a network is showing where the Caribbean needs to go. We are showing it in terms of not only limiting ourselves to the English, but we've moved to the Dutch, we are going to the French and the Spanish, and I think it is a model for the Caribbean leaders to see how, through the intelligent pooling of resources, we are making a success of it." (114)

Michael Abend, the CBU's television exchange consultant, says the CEU will do everything to enhance regional programming. He says the union will continue to market programs proclaiming the Caribbean view of events and developments.

"And I'm very confident that after two or three years, the union will have enough equipment, a building and enough ideas to establish a real strong Caribbean television system." (115)

GLOSSARY

- ACP** - African, Caribbean and Pacific.
- BBC** - British Broadcasting Corporation.
- CANA** - Caribbean News Agency.
- CAMWORK** - Caribbean Association of Media Workers.
- CARICOM** - Caribbean Community and Common Market.
- CARIFTA** - Caribbean Free Trade Association.
- CARIMAC** - Caribbean Institute of Mass Communication.
- CBI** - Caribbean Basin Initiative.
- CBU** - Caribbean Broadcasting Union.
- CCC** - Caribbean Conference of Churches
- CDB** - Caribbean Development Bank.
- CFPA** - Caribbean Family Planning Affiliation.
- CPBA** - Caribbean Publishing and Broadcasting Association.
- EBU** - European Broadcasting Union.
- EEC** - European Economic Community.
- FES** - Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.
- IPDC** - International Program for the Development of
Communication.
- IPS** - Inter-Press Service.
- IRP** - Inter-Regional Project.
- INTELSAT** - International Telecommunication Satellite.
- ISOG** - Inter-Union Satellite Operations Group.

ITU - International Telecommunications Union.

LDCs - Less Developed Countries.

NWICO - New World Information and Communication Order.

NTSC - National Television Standards Committee.

OECS - Organization of Eastern Caribbean States.

PAL - Phased Alternating Line.

PSO - Public Service Organization.

SECAM - Sequential Color with Memory.

TWI - Trans World International.

UNDP - United Nations Development Program.

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural
Organization.

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund.

URTNA - African Broadcasting Union.

UWI - University of the West Indies.

VOA - Voice of America.

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6. Sam Taitt, president of the Caribbean Publishing and Broadcasting Association (CPBA).

END

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